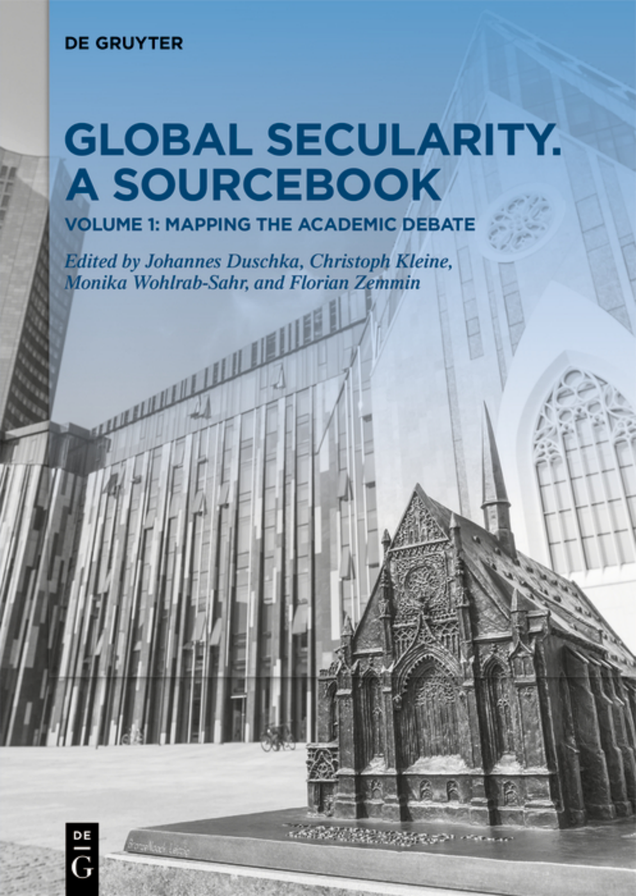
DE GRUYTER
GLOBAL SECULARITY.
A SOURCEBOOK
VOLUME 1: MAPPING THE ACADEMIC DEBATE
Edited by Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine,
Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin
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Global Secularity. A Sourcebook
Volume 1: Mapping the Academic Debate

Global Secularity. A Sourcebook

Edited by
Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Florian Zemmin,
and Judith Zimmermann

Volume 1

Mapping the Academic Debate

Edited by
Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr,
and Florian Zemmin

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Instructions for Use

Structure of Entries

As the titles of some sources are very long, we have sometimes used short titles for the headings of the entries, reflecting the content of the text.

All entries are structured as follows:

- **Heading:** Name of author of the source text: *Short English title reflecting the content* (year)
- **Introduction:** Each text is preceded by a short introduction detailing the context in which the text was written, its reception, and its place in the author's oeuvre.
- **Bibliographical information:** Information on the particular edition of the respective source, and on existing translations.
- **Translation**
  While some of the texts and extracts were originally written in English, the majority of our sources were originally published in another language, and appear here in translation. This applies particularly to volumes 2 to 7.
- Where a translation already existed prior to the publication of this sourcebook, we have – with the kind permission of the respective publishers – used these translations as the basis for the present edition. The sourcebook brings together three different types of translations:
  - Existing translations that were already very precise with regard to statements and contexts relevant here have been reproduced unchanged. They are labelled "Translation reproduced from. . .".
  - Existing translations that we have substantially revised are labelled "Translation adopted from. . .".
  - Finally, translations that have been produced entirely by us, and have not yet been published elsewhere, are labelled "Translation by. . .".

Footnotes

There are two types of footnotes in the sources: footnotes that were already included in the original source texts, and editorial footnotes added by our contributors and translators.

We have included footnotes from the original sources (footnotes included by the authors, or those added by the editors or translators of the edition in question) where these were relevant to the content. They appear in Arabic numerals, and contain a reference to the number of the footnote in the original edition of the source (example: 1 [note . . . in the original] . . .).

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We have also integrated editorial footnotes from our contributors and translators, and have labelled the authors accordingly. Editorial footnotes are numbered in Latin numerals and begin with I for each new text.

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Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Global Secularity: Introduction to the Series

1 Background and Aim of this Endeavour

This seven-volume series is the result of intensive interdisciplinary and international cooperation within the institutional framework of the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities." The aim of the *Multiple Secularities* project, which is based at Leipzig University and is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG),[I] has always been to capture and explain the diversity of arrangements between the religious and the secular in global modernity. When speaking of 'secularity,' we refer to the "institutionally as well as symbolically embedded forms and arrangements for distinguishing between religion and other societal areas, practices and interpretations."[II]

Our general premise is that the diversity of secularities (*multiple secularities*) is rooted in different configurations of problems and interests, varying forms of encounters with the hegemonic powers of 'the West,' and distinct cultural imprints and historical path dependencies. As a result, diverse, highly complex conditional structures have emerged in different societies, each resulting in unique, often controversial, and sometimes fragile forms of secularity.

In order to explain the diversity of secularities in global modernity, it is necessary to reconstruct the historical conditions for their formation – conditions that were sometimes created long before modernity. Naturally, premodern sources hardly ever use the conceptual pair of religious and secular. Therefore, merely comparing a premodern binary distinction between two fields of action, 'nomospheres,' or systems of cognitive and normative orientation on the one hand, and the modern concept of 'secularity' on the other, is bound to fail. Even in contemporary discourses in the Global North, there is no consensus on how the two sides of the conceptual pair should be defined. We are even further from a clear concept of 'the secular' than we are from any concrete 'modern concept of religion.' Both are 'floating signifiers.' However, for research on

I The Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" was funded by the DFG from 2016 to 2024. The centre was directed by Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr. The work of the centre is based on an earlier project, entitled "Multiple Secularities," which was directed by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and funded by the Saxon Ministry of Arts and Science from 2010 to 2012. For further information, see https://www.multiple-secularities.de/.
II Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Research Programme of the HCAS 'Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities'" Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" 1, Leipzig, March 2016, http://www.multiple-secularities.de/media/multiple_secularities_research_programme.pdf; cf. Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, "Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities," *Comparative Sociology* 11, no. 6 (2012): 881.

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multiple secularities, this observation is less of a problem than it is a key premise. If we assume that boundaries between the religious and the secular are drawn differently in each case, and are constantly renegotiated and frequently contested, then neither one category nor the other can be regarded as semantically stable in any way. Accordingly, there is no basis for simple diachronic and synchronic comparisons based on the terms 'religious' or 'secular.'

While using the concept of secularity to look for similar distinctions and differentiations in earlier historical periods, and in different parts of the world, we had to grapple with a hermeneutic problem. We could not presuppose that categories akin to 'religion' and 'the secular' existed in all societies. Even the question of whether 'religion' and 'the secular' are meaningful categories for describing and analysing these societies at all remains controversial. They are – as has been frequently argued – binary concepts that, in their current form, emerged in the 'modern West,' and were transferred to other societies through different forms of cultural encounter, not least through missionaries and colonial regimes. They are, without doubt, related to power, as many have underlined, problematising the use of the secular-religious binary in research on 'non-Western' societies.

However, this is not the whole story. It would equally be problematic to assume that if *specific terms* weren't there, there therefore could not have been practices, ideas, or even relatable concepts that express something similar to that which has been termed 'secular' and 'religious' in Latin Christendom. There is still the possibility of some kind of secularity *avant la lettre,* as has been argued for premodern Japan and ancient India.[III]

Therefore, we had to broaden our view, and use 'secularity' as a heuristic concept – rather than as a model under which empirical findings are simply subsumed. We started with the assumption that every culture in some way conceptualises its social differentiations, by making distinctions between nexuses of social activities.[IV] These early distinctions may have later provided conceptual resources in the process of appropriating a new globalised knowledge regime and principles of social organisation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These processes were triggered by the encounter with 'the West' – that is, with European and North American notions of society, modernity, development, civilisation, enlightenment, progress, and secular governance. Accordingly, we assume that pre-existing, premodern forms of distinction and differentiation may have informed the ways in which culture-specific forms of secularity were

III J. Swyngedouw, "Reflections on the Secularization Thesis in the Sociology of Religion in Japan." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, 1/2 (1979): 65–88; Rajeev Bhargava, "An Ancient Indian Secular Age?" in *Beyond the Secular West*, ed. Akeel Bilgrami (New York, NY: Columbia University Press 2016), 188–214.
IV See Kleine, Wohlrab-Sahr, "Comparative Secularities." For this perspective, see also José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun et al., 54–74 (Oxford University Press 2010), who treats the sacred-profane, transcendent-immanent, and religious-secular binaries as different modes of making distinctions in different historical epochs; the later ones retrospectively impacting the understanding of the former.

implemented. Therefore, we consider it necessary to thoroughly examine premodern social and epistemic structures to account for the multiplicity of forms of secularity in global modernity. 'Secularity,' then, serves as a heuristic tool, and not as a pre-fabricated concept.

While using the concept of 'secularity' as a heuristic tool does, of course, reflect our positionality and theoretical interest, it is our strong contention that distinctions in relation to religion are not particular to the present day and the temporal context of our theorising, let alone to the 'modern West.' An expected criticism of our usage of 'secularity' has been that it merely projects, or even violently imposes, a particular – and, moreover, normatively loaded – concept onto contexts to which it is alien. Our decision to compile this series of sourcebooks was driven not least by the intent to showcase distinctions being made in sources and by historical actors themselves, including those from 'beyond the West' and 'beyond modernity.' To what extent these distinctions are fruitfully grasped by the concept of 'secularity' will remain subject to debate. The fact that distinctions have been made, though, should be the basis for such a debate – a basis substantiated by this series. In this sense, our collection of sources is not intended to mark the end point of theoretically informed research on *multiple secularities*, but rather to provide a broad empirical basis for theoretical engagement with the phenomenon.

'Secularity,' as it is understood in our research context, is not present in every situation, or at all times, but often stays in the background. It is a specific, purpose- and situation-bound mode of conceptualising social differentiation, according to the binary scheme of 'religious' versus 'secular.' Therefore, our criterion for the selection of texts was that they should explicitly or implicitly make distinctions in a comparable mode. The most difficult aspect of this selection process then naturally lies in the question of which modes of distinction are comparable to that of secularity.

This seems rather straightforward for texts written since the second half of the nineteenth century. From that time onwards, secularity had begun its advance as a globally relevant taxonomy of social facts, and a legally codified principle of governance. Virtually no modern nation-state could avoid taking a position on the relationship between religious and secular institutions, actions, epistemologies, discourses, symbols, places, etc. The shaping of secularity was a central element in the formation of the nation-state. In keeping with the importance of the subject, we find numerous sources in the modern era that reflect debates around secularity.

On what basis, however, can we identify earlier sources as relating to conceptual distinctions and institutional differentiations that have significantly influenced the development of a particular form of secularity in modernity? The most obvious and promising approach in this regard is undoubtedly a genealogical one. Ideally, discursive entanglements and conceptual contact zones can be identified where 'Western' and 'non-Western' discourses intertwined, and processes of cultural translation or "trans-

lingual practice"[V] were set in motion. In such cases, it is then relatively easy to identify emic terms that were used as a conceptual resource for translating concepts such as 'religion' and 'the secular.' The genesis of these terms must then be traced through conceptual history.

Often, however, the sources do not allow such a historical and genealogical approach. In many cases, the assumption that given epistemic and social structures were used as conceptual and institutional resources in the formation of secularity in a particular historical context remains speculative, or at least probabilistic. Our selection of texts is therefore subject to interpretation, with some readers finding it more plausible than others that a particular text does indeed shed light on the development of a particular form of secularity.

It must also be stated that – despite the selectivity of our text selections – our strategy of inquiry is, and must be, open-ended. Some societies and cultures may employ or have employed distinctions of some kind, but not one that is similar to the distinction between the religious and the secular. This may show up in a selected text as a rejection of the secular-religious binary. There may also be a lack of written sources in contexts with mainly oral traditions, such as in some cultures in Africa, which makes it difficult to reconstruct their pre-colonial epistemic structures. Similarly, certain regions may indeed have come across such distinctions only through their encounter with colonial powers.

In other cases, such as in Japan, however, such distinctions have long been part of the stock of knowledge of a culture, since long before the encounter with 'the West,' and may have influenced how this encounter played out. In yet other cases, such as in China, worldly epistemologies existed from early on, without being embedded in a binary opposition to religion, due to the lack of a strong religious organisation.

This means that we do not start our inquiry with the assumption of ultimate difference or incommensurability, nor with the assumption of convergence or homogeneity. Instead, we look for both similarities and differences. The sources that we have collected are meant to allow readers to make their own comparisons, and to start their own inquiries into issues of religion and the secular around the globe.

The very fact that we have collected these sources under the title *Global Secularity* inevitably bears the marks of our theoretical interest and framework. Nevertheless, the sources themselves speak in their own tongue, and allow the reader to develop their own interpretation. What we intend is to present a more nuanced and richer picture than the one that is often painted: Secularity as a proprium of 'the West' that has been disseminated across the world only by means of power and violence, with no resonance with indigenous concepts or other resources, and no agency on the side of 'local'

V Lydia He Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China; 1900 – 1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1995).

actors.[VI] Given its preponderance, scholarly work that is critical of the use of the terminologies of 'secularism' and 'secularity' for non-European cultures must be taken seriously, and will, of course, also be presented in this collection of sources. However, they will not have the last word. These critiques have themselves been critically discussed by authors from different parts of the world, and there are important contributions from outside of Europe and North America that claim a tradition and presence of secularity for their own contexts, undermining the idea that these concepts are 'alien' to those contexts, as some have claimed them to be.

If binary distinctions between mundane and supramundane matters were also common elsewhere, coupled with a division of labour such that there were distinct, professionalised, and institutionalised, roles dealing with the two matters, it is hardly plausible to assume that secularity is a purely 'Western' regulatory principle, which could only have established itself globally through the use of (epistemic) violence. In view of the sources collected here, the assertion of a European *Sonderweg* seems just as unconvincing as teleological theories of secularisation and modernisation.

Thus, the underlying theoretical considerations of *multiple secularities*, combined with the sources collected for this series, decidedly challenge Eurocentrism and teleological views of historical processes. Additionally, this series seeks to confront postcolonial discourses of victimisation that portray the non-European world as a passive victim of imperialist and colonial power exerted by the Global North, without any agency of its own. With our sources, we aim to overcome this concealed Eurocentrism, and provide non-European cultures with a voice that is not solely a response to calls from the Global North.

2 "Global Secularity": A Collection of Sources in Seven Volumes

'Secularity,' in terms of drawing (contested, shifting, varying, fluid, and permeable) boundaries between religious and secular spheres of society, has undoubtedly become a global taxonomy of considerable political and legal weight.[VII] We neither deny nor

VI This endeavour was inspired by a textbook on secularization published in Germany: Christiane Frey, Uwe Hebekus, David Martyn, ed., *Säkularisierung. Grundlagentexte zur Theoriegeschichte* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2020). This very useful collection, however, presents mainly European and North American sources, and adds some Jewish and Muslim voices as mainly critical counterparts. In this volume, the postcolonial critique literally has the last word: it ends with Gil Anidjar's "Secularism," which states that "Secularism is Orientalism. And Orientalism is Christianity. It is Christian imperialism" (758). For this quote, see Gil Anidjar, "Secularism." *Critical Inquiry*, 33 (2007), 52–77, here 66. Should there be any doubt that critique of this critique could exist, we will present several examples thereof, in volume 1 of our sourcebook series.

VII See Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms," 62: "one of the most important global trends is the globalization of the category of 'religion' itself and the binary classification of 'religious/secular,' that it entails."

downplay the historical fact that this specific mode of conceptualising social differentiation was more often than not imposed upon 'non-Western' societies by 'Western' powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[VIII] When we speak of *global secularity* in the singular, we do not assume the *diffusion* of concepts and institutions from 'the West' to other regions, as is the case in concepts of 'world polity.' Similarly, we also do not presuppose the future uniformity of a secular transition, as underlies some current secularisation theories.[IX] Rather, in these seven volumes, we want to present a different story, showing that there were factual developments, positions, and debates around the globe prior to the global condition proper, that contributed to what we call 'secularity' – the conceptual distinctions and institutional differentiations related to what was later termed 'religion.' In some cases, we also find forms of exchange, entanglements, and references to developments elsewhere – e.g. within Asia, or from Asia to 'the West' – that call into question the idea of a one-sided influence of 'the West' upon other parts of the world. Sometimes they directly refer to each other, in other cases they emerge independently.

Even in seven volumes we can, of course, not cover the whole globe, nor should the concept of 'global' raise the expectation to do so in the first place. For 'global' notably does not mean 'planetary' – but rather indicates going beyond familiar boundaries, and connecting contexts that are often treated separately.[X] It is in this sense, then, that we speak of *global secularity*, to address forms of distinction and differentiation 'beyond the West,' and 'beyond modernity.' These occur as a multiplicity of understandings and conceptualisations, which, from our vantage point, are grasped and brought together through the heuristic concept of 'secularity.'

The seven volumes of this series are thus dedicated to collecting sources from the past and present, from many parts of the world, which shed light on the drawing, negotiating, disputing, or questioning of boundaries between what we today call 'religion' and 'the secular.' We have decided to choose sources that themselves address distinctions (related to what we today call 'religion'); but it is our decision to collect them under the heading of 'secularity.' Emic conceptions of distinctions related to religion are often negotiated with different terms and underlying ideas. This is definitely true

VIII See John Boli, "World Polity Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Globalization*, ed. Roland Robertson, Jan Aart Scholte (New York, NY: Routledge 2006).

IX See David Voas, "The Continuing Secular Transition," in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, ed. Detlef Pollack, and Daniel V. A. Olson, 25–48 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

X For different versions of global history, including conceptions of the global as planetary, see Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2016), 7–10, and more extensively chs. 3–5. Note that Dipesh Chakrabarty distinguishes between 'global' and 'planetary' in a slightly different way. While for Conrad 'planetary' refers to the spatial scope in terms of covering the whole planet, for Chakrabarty the concept 'global' is centred around human interactions, whereas the concept 'planetary' is used to decentre the human and to take the natural environment as a whole into due consideration. Cf. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Crises of Civilization: Exploring Global and Planetary Histories* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

for contexts in which the very concept of 'religion' had not yet been established, or was without clear-cut equivalents in non-European languages. The situation becomes even more difficult regarding much of Africa, where written sources from pre-modern times are notably scarce. Therefore, bringing the sources that we present together in the way that we have is necessarily embedded in an interpretation on our part, with its own theoretical underpinnings and assumptions. We will make this obvious in our systematic introductions, with the intention of re-opening a debate that seems to have been hastily closed, between classical secularisation theorists on the one hand, and the theoretical critique of secularism on the other. The first volume of our series is indeed dedicated to mapping the present *academic debate* on secularity, secularisation, or secularism, found mostly in the humanities and social sciences, spanning from the 1930s until today. The other six volumes, by contrast, collect primary sources from different social arenas, which document the drawing or questioning of boundaries between religion (or something similar) and other spheres of activity, and the negotiations about those boundaries. These sources come from very different eras, thus indicating that the demarcation of the boundaries of what we today call religion is not restricted to the modern period. For volumes 2 to 7, we decided in favour of a regional division. By reserving volume 1 for the *global theoretical debate*, and volumes 2 to 7 for *regional sources*, we neither deny the regional and political imprints of the former, nor the transregional and theoretical value of the latter.

The regional division of volumes is, of course, not without its pitfalls, but seemed advantageous in comparison to possible alternatives. The most obvious alternative, given our topic of secularity, would have been to structure the volumes according to different religions and confessions. This, however, would have inappropriately reified religions, and, at the same time, would have suggested particular intellectual – and especially theological – configurations and doctrines to have been decisive in the different formations and elaborations of secularity. As such, it would have sidelined or even undermined our attempted highlighting of societal and political developments. Our use of regional divisions, by contrast, does not obscure the significance of each region's dominant religious traditions and the specific relationship between the religious majority and minorities.

Volume 1, then, captures the global academic debate on secularity and – to a lesser extent – on secularisation. In this debate, the development in 'the West' is often a common point of reference that contributions from other parts of the world relate to, but from which they also often differentiate the development and the positions in their own regions. These texts explore specific references to a region's past, and the intellectual resources these deliver with respect to the distinction between religion and other spheres; they indicate and proclaim the diversity of paths that relate religion and the secular; they discuss issues of power related to boundary demarcation; and they explore possible future trajectories.

Volume 2 is dedicated to the Middle East and North Africa, a region often seen as a counterpoint to secularity, especially when Islam is made the central focus. While

Muslims do indeed form the majority in most societies of the region, they hold a variety of views on the proper relationship between religion and state. On the institutional level, this relationship plays out in decidedly different arrangements regarding the place of religion in the respective nation-states, ranging from examples of integrationist Islamism to examples of secularism. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Turkish Republic are cases in point. Alongside Islam, the Middle East is also the historical cradle of Judaism and Christianity. Today, the former figures most significantly in the Jewish state of Israel, while Christians make up half of the population in Lebanon, and significant minorities in Egypt, Syria, and other Arab countries. Grouped according to language, and ordered chronologically, the volume highlights the formation of secularity during colonial modernity, and traces its subsequent evolution. A separate section showcases premodern distinctions considered to be important references for modern appropriations of secularity in the region. The volume brings to the fore the multifaceted, and often contradictory, ways in which 'non-Western' religious (mainly Islamic) legacies were renegotiated in the encounter with the modern order. It is a testament to the groundbreaking impact of this order, as its resultant contingencies garnered significant challenges to secularity on philosophical, theological, and political grounds.

Volume 3 brings together texts from Buddhist South Asia, East Asia, Inner Asia, and the Himalayan region. The compilation was primarily based on the criterion of discursive entanglement. The spread of the Indian and Chinese cultural spheres in these regions led to the creation of spaces of densified communication and epistemic exchange. Concepts and ideas circulated via the so-called Silk Roads, as well as via maritime trade routes across large areas of Asia. This also applies to the ideas of dealing with the difference between transcendence and immanence, and the relationship between mundane and supramundane systems of norms, which are of interest to us. Broadly speaking, Buddhist or Confucian epistemes dominated in combination with the respective indigenous traditions in the areas mentioned, each with a different predominance. The Buddhist worldview, with its strong distinction between mundane and supramundane matters, was socio-structurally manifested in a pronounced monasticism. Two complementary nomospheres – that of the Buddha Dharma and that of the ruler's law – stood in a relationship of more or less co-equal interdependence. This binary distinction between two ordering powers is likely to have greatly facilitated the appropriation of the regulatory principle of secularity in the modern age. However, Confucian influences also presumably prepared the ground for secularity. Although the unconditional primacy of the secular-yet-sacred rule of the emperor left no room for a dual domination by some "temple nobility" and "military nobility,"[XI] it did allow Buddhist, Daoist, and other 'religious' institutions to be demarcated as representatives of a special area of social activity, and to be granted a certain autonomy. The recognition of this autonomy

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XI Max Weber, Guenther Roth, and Claus Wittich, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 1160.

was always subject to the proviso of usefulness – or at least harmlessness – to secular rule. In some ways, the Confucian model is therefore remarkably similar to modern forms of secularity. Additionally, officials of the Confucian literati repeatedly subjected Buddhism to quasi-secular criticism for its otherworldly orientation, and allegedly irrational epistemology. Regardless of the favourable conditions for the establishment of a form of secularity in large parts of the Buddhist or Confucian-influenced area of Asia, the demarcation between religious and secular fields of action remains controversial even in these areas. This is not least due to the fact that secular rule is often mythologically legitimised and ritually performed, and thus has a distinctly sacred character. It therefore contains elements that, according to modern understanding, are usually attributed to the religious sphere. The resulting conflicts are also illustrated by the sources collected here.

Volume 4 deals with Eastern Europe, an area for which many regions display an inherent multi-religiosity as a structural feature. It is a region in which Latin and Orthodox Christianity met in exchange, coexistence, and conflict; Islam took roots in south-eastern Europe in particular as a result of long-term Ottoman rule; and, at least until the Second World War, Jewish life formed a significant part of the religious landscape in almost all societies. The region has thus always been a laboratory for different theoretical forms and practical realisations of boundary demarcation between the religious and the secular. It thus serves as a perfect illustration of the fact that we are faced with a plurality of forms of secularity within Europe, too – indeed, even within the region in question here. The volume seeks to mirror this plurality, both in *space* and *time*.

In *space*, it covers different regions of Eastern Europe, which, due to their specific religious cultures and historical trajectories, produced different conceptualisations of the religious and secular: from the realm of *Latin* Christianity – both Catholic, essentially in East-Central Europe, and Protestant, in parts of the Baltic region – to *Orthodox* Eastern and Southeastern Europe, to those regions, where, as in the Balkans, *Islam* has had to meet the challenge of secularisation and 'Europeanisation' since the end of Ottoman rule.

In *time*, the volume starts with the 'medieval' period, which – with the Byzantine concept of 'symphonia,' for example – created a conceptual framework which has had a key impact on the Orthodox understanding of secularity up to the present. It continues with the 'modern' period, which includes the nineteenth century process of nation-state building that contributed to a reconfiguration of the religious and the secular, and the twentieth century, which saw the region confronted with both the challenges of an overall European process of modernisation, and the experience of a socialist political order enforcing its vision of secularity. It ends with more recent decades, which have continued the unfinished reconfiguration of the secular and the religious, the exact forms depending on the specific 'paths' of a deep-rooted political, economic, social, and cultural transition that occurred with the end of socialism, and under the influence of globalisation.

Volume 5 covers Africa, by which we mean Africa south of the Sahara, with North Africa having already been covered in volume 2. Paradoxically, Africa has historically been represented either as lacking religion, or as being notoriously and incorrigibly religious. Perhaps because of these opposing ascriptions, it has been conspicuously absent from international debates on secularity. Offering a unique collection of original sources on secularity and cognate themes, volume 5 seeks to address this lacuna. Given the scarcity of precolonial sources from the region, there is a modern focus here, and the volume engages with Africa's sociocultural multiplicity with a thematic approach, rather than a regional or national one. The central topics are the invention of African religion(s) – and hence the religionisation or culturalisation of African traditions – in the processes of constructing both colonial custom and post-colonial heritage. Sources from British indirect rule and French colonial *laïcité* present colonial formations and legacies in African secularities. African socialisms introduce peculiar entanglements of politics, secularism, and religion, which play out in anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa, and in current debates in African public spheres – with regard to religious pluralism, for example. Alongside demonstrating how religion and secularity are addressed in written constitutions, and how distinctions between the two have shifted, the volume also provides sources on secularity in fine arts, and introduces documents pertaining to the emergence of atheist and humanist organisations in Africa.

Volume 6, dedicated to South Asia and maritime Southeast Asia, is ambitious in its geographical and temporal spread. It begins with the Vedic texts in ancient India, and walks the reader up to the contemporary discussions on secularity in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This region also poses the challenge of a very long history of religious developments and diversity, colonialism and nationalism, and the struggles of post-colonial nation-states and their tryst with the concepts of 'religion' and the 'secular.' In exploring the evolving, contested, and contextual ideas of secularities, the volume works through various concepts and categories, and their articulation and elaboration in a diverse range of sources, in terms of genre, language, and location. The selection of texts for such a project can only be illustrative, and we have broadly looked for them through the following classificatory lens: i) texts that articulate the state's or the sovereign's position on the role and place of religion in other spheres, ii) canonical religious texts, and iii) texts that challenge both political and religious canons, and uphold interpretative frames that can be categorised as counter-culture. Collectively, they capture the tenor of the debate and its chequered evolution. In reconstructing the secularities in this region, we are confronted with impressive linguistic diversity, a result of the region's historical cultural heterogeneity. The multilingual archive poses problems of intertextuality, and the need to look at communicative spaces across the language boundaries. With the expansion of literacy in the early modern period, there was also an expansion in the range of genres, and, for scholars of the region, there is the additional problem of the relationship between genre and

meaning formation. In exploring the texts of this region, we have been attentive to the significance of the choice of language and genre in shaping the historical narratives on religion and secularities.

Volume 7, finally, provides a broad survey of formations of secularity in Europe and the Americas, taking into account sources outside of the canonical set of texts on secularisation and secularism. The volume is divided into three sections, dealing with the separation of politics and state, the negotiation and regulation of religious diversity, and the differentiation of religion from other spheres such as economics, science, and the arts. It spans two millennia of European history, and includes both North and South America in the wake of European colonisation. While focusing on three continents, the book also touches on wider developments, when it engages with the broader colonial and imperial experience. Throughout, the volume reveals tensions within and regarding issues of separation of church and state, scientific culture, and secularisation. The volume also includes a brief conclusion to the seven-volume series, outlining questions for future research.

3 Formalities

We decided to present the sources in English, to allow for as large a readership as possible. Some of these sources had to be translated from the original languages – including Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Spanish, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and others. Other sources were already available in English. The translations, as well as the introductions, were written in either American or British English. In the texts that were translated, important terms were inserted in italics in the original language after the translation.

Every volume is organised in several sections, each of which begins with a systematic introduction to the sources that are collected in that section. How the sources themselves are presented in the chapter, whether in a temporal or systematic order, may vary from case to case, and will be explained in the respective volumes. In most cases, we do not present complete texts, but only the relevant excerpts. Omissions are indicated by [. . .]. We also document the page breaks in the original versions of the texts, in order to help readers identify relevant passages; these are indicated by e.g. [p. 34/35].

An introduction to each text provides contextualising information on the author's life and work, and explains the text's relation to secularity.

Last, but not least: It seemed clear to us that such an endeavour – driven by the motive of making sources on secularity from various regions, times, and languages available to a worldwide audience of scholars and others – should be published openly, alongside a printed edition. Unfortunately, some publishing houses, remarkably most of them university presses, were not willing to release the rights for the texts that we had chosen for the open access publication, or had prohibitive regulations and conditions.

Therefore, in these cases, we decided to include only a longer quote from the text in the introductions. We very much regret this situation, but in some cases no other solution was possible.

Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin
Leipzig and Berlin, March 2024

Thanks

The work on these seven volumes was extensive, and they could only be realised with the support of many of our fellows and other colleagues worldwide, who helped in identifying the sources, translated texts, and wrote introductions to the sources. Without their help, this series would never have been possible. It is testimony to the entire *Multiple Secularities* project, and the academic community it has created, that such a project could be carried out and completed.

But identifying texts, selecting passages, translating them, and writing introductions was only half of what needed to be accomplished. Without Foteine König, our editorial assistant, this complex endeavour would have dragged on even longer, if not collapsed entirely. Foteine has worked tirelessly to contact all the publishers and acquire the rights, and has also managed to prevent us from extending our deadlines too much. We were also fortunate to have Sophia Marie Schnoor step in for the final stretch, to get the project to the finish line. Hannah von Franz and Nelly Giesecke undertook the tremendous effort of organising the actual manuscript, and Hannah kept an overview of everything when we had lost it ourselves.

English is not the mother tongue of many contributors to this volume, ourselves included. We are very grateful to our language editors, Chris and Thandi Allen of Evident Language, for their transformation of our introductions and translations into a version of English that would also suit native speakers. Last, but not least, Lilith Poßner, our technical editor, took care of the style of the manuscript, and cleared up many formal mistakes that we ourselves would have overlooked.

The DFG, the German Research Foundation, generously funded the Centre for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" for eight years, and also supported the open access costs of this publication. In this regard, we also owe gratitude to the Leipzig University Library, which decided to generously fund the publication of these seven volumes. We are happy that the work is now finished, and we are looking forward to the discussions that we hope it will stimulate.

Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Florian Zemmin, and Judith Zimmermann
Leipzig and Berlin, March 2024

Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Mapping the Academic Debate: Introduction to Volume 1

What this Volume is about

This first volume takes a fundamentally different approach from the other volumes of this series on *Global Secularity*. It does not collect *sources*, in the narrow sense of the word, *documenting* the actual drawing of boundaries between religion and other social spheres, or the negotiations over and contestations of those boundaries. Instead, it captures the *international academic debate* on secularity, and, in parts, on the closely related concepts of secularisation and secularism, where conceptual and institutional *distinctions* and *differentiations* of religion and the secular are addressed in one way or another. The volume brings together seminal texts within this debate, several of which have been translated into English for the first time. With this volume, we aim to show that the academic debate on secularity has, in fact, been a *global debate*, with contributions not only from the United States and Western Europe, but also from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Texts refer to other texts, affirmative or critical, and thereby create a debate. A text on Iran might use the example of 'Western' secularity to address problems with the Iranian concept of society under the guidance of Shiite jurists, whereas a text on China might claim that China has always been secular, independently of 'the West'. A text on Bulgaria might argue how inadequate the 'Western' model of secularisation is in capturing the developments in Eastern Europe, whereas texts on Muslim-majority countries and Islamic traditions differ significantly from each other in their interpretation of the adequacy of boundaries between state and religion. When speaking of *global secularity* with regard to this debate, we do not wish to insinuate that there is a 'world secularity' akin to the 'world polity' that has been claimed to result from the alleged global diffusion of 'Western' culture (see p. XVIII in the general introduction to the series). Instead, we point to a web of relations that is constituted through references of various kinds. Not surprisingly, these references are not evenly distributed among the various parties involved: the development in 'the West' is often the point of reference to which positions from other regions relate, with which they connect, or from which they distance themselves. But the relationships are not entirely one-sided either: We also present texts from Europe that claim entanglements from an early stage. In this way, we provide the reader with material for tracing various forms of exchange and reference.

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Criteria for Including Texts

When did the *academic debate on secularity* start? The answer to this question hinges on one's own conception of both 'secularity' and 'theory.' We have outlined our pragmatic distinction between sources and theoretical academic contributions in the general introduction to the series (see p. XVIII–XIX). Thus, let us here focus on the criterion of 'secularity.' It is evident that theoretical contributions on secularisation and on the fate of religion in modernity begin much earlier than the texts presented here. In order to capture this discourse, we would, in the European setting, have to begin at least with August Comte's notion of a developmental process leading from superstition to religion and, finally, to science; proceed with Emile Durkheim's *Division of Labour* and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, in which he predicted the eventual disappearance of all specific religions (while claiming the eternity of some kind of 'societal religion'); and finally include Max Weber's notion of disenchantment and rationalisation. Traces of these earlier works can, naturally, be found in many of the texts presented here.

There are several reasons behind our not starting that early. The first, and most obvious, is a matter of pragmatism – we cannot, of course, present everything that has ever been written. Secondly, these classical texts, as important as they are, are all already available in English translations, and can be easily accessed. These texts are important points of reference, but they have already been thoroughly dealt with in the academic debate,[I] and we need not reproduce this here. Thirdly, they do not make an immediate contribution to the debate on secularity from a *global* perspective, which we aim to depict in this volume. One could add that these classical texts address *secularisation* as a general process of societal development, sometimes seen as unavoidable, and often in the context of modernisation. Secularisation in the above sense, however, is not our primary focus. As has already been pointed out by José Casanova some years ago,[II] secularisation theory encompasses several interrelated aspects – religious decline, privatisation of religion, and functional differentiation – that, as he argues, need to be disentangled, in order to capture the variety of global developments. These various aspects must be analysed as they appear – separately or in combination – in different parts of the world. Our conceptual focus is primarily on one of these dimensions, namely the *differentiation* between religion and other social spheres; this is regarded as the most important aspect of secularisation theory by authors such as David Martin, Mark Chavez, and others. Even some of the most ardent American critics of secularisation theory have often left this dimension unquestioned. Others, like Talal Asad, Timothy Fitzgerald, or Russell T. McCutcheon, however, criticise the ideological underpinnings of the secular-religious *distinction* – or binary – more extensively. In doing so, however,

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I Christiane Frey, Uwe Hebekus and David Martyn, eds., *Säkularisierung: Grundlagentexte zur Theoriegeschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2020).

II José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

they nonetheless strongly acknowledge the significance and centrality of the *idea* of such a distinction, to the global academic debate and beyond. It is the debate on these *distinctions* and *differentiations* that we are attempting to capture in this volume.

Relevant sources indicating boundaries between societal spheres have existed since long before the formulation of the concept of 'secularity,' such that the historical depth of other volumes in this series is much greater; the global academic debate highlighted in this volume has evolved primarily since the 1960s. We present one earlier example from the 1930s (Becker 1932, text no. 1), which is close to the 'classics' of the turn of the century, but does also explicitly address an alleged *global* diffusion of secularisation.

Our main interest is to not only analytically grasp the main strands of the debate, but also to reveal its globality. In selecting the texts, we aimed to strike a balance between, on the one hand, seminal contributions that shaped the debate and came to serve as central reference points, and, on the other, original – if perhaps less well-known – sources from different contexts, which demonstrate the debate's global scope and connectedness, as well as its diversity. To this end, we have reprinted a number of popular and easily accessible English publications, as well as included original translations from a range of other languages – namely Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, German, Persian, and Indonesian.

Structure of the Volume

We have organised this volume into four sections, in order to highlight different aspects of the debate, although these are by no means mutually exclusive: epistemic structures (Section 1: Concepts, Taxonomies, and Epistemologies) are sustained or disturbed by historical trajectories (Section 2: Contingencies, Trajectories, and Entanglements) and contain a political dimension (Section 3: Power, Ideology, and the State). The integral connection between these three aspects is also evident in predictions about the future fate of the secular (Section 4: Prognosis and Projection). Some of the texts relate to the themes of more than one section. Where this was the case, we allocated the texts to the section to whose focus they speak most directly. As a result, we hope to emphasise different strands of the debate, as well as the evolution of positions through exchange with related contributions. In order to highlight the formation and evolution of particular positions, we have arranged the texts within each section chronologically. A welcomed side effect of this chronological order is that readers may recognise certain arguments at an earlier moment in time than originally expected. Equally unexpected, or at least less familiar, might be the different regional, cultural, and religious contexts in which individual contributions have been formulated. They nevertheless speak to common issues in a global debate. We therefore accentuate regional variation in the introductions to the individual texts, but do not make it the overarching structural principle of this volume or its four sections. The introductions to each section set out the constitutive issues being addressed, locate the section within the wider academic

debate, and briefly mention the main contribution of each text within that section. In both the section introductions and the introductions to the individual texts, we have also inserted cross references “(see text no. nn)” to further hint at connections between arguments and positions that may cut across the systematic subdivision of the sections, or the chronological order within them.

1 Concepts, Taxonomies, and Epistemologies – Between Particularism and Universalism

Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Introduction

This first section brings together voices from various disciplines and regions that most directly address the question of whether 'secularity,' as a binary taxonomy classifying things as either 'religious' or 'secular,' can be a meaningful concept outside the 'modern West.' The main issue here is therefore the transcultural applicability of concepts, and the universal validity of the epistemologies behind them. Now that the universalism that was long tacitly assumed in the social sciences, humanities, and cultural studies at 'Western' universities has been consistently historicised and subjected to critique, there is an urgent need to address the question of the appropriateness and relevance of classifying social phenomena as either 'religious' or 'secular.' The various approaches of the authors included in this section can be placed on a spectrum between the poles of universalism and particularism. Notably, differences in this regard are not defined by the authors' cultural backgrounds, though the contributions often do reflect the political sensitivity of each position.

Historical sources and recourse to premodern emic concepts and taxonomies can and have become the basis of politically relevant theorisation, for example regarding the question of whether a secular state is even conceivable in the Islamic world. The answer to this question depends, in part, on whether such a state can derive its legitimacy from indigenous resources, or whether it is always to be interpreted as a remnant of colonial coercion. Those inclined to take the latter position may see secularity as a medium of epistemic violence. Finding analogous figures of distinction and corresponding institutional differentiations in Islamic history may, for others, be a way of disentangling the 'secular' from the 'Western,' of emancipating themselves from religious repression, and of finding their own paths to democracy that cannot simply be denounced as a copy of 'Western' models.

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One question raised in connection to this (and not only regarding Islamic contexts) is whether secularity, as a regulatory principle of modern statehood, is able to fulfil its promises. If we assume that modern secularism is a political programme seeking to institutionalise a form of secularity that was originally established in Europe primarily to avoid religious conflicts – a premise that some critics already question – one may query whether this purpose has been achieved. And even if secularity may indeed work to avoid or mitigate religious conflicts in Europe, with its highly institutionalised mainline churches, it is by no means certain whether this also applies to more religiously diverse and fluid contexts, such as India or sub-Saharan Africa.

Questions about concepts, taxonomies, and epistemologies, which initially appear abstract and purely academic, always have a decidedly political dimension, too. General categories, such as 'religion' or 'secularity,' are used to grant rights and privileges, to include and exclude, to enable and restrict. They are a resource for all kinds of legitimation and delegitimation, and are thus far from innocent figures in an inconsequential game of semantics.

The question of whether 'secularity,' as a binary taxonomy, corresponds meaningfully to the social conditions of 'non-Western' societies and their epistemologies is by no means merely theoretical, but also political, and arguments are sustained with historical trajectories. The contributions to this section thus also touch on issues that will be focused on more in subsequent sections. While acknowledging these connections, we selected the contributions in this section because they most directly address questions of universalism and particularism. In this regard, they illustrate major topoi and positions for different regional contexts and intellectual traditions.

An – explicitly or implicitly – ever-present point of contention in this discussion on universalism and particularism stems from the classical theories of modernisation put forward by European and American intellectuals, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. In such procedural, often teleological accounts, modernisation – encompassing secularisation – is presented as an inevitable global process, suggesting a straightforward universal applicability of a certain conceptual framework, its taxonomy and underlying epistemology. *The Soviet Model of Secularisation* – as presented by Dmitry Uzlaner (text no. 13), and advocated by R. A. Lopatkin (text no. 54 in section 3) – with its premise that secularisation is a universal, "historical irreversible process" that "must end in the complete disappearance of religion," as the former puts it, is an especially rigid and hermetic example of this intellectual tradition. A modernisation-theoretical approach is also presented in the earliest text in this volume, one by American sociologist Howard Becker from 1932 (text no. 1). He presents a schematic, ideal-typical juxtaposition between the "isolated sacred" versus the "accessible secular" society. Fellow sociologist Peter Berger adopted a similar approach in his seminal *Sacred Canopy* 35 years later (text no. 3). His text, however, also alludes to a – sometimes hidden – particularist twist to many universalist stories of secularisation, ultimately attributing its emergence to the specific history of Christianity, all the way back to the Old Testament. Theologian J. C. Hoekendijk (text no. 2), on the other hand, conceptualises modernity as

a global phenomenon uncoupled from its specific origins; as early as 1961, he explicitly mentioned the possibility of independently emerging "autochthonous parallels" of secularism in Asia and Africa. Although Hoekendijk acknowledges parallel developments that can be understood as forms of secularity, he ultimately stays within the modernisation-theoretical framework, maintaining and emphasising a narrow connection between modernisation and a full-fledged secularism. In their many variants, these topoi and their political consequences – universalist accounts of modernisation as secularisation, and particularist attributions of Western or Christian origins to modernity and secularity – continue to inform the debate on *global secularity*. They are used by contemporary authors as both normative resources supporting their analyses, or as critical demarcation points from which they seek to distance themselves.

Islam is a renowned case in which the applicability of secularity is often outrightly denied. Rather than assessing and explaining differences through the analysis of historical trajectories that are always contingent, such outright denial tends to essentialise a transhistorical understanding of Islam, juxtaposing it with secularity or secularisation. In 1978, Malaysian philosopher Syed Muhammed Naquib al-Attas was one of the first to provide a precise terminology for this juxtaposition (text no. 5). To him, secularisation, as the differentiation of spheres of knowledge, is not merely a historical process, but an ideology, "secularizationism," which is outrightly rejected by Islam. Aziz al-Azmeh (text no. 20) takes issue with such an ideological understanding of secularisation. To him, secularisation is an objective process of structural differentiation. Al-Azmeh first prominently suggested this conception in an Arabic publication from 1992, tellingly entitled *Secularism from Another Perspective*. Our volume includes an excerpt from the preface to the 2020 English translation of this book, in which Al-Azmeh also directly and critically engages with the concept of *multiple secularities* (Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr, text no. 21, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, text no. 42 in section 2), which he faults for relativising what he regards as a global, universal process of secularisation.

To the British scholar and political activist Azzam Tamimi (text no. 8), Islam is the one exception to the thesis of secularisation as a continuous decline of religion in modern societies. Secularism, according to Tamimi, arose as a specific need in Christian societies that had to emancipate themselves from the theocratic establishment. In Muslim societies, secularism entered the scene through colonial force, without responding to actual societal needs. While Tamimi points to divergent historical trajectories, he eventually attributes the need for secularism or its absence to the natures of Christianity and Islam respectively, and extends this argument to the present day, questioning the need for the separation of religion and state in Muslim-majority societies.

For his part, the Lebanese historian Wajih Kawtharani (text no. 9) takes issue with the common view that religion and politics are not distinct within Islam, as they are in Christianity. He instead points to commonalities in the history of Muslim and Christian societies, and argues that, in the present, secularism is a necessary political arrangement in both contexts. Reinhard Schulze (text no. 12), professor emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) at Bern University, looks into the historical

formation of the understanding of Islam as a political religion. He shows how this categorisation solidified in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and was shared by European theologians and historians, as well as by Ottoman and Arab intellectuals. Florian Zemmin (text no. 19), professor of *Islamwissenschaft* at Freie Universität Berlin, discusses how the relationship between religion and society was conceptualised in modern Islamic reformism. Whilst this intellectual trend would come to largely share the understanding of Islam as also addressing the sphere of politics, Zemmin argues that the connection between religion and politics is envisioned here on the basis of a previous distinction between both spheres. In conceptualising this distinction-yet-connection, 'Islam' serves as a guiding idea and as such functions as an alternative equivalent to 'secularity.'

Especially with regard to African epistemologies, scholars have often questioned whether the distinction between immanence and transcendence – presumed to be a specific feature of axial cultures, and the basis of the distinction between the religious and the secular – makes any sense at all. Engelke (text no. 15), for instance, argues that Africa is neither religious nor secular but "mundane," and p'Bitek (text no. 4) vehemently criticises the Christian and 'Western' imposition of 'religion' on African societies – that is, the "religionisation of Africa," contending that it obstructs decolonisation.

The fact that European colonial powers rejected the notion that traditional African practices and beliefs had a religious character adds yet another facet to the problem. Against this background, the introduction of religion by missionaries can be seen as epistemic violence, a means of colonisation, and of alienation of the indigenous from their own culture. Viewed from this perspective, the encroachment of the 'West' was less the demand for secularity as a regulatory principle, and more the introduction of religion. Markus Dreßler (text no. 17) takes a closer look at such – often state-driven – processes of "religionisation" and "religion-making" in an effort to bridge the gap between the epistemological critique of secularism and differentiation-theoretical approaches to secularity. In any case, drawing boundaries between a religious and a secular sphere has consequences far beyond mere conceptual classification.

But matters are even more complicated still. Whereas scholars and other actors both from the Global North and from Africa may criticise the application of the category of 'religion' – which creates the conceptual binary of secularity, and opens up space for secularism as a related political programme – as inappropriate, others, like Ellis and ter Haar (text no. 11), insist on Africa being deeply religious. No doubt, the introduction of Christianity (and Islam) has been extremely successful, such that, in the eyes of many Africans, religion is (or has become) an integral, indispensable part of African culture. From this point of view, the legitimate existence of a secular sphere, allegedly alien to African culture, is often contested from different angles. In other words, it is suggested that you can have religion without the secular. This may also have something to do with the fact that, in sub-Saharan Africa, religion is primarily associated with 'progress' and 'rational modernity' – concepts associated with the secular in the Global North – and not with a 'premodern irrationality' that impedes progress.

The situation is quite different in East Asia, for example, where religion is regarded by many as backward-oriented and outdated. And yet, even with regard to the highly secularised nations of China and Japan, scholars have repeatedly questioned whether the dichotomy between the religious and the secular had a counterpart in premodern emic concepts and taxonomies. The contributions gathered in this volume show how much opinions on this subject differ. While some regard secularity merely as a 'Western' imposition without any forerunners in East Asia prior to the nineteenth century (e.g. Fitzgerald, text no. 10; Isomae, text no. 45 in section 2; and Horii, text no. 22), others insist that, at least in premodern Japan, similar distinctions had been made, and that the respective emic taxonomies were available as conceptual resources in the formation of a modern nation-state (e.g. Reader, text no. 31 in section 2; Kleine, text no. 50 in section 2; Kleine & Wohlrab-Sahr, text no. 21). Many Japanese scholars, such as Ikado (text no. 7), Tamaru (text no. 6), and Hayashi (text no. 63 in section 3), seem to be more concerned with secularisation or laicisation as a historical process, and with their respective theories, than with the special-purpose taxonomy of secularity as such. However, inasmuch as secularisation as a process implies a distinction between the religious and the secular, questions of the transcultural applicability of the secularisation paradigm always touch on the problem of local forms of secularity. Despite all the differences in detail, there is an observable tendency to recognise the historicity and contingency of 'Western' categories and models of development, without rejecting them as tools of analysis altogether. Rather, scholars suggest looking at the specificities of the Japanese trajectory, organisational forms of religions in Japan (Tamaru, text no. 6), and the role of the state in the process of secularisation or laicisation (Hayashi, text no. 63 in section 3), then modifying and refining theories of secularisation accordingly (Shimazono, text no. 39 in section 2). In the same vein, Chinese sociologists of religion have proposed breaking free from the current structural functionalist paradigm, without falling into self-Orientalism. Li Xiangping (text no. 18), for example, advocates for a dynamic understanding of how communal religion interacts with societal power, instead of contrasting institutionalised religions with the secular. With this, he argues, Chinese academia should develop its own theory of religion, moving beyond either uncritical acceptance or apologetic rejection of 'Western' theories.

As some contributions demonstrate, however, it is not only the application of secularity to 'non-Western' societies that has been challenged. The assumption that in Europe, since the nineteenth century at the latest, everything has been neatly categorised in the binary scheme of secularity is also subjected to critical revision. Josephson Storm (text no. 16), for example, posits a trinary formation that challenges the conventional binary juxtaposition of the religious and the secular. In this triad, "superstition" is opposed to secularism, and both are opposed to religion. "Superstition" is distinct from both secular state truths and religious notions deserving of tolerance. Likewise, Balagangadhara (text no. 14) argues that the original formation, stemming from a Christian context, was a triad. This triad emerged from distinguishing 'true religion' from 'false religions,' leading to the concept of the secular as a neutral space, detached from

conflicts over religious truth. Building on this premise, he strongly opposes the adoption of secularism in countries such as India, because the distinction between religion and the secular inherently implies a division between good and false religions, it therefore inadvertently fosters conflicts between different religions, and may lead to religious violence, rather than preventing it. The latter has been a strongly advocated standpoint in Indian debates since at least the 1980s, as well as in some strands of current postcolonial scholarship, which will be presented in sections two and three of this sourcebook.

1 Howard P. Becker: *Processes of Secularisation* (1932)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Howard Paul Becker (1899–1960) was an American sociologist, and the 50th president of the American Sociological Association. Despite not being able to complete his high school education due to family circumstances, Becker earned a BA and an MA from Northwestern University in 1925/26. He visited Germany during the 1920s, where he studied under Leopold von Wiese and Max Scheler. In 1930, he received his PhD from the University of Chicago. From 1937 onwards, he held a professorship in the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. After the Second World War, Becker worked for the Secret Intelligence Service in the American occupation zone in Germany, as head of the higher education department in the state of Hesse, and as a commissioner for several German universities. He served as a lecturer at Harvard University, and taught at Stanford, Columbia, University of Marburg, University of Cologne, and the University of Birmingham, UK.[I]

Howard P. Becker worked extensively on sociological theory, sociology of knowledge, the family, youth, and religion. He conducted various studies and field research among the rural population in different parts of Europe. As we will see in one of his earlier texts, documented here, "sacred-secular theory served as a vehicle for his substantive interests in values, in the normative aspects of behavior, and in the processes of social change" throughout his work.[II] Becker's first book, published in 1932, was an augmented transposition of Leopold von Wiese's *Systematic Sociology, Social Thought from Lore to Science* was first published in 1938, *Contemporary Social Theory* in 1940, *German Youth: Bond or Free* in 1946 – to mention just a few of his numerous and significant works.[III]

I For biographical information on Howard P. Becker cf.: Harry Elmer Barnes and Frank E. Hartung, "In Memoriam: Howard Paul Becker: 1899–1960," *American Journal of Sociology* 66, no. 3 (1960): 289–90, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2773055; Hans H. Gerth, "Howard Becker 1899–1960," *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 5 (1960): 743–44, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2090149?seq=9; Munzinger Online/Personen – Internationales Biographisches Archiv, "Becker, Howard," accessed 26 June, 2024, http://www.munzinger.de/document/00000001895 [Internationales Biographisches Archiv 20/1956]; Website of the American Sociological Association, "Howard Paul Becker," accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.asanet.org/howard-p-becker/?hilite=howard+becker.

II Barnes and Hartung, "In Memoriam," 290.

III Howard Becker, *Systematic Sociology. On the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre of Leopold von Wiese* (New York: Wiley / Chapman & Hall, 1932); Harry Elmer Barnes and Howard Becker,

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The excerpt from his early article on *Processes of Secularisation* (1932) that we present here is relevant to the discussion of theoretical accounts relating to secularity in several respects. Becker constructs the ideal types of the isolated sacred society and the accessible secular society, to then define a continuum between them, for use in the analysis of contemporary and historical societies. The sub-processes he attributes to secularisation can be described as social differentiation, individuation, rationalisation, scientification, and increasing (social) mobility – to mention the most relevant. His ideal type of the secular society is largely congruent with notions of modern society in classical modernisation theory (see Hoekendijk, text no. 2, Berger, text no. 3, Uzlaner, text no. 13, Lopatkin, text no. 54); accordingly, we find eminent early social theorists of modernity like Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ferdinand Tönnies and others among his central references. Although he *does* account for the importance of cultural contact via "population movement" in these processes, and presents a typology of its different modes – both forced and voluntary – and therefore slightly complicates an all too linear view of *secularisation as modernisation*, Becker's conceptualisation of the sacred-secular continuum is explicitly and implicitly teleological, and largely resembles the relationship between periphery and centre from the perspective of the centre and therefore serves as an example for an early take on *global secularity* from the perspective of classical modernisation theory (see also Al-Azmeh, text no. 20, Stolz, text no. 35).

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[...]

Part 1

The term "secularisation" has been used by a large number of writers, among them Tönnies, Durkheim, Malinowski, and Shotwell. Little or no space, however, has been devoted to an exact analysis, upon an ideal-typical or even upon a conceptual basis, of the processes involved. Further, the denotations and connotations of the term vary widely from writer to writer; in many instances, moreover, its use by the same writer is far from consistent. A comprehensive philosophy of history akin to Max Weber's *Entzauberung der Welt* may be connoted, or on the other hand nothing more may be meant than a decline in the importance of organised religion as a means of social control.

Secularisation is really an extremely inclusive term comprising a number of overlapping social processes – individuation, mental mobilisation, social and personal disorganisation and reorganisation, etc. In order to study these processes in their total setting of secularisation, and in order to take account of the far-reaching implications of the latter concept, it is necessary to know the methodological *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the continuum determining the selection of what we are to call processes of secularisation.

1

These methodological termini we shall call the isolated sacred society and the accessible secular society, two phrases that denote two idealtypical social organisations. A good *empirical* example of the first would be the marriage group, or large kinship group, characteristic of rural India; of the second, certain aspects of metropolitan New York. [p. 138/139]

We are interested in the empirical, however, only as an approximation of the ideal-typical; the nature of the latter must therefore be made clear. The term "ideal type" derives from Max Weber, who so designated various personality types and types of social process and grouping which are never found in an unmixed or "pure" form, but which for purposes of conceptual clarity and systematisation are spoken of *as if* they so existed.

[. . .]

What has this to do with the continuum determining the selection of what we are to call secularising processes? To begin with, the construction, *on the firm basis of previous culture case study*,[1] of an ideal type wherein the phenomena denoted by the problem are

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1 [note 2 in the original] The writer has already made such studies. Two are incorporated in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Ionis and Athens: Studies in Secularisation," and several others have appeared in SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH, KÖLNER VIERTELJAHRSHEFTE FÜR SOZIOLOGIE, etc. In order to appreciate to the full the implications of the method, cf. Wiese-Becker, SYSTEMATIC SOCIOLOGY, using index for such terms as culture case study, mental mobility, stranger, history, etc.

at a *minimum* would yield a heuristic fiction that would establish the necessary conceptual limit in one direction. One point thus fixed by this marginal ideal type, it would then be necessary only to construct [p. 139/140] another, *also on the firm basis of previous culture case study,* in which the phenomena denoted by the problem are at a *maximum,* and two points of reference would be established. As the logicians say, these *Grenztypen* or marginal types would then give the determining orientation to the formulation of the results attained by empirical study, for inasmuch as the ideal types are relative each to the other and have meaning only as the extremes of an infinitely divisible continuum along which empirical cases can be ranged, the minutest variation toward either extreme would be significant.

Description or construction of the isolated sacred society *as an ideal type* is now in order. Isolation is a characteristic affording as good a point of departure as any, and so with it we begin.

2

The isolated sacred society is isolated in three ways: vicinally,[2] socially, and mentally. [. . . p. 140/141. . .] As an ideal type the isolated sacred society has all three kinds of isolation to the *n*th degree.

In addition to being isolated this society is completely sacred (in the special sense here given the latter term). No comparison, classification, analysis, and abstraction, habitual or otherwise, is practised; everything is unique, concrete, and personal, for all contacts are primary. [. . .] Tradition and ceremonial play a large part in the life of the society, and every situation is defined in customary and sacred terms [. . .]. The folkways and mores rule; there is a minimum of rationalistic criticism, and of individuation a similar minimum. [. . .] This dominance of sacred sanctions is facilitated by the fact that the isolated sacred society is economically self-sufficient; there is no foreign trade nor any other opportunity for the intrusion of pecuniary valuation and the development of detached economic attitudes. Inasmuch as there is no trade, the division of labour is simple, and there is no town, urban, or metropolitan economy; further, no strangers, with their detached, critical attitudes leading to disregard of or contempt for sacred matters, are tolerated. What is sacred is kept sacred; isolation has a powerful ally in the emotional resistance to change it engenders. The form of the kinship group is that of the large family, the *Grossfamilie,* the *genos,* and is completely under the control of sacred sanctions. Production and consumption are exclusively community matters,

2 [note 3 in the original] This term derives from Ratzel's *Lage*, which was translated by Semple as "vicinal location." Cf. the following: "A people has. . .a twofold location, an immediate one, based upon their actual territory, and a mediate or vicinal one, growing out of its relations to the countries nearest them. The first is a question of the land under their feet; the other of the neighbours about them." (E.C. Semple, INFLUENCES OF GEOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENT [New York: Henry Holt, 1911] p. 132.) [. . .]

and as such are similarly controlled. Property is largely subject to collective and sacred considerations.

[. . . p. 141/142 . . .]

Irrationalism and supernaturalism, whether traditionally religious in derivation or otherwise, are completely dominant; rationalism and scepticism are only potentially present. Rational science is unknown.

Here, then, is one of our ideal types – the isolated sacred society.

3

The accessible secular society, its methodological antithesis, is accessible in three ways (all of them secondary): vicinally, socially, and mentally. [. . .] The social accessibility of this secular society is the result of the complete absence of occupational, professional, class, caste, racial, religious, or moral barriers; there is nothing whatever to hinder social circulation. Competition is consequently unrestricted, for there are no non-competing groups, and the free movement made possible by vicinal accessibility facilitates the spatial allocation of the members of such a society in strict accordance with their economic status. [. . .] The mental accessibility of this society is the result of common basic education, complete literacy and lack of language barriers, popularised science and scholarship, a press or similar agency that distributes uniform news to all, &c., &c., [sic] As an ideal type the accessible secular society has all of these characteristics to the *n*th degree. [p. 142/143]

In addition to its accessibility this society is completely secular (in the special sense here given the latter term). Every relationship is treated as a means to an elusive end, "happiness" as consciously defined in terms of the strictly egoistic wishes of the individual, and never as an end in itself. Comparison, analysis, classification and abstraction are habitually practised; the unique, concrete, and personal are completely set aside. [. . .] Tradition and ceremonial play no part in the life of such a society, and every situation is defined in rationalistic and secular terms. The readily perceivable folkways and mores give ground to rational constructs; there is a maximum of rationalistic criticism, and of individuation a similar maximum. [. . .] This dominance of secular standards is reinforced by reason of the fact that the accessible secular society is highly differentiated economically; it has a complex metropolitan economy, with a territorial as well as an occupational division of labour. Trade is carried on with all parts of the world; there are no political barriers, such as protective tariffs or immigration restrictions, of any kind. The stranger is free to come and go as he will; inasmuch as everyone is more or less a stranger, cosmopolitanism acquires prestige value and becomes a further aid to the detachment characteristic of the stranger. [. . .] The kinship group is reduced to the particularistic family, and all the production and almost if not all the consumption functions of the latter are taken over by the metropolitan economy. [. . .] Formal, secular, rational, legal contracts are the rule; even the marriage relationship is cast in the form

of a secular contract between two individuals – a contract in which the kinship bond plays no conditioning part. [. . . p. 143/144. . .] Irrationalism and supernaturalism of *traditionally* religious derivation are not found; rationalism and naturalism have prestige value, and all irrationalism and supernaturalism must seem to be their opposite, *i.e.*, “scientific.” Genuine science has great power and wide range.

Here, then, is the second of our ideal types – the accessible secular society.

4

Let it again be emphasised that both the isolated sacred society and the accessible secular society are nowhere existent as empirical cases; they are conscious fictions, heuristic concepts, artificial abstractions, arbitrary constructs – in short, ideal types that are never found on land or sea.

[. . .]

Further, the ideal types by means of which the transition is analysed are by no means altogether new; they show points of resemblance to Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*; to Durkheim’s *solidarité mécanique* and *solidarité organique*; to the contrasting types of social organisation pervading Simmel’s *Über soziale Differenzierung* as well [p. 144/145] as his *Philosophie des Geldes*; to the classical division into Golden and Iron Ages; to Vinogradoff’s kinship society and political society; to Cooley’s primary and secondary groups; to Ross’s community and society; to Redfield’s folk culture and urban culture; to the differing types of social structure depicted by such social organism theorists as Müller, List, Carey, and Spann on the one hand, and such social contract theorists as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau on the other; to Maine’s “status” and “contract”; to the antithetical social processes, *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung,* discussed by Max Weber; to Sorokin’s empirical dichotomy into farmer-peasant and city types; and most of all to the concepts underlying the analyses of rural and urban life made by Park, Faris, Burgess, Thomas, Znaniecki and others influenced by them. It goes without saying that the content given to this wide range of words and phrases varies somewhat from writer to writer, but as Park has well said, “while these terms may not refer to exactly the same thing, I think the differences are not important. What is important is that these different men, looking at the phenomena from quite different points of view, have all fallen upon the same distinction. That indicates at least that the distinction is a fundamental one.”[3]

[. . .]

3 [note 6 in the original] R.E. Park, letter to the writer.

5

Some qualifications must now be introduced. The first relates to the scope of the generalisations to be derived from the use of such ideal types. It may be said unequivocally that the processes of transition, [p. 145/146] of secularisation, by means of which the isolated sacred society is transformed into the accessible secular society, should be spoken of only in the most general of terms. At the present stage of our knowledge this extreme generality is unavoidable, for we certainly do not know enough to lay down iron-clad formulæ. The most that should be done is to indicate in broad outline the stages in the processes of secularisation that have been evident in cases previously investigated, without any assertion that they will necessarily appear in those to be studied in the future, and without any attempt to force the latter into them. [. . .]

Again, a qualification is introduced by the fact that there is no particular reason why population movement should be considered in connection with secularisation except that such movement has been and is one of the chief ways in which human beings get genuinely new experience. Any other mode of acquiring new experience could have been included in the present context with almost equal justification; one might well ask the relation of the newspaper, the talking picture, the radio, books – in short, *communication* in general – to the same phenomena of transition.

[. . . p. 146–148]

6

They [the varieties of population movement] may be divided into two large groups: (1) those which if measured would probably show no significant correlation with personality change or with social change; and (2) those which probably would show such a correlation.

[. . .]

The second group of movements to be considered, viz., those which would probably show a significant correlation of movement with personality change and with social change, comprises: (*a*) inclusive [p. 148/149] conquest (*e.g.,* the Germanic migrations, the First and Second Crusades, the frontier settlement of Ionia); (*b*) exclusive and inclusive colonisation (*e.g.,* the Greek colonising movements); (*c*) dispersion, or movements of small plurality patterns and monads, in the form of immigration, flight, travel (e.g., the journeys of Ionian traders, philosophers, and historians, the peregrinations of the scholars of the Renaissance, the flocking of certain rural and "rurban" persons to modern urban centres).

[. . .]

Exclusive and inclusive colonisation are instances of the latter; whether the colonists intermarry with the natives or not, there is usually a moderately high correlation of such movement with personality change and with social change, because of the predominance of such positive indices as: an increased degree of vicinal accessibility, especially for the mother city or country; the frontier or middleman position of the earlier colonists; the development of a territorial division of labour; contact with peoples having different folkways and mores; the detachment with which the colonists eventually come to regard the institutions of the mother city or country; the consequent tendency toward rationalism, etc. The trend toward the accessible secular society is well under way.

The last variety of movement, dispersion, is from the present point of view the most important of all; culture case studies made by the writer have demonstrated, in his opinion, that *lasting* transition toward the accessible secular society is more likely to follow from the movements of small plurality patterns (groups) and monads (individuals) than from any of the varieties above mentioned. [. . . p. 149/150. . .] Inasmuch as dispersion is so omnipresent and important a type of movement, a mere listing of indices is hardly sufficient; further, more extended treatment is warranted in view of the fact that it exhibits a definite relation to processes of secularisation more clearly than does any other variety of population movement.

7

In order to deal properly with dispersion, it is necessary to add two ideal-typical corollaries to the main propositions of the accessible secular society and the isolated sacred society; these corollaries are those of the secular and the sacred stranger. The part played by one of the products of dispersion, viz., the stranger, the man habituated to abstraction, has already been dwelt upon by such writers as Simmel and Park; he may be heuristically conceived as the microcosm or epitome of the accessible secular society and may, in this ideal-typical capacity, be termed *the secular stranger.* Conversely, there is another product of dispersion, another type of stranger who has not yet been so termed, the man habituated to nothing but the concrete and personal; he may be heuristically conceived as the microcosm or epitome of the isolated sacred society, and may, in this ideal-typical capacity be termed *the sacred stranger.*

[. . . p. 150–153. . .]

8

To begin with, modern dispersion is most often associated with movement from isolated sacred societies to centres of metropolitan economy affording our best empirical instances of accessible secular societies, *i.e.*, modern dispersion is chiefly the dispersion

of sacred strangers. It is also true, however, that in earlier periods, when transportation and communication were not so highly developed, this was not generally the case – indeed, the trend was in the reverse direction [. . .]. [. . .] Dispersion, especially from isolated sacred societies to accessible secular societies, was not the *predominant* form of movement in earlier periods – that much at least is certain. Only in comparatively recent times, perhaps only since the Industrial Revolution, has the sacred stranger appeared in large numbers in the centres of metropolitan economy.

By and large, then, it may be said that secular-to-sacred dispersion, although still of considerable importance, is nevertheless of greater historical than contemporary significance. Sacred-to-secular dispersion, on the other hand, is of greater contemporary than historical significance, especially if the meaning of "contemporary" is extended to include the period from the nineteenth century to the present. [p. 153/154. . .] In view of these facts, sacred-to-secular dispersion will be focussed upon in the balance of this article; unless otherwise stated, the term dispersion will mean the sacred-to-secular movement of monads or small plurality patterns.

By thus concentrating upon one particular contemporary type of movement, an important type which has a high positive correlation with personality change and with social change, an analysis will result that comes as close as now seems possible to providing a satisfactory answer to the question: "What is secularisation?" Why? Because the processes correlated with sacred-to-secular dispersion follow the same sequence in bringing about change in the dispersing persons as that followed by those same processes in bringing about the transition from the isolated sacred society to the accessible secular society! In other words, the relation of population movement to personality change and to social change, which cannot be expressed at all in terms of spatial movement *per se,* is expressed in the most general form possible when the effect of dispersion from the isolated sacred community to the accessible secular society is expressed in terms of the *processes* involved. Further, such an analysis of the effects of dispersion upon the person has certain historical or genetic implications: the isolated sacred community is temporarily prior to the accessible secular society, and dispersion affords a recapitulative analogy of the general process whereby isolation is broken down and sacred inhibitions are destroyed. As Tönnies says, "*ein Zeitalter der Gesellschaft folgt einem Zeitalter der Gemeinschaft;*"[4] dispersion shows us an analogous sequence in the life of the sacred stranger. The process whereby he becomes mentally mobile and individuated is in a sense but another aspect of that whereby the isolated sacred community becomes accessible and secular. They are obverse and reverse; one should not be considered without the other.

4 [note 11 in the original] Tönnies, *op.cit*., p. 247. [This reference refers to omitted note 6 in the original: "F. Tönnies, GEMEINSCHAFT UND GESELLSCHAFT (6th and 7th ed. ; Berlin : Cuitiua, 1916) (1st ed., 1887) pp. 233–34."]

And so it is that dispersion, a type of population movement having as much if not more contemporary relevance than any other, is also better adapted than any other to provide as general an answer as can or should be given to the question: "What is secularisation?" – an answer in terms of process.

(To be concluded.)[I]

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2 Johannes C. Hoekendijk: *Secularism* (1961)

Translated and introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk (1912–1975) was a Dutch theologian and missiologist, born and raised in a Dutch missionary household in Garut, Indonesia, then termed the Dutch East Indies. His family returned to the Netherlands in 1925. Hoekendijk was involved in the Dutch resistance during the Second World War, and, as a result, had to flee to Geneva. After the war, he eventually studied theology at Utrecht University, in order to become a missionary. His dissertation on church and *Volk* in German missiology is a critical analysis of the "ethnopathos" therein, which aimed to transform the concept of *Volk* into a pseudotheological category.[I] Hoekendijk served as secretary of the Department of Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (1949–1953), before being appointed professor of practical theology (1953–1959) and later church history (1959–1965) at Utrecht University. For the last ten years of his life, he held the chair for World Christianity at Union Theological Seminary in New York.[II]

Hoekendijk was heavily engaged in ecumenical discussion of mission, and is considered to have been an influential figure in 'wordly theology' and the paradigm changes in missionary thinking that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. He is described as a controversial thinker and an intellectual loner. Most notable in the context of this sourcebook is his positive attitude towards the secular world, which he puts ahead of church as the space for the realization of God. His short handbook article on *Secularism*

I Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, "Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingswetenschap," Ph.D. Thesis (University of Utrecht, 1948).

II For biographical information on Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk cf. "Dr. Hoekendijk, 63, Missions Professor," *The New York Times*, 2 July 1975, 36, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/1975/07/02/archives/dr-hoekendijk-63-missions-professor.html; Bert Hoedemaker, "The Legacy of J. C. Hoekendijk," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 4 (1995): 166–70, https://doi.org/10.1177/239693939501900405; Libertus A. [Bert] Hoedemaker, "Hoekendijk, J(ohannes) C(hristiaan) („Hans")," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference, 1998), 297. Republished on History of Missiology, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/g-h/hoekendijk-johannes-christiaan-1912-1975/; Bert Hoedemaker, "Hoekendijk, Johannes Christiaan", in *Religion Past and Present Online*, 2011, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_09956; Bert Hoedemaker, "Hoekendijk's Journals," *Utrecht University Special Collections*, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.uu.nl/en/special-collections/collections/manuscripts/modern-manuscripts/hoekendijks-journals.

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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(with the subtitle *in Asia and Africa*), which is printed in English translation for the first time here, contains some surprisingly topical views in the language of his time and profession. In the first part, on the "Great Society," he conceptualises modernity as a global capitalist superstructure that emerged in the (Christian) 'West,' but that has become an autonomous phenomenon that develops and spreads independently of these (intellectual) roots.[III] In the second part, Hoekendijk explicitly looks for "autochthonous" historical parallels to Western secularism in Asian and African societies (see also Dumont, text no. 23, Madjid, text no. 24, Gungwu, text no. 30, Barghava, text no. 37, Kleine, text no. 50, Igwe, text no. 61, and others in this volume), thereby making this text – considering its publication in the early 1960s – an intriguing source regarding the academic debate on *global secularity*. Hoekendijk gives examples of pre-colonial agnosticism, atheism, or profanisation and hints at contemporary secular movements on both continents that make reference to pre-colonial times; he eventually concludes – with a strong Eurocentric undertone – that, despite these evident parallels, secularism in its comprehensive sense is a modern phenomenon (see also Becker, text no. 1, Al-Azmeh, text no. 20, Stolz, text no. 35, Asad, text no. 56, and others in this volume) that cannot be reconstructed before the nineteenth century in 'non-Western' parts of the world. In his reflections on the interrelationship between mission and secularism, he points to interesting historical configurations in which mission work actively facilitated secularism. This nexus was reversed following the First World War, when secularism was similarly – albeit with a different aim – attacked by both missionaries, and some elites within the colonised societies.

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III This conceptualisation speaks surprisingly directly to very recent conceptualisations of modernity in the context of the discussions around a *Global History of Religion* (or *Global Religious History*), see for example Adrian Hermann, who tries to reconcile Talal Asad's and Niklas Luhmann's approaches to global modernity. Adrian Hermann, "European History of Religion, Global History of Religion: On the Expansion of a Gladigowian Concept for the Study of Religion," in *Religion in Culture – Culture in Religion: Burkhard Gladigow's Contribution to Shifting Paradigms in the Study of Religion,* ed. Christoph Auffarth, Alexandra Grieser, and Anne Koch (Tübingen: Tübingen University Press), 237–68.

Translation by Johannes Duschka

II. In Asia and Africa

1. “Great Society”
2. Autochthonous Parallels of S[ecularism]?
3. S[ecularism] and Mission
4. Churches in Asia and Africa
   [. . .][I]

1. The world-historical situation in the second half of the 20th century is decisively characterised by, among other things, the universal establishment of the so-called *Great Society*: the global, industrialised society that has spread relentlessly across the globe from its Western European-American origin. “No long-distance migration (*Fernwanderung*), no world religion, no intellectual force, but rather the most external of external factors: a particular means of producing goods and organising work has conjured up a world-historical situation that is universal in the absolute sense” (Freyer).[II] In this new global civilisation, which has superimposed itself over primary cultures as a superstructure, technology, industry and natural science are functionally interrelated as interdependent preconditions (Gehlen). Every individual who wishes to operate in this domain must put up with a metamorphosis into a *homo technicus*. This implies a transformation not only of the content of consciousness, but also of its very structure, and, of course, a break with one’s cultural past – including the abandonment of religious traditions. One is called upon to participate in the “Great Society” as an existential positivist (*Daseinspositivist*). Technocratic civilisation, the “daughter of Christianity,” prepared and shaped in the tradition of the European Enlightenment, was initially a purely “Western” affair. It has since developed into an independent, autonomous phenomenon that can no longer be adequately explained in terms of its intellectual-historical origins. It would therefore be a mistake to continue to think of the spread of the industrial system in terms of West-East categories, or to view it as a strictly *European* cultural expansion. In the wake of this industrial system, a secularist society has been developing in Asia and Africa – i.e. a society in which private and public decisions are made without consideration for religious or metaphysical imperatives and sanctions.

2. In recent decades, there have been debates in some circles as to whether modern s[ecularism] has encountered *autochthonous parallels* in Asia [p. 1296/1297] and Africa. Reference is made, for example, to the Enlightenment tendencies present in several Asian cultures, and to the various ethical teachings (*Lebenslehren*) that dismissed or even fought against all metaphysics and religion as idle speculation. One could, for

I JD: All internal cross references to other articles of the *RGG* have been omitted in this translation.
II JD: Hans Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1955), 251.

example, recall agnostic currents in Indian spiritual life (Devanandan), or the atheism of various Hindu systems (Gensichen). In East Asia, a remarkable tendency towards profanisation should be pointed out, having shaped Chinese folkdom (*Volkstum*)[III] in its various forms to an exceptional degree (Rosenkranz) and having also had a particularly strong impact in Japan (Spiegelberg). The Indian theologian P. D. Devanandan has dared to construct an *Asian s[ecularism]*, the tenets of which he formulates as follows: a) life can be interpreted without taking into account values other than life itself; b) the key to this interpretation is the human being; c) salvation (i.e. well-being) consists in the fact that the human being, bound to life, frees himself from this bond (religio!). An *African s[ecularism]* could then be assumed in the new concept of *négritude*: a religion-free, total humanism distilled from supposedly ancient African heritage (e.g. International Congress of Negro Writers 1956[IV]). Even if such "parallels" can be traced within the realm of ideas, it should first be noted that s[ecularism] in its concise sense is a historically unique phenomenon. Autochthonous approaches may have foreshadowed Enlightenment and freethinking; but nothing really changes as long as the prevailing order of life is not challenged, and as long as one continues to act *within* it as a rebellious (reformist) conformist. S[ecularism] can only come about when the social structure is seen as an entity that can be transformed, and when the world is reified as malleable material – i.e. only in the "open" society of a technicised world. The peoples of Asia and Africa, however, did not achieve technology independently. "In the organic structure of their (i.e. the peoples of Asia) mythical-magical order of being, is no room for technology as an independent human endeavour to subjugate the world" (Rosenkranz). This is why the history of s[ecularism] in Asia and Africa began only with the onset of industrialisation in the 19th century. In the contact zones with this "modern" civilisation, the disruptive experience of novelty (*Neuheitserlebnis*) arose, leading to alienation from tradition, and the renunciation of (first) the religion of the fathers – and (later) all religion and meta-[p. 1297/1298]physics. The purported autochthonous parallels are constructions *ex post facto*.

3. Sometimes to its own surprise, more recent attempts at religious mission have found s[ecularism] to be their companion almost everywhere. However, the relationship between these two "great powers" (G. Warneck), which often arrived simultaneously in the Afro-Asian world, was so diverse and complex that it cannot be reduced to a single formula. Some significant traits can be distinguished, however. A) In missionary work

III JD: *Volkstum* is often translated as *folklore*, but Hoekendijk's usage suggests a broader meaning in the sense of culture or national character. In order to convey the broader meaning of the term, I have chosen to translate it with the rather unusual English term *folkdom*. This choice also reflects the dated sound of the original term from a contemporary perspective.

IV JD: See "The 1st international Conference of Negro Writers and Artists (Paris – Sorbonne – 19th–22nd September 1956) Full Account," Special Issue, *Presence Africaine*, no. 8–10 (1956). For excerpts, see https://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/Black%20Liberation%20Disk/Black%20Power!/SugahData/Journals/Presence.S.pdf, accessed 26 June, 2024.

with a pietistic character, the areas of life that were decisive for the reorganisation of society were often left to s[ecularism], due to the narrowing of the message towards the individual. These areas were removed from "paganism", but then exposed to the "acids of modernity" without a relevant model for coping with existence. Thus, mission has often become the initiator and bearer of s[ecularism], which, incidentally, it wholly considered to be a sinful "friendship [with] the world" (James 4:4). B) A. Duff, in particular, had a keen eye for the new problems that arose with s[ecularism]. His *Education-Scheme* represents a magnificent attempt to enable Indians to participate in "modern civilization." He welcomed s[ecularism] as a comrade-in-arms; it should "redeem Hindus and Muslims from their metaphysics and thus open them up to the truth." Duff was aware of the perils of "educated agnosticism," but believed that the Indians would arrive at the truth of (true) religion by way of scientific truth, which would emancipate them from false religion. Along this line, broad missionary circles have long reckoned with s[ecularism] as a "bulldozer" of mission [. . .]. J. N. Farquhar (*The Crown of Hinduism*, 1913) is a classic illustration of how s[ecularism] could still be assessed as *praeparatio evangelica* at the beginning of the 20th century. C) After the First World War, a completely negative evaluation of s[ecularism] quickly gained the upper hand. Previously regarded as paving the way for mission, s[ecularism] was now revealed to be a challenger (*Wegbestreiter*) and competitor of mission. The discussion at and after the World Mission Conference in Jerusalem in 1928 [. . .] is telling. There, Rufus Jones defined s[ecularism] as "an attitude towards life and an interpretation of life that takes into account solely the natural order of things and which does not view God or a realm of spiritual reality as fundamental to life and thought." A whole series of investigations into this "threat to humanity" (Oldham) ensued. For the first time, all missionary work in Asia and Africa was studied through the lens of s[ecularism]. It turned out that the time had not yet co-[p. 1297/1298]me to pinpoint the problem; by and large, s[ecularism] was simply regarded as a West-East problem, and sometimes, in the face of this threat of Europeanisation, an (impossible) retrogressive adaptation to the old folkdom (*Volkstum*) was advocated.

4. *The churches in Asia and Africa* are now compelled to address the particular s[ecularism] prevalent in their region independently. In general, it is noticeable that many of their leading Christians are again trying to attain a positive understanding of secularisation and its possible consequences. In close proximity, they are experiencing a "secondary religionisation" of s[ecularism] within initially non-religious, national and social reform movements (Balandier). This is why they are in favour of a radical profanisation (*Verweltlichung*) of sociopolitical life almost everywhere, with surprisingly little fear of ideology. This is not only because they, as a minority, want to guard themselves against any preferential treatment of the religious majority and therefore advocate the transfer of sociopolitical life into the profane (*weltlich*) sphere (this motive also plays a role), but above all because they have heard the message of the profanisation (*Verweltlichung*) of the world anew from the Gospel. Exemplary in this regard is the work of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in India, whose pub-

lications (especially "Christian Participation in Nation-Building," 1960)[V] already offer many approaches for overcoming the problems of secularisation and suggestions for encountering s[ecularism].

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3 Peter L. Berger: *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) was an American sociologist and Protestant theologian. His parents were Jewish converts to Christianity, living in Vienna. When the Nazis took over in Austria in 1938, his family emigrated to Palestine, and, after the Second World War, they moved to New York. Berger first became interested in religion during his childhood in Palestine.

At the New School for Social Research in New York, which functioned as a "University in Exile" for European refugees, Peter L. Berger met sociologist of knowledge Alfred Schütz, who had also fled from Europe. At The New School, he also became acquainted with Thomas Luckmann, with whom he later wrote *The Social Construction of Reality*, which became a seminal text in the sociology of knowledge. Both scholars were strongly influenced by Alfred Schütz.

Berger taught sociology and theology at the New School, at Rutgers University, and – from 1981 – at Boston University, where he also was the director of the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs.

Alongside *The Social Construction of Reality,* Berger's main contributions were in the field of the sociology of religion. In these works, which amounted to diagnoses of modern society, Berger was highly influenced by Max Weber's notion of rationalisation. His later works often had a normative twist, with Berger coming close to voicing conservative perspectives on the roles of family, community, and church, for the "homeless mind" of the modern individual.

In *The Sacred Canopy*, his major work on religion in modern societies, he describes the role of religion as being the guarantor of the societal nomos, i.e. its essential values, convictions, beliefs, and its basic knowledge about the order of things. Religion legitimises this nomos, and thereby protects humans against the threat of chaos and disorder. Berger considers this basic function of religion to have been weakened by processes of modernisation, pluralisation, and secularisation. He relates secularisation back to the Protestant Reformation, and sees it as then having been further enhanced in the course of modernisation and – finally – globalisation.

Berger's essential diagnosis was that modernity, which is characterised by the differentiation of social spheres, and by a plurality of competing religious and secular

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world views, undermines the existence of plausibility structures, the stability of nomoi, and the anchorage of human beings in their world. Beliefs and world views become contingent – a matter of choice – and are stabilised and legitimised in the private realm, rather than by shared public beliefs. Berger was convinced that institutions like the family or the church play an important role in providing the modern individual with a sense of belonging, and in countering alienation.

Berger understands secularisation as a process of importance to modern Western history, being "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols." Secularisation, in his view, is more than a socio-structural process, as it affects the totality of cultural life and of ideation, as well as the rise of science as a thoroughly secular perspective on the world. On top of this, he argues, is a secularisation of consciousness, too. In his books, one finds arguments similar to those elaborated later by Charles Taylor (text no. 40, in section 2).

In the quote below from *The Sacred Canopy,* Berger asks what the "carriers" – that is, socio-cultural processes or groups acting as mediators – of secularisation might be, and argues – in strong alignment with Max Weber's notion of disenchantment – that the Western religious tradition – especially Protestantism, but, much earlier, even Judaism – carried the seeds of secularisation within itself:

"The suspicion that there may be an inherent connection between Christianity and the character of the modern Western world is by no means new. [. . .] At the risk of some simplification, it can be said that Protestantism divested itself as much as possible from the three most ancient and most powerful concomitants of the sacred – mystery, miracle, and magic. This process has been aptly caught in the phrase 'disenchantment of the world'. [. . .] It may be maintained, then, that Protestantism served as a historically decisive prelude to secularization, whatever may have been the importance of other factors.

If this interpretation of the historical nexus between Protestantism and secularization is accepted [. . .], then the question inevitably suggests itself as to whether the secularizing potency of Protestantism was a *novum* or whether it rather had its roots in earlier elements of the Biblical tradition. We would contend that the latter answer is the correct one [. . .]. In other words, we would maintain that the "disenchantment of the world" begins in the Old Testament. [. . .]

In order to appreciate this position one must see ancient Israel in the context of the cultures amid which it sprang up and *against* which it defined itself. [. . .] While it would be erroneous to underestimate the considerable differences between these cultures (notably between the two cultural foci of Egypt and Mesopotamia), one common characteristic is the one that has aptly been called 'cosmological'. [. . .] This means that the human world (that is, everything that we today would call culture and society) is understood as being embedded in a cosmic order that embraces the entire universe. This order not only fails to make the sharp modern differentiation between the human and non-human (or 'natural') spheres of empirical reality, but, more importantly, it is an order that posits continuity between the empirical and the supra-empirical, between the world of men and the world of the gods. [. . .]

It is profoundly significant that the traditions later incorporated in the canon of the Old Testament interpreted the origins of Israel as a *double* exodus – the patriarchs' exodus from Mesopotamia and the great exodus from Egypt under Moses. This prototypical Israelite exodus was not just a geographical or political movement. Rather, it constituted a break with an entire universe. At the heart of the religion of ancient Israel lies the vehement repudiation of both the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian versions of cosmic order, a repudiation that was, of course, extended to the pre-Israelite indigenous culture of Syria-Palestine. This great denial of Israelite religion may be analyzed in terms of three pervasive motifs – transcendentalization, historization, and the rationalization of ethics."[I]

Whilst Berger was convinced for a long time that an all-encompassing secularisation would characterise the future of modern societies, not only in the West, but worldwide, he later stepped back from that position, diagnosing a thorough de-secularisation of the world. He came to consider the secularisation process of Western Europe to be an exception, rather than the blueprint for the world's future.

These later insights however, remained somewhat at odds with his previous analysis of pluralisation and differentiation undermining the stability of the nomos, and thereby turning religion into a contingent, private choice, rather than a common belief.

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I Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 110–15.

4 Okot p'Bitek: *African Religions in Western Scholarship* (1971)

Introduced by Magnus Echtler

Introduction

Okot p'Bitek (1931–1982) was a Ugandan poet and academic, born in the town of Gulu in northern Uganda. His parents had converted to Christianity, but continued to uphold Acholi culture, participate in clan rituals, and perform as dancers, songwriters, and storytellers. Like his father, p'Bitek studied to become a teacher. During this time, he composed popular songs, wrote his first novel, and played football for the Ugandan national team. From 1956 to 1963, he studied education and law in the United Kingdom, and received a Bachelor of Letters in anthropology from the University of Oxford. From 1963, he taught at Makerere University, Uganda, continued his anthropological research and submitted a dissertation to the University of Oxford, though he was not awarded a PhD. In 1965, he became director of the Ugandan National Cultural Centre. Due to his critique of the government, he had to leave Uganda in 1968. During his exile, he taught at universities in Kenya, Nigeria, and the USA. He returned to Makerere in 1979, and died in Uganda in 1982.

P'Bitek achieved international recognition with his poems *Song of Lawino* (1966), in which a wife laments the Westernization of her husband that makes him despise African culture, and *Song of Ocol* (1971), the husband's reply criticizing his wife's backwardness. Drawing on local artistic expression, and originally written in Acholi – a Luo language – but translated and published in English, his poetic exposition of fundamental tensions in postcolonial societies reached African, and eventually global audiences.[I] The endeavour to decolonize African culture and religion was a motivating factor in p'Bitek's academic writings, too.[II] Whilst sharing a similar academic background, his critique of anthropology as colonial science in fact predated that of Talal Asad (see text 56 in this volume). In addition, his critique of Western interpretations of African religions formed the secular counterpoint to John Mbiti's proclamation of "notoriously religious" Africans.[III] Between them, the two laid the postcolonial groundwork for debating the religious-secular divide

I Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino, Song of Ocol* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972; London: Heinemann, 1984).

II Okot p'Bitek, *Religion of the Central Luo* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1971); *Africa's Cultural Revolution* (Nairobi: Macmillan Books for Africa, 1973); *Artist, the Ruler: Essays on Art, Culture, and Values* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1986).

III John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1.

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in Africa (see Ellis/ter Haar, Engelke and Igwe, texts no. 11, 14, and 61).[IV] P'Bitek considered himself "not a religious person – neither pagan nor Christian," yet he advocated the study of African religions at African universities, in order "to know our people [. . .] so that we can serve them better," a task that required one to "resist the temptation to present African deities in terms of foreign ideas."[V] As a result, he criticized the Christian agenda of both European anthropologists like his Oxford teachers E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Godfrey Lienhardt, and African theologians like Mbiti, all of whom religionized African culture, and hence destroyed its potential for decolonizing Africans.

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Preface

I first met a number of Western scholars at Oxford University in 1960. During the very first lecture in the Institute of Social Anthropology, the teacher kept referring to Africans or non-Western peoples as barbarians, savages, primitives, tribes etc. I protested; but to no avail. All the professors and lecturers in the Institute, and those who came from outside to read papers, spoke the same insulting language.

In the Institute Library, I detested to see such titles of books and articles in the learned journals as Primitive Culture, Primitive Religion, The Savage Mind, Primitive Government, The Position of [p. vii/viii] Women in Savage Societies, lnstitutions of Primitive Societies, Primitive Song, Sex and Repression in Savage Societies, Primitive Mentality, and so on.

In this book I trace the study of African religions by Western scholars from the Classical time to the present day. Two major conclusions are reached. First, that whereas different schools of social anthropology may quarrel bitterly over methods, they may all share the same view that the population of the world is divisible into two: one, their

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IV See Benson Ohihon Igboin, "The Scramble for Religion and Secularism in Pre-Colonial Africa," *Religions* 13 (2022): 1096, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13111096. This article is itself deserving of inclusion in this sourcebook, but was published and discovered after the final selection for the sourcebook had been made.

V Okot p'Bitek, "African Religion in an African University," in *Africa's Cultural Revolution*, 85f, 90.

own, civilized, and the rest, primitive. The second conclusion is that Western scholars have never been genuinely interested in African religions per se. Their works have all been part and parcel of some controversy or debate in the Western world. [. . . p. viii–90]

De-Hellenizing the Christian God

[. . . p. 90–97. . .]
After almost two thousand years in the metaphysical wilderness where the business of *religion* is a department of life separated from the rest of living, of religion, which, as Samuel Johnson wrote, "it is in a book: we have an order of men whose duty it is to teach: we have one day in the [p. 97/98] week set apart for it and this is pretty well observed. . ."[1] Western man is beginning to return to the situation similar to those existing in many African societies. John Taylor has called the Christian religion as practised in Africa "Classroom Religion", and likened it to a girl's school uniform, "something to be put on at certain times and in particular circumstances, and has nothing to do with other areas of life".[2]

John Mbiti has observed, "Because traditional religions permeate all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion." He noted that many African languages do not have a word for *religion;* "it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death".[3]

In his book, *Men Without God?*, Keith Russell posed the question whether it is necessary that the church should insist on the autonomous existence of a department of life called "religion" which has a primarily metaphysical reference, and whether the accusation of "materialism" which the Western church so frequently brings against both its own people and the young African nations depends on a true understanding of the material in God's world, or if it is a hangover from centuries of insistence on a false sacred secular antithesis.

It has been intimated that, because religion permeates every aspect of life in African societies, there were no African non-believers in traditional [p. 98/99] Africa. As Mbiti explained, "A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his contact of security, his kinship, and the entire group of those that make him aware of existence . . .. Therefore, to be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society;

1 [note 24 in the original] Quoted by Godfrey Lienhardt, "Religion" in *Man, Culture and Society,* edited by Harry L. Shapiron, New York, 1960, p. 310.
2 [note 25 in the original] Op. cit. [John Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, London, 1963], pp. 19–20.
3 [note 26 in the original] *African Religions and Philosophy,* London/New York, 1969, pp. 3–4.

and African peoples do not know how to exist without religion."[4] For Mbiti, of course, religion includes beliefs concerning God and the spirits, as well as the rituals that an individual undergoes from before his birth until after his death.

Karl Heim has argued that although secularism has existed in ancient times,[5] in its present form it is a product of that area of the world which was influenced by the biblical view of the relationship between God, man and the world. "Secularism is the possibility man has of abstracting himself from God and the question of eternity; of regarding them as an 'ideological superstructure'; and of attempting to be a child of this world."[6]

Now, although attempts have been made to describe certain African deities in terms of the attributes of the Christian God, all of them are actually continuously and geographically present and intimately concerned with the day-to-day life of the people, here on earth. No genuinely metaphysical speculations are attached to them, and there is no thought of another world. It follows then that, in so far as African believed in certain 'powers', they may be called religious; but, as most of them did not hold beliefs in any deities similar in conception to the Christian God, we [p. 99/100] may refer to traditional Africans as atheistic in their outlook.

It is this which has provoked Keith Russell to comment that the early death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was no great loss to the Acholi. The German theologian had written from prison that God was teaching men that they must live as people who could get along very well without him. The Acholi had no need to be taught anything like this, they knew it very well already. Moreover in the Acholi world-view men have learned to cope with all question of importance without recourse to a God as a working hypothesis. And even in death the Acholi need no God. This is the meaning of this profound funeral poem that they sing at the last funeral ceremony.

Fire rages at Layima
Fire rages in the valley
Of river Cumu,
Everything is utterly utterly destroyed;
If I could reach
The homestead of Death's mother
O! my daughter
I would make a long grass torch,
If I could reach
The homestead of Death's mother

4 [note 27 in the original] Op. cit., p. 2.
5 [note 28 in the original] Democritus, Epicurus and Lucertius (d. 55 B.C.) were secularists.
6 [note 29 in the original] See his "Christian Faith and the growing power of Secularism" in *Religion and Culture:* Essays in honour of Paul Tillich, edited by Walter Leibrecht, New York, 1959, p. 187.

> I would destroy everything utterly utterly
> Like the fire that rages at Layima
> Like the fire that rages
> In the valley of river Cumu! [p. 100–102]

Some Conclusions

What emerges from this brief survey is a distorted and pale picture of African religious beliefs, their deities buried under thick layers of the prejudices of the students of African societies. Throughout the long history of Western scholarship African religions have never been the object of study in their own right. African deities were used as mercenaries in foreign battles, not one of which was in the interest of African peoples. [. . . p. 102–104. . .]

The Christian Fathers had no intention of presenting African deities as they really were. Their main aim was to condemn and then destroy what they called "demons", and replace them with the Christian faith.

We hear echoes of the same battle cry from the fifteenth century onwards, when hordes upon hordes of barbarians from Europe disguised as Christians leapt from ships, bible and gun in hand, to attack, plunder, murder and enslave the inhabitants of the whole world. The writers of that long period of Western domination set out to justify the colonial system by preaching that the world was sick and needed Western suppression (re-christened civilization), in order to survive. The speculations of the eighteenth-century philosophers and those of the nineteenth century anthropologists were not meant to give a true picture of African religions. These people were not interested in a proper study of African societies, because if they were they would have come to Africa to carry out researches. Their works were "apologies" for the colonial system, their task was to demonstrate the superiority of Western culture over those of the colonized peoples.

African deities fared no better at the hands of the philosophers who talked of the *noble savage,* because, like the Homeric poets, they were engaged not in studying African religion but in criticising their own societies; using the same principle which, in northern Uganda, is expressed in the saying that "every married woman thinks that the [p. 104/105] husbands of the other women are less troublesome than hers". The terms such as "fetishism" and "Animism", which were coined and used by Western writers in their imaginary speculations, are not only meaningless, they are nuisance in the proper understanding of African religions. They must be dropped.

For the first time in Western scholarship, the systematic study of African religions through field work began about forty or so years ago. A golden opportunity presented itself for the recording and understanding of African religious conceptions as they really are. But, alas, the materials collected from these researches have been interpreted in such a way that African deities became distorted beyond recognition. And, once more,

African religious conceptions were drafted by Christian scholars to fight on their side against European non-believers. [. . . p. 105–107 . . .]

Some Pitfalls

We have noted that Western Christian anthropologists confess openly that, in their interpretation of African religions, they are influenced by their own cultural backgrounds. A similar excuse has been used by John Mbiti, who argued that, philosophy of one kind or another was behind the thinking and acting of every people. [. . . p. 107/108. . .]

The protests by Evans-Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt and Mbiti against the non-Christian interpretation of religion are against the subjective approach of those scholars. We must reject all forms of subjectivity whether the subjectivity arises from anti-Christian, or from pro-Christian prejudices.

Certain assumptions deriving from Christian theology – that amalgam of Platonic and Aristotelian ways of thinking and Judaic concepts and Christian claims – ought not to be brought in when Christian students approach the study of African religion. First, the assumption that the universe is purposive throughout. St. Thomas' "Fifth Proof" of the existence of God was that we find even lifeless things serving a purpose, which must be that of some being outside them, since only living things can have an internal purpose. Christian anthropologists and missionaries have written as though this were also true of the beliefs of African peoples. But there is no evidence that African peoples see a purpose in all things. Indeed, most of the religious activities in African religions seem to be part of the way and means of dealing with existing or threatening dangers. In African thinking the universe seems to consist of three categories of objects, namely: [p. 108/109]

(a) Useful objects, e.g. foodstuffs, tools, weapons, etc.
(b) Harmful objects, e.g. snakes, diseases, poisons, etc.
(c) Neutral objects, e.g. stars – expect those that guide a lost hunter; numerous types of harmless insects, millipides, lizards, toads, etc.

The purpose of any particular object is determined by its use to human beings, and not "of some being outside them". Even the deities are there to serve the interests of men. The African deities are for man, and not man for them.

The second Christian assumption which should be left behind is that the temporal order of nature is in some sense inferior and illusory. This is the basis of the *other-worldliness* of the Christian faith. It seems that there is no *other-worldliness* in African religious thought. African ethics is not grounded on a promise or threat by some god that the good people will, in the future, enjoy life in heaven, while the bad will cook in a great fire. In this sense, the use of the term *heaven* in describing African religious concepts is confusing and misleading.

Some Ganda men told John Taylor, "My fire is my God, for it cooks the food I eat"; "Our God is our food and our pipes, nothing else"; "I know God, he made all things but

I don't want to worship him, you can teach the children". Taylor commented, "God, in spite of grace, has not yet been brought inside. Now Africa's century of acquiescence is coming to an end and the old views and values are reasserting themselves. If [p. 109/110] God remains outside much longer, African's *this-wordliness* will turn into materialism."[7] To Africans this is the only world, and it is neither inferior to any other, nor illusory. [. . . p. 110/111 . . .]

The aim of the study of African religions should be to understand the religious beliefs and practices of African peoples, rather than to discover the Christian God in Africa.

Some Practical Issues

African leaders and governments declare that the reconstruction of their societies will be based on African ideals and beliefs. Leopold Senghor wrote, "The antifederalists have accused us of being atheists, 'Marxists', and of outlawing religion. Surely this smacks of propaganda. Can we integrate Negro-African cultural values, especially religious values, with socialism? We must answer that question once and for all with an equivocal yes"[8] Julius Nyerere has stated that African socialism "is rooted in our own past – in the traditional society which produced us. Modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage the recognition of 'society' as an extension of the family unit".[9] The Government of Kenya has presented its political thinking in the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1963–65. Paragraph 10 of that document reads, "Another fundamental force in African traditional life was religion which [p. 111/112] provided a strict moral code for the community. This will be a permanent feature of African socialism."

But will the African deities survive the revolutions in science and philosophy which have killed the Christian God? I doubt it. Christianity has declined because the Christian God used to fill gaps in science, or to deal with life at the point at which thing got beyond human explanation or control. This has now been dismissed as intellectual laziness or superstition. The Christian God has become intellectually superfluous and, moreover, the metaphysical statement about him do not make sense to modern man.

In northern Uganda the chiefdom deities perished during the first few years of colonial rule. Today there are many young men and women who know nothing at all about them. The cult of ancestors is still strong, and this reflects the continuing bond of relationship between members of a clan. The numerous *jogi,* spirits, which are believed to be the cause of diseases and other misfortunes, appear to be on the increase.

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7 [note 9 in the original] *Primal Vision,* p. 90.

8 [note 12 in the original] *On African Socialism*, New York, 1964, p. 26.

9 [note 13 in the original] "UJamaa – the basis of African Socialism" in *African Socialism*, edited by William Friedland and Carl Rosberg Jr., Stanford, 1964, pp. 238–47.

The belief in these deities provides the explanations as well as the method of dealing with misfortunes and ill-health. With the advance of medical knowledge, perhaps one day, the people of northern Uganda and other peoples of Africa will tell the diviners, in the words of Voltaire, “You have made ample use of the time of ignorance, superstition, and infatuation, to strip us of our inheritance, and strangle us under your feet, that you might fatten on the substance of the [p. 112/113] unfortunate. But tremble for fear that the day of reason will arrive.”[10]

However, the important issue is not whether African deities and religions will or will not die out. It is a fact that the vast majority of Africans today hold the beliefs of their religions. Christianity has barely touched the core of the life of most African peoples. Keith Russell has estimated that in northern Uganda ninety per cent of the homes still have connexions with the clan rituals at times of need.[11] It seems to me that the new God of Christianity was taken by many African peoples as just another deity, and added to the long list of the ones they believed in. So that many African Christians are also practitioners of their own religions.

It follows that if the leaders sincerely believe that the social reconstruction in Africa should be based on the African world-view, their religions must be studied and presented as accurately as possible, so as to discover the African world view. Christian sex ethics, its *other-wordliness*, and its preoccupations with *sin* are three important areas which African intellectuals and leaders can explore, because, here, Christianity contrasts vividly with African religions.

One of the basic issues of nation building is the concept of the *family.* Commissions of inquiry[12] have been set up in many African countries to look into the question of marriage, indicating the unsatisfactory state of affairs resulting from the colonial marriage laws. Otto Kahn-Freund wrote, “The great problem is that of the unification and codification of the law in a culturally and reli[p. 113/114]giously plural society. How can the consciousness of the great strength of the social norm which hold them together be combined with the need for creating a modern, intelligible, unified system of law? How and where can one find the difficult path between an over-conservative and timid insistence on the tradition and diversity and an over-radical and unrealistic insistence on modernization and unity.”[13] The Kenya Commissioners, in their introduction to the Report on the Law of Succession, wrote, “We agreed that the law should generally be

10 [note 14 in the original] *Philosophical Dictionary,* see in *Portable Voltaire,* edited by Ben Ray Redman, New York, 1969, p. 54.

11 [note 15 in the original] *Men Without God?* p. 29.

12 [note 16 in the original] Uganda Government: *Report of the Commission on Marriage, Divorce and the status of Women* (also known as the *Kalema Report*) 1965; Republic of Kenya: *Report of the Commission on the Law of Marriage and Divorce,* Nairobi, 1968; and *Report of the Commission on the Law of Succession,* Nairobi, 1968; See also Tanner, “The codification of customary Law in Tanzania” in *East African Law Journal,* vol. 2, 1966.

13 [note 17 in the original] “Law Reform in Kenya”, *East African Law Journal,* vol. 5, 1969, p. 54.

compatible with the African way of life, and should not be based on any foreign model. On the other hand, the law should recognise that the traditional African way of life is rapidly changing and should therefore cater for differing conditions both in the rural and urban areas. We thought that the law should recognise that Kenya is a country of many races, tribes, communities and religions, that the law and custom of these different people are deep-rooted and that any change we suggest should offend as little as possible their respective beliefs. On the other hand, we thought that the new law should encourage national unity and the building of Kenya as one nation irrespective of race or creed."[14] [. . . p. 114–117]

Political Philosophy

[. . . p. 117–119]
The most critical decisions which leaders of Africa must take lie not so much in the economic or political fields, but in the fields of culture and of basic human values. Of course there are conflicts between political philosophies and economic system· there is also the rivalry between power blocks. But the basic conflict is between fundamental assumptions of Western civilization and the fundamental assumptions of African civilization. The assumptions of Western man have their roots in Judaism, the Greek and Roman experiences, the Christian faith and industrialization. True Uhuru means the abolition of Western political and economic dominance from Africa, and the reconstruction of our societies on the basis of African thought systems. The study of African religions is one important way of understanding African ways of thought.

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14 [note 18 in the original] *Commission . . . Law of Succession* 11–13, p. 3.

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5 Syed M. N. al-Attas: *Islam and Secularism* (1978)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Syed Muhammed Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931) is a Malaysian Muslim philosopher, who worked extensively on Islamic mysticism and metaphysics, but is probably best known for having pioneered the concept of Islamisation of knowledge. He is the brother of Syed Hussein Alatas (1928–2007), an eminent Malaysian sociologist, whose son Syed Farid Alatas (b. 1961) has dedicated his life's work to applying Ibn Khaldun's writings and ideas (see text no. 9 in vol. 2) in contemporary sociology. While Syed Muhammed Naquib al-Attas' brother and, especially, his nephew argue for the synthesis of local and Western knowledge, he himself assumes a more confrontational stance. After completing a BA at the University of Malaysia, Syed Muhammed Naquib al-Attas went on to complete an MA in Islamic studies at McGill University, and received his PhD from SOAS in 1962, with a thesis on a sixteenth-century Sufi from Sumatra. Al-Attas subsequently returned to Malaysia, where he served as dean in the faculties of arts and literature at several institutions of higher education. In 1987, he founded the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation in Kuala Lumpur. He thereby participated in wider efforts towards Islamisation of knowledge, which were also undertaken in Iran, the USA, and several Arab countries in the 1980s.

For al-Attas, secularism and secularisation present a major threat to his envisioned system of knowledge, as they lead to Westernisation and, fundamentally, to a dualistic vision of reality – as he argues in his book *Islam and Secularism*, a passage from which is reproduced below. According to al-Attas, secularism is rejected by Islam, which, in contrast to the materialist West, preserved spirituality, especially in the Sufi variants that he most strongly affiliates with. Writing in English in 1978, al-Attas was among the first to explicitly juxtapose the terms Islam and secularism, arguing against a differentiation of spheres of knowledge. To him, secularisation is thus not a mere structural process, but, also and equally, an ideology, just as secularism is. For this reason, he has coined the term 'secularizationism'. In view of al-Attas' claim to Islam's unique spirituality, as contrasted with the West and Christianity, it is worth noting that similar arguments for alternative, mystical conceptions of knowledge are visible in a variety of trends, including within what al-Attas depicts as "the Western Christian world."

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In the preceding pages I have tried to convey in brief outline and cursory sketch the real contemporary situation in the Western Christian world. Although the sketch is very brief I believe that it has at least captured in summary and true perspective the essential components comprising the fundamental problems that beset Western Christian society. We must see, in view of the fact that secularization is not merely confined to the Western world, that their experience of it and their attitude towards it is most instructive for Muslims. Islam is not similar to Christianity in this respect that secularization, in the way in which it is also happening in the Muslim world, has not and will not necessarily affect our beliefs in the same way it does the beliefs of Western man. For that matter Islam is not the same as Christianity, whether as a religion or as a civilization. But problems arising out of secularization, though not the same as those confronting the West, have certainly caused much confusion in our midst. It is most significant to us that these problems are caused due to the introduction of Western ways of thinking and judging and believing emulated by some Muslim scholars and intellectuals who have been unduly influenced by the West and overawed by its scientific and technological achievements, who by virtue of the fact that they can be thus influenced betray their lack of true understanding and full grasp of both the Islamic as well as the Western world views and essential [p. 15/16] beliefs and modes of thought that project them; who have, because of their influential positions in Muslim society, become conscious or unconscious disseminators of unnecessary confusion and ignorance. The situation in our midst can indeed be seen as critical when we consider the fact that the Muslim Community is generally unaware of what the secularizing process implies. It is therefore essential that we obtain a clear understanding of it from those who know and are conscious of it, who believe and welcome it, who teach and advocate it to the world.

The term *secular,* from the Latin *saeculum,* conveys a meaning with a marked dual connotation of *time* and *location;* the time referring to the 'now' or 'present' sense of it, and the location to the 'world' or 'worldly' sense of it. Thus *saeculum* means 'this age' or 'the present time', and this age or the present time refers to events in this world, and it also then means 'contemporary events'. The emphasis of meaning is set on a particular time or period in the world viewed as a *historical process.* The concept *secular* refers to the *condition* of the world at this particular time or period or age. Already here we discern the germ of meaning that easily develops itself naturally and logically into the existential context of an ever-changing world in which there occurs the notion of relativ-

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ity of human values. This spatiotemporal connotation conveyed in the concept secular is derived historically out of the experience and consciousness born of the fusion of the Graeco-Roman and Judaic traditions in Western Christianity. It is this 'fusion' of the mutually conflicting elements of the Hellenic and Hebrew world views which have deliberately been incorporated into Christianity that modern Christian theologians and intellectuals recognize as problematic, in that the former views existence as basically *spatial* and the latter as basically *temporal* in such wise that the arising confusion of worldviews becomes the root of their epistemological and hence also theological problems. Since the world has only in modern times been more and more understood and recognized by them as historical, the emphasis on the [p. 16/17] temporal aspect of it has become more meaningful and has conveyed a special significance to them. For this reason they exert themselves in efforts emphasizing their conception of the Hebrew vision of existence, which they think is more congenial with the spirit of 'the times', and denouncing the Hellenic as a grave and basic mistake, as can be glimpsed from the brief sketch in the preceding chapter.

Secularization is defined as the deliverance of man "first from religious and then from metaphysical control over his reason and his language".[1] It is "the loosing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols... the 'defatalization of history', the discovery by man that he has been left with the world on his hands, that he can no longer blame fortune or the furies for what he does with it. ... ; [it is] man turning his attention away from the worlds beyond and toward this world and this time".[2] Secularization encompasses not only the political and social aspects of life, but also inevitably the cultural, for it denotes "the disappearance of religious determination of the symbols of cultural integration".[3] It implies "a historical process, almost certainly irreversible, in which society and culture are delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical world views".[4] It is a "liberating development", and the end product of secularization is historical relativism.[5] Hence according to them history is a process of [p. 17/18] secularization.[6] The integral components in the dimensions of secularization are the disenchantment of nature, the desacralization of politics, and the deconsecration of values.[7] By the 'disenchantment' of nature – a term and concept bor-

1 [note 1 in the original] By the Dutch theologian Cornelis van Peursen, who occupied the chair of philosophy in the University of Leiden. This definition is cited by the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox in his *The Secular City,* New York, 1965, p. 2, and is quoted from a report on a conference held at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, in September, 1959 (see *ibid.,* p. 13, note 1).

2 [note 2 in the original] Cox, *ibid.*, pp. 2 and 17.

3 [note 3 in the original] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

4 [note 4 in the original] *Loc. cit.*

5 [note 5 in the original] *Ibid.*, pp. 30–36.

6 [note 6 in the original] *Ibid., passim*, and see p. 109.

7 [note 7 in the original] *Ibid.*, pp. 21–23.

rowed from the German sociologist Max Weber[8] – they mean as he means, the freeing of nature from its religious overtones; and this involves the dispelling of animistic spirits and gods and magic from the natural world, separating it from God and distinguishing man from it, so that man may no longer regard nature as a divine entity, which thus allows him to act freely upon nature, to make use of it according to his needs and plans, and hence create historical change and 'development'. By the 'desacralization' of politics they mean the abolition of sacral legitimation of political power and authority, which is the prerequisite of political change and hence also social change allowing for the emergence of the historical process. By the 'deconsecration' of values they mean the rendering transient and relative all cultural creations and every value system which for them includes religion and worldviews having ultimate and final significance, so that in this way history, the future, is open to change, and man is free to create the change and immerse himself in the 'evolutionary' process. This attitude towards values demands an awareness on the part of secular man of the relativity of his own views and beliefs; he must live with the realization that the rules and ethical codes of conduct [p. 18/19] which guide his own life will change with the times and generations. This attitude demands what they call 'maturity', and hence secularization is also a process of 'evolution' of the consciousness of man from the 'infantile' to the 'mature' states, and is defined as "the removal of juvenile dependence from every level of society. . . . the process of maturing and assuming responsibility. . . . the removal of religious and metaphysical supports and putting man on his own".[9] They say that this change of values is also the recurrent phenomenon of "conversion" which occurs "at the intersection of the action of history on man and the action of man on history", which they call "responsibility, the acceptance of adult accountability".[10] Now we must take due notice of the fact that they make a distinction between secularization and *secularism,* saying that whereas the former implies a continuing and open-ended process in which values and worldviews are continually revised in accordance with 'evolutionary' change in history, the latter, like religion, projects a closed worldview and an absolute set of values in line with an ultimate historical purpose having a final significance for man. Secularism according to them denotes an *ideology.*[11] Whereas the ideology that is secularism, like the process that is secularization, also disenchants nature and desacralizes politics, it never quite deconsecrates values since it sets up its own system of values intending it to be regarded as absolute and final, unlike secularization which relativises *all* values and produces the openness

8 [note 8 in the original] The phrase 'disenchantment of the world' was used by Friedrich Schiller and quoted by Weber. Another term which Weber used in this connection is rationalization. See Weber's *Essays in Sociology,* New York 1958, see also his *Sociology of Religion,* Boston, 1964. See chapter III and V of the former; and for Weber's concept of rationalization, see Talcott Parson's explanation of it in the Introduction to the latter work, pp. xxxi–xxxiii.

9 [note 9 in the original] Cox, *ibid.*, pp. 109, 119.

10 [note 10 in the original] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

11 [note 11 in the original] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and freedom necessary for human action and for history. For this reason they regard secularism as a menace to secularization, and urge that it must be vigilantly watched and checked and prevented from becoming the ideology of the state. Secularization, they think, describes the inner workings of man's 'evolution'. The context in which secularization occurs is the urban civilization. The [p. 19/20] structure of common life, they believe, has 'evolved' from the primitive to the tribal to the village to the town to the city by stages – from the simple social groupings to the complex mass society; and in the state of human life, or the stage of man's 'evolution', this corresponds to the 'development' of man from the 'infantile' to the 'mature' states. The urban civilization is the context in which the state of man's 'maturing' is taking place; the context in which secularization takes place, patterning the form of the civilization as well as being patterned by it.

The definition of secularization which describes its true nature to our understanding corresponds exactly with what is going on in the spiritual and intellectual and rational and physical and material life of Western man and his culture and civilization; and it is true only when applied to describe the nature and existential condition of Western culture and civilization. The claim that secularization has its roots in biblical faith and that it is the fruit of the Gospel has no substance in historical fact. Secularization has its roots not in biblical faith, but in the *interpretation* of biblical faith by Western man; it is not the fruit of the Gospel, but is the fruit of the long history of philosophical and metaphysical conflict in the religious and purely rationalistic *worldview* of Western man. The interdependence of the interpretation and the worldview operates in history and is seen as a 'development'; indeed it has been so logically in history because for Western man the truth, or God Himself, has become incarnate in man in time and in history. [. . .p. 20–47]

We observed earlier that Western theologians have made a distinction which appears to them as significant between secularization and secularism, where secularism is a name denoting not a process, but a crystallization, as it were, of the process of secularization into a particular and distinct form, an ideology. They have also implied that every ism is ideology. This of course depends upon how the term 'ideology' is understood and to what term the ism is suffixed. In the first instance, if ideology is taken to mean a set of general ideas, or philosophical program without having any reference to its interpretation and implementation as the worldview of a state, then so is secularization, as they have conceived it, an ideology; the distinction being that the worldview of one is 'closed' and that of the other is 'open'. If, however, ideology is taken to mean a set of general ideas, or philosophical program which finds expression as the official worldview of a state, then again, secularization, as they have conceived it, is also an ideology; for they have conceived secularization not merely as a historical process in which man is passively immersed, but that man himself is ever engaged actively in creating the process, so that in each generation man sets forth a philosophical program projecting a worldview officially adopted by the state even if that worldview should be in the form of a secular relativism. Secularization then, in the way they have conceived it, is not different from *secularizationism.* In the second instance, we say that not every ism is

ideological in the second sense of the concept ideology as described above. Indeed it is the second sense of the concept ideology that we are in fact concerned with, since that is the sense they have in mind although they have not stated it definitely, for both secularism and secularization in the way they have [p. 47/48] conceived it almost as similar worldviews are worldviews applicable to state and society. So then in this sense, which is the sense they mean, we say that not every ism is ideological, for it depends upon the conceptual designation of the term to which it is suffixed. When ism is suffixed to secular, or capital, or social, or nihil, it denotes an ideology. But when ism is suffixed to real, or rational, it does not denote an ideology in this sense. Perhaps so in the first sense described above. Nevertheless we can conceive and speak of an Islamic rationalism, and not of an Islamic secularism; so as far as we are concerned the implications inherent in the second sense of the concept ideology, although undoubtedly derived from the first sense of it, deserves our immediate attention, for that is the sense in which secularism and secularization, or secularizationism pose an immediate threat to us. Irrespective of the academic distinction made between the 'open' worldview projected by secularizationism on the one hand, and the 'closed' worldview projected by secularism on the other, both are equally opposed to the worldview projected by Islām. As far as their opposition to Islām is concerned we do not find the distinction between them significant enough for us to justify our making a special distinction between them from the point of view of practical judgement. In fact, in spite of what those theologians say about secularization having its roots in biblical faith and secularism in Western philosophy and science – a claim which we have shown to be incorrect in that both have their roots in Western philosophy and science and metaphysics – the one might, according to the logic of historicity and 'evolution', indeed merge with the other. So in this book, therefore, and particularly with reference to its title: *Islām and Secularism*, the term secularism is meant to denote not merely secular ideologies such as, for example, Communism or Socialism in its various forms, but encompasses also all expressions of the secular worldview including that projected by secularization, which is none other than a secular historical relativism which I have called secularizationism. [p. 48/49]

We have said earlier that Christianity has no Revealed Law or *sharīʼah* such as we have in Islām, and this is because it was not really a revealed religion in the sense we understand. We also said that it has no clear concept of religion except in terms of faith vaguely expressed, and this fact is also related to what is said in the preceding sentence. Christian dogma develops, and has been developing since earliest times; it has always existed in a process of development. The realization that the religion develops is a recent discovery even among the theologians, and this is also perhaps why it has never been nor ever will be easy for them, in their experience and consciousness of existence, to define belief and faith and religion. Their secular authorities have indeed put forward what in fact amounts to *descriptions* of religion, which they ultimately reduce to a system of doctrines and pledges and rites which they understand to have 'developed' and 'evolved' with man as part of the historical process and the 'maturing' of man. The deeper aspects of religion are dealt with and interpreted not by theology,

but by a new science which they have developed for that purpose called the Philosophy of Religion. The word *religion* itself, derived from Middle English *religioun,* from Old French *religion,* from Latin *religio,* which vaguely refers to a 'bond between man and the gods', does not yield much information about its meaning as a real and fundamental aspect of human life. Moreover, the idea of a covenant vaguely discerned behind the 'bond' existing between man and the gods has, because of the peculiar structure of the language, become confusingly opaque when applied to refer to the Universal God of true religion. No doubt there is general agreement among mankind that the concept of religion has to do with a kind of bond, but this is not clearly explained in the various religions, and no revealed Book of the People of the Book made any reference to any fundamental and original covenant between man and God. Only in the Holy Qur'an is there found clear reference to this most important basis of religion, as will be shown in the next chapter.

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6 Tamaru Noriyoshi: *The Problem of Secularization* (1979)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Tamaru Noriyoshi 田丸徳善 (1931–2014) was a well-known Japanese scholar of religion, and a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo and Taishō University.

He graduated from the University of Tokyo's Department of the History of Religions in 1953. Starting in 1955, he studied for four years at the University of Bonn, West Germany, and, from 1959, was research fellow for one year at the Rockefeller Foundation. Tamaru also served as president of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies, and the Japanese Association for Comparative Philosophy.[I]

Tamaru's fields of expertise were comparative religious and cultural theory, and the history of religious thought. He was also deeply interested in Buddhism, Christianity, and Shintoism. He became known to a broader international audience especially due to the edited volume *Religion in Japanese Culture*.[II]

The article printed below (in excerpts) was originally published in English. It first gives a brief overview of the conceptual history of, and the academic discussion about, the term '*sezokuka*,' which is used in Japan as a standard translation of 'secularisation.' Tamaru also points out the complexity and flexibility of the Western term, as well as its often normative implications as a generalised term signifying societal progress. His main focus, however, is on "questions concerning the transhistorical and cross-cultural applicability of the concept of secularization." He argues that, even regarding European history, the concept of secularisation is used transhistorically by sociologists, i.e. applied to historical contexts before the concept was formed. Seen in this light, secularisation is a "technical term to designate a characteristic process which may and in fact did occur repeatedly in any given society and culture." Tamaru shows, however, that the application of the term to Japan is quite controversial among Japanese researchers, not least because of the different social forms that religion has taken in Europe and Japan.

I Wikipedia, s.v. "田丸徳善," last modified October 18, 2021 , 3:32, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%94%B0%E4%B8%B8%E5%BE%B3%E5%96%84.
II Tamaru Noriyoshi and David Reid, eds., *Religion in Japanese Culture*: *Where the Living Traditions Meet a Changing World* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1996). Wikipedia, "田丸徳善."

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The term “secularization” doubtless derives from the Western religious tradition. *Sezokuka* [世俗化], as used in the contemporary Japanese academic vocabulary, may quite probably be considered a direct translation of the English word or its equivalents in other modern European languages. The individual elements constituting this compound word, *se* and *zoku,* as well as their combination *sezoku,* have for a long period of time been in use in our country. As is the case with many other terms of a more or less technical nature, they are borrowings from the Chinese, and their origin can be traced back to such important thinkers of classical times as Mencius or Mo-tzu. In those classical sources – and afterwards, too – the word *se* (which in Japanese is also read *yo*) is usually used to refer to the world of human beings, this world, and the customs and rules current here. *Zoku* likewise means manners or habits. We also have a compound form: *zokuka* [俗化], which may mean instructing people in such social customs, but more often tends to have the rather negative connotation of falling into bad habits, becoming vulgar and degenerate. In this connection, it must be remembered that in Buddhist terminology both *se* and *zoku* are used to designate the ordinary, daily spheres of life in distinction from the properly religious one, for instance, lay people in contrast to monks (*sō* [僧]) who have renounced the world. Phrases like *sōzoku* [僧俗] (clergy and laity), *genzoku* [還俗] (leaving clerical status and returning to an ordinary way of life), *sehō* [世法] or *zokutai* [俗諦] [p. 92/93] (worldly truth) illustrate this use. Here we may have something comparable to the Western dichotomy between the religious and the secular.

In the history of Japanese religion, particularly of Japanese Buddhism, there have been many periods when its representatives and institutions lost their independence and got deeply involved in daily, worldly matters. This was the case, for example, during the Tokugawa period (1600–1868). At that time the majority of Buddhist schools enjoyed the patronage of the government (the shogunate), and Buddhism was given the status of a semi-state religion. But symptoms of degeneration became evident as time went on, coming to the fore in the delinquency of some priests and phenomena of a similar nature. These occasioned severe criticisms against Buddhism, criticisms brought forward by three major groups: (1) Confucian intellectuals and economic theorists, (2) scholars of *kokugaku* [国学] or National Learning, and (3)

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some daimyo who were in charge of local domains and therefore had political motivations. These criticisms resemble in many respects those leveled against Christianity by modern Western thinkers of the Enlightenment period and are a very interesting topic of investigation also from the viewpoint of intellectual history. Tsuji Zennosuke, an acknowledged authority on the history of Japanese Buddhism, discusses these phenomena in detail in a chapter of his standard work, calling them *zokuka* [俗化] of Buddhism (Tsuji 1951, p. 450). It is clear, however, that his reference is more to signs of moral degradation on the part of Buddhist clergy than to a general trend of religious development.

Presumably the first scholar to apply the term *sezokuka* to the history of Japanese religion was Hori Ichirō. In an article entitled "Social transformation and Buddhism" he called the attention of readers to a basic dilemma between "anti-secularism and secularization" (*hanzoku* [反俗] *to sezokuka*) always inherent in Japanese Buddhism. According to him, [p. 93/94] Buddhism, originally a religion with a very high degree of anti-secularism, had become subservient to secular powers, particularly the state, since its introduction into this country. True, this tendency toward secularization had appeared in an earlier stage of its development, but came to be so conspicuous only in Japan (Hori 1961, p. 46). Several years later, in partial adoption of the views of foreign scholars like Charles Eliot and Robert Bellah, he once called the latent religiosity peculiar to Japan "Shinto" in its wider sense. His point was that since Japanese religion was from the very beginning a "secular religion" subordinate to political values, it is by no means possible to trace a process of "secularization" in the modern Western and Christian sense of the word (Hori 1975, p. 155, first published in 1967).

Thus, though he introduced the term "secularization," explicitly citing the English original, it cannot be readily decided whether his problem was exactly the same as the one that has been the main theme of debate during the last decade. For what preoccupied him was the interpretation of the history of Japanese religion or, more precisely, of the undercurrents going through all historical periods, whereas the "secularization controversy" revolves primarily around the question of how to assess the religious situation in the so-called developed societies of the present age. As mentioned above, the concept of secularization in this more specific sense is obviously Western in origin and has been brought into this country only in recent years. Or we might go a step farther and assume that the discussion of the problem itself, insofar as there has been any, was stimulated by the impact of Western views on Japanese scholars and was modelled after these views. In support of this assumption, it may be pointed out that the book *The Secular City* by Harvey Cox (1965), one of the spokesmen of "secular theology," was translated into Japanese as soon as two years after its [p. 94/95] appearance. In this context, too, we can cite the fact that those scholars who first took up the theme as an object of scientific inquiry, like Ikado Fujio (see his 1972 and 1974 books together with many other articles dealing with the subject of contemporary religion) or Swyngedouw (1971 etc.), had a Christian background, either Protestant or Catholic, and seem to share

to a considerable extent the awareness of the problem prevailing in the United States or Europe.[1] [. . . p. 95–100. . .]

One of the characteristic features of the concept of secularization is to be found in its multi-layeredness and amazingly great elasticity. On the one hand it refers to the concrete facts and historical processes which have been and still are taking place around us; on the other it serves to express certain interpretations about these processes. This elasticity was achieved by the usual means of analogical application. Through this means the term, originally used in a rather limited sense to designate legal-political procedures of transference of material property from religious bodies (churches) to the hands of non-religious authorities (confiscations, etc.), was made to cover other spheres of social and cultural life and to refer to an alleged decrease in the influence of religion there. (Similar multi-layeredness can also be found in such concepts as "modernization" or "rationalization," which refer both to material and spiritual spheres and have a close connection with "secularization.") In addition, the concept functions as a medium for ideological factors in the sense of either positive or negative evaluations of the factual process. Matthes quite probably made the same point when he distinguished between the "*experience* of secularization" and the "*thesis* of secularization." According to [p. 100/101] him, the latter is based on primary experiences by various people but, at the same time, is incorporated with partial theorizing about them and also connected with diverse goalsettings. Adopting an expression originally coined by Rene König, he called it a kind of "practical theory" or, in a still different formulation, a "zeitgeschichtliches Interpretament" (Matthes 1967, pp. 77–88). If this in fact is the case, it would be an interesting and worthwhile task to analyze it and lay bare the roots from which it stems, just as it is to study the phenomena in detail. In short, it would be a task to be assigned to intellectual history and to criticism of ideologies.

The practical use of such a thesis consists first of all in its implication that it supposedly enables one to locate contemporary society in a large-scale historical process by contrasting it with the past before the onset of secularization. The allegedly non-secular past is quite often idealized in such a way as to assume the features of a Utopia

1 [note 2 in the original] Around 1960, Japanese scholars started to approach the problem of "religion and social change." The topics, however, were usually formulated in terms of "urbanization" or "industrialization," both of which were more limited in implication than "secularization." The survey by Kishimoto Hideo on "Urbanization of Shinto" (Kishimoto 1964) may be regarded as one of the earliest efforts of this kind. At the Second International Conference for Shinto Studies, held in Tokyo in June 1967, "industrialization" ("modernization") was discussed as the fifth sub-topic of the overall theme "Continuity and Change" (see Kokugakuin University, Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics 1968). As for research on the Buddhist side dealing with changes on the contemporary scene, the work by Fujii Masao (1974) may be mentioned as most pertinent. The articles reprinted in this book mostly deal with the topic of Buddhism and "urbanization," not "secularization." These random examples seem to indicate that the concept of "secularization" did not become fully indigenized until the introduction of "secular theology", among Protestant theological circles and the appearance of the works by Ikado Fujio (1972, 1974).

or Golden Age of religion (cf. Martin 1966) and is sustained by a keen sense of present crisis, thus inducing its users to identify contemporary changes with the decline of religion. Conversely, as in the thinkers of the Enlightenment and of the nineteenth century, the process may be positively evaluated as bringing about an increase of both intellectual and practical freedom for mankind. Moreover, what is important in this context is the fact that in such arguments pro and con, the process called secularization is often considered to take place on a global scale and with a certain amount of necessity. In other words, one implicitly assumes a sort of historical law. Secularization, it is argued, is nothing other than a concomitant phenomenon of the worldwide trend toward industrialization, bureaucratization, and rationalization. Since it is everywhere the same, secularization with all its consequences must occur also in non-Western societies (as an example of such a reasoning, see Berger 1967, pp. 156, 171, etc.). It is by no means self-evident, however, [p. 101/102] that this kind of generalization is legitimate and fits in with individual cases. It is more of a hypothetical conjecture than a verified conclusion. [. . . p. 102–104. . .]

I should now like to turn to a few related issues in an attempt to shed light on the topic from a slightly different perspective. They are, above all, the questions concerning the transhistorical and cross-cultural applicability of the concept of secularization.

At present, as Swyngedouw rightly remarks, "secularization" is used in the first place to refer to the process of change occurring in traditional religious expressions in contemporary society. This is quite natural since the contemporary situation is the primary object which can be approached in empirical, positivistic terms by sociology of religion (in distinction from social history). But the matter is a bit different when it comes to determining the terminus [p. 104/105] a quo of such a process of change. The question cannot be put aside because the concept of "secularization", has an intrinsic reference to the flow of time called history, and hence necessitates some comparison with preceding periods. In this point there are divergent opinions. Sorokin, for instance, suggested that the secularization of social, individual, and cultural life in Europe first appeared during the twelfth century (Sorokin 1966). Hill, to cite just one other example, went even further back: he maintained that the initial onset of secularization might be regarded as having happened in the fourth century after the conversion of Constantine to Christianity. The acceptance of the church as an established religion by the Roman Empire, he contends, led to a lowering of the degree of commitment of the members which had been maintained because of its minority character, and later called forth various protest movements aiming at a virtuoso religiosity like that of medieval monasticism or modern evangelism (see Hill 1973, pp. 232–234).

In the last-mentioned example, "secularization" is applied not only to the objective, institutional aspect but also to the subjective aspect of religious life. What is important about this view, in addition, seems to be the fact that by putting the origin so far back, it by implication opens up the way for a transhistorical use of the term. Indeed, as Reicke has shown with regard to European history (see Reicke 1961), secularization in the objective-legal sense of transference of control over material property from the hands

of religious organizations to secular, political authorities took place already in ancient times and was repeated thereafter. In other words, it is a process which may occur irrespective of the age. Moreover, though this is more difficult to demonstrate, the absence of religious motivations or attitudes is not necessarily a phenomenon peculiar to the modern and contemporary periods. (Maybe we had better call this [p. 105/106] phenomenon "secularity" instead of "secularization.") A case in point is that of primitive man or society. Some scholars, notably Eliade (see Eliade 1957), have described primitives as if they all were deeply religious. It is clear, however, that this is a gross oversimplification. Already several decades ago Radin asserted that in primitive societies, too, there are men of different temperaments: skeptics alongside the religiously-minded (see Radin 1927). Recently, the same view has been put forward once more by Douglas, who indicated that since among the primitives every variety of materialism and skepticism can be found together with religious outlooks, the distinction between modern and traditional or primitive has nothing to do with the contrast between secular and religious (see Douglas 1973, p. 36).

Understood in this way, "secularization" both in its objective and subjective forms becomes a technical term to designate a characteristic process which may and in fact did occur repeatedly in any given society and culture. Put differently, it is a universal process irrespective of time and place. In the sociologies of religion written in the 1940s by Wach (see Wach 1944) or Mensching (see Menshing [sic] 1947, 2nd rev. ed. 1968), whose basic orientation was comparative-typological rather than purely sociological in the more specialized sense, the word was employed as a general term, in marked contrast to the tendency among sociologists of religion today to restrict its application to modern countries. In this connection, incidentally, the treatment of the subject by Ratschow deserves attention as an attempt to bridge the two viewpoints. He distinguished between "latent" and "acute" secularizations and showed that, while the former together with some sub-types of the latter are universally recognizable phenomena, the "totalitarian" secularization of life due to the Enlightenment since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must be regarded as a unique historical event (see Ratschow 1961). [p. 106/107]

Here we are confronted with a basic difference in the approaches of various sociologies of religion: comparative-typological versus historical-specialized, religio-scientific versus sociological in the narrower sense. And here also we encounter a fundamental difficulty inherent in the problem of secularization. Applying the concept to diverse phenomena, both past and present, in a neutral, a-historical, universal manner, as did Wach and Mensching, almost inevitably results in a weakening and finally a loss of its interpretive power (Aussagekraft) in relation to the present-day situation (on this point, see Fürstenberg 1961, col. 1028; Rendtorff 1966, p. 55). From a certain point of view, this may seem too big a loss, especially when one considers the circumstance that the classical achievement of Weber owes its lasting influence to its penetrating insights – not to say predictions – about the trends of the modern world. On the other hand, however, we should take care not to overemphasize the significance of the modern and contem-

porary situation and claim it as unique in the history of mankind. In this connection, Robertson's warning against the inclination he calls "presentism", seems especially to the point (Robertson 1970, p. 240). For man is after all a self-centered being and tends to stress the importance of things, both in space and time, nearer to him, and the sociologist of religion can be no exception to this rule. More concretely, the discussion of secularization quite often, if not always, is accompanied by a sense of crisis as regards the present age. But is not every period of history a transition and hence a crisis? For an adequate treatment of the problem of secularization, I would contend, a way must be sought to synthesize somehow the wide, comparative perspective with a keen awareness of historical change.

The question whether the concept of secularization can be transhistorically applied overlaps to some extent that of whether its cross-cultural use is possible and legitimate. [p. 107/108] Both share a common structure and exhibit similar features. Admittedly, the concept and problem of secularization itself came to be formulated during the process of modernization of European countries, and can be fully appreciated only against the background of this experience. Most Western scholars, even when asking whether there is any "autochthonous parallel" in Asian or African societies, end up with a negative answer (see, for example, Hoekendijk 1961). Or, to cite another example, in a recent book Martin explicitly states that secularization has been first of all a Christian phenomenon, and that this process has been exported with modifications to other societies (see Martin 1978, pp. 1–2). A critical recognition of this fact, surely, is a welcome tendency, since it helps to avoid the errors, so often committed also in the study of religion, of making hasty generalizations from a limited number of historical cases and elevating them to the status of a model.

Scholars of Japanese religion, at the same time, seem to realize increasingly that in Japan as a non-Western society the theoretical models derived from Western societies cannot be meaningfully applied. We have already seen that Hori Ichirō remained rather reserved or even skeptical about the possibility of talking about "secularization" in the history of Japanese religion, even though he was one of the first to introduce the term into the Japanese academic vocabulary. This negative response, certainly, was not without connection with his basic interest in the substratum of Japanese religiosity which he called "folk religion" (*minkan shinkō* [民間信仰]), and with his inclination to see continuity rather than change in history. More recently, Yanagawa and Abe have brought forth, though from a slightly different angle, an even more powerful challenge to Western sociological theories, thus calling the cross-cultural applicability of the concept of secularization into serious doubt. Pointing out the peculiar nature of Japanese religion, which does not place much emphasis [p. 108/109] on belief and hence admits a high degree of syncretism, they argue that it cannot be explained in terms of the church-oriented concept of religion of the West. If there is any parallel development comparable to the secularization in Christian countries, according to them, it surely is not the decline of institutionalized religions but the change occurring in the institution of the *ie* [家] or household and its accompanying ancestor worship (see Yanagawa and

Abe 1978, pp. 8, 24, 33–34). Since, broadly speaking, the *ie* system has not been the sole foundation of Japanese society and there have been, alongside and partly overlapping it, community forms of life both on local and national levels, it is not enough to direct our attention toward ancestor worship alone. With this modification, however, their argument may be readily endorsed.

There is no denying the fact that these institutions in Japan are undergoing changes just as radical as those of Christian churches or other organizations in Western societies. And perhaps the traditional value-system of Japanese society is also currently involved in some kind of transformation, though in a way that is more subtle and harder to demonstrate (cf. Swyngedouw 1976, 1978). But how and why? And does this change, if it can be identified, mean a decline of religion or not? Here we are again brought back to our starting point and confronted with a series of open questions to be investigated in future.

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7 Ikado Fujio: *The Search for a Definition of Secularization: Toward a General Theory* (1983)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Ikado Fujio 井門富二夫 (1924–2016) was a Japanese scholar of religion, who specialised in the sociology of religion and comparative cultural theory. Born in 1924 in Ōtsu City, Shiga Prefecture, he studied at the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Letters, graduating in 1949 with a thesis entitled "The Development of Evangelical Denominations in the Eighteenth Century: Aspects of Denominational Modernisation", in which he focused on John Wesley (1703–1791). From 1955 to 1959, Ikado studied at the University of Chicago's Graduate School, as a Fulbright scholar.

After returning to Japan, he worked for eight years at the Ministry of Education and was a lecturer at the University of Tokyo. In 1968, Ikado became a professor at Tsuda Women's College's newly established Department of International Relations, where he was able to broaden his contacts with scholars in the United States and Europe. In 1972, he wrote the book *Sezoku shakai no shūkyō* (Religion in a secular society). In 1975, he accepted a position at the University of Tsukuba, where he was head of the Department of Philosophy and Philosophy of Thought, Area Studies. After Ikado retired from the University of Tsukuba, and became a professor emeritus, he became the first dean of the School of International Studies at J. F. Oberlin University. He was also a visiting professor at Aichi Gaku'in University, as well as president of the Japanese Association of Religious Studies.[I]

A consistent theme in Ikado's work is the problem of the relationship between universalism, which, in reality, is often merely a generalisation of Western concepts and theories, and cultural particularism, which emphasises the peculiarities of Japanese history, culture, and society. This problem arises not least in theories of secularisation, which usually have a strong Eurocentric bias, declaring a contingent historical development in Western Europe to be a general law of development. In the article reprinted

I For biographical information on Ikado see Jan Swyngedouw, "Ikado Fujio: A Japanese Cosmopolitan," Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 7, no. 2–3 (1980): 208–26. Cf. Wikipedia, s.v. "井門富二夫," last modified November 1, 2023, 6:37, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://ja.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=井門富二夫&oldid=97702518.

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here, he criticises the then-common definition of secularisation as “a general decline of religion in all its dimensions.” He contrasts this with a model that focuses on the transformation of religion in a functionally differentiated society. In this process of secularisation, we do not experience a decline, but rather a change in religion. Religion responds to societal differentiation by itself differentiating into three forms: (1) culture religion, or institutional religion, (2) organisational religion, and, (3) private religion, or “invisible religion.”

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Arguments regarding secularization greatly depend upon the protagonists’ definitions of religion itself. As a starting point for discussion, let me first of all put forward my operational hypothesis about religion.

Religion, as well as other cultural and social phenomena such as politics, economics, and education, is one of the essential elements of a cultural environment, created by human beings in order to accommodate themselves to nature and to survive. Although all such elements are, so to speak, apparatuses for human existence, religion characteristically is a system of symbols which brings the cosmological framework of a given cultural environment into existence, maintains it, and stabilizes the view of values or the meaningful order in the environment. In that process, it is a means of transmitting to the cultural environment, in some form or another, those expression, namely “transcendence, or value standards which do not exist within human experience.”

Thus religion is an attempt on the part of human beings to approach the transcendent, an attempt which produces authorities and gives birth to the legitimation system which makes the cultural society a cosmos. The transcendent always conceals itself from human beings. It is an authority which on the one hand gives closure to a cosmos, in other words, gives an absolute order to the cosmos, but on the other hand, it relativizes and diversifies a number of separate universes. According to the relation between religion and the transcendent, therefore, the latter becomes an authority, and occasionally relativizes a given cultural society, thus harboring the potential for becoming a motive force toward social change.

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From this point of view, former arguments about secularization appear doubtful. Is it certain that secularization means a general decline of religion in all its dimensions? If so, why do religious customs or rites such as *shichi-go-san* 七五三 (shrine pilgrimage on a child's 3rd, 5th and 7th birthdays), *hatsu-mōde* 初詣 (first pilgrimage of the new year), and funerals flourish, and why is it that the expansion of new religious groups continually become the topic of news in Japan, while statistically, the number of Japanese who claim to have no religious belief is increasing?

In European countries where parish churches have broken down, and even funeral rites are being secularized, why are new fundamentalist sects constantly coming to life, and why do private religious rituals, such as the spiritual exercises of Zen, flourish in spite of the decrease of social attendance at churches?

The assertion that secularization means religious decline seems to be based on statistical and apparent phenomena such as decrease of the number of members of particular religious groups (religious communities and religious voluntary associations), or the disappearance of certain religious customs. The view of religion implicit in that argument is that of a primitive or peasant society where the society itself is a religious community, not yet functionally differentiated from law and politics.

Thus secularization might be explained more accurately as being a process of the functional differentiation of other social elements, such as politics, law, economics, and education, from religion, as the result of social changes in the society where religion was once the dominant norm. From the Parsonian point of view, when "hardware" turns out to be functionally differentiated, gigantic and complicated in order to gain greater application capacity, "software" should be more generalized to keep the cybernetic balance as a whole. This can be explained as follows:

(a) While the religious world view becomes more abstract and more distant from the world of the masses, each individual as one internal mechanism of the hardware system, tends to participate in more familiar sub-world programs, that is, decline of established religions on the one hand, and the flourishing of new religions or political groups as references groups on the other hand.

(b) As Fenn analyzed excellently, this "functional differentiation" means the process whereby "natural actors," who were in harmony with the society and its religious view of the universe, change into "corporate actors," who belong to diverse sub-ideology system and compete with each other as a result of the diffusion or weakening of that religious world view. In this process, a society changes in character from a natural integrity system to the state, which as a control system depends on the agreement of "corporate actors." Therefore, in modern society, the state, as a source of social integrating power, often conflicts with corporations or associations which serve to give a core of identity to the individual person. Rather than being a source of total social power, religion is more often a symbol used by persons or groups who protest against society in the name of the transcendent.

(c) Under these situations, religion, once the integrity symbol of the whole society, differentiates itself functionally and works separately in other secular domains.

> For example, (1) religious symbols which could not cope with more transcendent and abstract programs have become "customs" such as initiation rituals or funeral ceremonies performed by established religions, working covertly among secular domains such as politics, law, and ethics; (2) it becomes the ideology of such diverse reference groups as religious organizations or political parties, and a symbol of goal-attainment behavior; (3) most remarkably, it becomes a modern myth in the form of science fiction or poetry, which helps the formation of individual identity. Or it is used as a mass medium to sell a diffused world view to the individual consumer, serving as a secular means of maintaining a latent cultural framework.

I regard this as a process of differentiation of religion from other social domains. In this process, the religious function of integrating the cosmos or challenging established norms, diffuses itself into other social domains. It is not called religion any longer, but it remains religious functionally. The aspect mentioned in (1) above, I call culture religion, or institutional religion. The aspect described in (2), organization religion with the function of goal attainment. And the aspect of (3), private religion, or "invisible religion," according to Luckmann.

I think it is only from this point of view possible to solve the contradictory situation obtaining between the decline of religion and the concurrent maintenance of religious customs in modern societies. On the surface of society, however, conflict between state and other "corporate powers" or individuals over the issues of authority and identity can often be observed, making the endless effort of society towards integration stand out. This is the process of Rousseau's "political religion" attempting to extend its influence. When one substitutes Bellah's "civil religion" for "political religion," the following conditions should be taken into account: first, a state admits the coexistence of various religions and politics as sub-systems of ideology under the name of "transcendence," whose meaning has already been weakened even on the symbolic level; and second, the authority of civil religion should be established only after obtaining a national consensus. If one describes secularization in this way, then as Ikado and Vernon pointed out in the 1960's, while religion itself continues to be functionally differentiated (in other word, former religious functions are turned over to other social phenomena), it still performs its original cultural function, and in that sense it is aligned on a par with politics, economics, etc. In this way it is still active as a cultural product inevitably brought about in the course of the human struggle for existence.

In surveys of political consciousness, while many respondents note that they have no interests in political matters, they nonetheless constitute a political powerful "indifference group." Similarly, many people who express a superficial indifference to religious matters actively participate in religious functions.

As pointed out earlier by Swanson and Margaret Mead, ontological theology, which gave authority to past experiences in the name of God, declined after the Reformation in the West, and in its place arose epistemological theology. Epistemological theology proclaimed the god of eschatological hope, the hope for a yet unreachable utopian goal

which appeared in the context of the dialectical development of human experience, namely the contradictory, conflicting nature of experience (and as Skinner has pointed out, to the degree that it was utopia, it was no different from a transcendental existence). From theologian Patric Masterson's viewpoint, it is possible to define the philosophers from Marx to Ernst Bloch as "modern religious men" on the same plane as Martin Buber.

Such Copernican change in theological matters may be one aspect of secularization, and if so, the first characteristic of secularization may be the "functional differentiation of society, and the functional differentiation of religion in response," and the second, "the process whereby transcendental sources of value come to be expressed by the use of future-oriented symbol systems, such as 'hope'."

In this sense, Duvos, the author of *A God Within*, or Erich Fromm may be considered representative of modern theologians, and similar examples of modern-type religious groups in Japan might be the Yomagishi-kai[I] and Ittō-en,[II] groups which aim at the realization of Buddhist communal society.

I CK: Obviously an incorrect rendering of "Yamagishi-kai ヤマギシ会", i.e., the largest commune movement in Japan, founded by Miyozō Yamagishi (1901–1961) in 1953, whose aim it is to "harmonise nature and humanity, namely heaven, earth and man, and to bring about a stable and comfortable society for mankind, rich in goods, health and affection."

II CK: A utopian community founded by Nishida Tenkō in Kyoto in 1905, who, distressed by the conflict between farmers and capitalists, abandoned his job to lead a wandering life of seeking. In 1905, while fasting in Nagahama's Aizen Hall, he heard the cries of an infant and realised that the ideal of life was to be as mindless as a baby, so he founded the commune Ittōen –燈園 (Garden of the Single Light) in Shishigatani, Kyoto, where he preached a religious life of alms-bearing, service and penance.

8 Azzam Tamimi: *The Origins of Arab Secularism* (2000)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Azzam Tamimi (b. 1955, Hebron, West Bank) is a British-Palestinian academic and political activist, who lives in London. He is affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and supports Hamas.

Tamimi lived in Hebron until the age of seven, when his family moved to Kuwait, where he went to school. Later, he attended college in London, where he received a BA in combined sciences from the University of Sunderland in 1979, and a PhD in political theory from the University of Westminster in 1998.

He was the founder of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London, which he headed until 2008.

Tamimi has written and edited several books on Middle Eastern and Islamic politics. Among them are *Rachid Ghannouchi, Democrat within Islamism* (2001), in which he introduces Sheik Ghannouchi, the leader of Tunisia's Islamist opposition, as someone who advocates democracy and pluralism, but conceives contemporary forms of liberal democracy as being unsuitable for Muslim societies, because of their secular foundations. Together with John Esposito, he edited *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (2000). Later, he wrote *Hamas: A History from Within* (2007), and *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (2009). He considers Hamas to be the legitimate political representation of the Palestinians.

Tamimi has made very controversial statements on the Islamist attacks of 9/11, on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on his readiness to serve as a martyr for his country.

For the sourcebook, a text from *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* was chosen, where the author claims a fundamental incompatibility between "secularism" and Islam, both in the past and the present.

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Introduction

> In the social sciences, one of the commonest theses is the secularisation thesis, which runs as follows. Under conditions prevailing in industrial-scientific society, the hold of religion over society and its people diminishes. By and large this is true, but it is not completely true, for there is one major exception, Islam. In the last hundred years the hold of Islam over Muslims has not diminished but has rather increased. It is one striking counter-example to the secularisation thesis.[1]

The last one hundred years Gellner refers to comprise the period when secularism was introduced to various parts of the Muslim World. This was also the period when, as a reaction, Islamic movements emerged to counter what they saw as a colonial design against Islam and the Muslims in the form of an intellectual and political onslaught aimed at westernising the Muslims and stripping them of their cultural identity.

Secularism, in Arabic ‘ilmaniyah (from ‘ilm – science) or ‘alamaniyah (from ‘alam – world), may be more accurately rendered by the word dunyawiyah, meaning that which is worldly, mundane or temporal. It is a concept that came to the Muslim world in the company of other related terms such as modernity, westernisation and modernisation within the context of colonialism. Although secularism is usually taken to imply the liberation of the political from the authority of the religious, it has, together with its related terms, been used in different contexts to describe a process aimed at the marginalisation of Islam, or its exclusion from the process of re-structuring society during both the colonial and postindependence periods. Secularisation in the Middle East has entailed severing society’s cultural roots; its objective has been to effect a complete break with the past.

In the English-language literature on secularism and secularisation, political theorists and historians at least agree on one fundamental observation, namely that ‘secularism’ is a product of Christian society. Whether secularism is defined as a reaction or a protest movement,[2] as a [p. 13/14] doctrine or an ideology,[3] whether secularisation’s eventual objective is to deny God and eliminate religion altogether or just to restrict religion to the private sphere while recognising the existence of a ‘god’ that has no say in people’s worldly, or secular, affairs, the concept cannot be comprehended outside the context of Europe’s evolution and its Christian reform movements. Long before the Renaissance, the term ‘secular’ was used to describe functions that were extra-ecclesiastical. The religious establishment itself sanctioned and requested these functions

1 [note 1 in the original] Ernest Gellner, ‘Marxism and Islam: Failure and Success’ in A. Tamimi (ed.), *Power-Sharing Islam?*, London: Liberty for Muslim World Publications, 1993, p. 36.

2 [note 2 in the original] *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* James Hastings and T. Clark (eds), Edinburgh, 1971, vol. II, p. 347. See also the *Blackwell Dictionary of 20th Century Social Thought,* W. Outhwaite & T. Bottmore (eds), 1995.

3 [note 3 in the original] *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* Mircea Eliade (ed.), Macmillan, New York, 1987, vol. 13, p. 159.]

either because priests could not or did not perform them, or in response to changes in social or political circumstances. [. . . p. 14–16 . . .]

Muslim critics of secularism maintain that in the Western tradition secularism is not only justifiable but has even had positive aspects. It is justifiable in the West due to the nature of the Christian religion. Christianity in medieval Europe, it is argued, was responsible for the emergence and success of secularism in the West for it already recognised the division of life into what belonged to God and what belonged to Caesar, lacked a system for the legislation and regulation of mundane affairs, and had for many centuries been associated with despotic regimes and with oppressive theocracies. Furthermore, medieval Christianity entertained the existence of a special class of people, the priests, who claimed to be God's representatives on earth, interpreting what they claimed were his words and using their religious authority to deprive members of the community of their basic rights. In other words, the Christian theocratic establishment constituted a major obstacle to progress and development, and consequently to democracy. In contrast the rise of secularism in the Muslim world occurred in completely different circumstances. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and specifically until just before Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, the entire Arab region was Islamic in norms, laws, values and traditions. During the Western colonial era, inaugurated by the French campaign, the Arab world witnessed gradual intellectual, social and political changes as a result of the impression left by the modes of thought and conduct brought to the area by the Western colonialists.[4] [. . . p. 16–28]

Secularism as advocated by Arab secularists has been proven to be incompatible with Islam. If secularism was justifiable in the West due to the nature of religion there, it is entirely unnecessary in the Muslim world. Muslims can progress and develop without having to create a wall between their religious values and livelihood. Secularisation of Muslim societies, though short-lived, has been possible only through force as wielded by despotic governments.

Secularism was turned into a religion by its advocates, and they installed themselves as an authority very much resembling the Church in medieval Europe. A proof of the failure of secularism is the reluctance of secularists to accept the verdict of the people through free democratic elections. Results of elections held so far, at parliamentary, municipal or trade unionist level, clearly show secularists to be unpopular with the masses. The major challenge to them has been the Islamists' commitment to the values of democracy, pluralism, civil liberties and human rights, which contemporary Arab secularists claim to uphold but fail to respect.

4 [note 16 in the original] R.S. Ahmad, *Al-Din Wal-Dawlah Wal-Thawrah* (Religion, State and Revolution), Al-Dar Al-Sharqiyah, 1989, p. 31.

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9 Wajih Kawtharani: *Religion and Politics in Islamic Societies* (2001)

Translated and introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Wajih Kawtharani (b. 1941) is Professor Emeritus of History at the Lebanese University, and currently a research professor and publication manager at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He has published widely on social and political history, with a regional focus on the Mashriq and the Levant, and has also written about the relationship between religion and politics in Arab and Islamic countries more broadly. His book *The Faqih and the Sultan: Dialectic of Religion and Politics during the Ottoman Period and under Safavid and Qajar rule* was first published in 1989, and is now in its fourth edition. The *faqīḥ* (jurisprudent) and the sultan (ruler) exemplify the relationship between religion (*dīn*) and politics (*siyāsa*), or between religious propagation (*daʿwa*) and state (*dawla*). As Kawtharani notes in his book (p. 35), this relationship was historically also expressed using other terms, such as tribal solidarity (*ʿasabiyya*) and religious propagation in the writings of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), or rulers' stipulations (*al-aḥkām al-sulṭāniyya*) and divinely sanctioned governance (*al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*) in the writings of al-Mawardi (d. 1058), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and others. In Christian European history, yet more terms were used. Kawtharani argues that, while institutional arrangements and chronological stages differed between Christian and Islamic history, there are striking similarities in the basic relationship between religious and worldly power.

Kawtharani focuses on the cases of Ottoman and Seljuq rule, as these produced the most influential models in Islamic history, continuing to shape contemporary memory and public arguments. In the limited space provided here, one cannot reproduce Kawtharani's more detailed historical findings and arguments. Instead, the following selection is taken from his introduction to the third edition (2001), in which Kawtharani pertinently situates his own position and approach in relation to prevalent views concerning the relationship between religion and politics in Islamic societies. He argues against the view, held by both Islamists and some Orientalists, that religion and politics are not distinct within Islam, as they are in Christianity. Criticising the superficial and selective appropriation of historical references and precedents in contemporary arguments either for or against secularism, he argues that a comparative history would reveal striking similarities between Islamic and Christian European history. He combines his historical study with a normative argument in favour of secularity, which he considers to be the prevention of using religion for

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political purposes and interests, and, as such, to be necessary for a modern democratic state and civil society, in Islamic and Christian European contexts alike.

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Wajih Kawtharani. *al-Faqih wa-l-Sultan. Jadaliyyat al-Din wa-l-Siyasa fi Tajribatayn Tarikhiyyatayn: al-ʿUthmaniyya wa-l-Safawiyya-al-Qajiriyya* [The Faqih and the Sultan: Dialectic of Religion and Politics during the Ottoman Period and under Safavid and Qajar Rule]. 4th ed. Beirut: al-Markaz al-ʿArabi, 2015; 15–23, 25–26.

Translation by Florian Zemmin

When the Islamist talks like the Orientalist about the relationship between religion and politics (via the examples of Bernard Lewis and Muhammad ʿImara).

In his book *The Political Language of Islam*, the Orientalist Bernard Lewis writes about the relationship between religion and politics:

> In classical Islam there was no distinction between Church and state. In Christendom the existence of two authorities goes back to the founder, who enjoined his followers to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's. Throughout the history of Christendom there have been two powers: God and Caesar, represented in this world by *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, or, in modern terms, church and state. They may be associated, they may [be] separate; they may be in harmony, they may be in conflict; one may dominate, the other may dominate; one may interfere, the other may protest . . .. But always there are two, the spiritual and the temporal powers, each with its own laws and jurisdictions, its own structure and hierarchy.

Lewis goes on:

> In pre-westernized Islam, there were not two powers but one, and the question of separation, therefore, could not arise. The distinction between church and state [p. 15/16], so deeply rooted in Christendom, did not exist in Islam, and in classical Arabic, as well as in other languages which derive their intellectual and political vocabulary from classical Arabic, there were no pairs of words corresponding to spiritual and temporal, lay and ecclesiastical, religious and secular. It was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then under the influence of Western ideas and institutions, that new words were found, first in Turkish and then in Arabic, to express the idea of secular. Even in modern usage, there is no Muslim equivalent to "the Church," meaning "ecclesiastical organization." All the different words for mosque denote only a building which is a place of worship, not an abstraction, an authority, or an institution. One might perhaps discern, in the postclassical evolution of the professional men of religion, some approximation to a clergy, and such terms as "ulema" and "mollahs" almost acquire this sense. But there is no equivalent to the term "laity," a meaningless expression in the context of Islam. At the present time, the very notion of a secular jurisdiction

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> and authority – of a so-to-speak unsanctified part of life that lies outside the scope of religious law and those who uphold it – is seen as an impiety, indeed as the ultimate betrayal of Islam.[I]

Lewis then concludes, in no uncertain terms, that this holds true for so-called "fundamentalist" parties and movements, as well as for all states in the Arab and Islamic world that had found themselves obliged to include (in their constitutions) that "Islam is the religion of the state." He exempts the Kemalist Turkish experience from this verdict, only to add that Turkish society being Islamic undermined the secularism of the state, which would enable a Turkish Islamic party to come to power. He makes this claim as if a society being Islamic, in that the majority believes in Islam, means that it can only bring forth a state that does not separate (*tufarriq*) religion and politics, and does not distinguish (*tafṣil*) between what is civil and what is religious, or between what is sacred or divine and what is temporal or human.[II] [p. 16/17]

Paradoxically, we find Muhammad ʿImara, an Islamist author (*kātib islāmī*) hostile to Orientalism and Westernization, reiterating the same terms and using the same concepts, in order to arrive at the same conclusion: that secularism is absent from Islam and Muslims, and that secularism even contradicts the principles and bases of Islam.

Muhammad ʿImara opines: "Islam does not render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's;" as if secularism were among Christianity's original principles (*aṣl min uṣūl*) and applying secularism in European modernity were a return to the origin (*al-aṣl*); as if Christianity in its origins called for secularism through its very nature. As to what happened in European Christian history between the papacy and kings – the declaration of rule by divine right, and the outbreak of religious wars – this is considered to be nothing but a deviation from the first principles of Christianity, a deviation for which the men of religion, that is, the clergy, are responsible.

In this way, history, and its concomitants and complexities, are removed from religion, from both Christianity and Islam. Thereby, a fixed and timeless image is solidified in the mind of the (classical) Orientalist and in the mind of the Islamist thinker. An image of unicity (*tawḥīd*) and the middle way (*wasaṭiyya*)[III] here, and an image of duality there.

I FZ: Kawtharani takes this translated quote from the French translation of Lewis' book: Bernard Lewis, *Le langage politique de L'Islam* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 13–14. The quote here is taken from the English original: Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2–3; the second part of the quote follows directly after the first; the omission in the first part of the quote is of only the words "as we are now learning again"; in the second part, the Arabic has only "spiritual and secular" (*al-rūḥī wa-l-ʿalmānī*), where the original has "spiritual and temporal, lay and ecclesiastical, religious and secular"; the Arabic has only ʿulamaʾ where the original has 'ulema' and 'mollahs'."

II FZ: Kawtharani here refers to the French translation, p. 14; see p. 4 in the English original.

III FZ: *wasaṭiyya* is rather firmly established as a positively connoted concept in Islamic (and Islamist) discourse, referring to the principle of taking a reasonable moderate middle position between alleged extremes.

ʿImara writes, "We are not exposed to this contradictory duality, or that heated polarization, both of which European civilization and its reality experienced, and which made matters become black and white there; a secularism that separates (*tafṣil*) religion from the state, or leads to its [i.e. religion's] destruction, and the elimination of its influence and effect from both the state and society, or [leads to] a clergy and religious sovereignty and rule by divine right. . ."[1] Thus the Islamist, exactly like the Orientalist, presents the duality of Christianity as proof and vindication of the difference between the two experiences; he does so in order to refute the idea of secularism "as the solution." For if no problem exists in the Islamic experience, then there is no [need for a] solution!

When the Islamist writer then adds that "part of" the problem was produced by "reality," he confines himself to condemning the problem, evoking "Islam" and trends of Islamic thought [p. 17/18] to support this condemnation. He writes,

> It is true that Islamic historical reality saw an imitation of Christianity with regard to its disruption: some scholars of Islamic religion (*ʿulamāʾ al-dīn al-islāmī*) turned into "men of religion" (*ʻrijāl al-dīnʼ*); they claimed for themselves the power to "declare what is lawful and what is forbidden," and monopolized for their opinions the validity of the singular true opinion – and hence the official [opinion] of Islam, even though in Islam the efforts of one scholar to arrive at an insight do not bind other scholars, and do not even bind the followers of other scholars . . . Yet, this imitation of this [Christian] disruption became a historical reality that Islam did not acknowledge, and which did not evolve into a part of the religion. . . . It even became a reality condemned by all trends of Islamic thought, and never became accepted, except in the sphere of the Shiʿite school.[2]

By mentioning the Shiʿite-Sunni division, or any other division in the Islamic world, the author can easily confine "this disruption" to one group, especially when history – the history of groups and their conflicts, of states and the groups within them (*ʿaṣabiyyātihā*), of jurists and their (negative or positive) relation to the rulers – is erased, and cases of declaring someone a sinner or an apostate in the name of religion are forgotten by both Sunnis and Shiʿites. Subsequently, the author can easily present himself as a critic representing "true Islam" and a judge of "historical reality." Hence, he allows himself to say, "this historical reality was not acknowledged by Islam and did not evolve into a part of religion."[3]

This elevation of Islam above history and reality facilitates the production of a contemporary "Islamic discourse" that serves two functions. The first function is to erase conflicts [that did exist] from history or, when reluctantly acknowledging them, to depict them as "deviations and disruptions." The second, complementary function is to enter into the dominant contemporary political conflict, by adopting a standpoint that one considers to be truly Islamic, identical with the full and comprehensive Islam (*al-Islām al-kullī wa-l-shumūlī*), and that rejects the trends of secularism. This standpoint declares

1 [note 3 in the original] Muhammad ʿImara, *al-Islam wa-l-ʿUruba wa-l-ʿAlmaniyya*. Beirut, Dar al-Wahda 1981, p. 63.
2 [note 4 in the original] Ibid., p. 63.
3 [note 5 in the original] Ibid., p. 63.

that the latter emerged from the womb of European civilization, and in the context of particular circumstances [p. 18/19] and premises, which are epitomized by the conflict between church and temporal power. Sometimes trends of secularism are [declared to be] ideological, induced by colonialism and its [compliant] local elites. This logic, which is in need of revision, has unfortunately become a dominant thought that has intruded into some lines of nationalist thought and the minds of some nationalist thinkers, foremost among them Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri.[IV] In this dominant perspective, terms and concepts feature as standalone weapons, in order to establish one concept, and erase another from a whole civilization and from an entire history. The words "clergy," "man of religion," "secular," and "secularism" were absent from Islamic civilization and its history and language. The difference [from European civilization] on this level is used by Orientalists, Islamist authors, and scholars concerned with "identity" – such as al-Jabiri – to justify the elimination and disposal of the concept of secularism.

In my opinion, the historical context of the socio-political conflict witnessed in Islamic history over the position of religion might have differed from the Christian historical experience, on the level of the words used to describe it, but it did not differ from it as concerns its substance and essence; nor fundamentally as concerns the function of religion in Islamic history's political conflicts. Ibn Khaldun, in his *Muqaddima*,[V] points to the concept of seeking power through religion (*al-istiqwāʾ bi-l-dīn*) when discussing the dialectic relationship between tribal solidarity and religious propagation (*jadaliyyat al-ʿalāqa bayna al-ʿaṣabiyya wa-l-daʿwa al-dīniyya*). He says, "religious propagation adds to the power of tribal solidarity." Prior to this, jurists had legitimized emirates based on force and coercion (*imārat al-istīlāʾ al-ʿaskariyya*) religiously. And a long time before that, Imam ʿAli distinguished (*farraqa*) between godly rule, as it was advocated by the Khawarij, and the need for an "emirate" as a socio-political function. What is more, the opinions of later jurists (in Mamluk times) evinced a distinction and differentiation (*tamyīz wa-tafrīq*) between what they called "(religiously) legitimate rulership (*al-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*)" and "customary rulership (*al-siyāsa al-iṣṭilāḥiyya*)." This led to the transformation of jurisprudence (*al-iftāʾ wa-l-qaḍāʾ*) – a task entrusted to the most capable jurists (*al-mujtahidīn*) – into an institution of the ruler, namely the institution of the shaykh al-Islam, such that power was distributed between the ruler and the jurist and between the ruling and the legislating body. The context and its result were identical for the Sunni (Ottoman) state and the Shiʿite (Safawid) state. [p. 19/20]

This "duality," that the Islamists and some Orientalists (such as Bernard Lewis) impugn, appears to be self-evident in contemporary Arab and Islamic societies. It can

IV FZ: See text no. 39 in volume two.

V FZ: See text no. 9 in volume two.

be seen everywhere, from the *miḥna*[VI] of ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq,[VII] and the crisis of Taha Husayn and his book *al-Shiʿr al-Jahili*, to the murder of Faraj Fuda, the stabbing of Naguib Mahfuz, the *miḥna* of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, and the opposition of religious and civil institutions (*muʾassasāt dīniyya wa-ahliyya*) to a book here and an author there, all in the name of defending Islam. From what in Iran or Kuwait is today called the conflict between "conservatives and liberals," to the Lebanese crisis of "civil marriage" and the fabricated issue around the singer Marcel Khalifa, in which the legal opinion of a civil judiciary entered the religious civil wars and their legitimization (*mashrūʿātihā*) in more than one place. This is the same overlapping and intricated duality that pained European Christian societies, even when it was expressed in other terms.

The historical simplification that we see concerning this topic is based on concepts and terms that are employed by someone like Bernard Lewis, and repeated without hesitation from a different position by many Islamist authors. (These concepts and terms) shut the door on sincere historical investigation in two directions: one, understanding and comprehending European and Christian history; two, understanding and comprehending the histories of the Islamic peoples, especially in the field of social and political histories and the position of religion within them.

Islamist authors usually take refuge in the concept of "*tawḥīd*" (unicity) or "*al-wasaṭiyya*" (the middle way), to impugn dualities and conflicts in our Islamic history. With these expressions, they obliterate the history of conflicts, wars, seditions, and the use of religion for the purpose of conquest. These concepts are the veil of history. When we remove it, we will discover that we are in the direst need of secularism, just as European societies were. Hence, we arrive at the following argument: secularism concerning our political and civil lives means first and foremost – i.e. before its other meanings, which are subject to discussion, opinions, and approaches – the prohibition of political empowerment through religion (*al-istiqwāʾ al-siyāsī bi-l-dīn*). This is a matter that does not touch upon religion, but rather upon those who use religion for the sake of power in political, civil, and personal matters. (p. 20/21)

VI FZ: The Arabic term *miḥna* refers to a trial that involves doubting someone's religious convictions. This usage goes back to the third Islamic century (the ninth century CE), when the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn demanded that scholars subscribe to the doctrine of the Qurʾan having been created, as opposed to being eternal. This political enforcement of a theological view in Islamic history comes closest to an inquisition, a most prominent victim of which was Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, who was incarcerated for some time, but was later able to resume his teaching. See Walter M. Patton, *Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna: A Biography of the Imam Including an Account of the Mohammedan Inquisition Called the mihna. 218–234. A.H.* (Leiden: Brill, 1897).

VII FZ: See text no. 34 in volume two.

Islamic Societies Are Like Christian Societies in Need of Secularism

There are many mistaken ideas about "secularism," about its position in our social, cultural and political life, and about the extent to which societies are in need of it, especially those [societies] that we call "Islamic societies," on historical or historical-geographic grounds. Regarding general contexts, these [societies] do not differ from those European societies that in the Middle Ages were called "Christian societies." Rather, the relationship between religion and its representatives, on the one hand, and politics and its representatives, on the other, has always been, throughout the centuries, a dialectical relation of uniting and dividing, of dominion of one over the other, or vice versa. In brief, it was a back and forth, until the state almost completely dominated religion in the Islamic historical experience, and until the two powers – the civil and political power on the one hand, and the religious power on the other – were separated in the Western, Christian historical experience. This separation was the cultural, constitutional, and institutional crowning of a successful solution to the question of the intricate and dialectical relationship between political and religious power, after wars, calamities, and conflicts that spanned many centuries of Christian European history and that were characterized by fanaticism and narrowmindedness. At the same time, what remained intricate, delicate and convoluted was the relation of religious power, and its representatives among the scholars and jurists and "religious" judges (*quḍāt "sharʿiyīn"*), to the ruling institution – whether this was a ruling power in the old, classical sense, or a "civil" one in the modern conceptual sense. The problem became even more intricate and aggravated as modern rulers resorted to religion in order to empower themselves, to consolidate "their rule," and to earn "their legitimacy." In the ways they use this "empowerment" they are all equal to each other: military and civil rulers, mullahs, ayatollahs and their opponents. They have different positions and perspectives, but all of them are aiming at a religious civil society, in order to turn the religiosity of society – that is, the religiosity of people – into a political matter of allegiance, obedience, and subordination. These are all classical terms and concepts that abound in the history of our rulers. Thereby, politics ceased to be a rational organization of worldly affairs (*tadabbur ʿaqlī li-shuʾūn al-dunyā*) [p. 21/22]; and instead rulers and their rule were established solely on the basis of – and purely for the sake of – power. Otherwise, "harmful innovation" and "insurrection" (*al-khurūj*) were the straightforward solutions for the people in power and for their opponents, respectively. "Allegiance" or "resistance" (*mumāniʿa*) turn into legitimacy or insurrection. Politics here is identified with religion, as belief or unbelief, religiously lawful or prohibited, and hence as allegiance and obedience or insurrection and resistance.

Islamist authors – together with Orientalists, as we pointed out at the beginning – claim that Islam does not distinguish, differentiate, or separate (*lā yufarriq wa-lā yumayyiz wa-la yafṣil*) when it comes to the relationship between civil and religious power, and

that, in this regard, it differs from Christianity, which does differentiate between the two. In reality, the facts of history and many studies on it do not confirm this argument, which was "mythologised" through repetition, propagation, and voices resounding from the pulpits (both traditional and modern ones). In reality, the case of Islam is equal to that of Christianity with regard to history, its main effects, its circumstances, and the way that humans – with their desires and interests – are shaped by it and shape it. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's" is a saying of the Lord Jesus that occurred in a context that can be resorted to for a "secular interpretation (*li-taʾwīl ʿalmānī*)" today. However, this does not undo other, prolonged and extensive historical contexts in which Christianity was politicized and came to rule directly. and in which politics was Christianized and made use of religion. Thus the roles of control, of unicity or of the dialectical relationship between Caesar and church – between the king as civil power and his sanctification "by divine right" – were all inverted.

In Islam, one can also resort to sayings of the Prophet, his companions, and some Imams for a "secular interpretation." Among these are, for example, the distinction between opinion and revelation; the "constitution of Medina;" the Qurʾanic principle of there being "no coercion in religion" [Q 2:256]; and the saying of the Prophet that "you are more knowledgeable about your worldly affairs." The "secular interpretation" may even go a long way in explaining the position of Imam ʿAli on the question of the arbitration that Muʿawiyya and ʿAmr bin al-ʿAs and their followers called for. It is an explanation that is relevant to the present question of propagating "godly rule" (*"al-ḥākimiyya al-ilāhiyya"*), which Islamists call for in opposition to political rulers. Imam ʿAli warned against using the Qurʾan for [political] arbitration; his famous historical statement of "the Qurʾan carrying more than one side" warned the followers of Muʿawiyya and the opposing Khawarij [p. 22/23] about the dangers involved: the conflict is political, and sedition comes from involving the Qurʾan in this conflict.

Prophetic signs (*ishārāt nabawiyya*) and sayings of ʿAli may be apt for "a secular interpretation" today, as Islam embraces secularism, just as Lord Jesus' saying, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's," is apt for justifying the idea that Christianity embraces secularism. However, this selective justification is not sufficient; it is a projective interpretation, an instance of justifying "ideologizations."

The point is that a selective historical reference (*marjiʿiyya*) is insufficient and even unsuitable for justifying a position, whether this position calls for secularism or refutes it. The lesson is rather to be found in historical logic, its course, its requirements, and its probabilities. History here is the history of real events and the history of ideas, immersed in world history, through comparative history, the history of civilizations and their interactions; not a singular history, isolated from the reasons for its formation, its interactions and the different effects it produces.

When we study European Christian history and Islamic history together, with the method of comparative history, and with a focus on the dialectic relationship between religion and politics, we find great similarity regarding functions and roles of the jurist

and the ruler, even though signifiers and concepts differ, and the chronological stages – as well as the forms of institutions – are distinct. [. . . p. 23–25. . .]

In the case of Islamic societies, our need for secularism equals our need for democracy, in order to exit (*li-l-khurūj min*) the characteristics of despotism (*ṭabāʾiʿ al-istibdād*) – to use an expression coined by [ʿAbd al-Rahman] al-Kawakabi at the end of the nineteenth century – and to exit the path of fanaticism and the ways in which religion has been used for [political] empowerment, and as a means to enter our political conflicts, from which we are suffering and which we are observing today.

We stress that we are, of course, not talking about a ready-made recipe here. Just as the democratic trajectory is a long historical trajectory of opposing absolutism and moving towards establishing a democratic practice and culture, secularism is also a long historical trajectory, not opposing religion, but opposing those who make use of religion in politics – that is, opposing those who use religion to empower themselves in political society. Civil culture becomes here, and in one of its fundamental aspects, a re-reading of history, in order to transition to a new one. Can this be accomplished without criticism?

Secularism, at its core, is not against religion. Rather, it is against the making use of religion in politics and partisanship (*istithmār al-dīn fī al-siyāsa wa-l-hizbiyya*); it is not against the man of religion, but against his making use of his religious quality in politics. Those today pushing for a critical, aesthetic, and artistic culture in the name of religion are, in fact, pursuing a policy that aims at changing politics and culture in society. I do not think that the goal [in this case] is to protect religion. Rather, it is to protect a model (*namaṭ*) of political relations that is based on politicizing religion and using it against both civil politics and culture. Secularism liberates religion from the sway of power, after religion was seized by the sultanic state in Islamic history, and after the members of the modern state and of the opposition have been using it in their claims and conflicts in civil society [p. 25/26], which might prevent or indefinitely postpone the establishment of the modern state and the civil society.

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10 Timothy Fitzgerald: *Religion and the Secular in Japan* (2003)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Timothy Fitzgerald (b. 1947) is undoubtedly one of the most controversial scholars of religion, and the mastermind of a group of researchers who identify with an approach labelled 'critical religion.' This approach suggests shifting the viewpoint away from the analysis of supposedly *religious* data, and towards analysing the deployments of the categories of 'religion' and 'religious' themselves. As Mitsutoshi Horii (text no. 22) put it, "to treat the category 'religion' as the object, not the tool, of analysis."[I] A somewhat similar approach is also suggested by Russel McCutcheon (text no. 57 in section 3).

Fitzgerald studied religious studies at King's College, London (1977), where he also obtained his PhD (1977–1983). In 1980, he was given a position at a college of higher education, where he taught Hinduism, Buddhism, and method and theory in the study of religion. Doing so, he became increasingly aware that 'world religions' are highly artificial and arbitrary constructs. Between 1988 and 2001, he lived in Japan, which strongly influenced his view of world history, and the study of religion and its underlying ideology. Back in the UK, Fitzgerald worked as a reader in religion at the University of Stirling until 2015.

One of Fitzgerald's main concerns has always been to raise awareness of the ideological function of the religious-secular binary, and other apparently neutral descriptive terms, which, in his view, are actually power categories, utilised in acts of cognitive imperialism. He contends that classifying the world, even in academic work, is done for specific purposes, which are, however, rarely disclosed, and remain largely unconscious. This critical approach to the cross-cultural application of generalised categories such as 'religion' and 'the secular,' as well as his special interest in analysing Japanese practices and institutions, is reflected in various articles, and in his first book *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000). His many subsequent articles and books deal with categories as largely empty signifiers that operate the researcher, rather than the researcher operating them.

I Mitsutoshi Horii, "Historicizing the Category of 'Religion' in Sociological Theories: Max Weber and Emile Durkheim," Critical Research on Religion 3, no. 1 (2018): 12.

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We present here excerpts from an article originally published in the *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* in 2003. We would like to thank Timothy Fitzgerald for his permission to include these extracts in this volume.

In this text, Fitzgerald attacks a number of scholars specialised in Japanese religions – mainly on the ground that they presuppose the existence of religion in Japan in the first place. One of his main targets is Ian Reader (born in 1949), professor of Japanese and Religious Studies at Lancaster until 2015, a renowned expert on religions in Japan, the very existence of which Fitzgerald calls into question. Reader's response to Fitzgerald's critique is also printed in this volume (see text no. 31).

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T. Fitzgerald. "Religion and the Secular in Japan: Problems in History, Social Anthropology and the Study of Religion." *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, 2003, http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/Fitzgerald.html.

[. . .] 'Religion' and its tacit distinction from 'the secular' is a category that is being constantly used by academics and the media, as well as in ordinary conversation, to refer to a large number of quite disparate things in a wide variety of situations. Among those things there are some uses and referents of 'religion' that occur more frequently than others, for example belief in gods, or soteriological doctrines, or ritual in general, or some special kind of religious ritual, or cosmology, or the basic values and norms of a society, its ideology and so on. All of these ideas about the meaning and definition of religion can be found in the huge number of texts produced on the elusive subject; and frequently many different usages can be found in the same text.

[. . .]

We can notice that this general category is an English language word derived from Latin '*religio*' and with close equivalents in other European languages. There is a historical context and geographical location. It seems that in the late 16th and early 17th centuries the word 'religion' began to be used in new reified ways that reflected the ideological revolution of early modernity (Bossy, 1982). But many scholars in religion, and in other disciplines such as history, sociology and social anthropology, still apply it freely to any historical period in virtually any society.

[. . .]

'Religion' is sometimes assumed to be something we simply find in the world. Much thinking about 'religion' that goes on in comparative religion or religious studies has

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assumed that religions are things that one can study in any society, that we all know what we mean by religion when we see it and when we use the word.

[. . .]

The point that I am concerned to make here is that, to many writers, religion has appeared as a given, universal aspect of the world and of human experience. This has taken the form of religion as a 'natural' aspect of the world or part of the essence of human nature, an assumption critiqued by Winston Davis (1992: 229). [. . .] My argument is that religion as an idea is de facto defined in our thinking by its distinction from that which is not religion, the secular, and that this distinction itself is highly ideological and the product of specific European historical trends. Furthermore, the function of this distinction in our own democratic and capitalist ideologies is of profoundly greater importance than, for example, analytical concepts such as kinship, marriage, tribe, peasant, cosmology, sports, dance or even ritual. Though all our European-language ideas may be problematic to some extent when applied cross-culturally, some are more problematic than others.

[. . .]

The problem then is to understand their persistence with it. I suggest that this can only be understood as the result of a western ideological imperative that we all to some extent share and that needs to be uncovered effectively before it can be neutralised and eliminated from our analytical vocabulary[1].

The problem lies in the way data is selected and presented when the religion-secular divide is operating, and the way the tacit theoretical presuppositions introduced by the category religion itself distort rather than clarify our understanding. This ideological field, or religion discourse, is also reproduced, as I have indicated, though in somewhat less invasive ways, in anthropology texts, and is reflected in taught courses

1 [note 9 in the original] My point here is that, instead of assuming we all know what 'religion' means, either in English or in what we assume to be its Japanese language equivalents, we need to make these uses our object of research and analysis. It is sometimes claimed that religion is a powerful folk category in the Japanese language. How then is it that so often Japanese people say they are not religious? To claim this is merely stating the problem, not solving it! Even in English we talk at cross purposes, as for example when Reader and Tanabe criticise Reischauer and Jansen's confusion which they say "results from their expectations of what is real religion rather than from the actualities of Japanese religion." (Reader and Tanabe, 1998: 7). I invite the reader to substitute the words "the actualities of" for "real" and then judge who is confused. At least Reischauer says clearly how he is using the word, and his usage is arguably defensible. How much more confusion may arise on the English-Japanese language (*eiwa)* interface between religion and '*shūkyō*', or religion and *shūha, shūshi, shūmon, shinkō, shinkyō, shinnen, shūhō, kyōhō, seidō, kyōdō, daikyō, kokkyō,* all with differing nuances (see Isomae, 2000). Similar semantic problems arise with the western distinction between religion and the secular. The Japanese word sometimes given for 'secular' is usually *sezoku*, but this word may need theorising as do the English words secular, profane and mundane. Another important but problematic dichotomy is that between supernatural and natural, which even in English is a confused semantic area.

on the anthropology of religion, anthropological sections and panels of religious studies conferences, and chapters on religion in introductions to anthropology.

[. . .]

While all our categories can be problematic, religion and its distinction from the secular carries more ideological weight in the modern western configuration of values than most. Modern concepts of politics, economics and law, for example, presuppose the notion of a secular sphere, and the idea of the secular is interdependent with the idea of religion. They are mutually self-defining. It is for this reason that I am arguing that we should take special note how this important piece of western ideology misleadingly appears as a piece of neutral analytical equipment, or even more problematically as though 'it' is somehow objectively there in the society or culture.

[. . .]

My contention is that this author's [i.e., Ian Reader's] multiple references to religion, or the religious world of the Japanese, and his repeated distinction between overtly religious acts and those rituals that are merely secular, can only be understood as an attempt to assert a special, distinct and irreducible realm of experience, feeling and action. But though Reader himself has pointed out that the idea of religion was imported during the Meiji era (1991: 13–14), he never considers the arguments that this is a western myth, one that liberal ecumenical missionaries and others have been exporting to the rest of the world since the days of Max Muller.

[. . .]

Reader more or less admits that the very idea of 'religion' and its distinction from 'the secular' has been negotiated into existence in the Japanese context. He says

> A problem that occurs. . .is precisely what is understood when terms like 'religion' are used in Japan. The Japanese word generally used in surveys and elsewhere to denote 'religion' is *shūkyō* [宗教], a word made up of two ideograms, *shū* [宗], meaning sect or denomination, and *kyō* [教], teaching and doctrine. It is a derived word that came into prominence in the 19th century as a result of Japanese encounters with the west and particularly with Christian missionaries, to denote a concept and view of religion commonplace in the realms of 19th century Christian theology but at that time not found in Japan, of religion as a specific, belief-framed entity. The term *shūkyō* thus, in origin at least, implies a separation of that which is religious from other aspects of society and culture, and contains implications of belief and commitment to one order or movement – something that has not been traditionally a common factor in Japanese religious behaviour and something that tends to exclude many of the phenomena involved in the Japanese religious process. (Reader, 1991: 13–14)

What is remarkable about this passage is that, at the very moment that Reader is showing us, correctly, that the term religion and its derivatives such as religious is an alien concept which falsely separates "that which is religious from other aspects of society", he is at the same time, even in the same sentence, continuing to assert such ideas as "Japanese religious behaviour" and "the Japanese religious process". He is saying, in effect, that the distinction between the religious and the non-religious is not a common factor "in Japanese religious behaviour". These are not mere banal grammat-

ical observations that I am making; the use of language here is an indication of a wider problem, and one feels compelled to ask why a writer of Reader's acknowledged accomplishments should get trapped in it. The answer is that such thinking is not merely Reader's, but is institutionalised within Religious Studies and to some extent throughout the humanities and social sciences. This is how an ideology mystifies us by appearing as self-evident and in-the-nature-of-things. [. . .]

The problem is with the selection and interpretation of data. The data itself often tends to cluster around ritual forms of behaviour that are ostensibly linked to the 'supernatural' or its nearest Japanese equivalent. [. . .] The fact that some of these ritual actions make references to various unseen beings that in English we typically refer to as the supernatural fails to guarantee a separate and distinctive phenomenon called religion, as Reader's own data indicates.

[. . .]

And since, as we have already seen, the Japanese never did distinguish between religious and secular ideas and institutions until western pressure led to the construction of *shūkyō*, then presumably they had been in error until the Christian missionaries and their liberal ecumenical progeny came along to enlighten them[2].

Reader tells us that the Japanese are religious but they don't know it. He has hinted at a possible reason, that they want to appear secular. But what does secular mean? For it needs to be remembered that the concept of religion did not come into Japan alone, pure as a shrine maiden. It came coupled with the concept of the secular. The insistence by the western powers that a civilized society separates church and state was a kind of imperial intrusion.[3] The confusion persists to this day. Thus, when a Japanese person seems to want to say that Japan is a secular society, it is far from clear what he or she means.

[. . .]

It is impossible to establish from any of these books[I] that there exist any specifically religious institutions, emotions, experiences or feelings. The use of the word 'spiritual' may seem to offer some way out of the dilemma. In their 1998 book, Reader and Tanabe

2 [note 17 in the original] I have argued that the 'scientific' study of religion, and the World Religions construct that grew out of it, is basically a form of liberal Christian ecumenical theology combined with such modernist exotica as theosophy, neo-Vedanta, esoteric Buddhism and other constructs disguised as a science (Fitzgerald, 2000a and 2000b).

3 [note 18 in the original] See, for example, Isomae Jun'ichi's (2000) historical work on the problematic reception and translation of the concept of religion during Meiji.

I CK: I.e. Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992); Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982); H. Neill McFarland, *Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1991); Ian Reader and George Tanabe, Jr., *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).

identify “spiritual” elements of *genze riyaku* [現世利益] as “peace of mind, faith and salvation” (1998: 23). Religion, then, is identified as ritual actions performed to mystical beings with an attitude of “faith” (*shinkō* [信仰]) for the purpose of obtaining “peace of mind” (*anshin* [安心]) and “salvation” (*kyūsai* [救済]). To what degree, and by what criterion, are these values and attitudes genuinely special and set-apart (religion), and how much overlap is there with ‘secular’ ritual performance?

[. . .]

What I am arguing is that, while ritual relations with mystical powers obviously have some distinctive features, there is no evidence that the forms of reciprocity, the values, or the feelings expressed, are of a fundamentally different kind than a second great imaginary category of ‘non-religious’ or ‘secular’ ones. A more convincing model is that of a family of over-lapping ritual performances that share ideas about reciprocity, self-sacrifice, and dependency. In such a wider perspective, freed from the compulsion to stuff rituals and experiences into either the ‘religious’ bag or the ‘secular’ one, certain conceptual confusions, idealisations and other problems of representation will be reduced.

In what sense then does the word ‘spiritual’ indicate some especially ‘religious’ meaning that cannot equally refer to any widely held values that are embedded in ritual performances throughout the spectrum of social relations?

[. . .]

The meaning of ‘spiritual’ here indicates strength of character to submit to Japanese group values without complaint, the ability and courage to survive under adverse circumstances, to ‘gaman’ and endure with fortitude. Similar things that she [Patricia G. Steinhoff] is saying about a communist group might have been said about the training of sumo wrestlers and baseball players,[4] the character reform of prison regimes, school training for exams – as well as Soto Zen meditation techniques and so on.

Steinhoff connects the idea of “spiritual rewards” here with the Red Army’s infliction of severe punishment and even death on its own members in the disciplinary process of *kyōsanshugika* [共産主義化]. This unusual and pathological outcome may not characterise normal Japanese groups, but it was made possible in admittedly abnormal circumstances by some of the basic values of group organisation in Japan, which Steinhoff lists as:

> deference to formal authority and unwillingness to challenge it; consensus decision-making procedures that carry a high expectations of subsequent participation; indirect and ambiguous means of expressing dissent; and high levels of commitment and loyalty to the group. (Steinhoff, 1992: 222)

The point is that the English words ‘spirit’ and ‘spiritual’ are multivalent. Reader seems to assume that the idea of the “spiritual” clinches the legitimacy of a special and set-apart “religious world of the Japanese”. Yet in his own uses it can mean different things:

4 [note 23 in the original] See Whiting (1990) for a discussion of ascetic practices in baseball training.

in some contexts, some naively constructed world of invisible souls; in another context some special mode of consciousness attained in Zen meditation; and yet again a quite different nuance of commitment to Japanese group values or corporate discipline. [. . .]

Again, there is a concept of ascetic practice (*shugyō* [修行]) that is believed to lead to self-purification (a state of being in the correct condition), consciousness-raising, and self-transformation. Arguably it is a sacrificial concept, where the self is sacrificed for ritual, political, economic or soteriological ends. Surely the ultimate self-sacrifice is for the nation, conceived as a transcendental dynastic domain. The values behind a sacrificial asceticism or renunciation of the self can be found operating in diverse situations in Japan. We also find that many of these rituals are concerned with the legitimation of the social order, including the nation state, the construction of status and gender identity, the continuation of the *ie* or the family; in short, that they are connected to social reproduction, to politics, or more generally to the legitimation of power and authority. The performance of these rituals may express profoundly important collective values, and may be accompanied by a range of feelings and emotions. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that there are special 'religious' kinds of values, feelings and emotions qualitatively different from 'non-religious' ones, or that ascetic practice is confined to Zen meditation halls or *shugendō* [修験道] mountain contexts; or that relations with mystical powers such as *kami* [神] and *hotoke* [仏] are only about magic and have no wider ritual meaning.

Even the idea of "salvation" is problematic in the sense that the Japanese word *kyūsai*, while not colloquial, does not refer exclusively to benefits obtained from mystical beings. Reader and Tanabe have, in my view rightly, extended the meaning of salvation to include the receiving of material benefits such as longer life, health, the resolution of conflicts, in this world (1998: 22). One can thus talk about both 'thisworldly' and 'otherworldly' salvation.[5] Though rather formal, it can in principle be used (like *tasukeru* [助ける]) (to help or save) to refer to any action whereby one person or group saves another, for example from a storm at sea, from *chikan* [痴漢] (sexual molestation) on the subway, or from unemployment.

[. . .]

An important element of ancestor rites for ordinary people is soteriological, in the sense that they offer a passage out of this world into the next, which may be thought of as a kind of salvation. When people think of 'religion', they are sometimes, perhaps often, thinking of the other world as a place where the sadness and separations of old age and death can finally be overcome, and where the lone, and perhaps lonely, individual in this world can be reunited with loved ones. But for ordinary people the next

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5 [note 24 in the original] I have myself argued that various kinds of social movements, for example for ethnic autonomy or liberation from colonial oppression through nationalism, are this worldly political soteriologies (see Fitzgerald, 2000b). E.P. Thompson, in his *The Making of the English Working Classes*, shows how non-conformist sects and their preachers oscillated in the 1790s between this-worldly political soteriologies inspired by the French revolution and extreme otherworldly visions of salvation (Thompson, 1963)

world is a kind of extension of this world. It is not a mystical absolute that transcends time and space. But still, this is a kind of soteriology for the individual.

[. . .]

Ancestor rites are conducted within complex sociological situations. They are rituals, performed collectively or personally, and they have many different implications. They are a way of negotiating or constructing and reconstructing the social relations of the group, whether the *ie* [家], or the *kaisha* [会社] (company) (Nakamaki 1995), or the old people's home, or the neighbourhood (Stefansson, 1995); they can provide a mystical source of help for individuals and groups; they are also a focus for an individual's personal soteriological aspirations and hopes. Soteriology, as a doctrine of individual liberation is present in the form of images of loved ones, or perhaps an authoritative figure, returning to take them on to the next world. But the primacy of action would suggest that such soteriological elements are only meaningful when we also understand the other co-existing elements in the social and ritual context. The distinction between the religious and the secular does not seem to help with this.

Finally, I return from Japan to Europe.

[. . .] What I want to suggest is that the distinction between religion and the secular is a special case, because the new ideas of 'secular society' independent of what increasingly came to be referred to as 'religion' constituted a framework within which new political, legal, economic institutions were able to appear persuasive and even natural. By separating out certain things into the basket 'religion' you are able to remove the arbitrary interventions of the church, and of the king who is legitimated by the priesthood, from the organisation of the state. The modern state and the idea of civil society are based on a different rationality, and science becomes increasingly unencumbered by the traditional knowledge of the Bible and the Church fathers. Science and rationality are subject to different forms of legitimation than traditional knowledge.

[. . .]

I suggest that religion and the secular are two of our categories that have a specially close linkage, that they mutually define each other, that in order to construct a concept of secular society in which trade, law, government and science were freed from the arbitrary interferences of the Church or the King, people like Hobbes, John Locke, the Deists, the American writers of the Constitution, the French Enlightenment philosophes, needed a new idea of 'religion' or 'religions' in the plural to help them do that job of making a new idea of secular society; that the problem as to what counts as religion is also the problem as to what counts as non-religion or the secular.

The decision about what is and is not categorised as religion is highly ideological, yet the word is used freely and rather uncritically as though we can all easily find religions in any part of the world and at any period of history. Most academics use the word religion without much consciousness of the way that their usage is arranging historical and ethnographic data according to a pattern that fits into the assumptions and needs of western capitalism, or western ideas about gender, the individual, about rights, or western theories of exchange and markets. This becomes of special importance in the

context of colonialism and neo-colonialism, since it facilitates a distortion in our understanding of non-western ideologies and cultures.

The issue takes on added interest if we are aware of the number of anthropologists and historians who have pointed out that many – perhaps most – societies in Asia and, I believe, Africa, do not have an indigenous word for 'religion', but when confronted by powerful invaders with their merchants, armies, missionaries and administrators who claimed to represent civilization, have been compelled to search for and construct a suitable word from their own traditional discourses.[6] The idea that there are some special phenomena in all societies that can be described as religious or religions was not something that the people in that society decided on by themselves, but an idea received from the west, or at least negotiated into existence by local elites with the help of trading enterprises, military officers, Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and others. What constituted 'religion' in any given society in Asia was not a self-evident fact to the people there, neither was it indeed to the outsiders, but had to be discovered and/or invented.[7]

By and large the Japanese avoided colonization by adopting western categories and institutions that were supposedly the mark of more highly developed civilizations and placing them in the *omote* [表] (one's front) or *tatemae* [建前] (one's public face) mode. The American written constitution with its separation of church and state and its guarantee of freedom of religion satisfies the west that Japan is really just like us, and conforms to our western assumptions about the world. But the problems of ethnographic and historical interpretation that occur when we assume that there is a religious world in Japan that can be meaningfully distinguished from another secular world suggests that the reality is not like that.

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6 [note 27 in the original] Isomae (2000) says that the western powers divided the non-western parts of the world into 3 categories a) civilized nations (*bunmei kuni*); savage or semi-civilized (*yaban kuni*); and primitive or under-developed (*mikai kuni*). The latter, which included vast areas of Asia, Africa and America were virtually deemed to be uninhabited and therefore the tribal peoples living there were hardly deemed to exist as human societies. In the middle category were placed ancient literate cultures such as Japan, China and India. Japan had a desire to be elevated to the "civilized" category [e.g. equal with Euro-Americans] and thus to avoid unequal trade treaties and the generally condescending attitude of the west. One of the conditions for inclusion in this elevated group was a western style constitution that included the separation of church and state and the principle of freedom of worship. The Meiji elite obliged with the 1889 Constitution.

7 [note 28 in the original] On the invention of comparative religion, and hence the category of religion itself, on the frontiers of southern Africa, see Chidester (1996).

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11 Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar: *Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously* (2007)

Introduced by Magnus Echtler

Introduction

Gerri ter Haar (b. 1946), a Dutch scholar of religion and founding member of the African Association for the Study of Religions, is professor emeritus of Religion and Development at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. Her work has focused on African religious traditions, especially African Christianity, and she has written on the problem of evil, conflict, and human rights. She was married to the British historian Stephen Ellis (1953–2015), long-time researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden and professor in Amsterdam, whose wide-ranging work included analysis of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, civil war in Liberia, and crime in Nigeria. Together, they analysed the relationship between religion and politics in Africa.

Ellis and ter Haar argue that "[m]odern Africans [. . .] tend to believe in the existence of invisible forces which share the world with visible ones and to that extent they may be described as religious." This religious belief has not declined, "operates at every level of society in Africa," and includes "deeply rooted concepts of power which tend to merge the religious and the political."[I] According to Ellis and ter Haar, African epistemologies are holistic rather than differentiating; they follow John Mbiti in labelling this whole as religious. They promote this inclusive use of the category "religion" as overcoming colonial classifications of African traditions as "superstitious." By contrast, Okot p'Bitek criticized the Christian, Western imposition of "religion" (see text 4 in this section), and Paul Landau argued "that the concept (religion) is itself an artefact of Christian encounters with non-Christians" that lumped together expressions that "once operated in all sorts of different ways, and attached to all sorts of fleeting moments and occurrences."[II] Against such critique, Ellis and ter Haar emphasize the continuity between pre-colonial traditions and Christianity, and indicate that African spirituality

I Stephen Ellis and Gerri ter Haar, "Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, no. 2 (1998): 177–78, 182.

II Paul Landau, "'Religion' and Christian Conversion in African History: A New Model," *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 1 (1999): 11, 30.

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invigorates world Christianity.[III] This global reach corresponds with their argument against African exceptionalism. Their African epistemologies could be read as religious epistemologies that inform peoples' views of the world everywhere, except in the West, where the immanent frame of secular humanism has (temporarily) suppressed belief in "spiritual beings with effective powers over the material world."[IV] Their critique focusses on social sciences that are bound in the secularisation paradigm, which thus fail to understand the reality of people living outside the immanent frame. This critique regards African secularists that refuse to interpret social problems through the "spirit idiom" as mere agents of neo-colonialism (see entry on Leo Igwe, text no. 61 in this volume).[V]

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Introduction

[. . .] All the models in common academic use are based on the assumption of a structural distinction between the visible or material world and the invisible world, whereas such a rigid distinction does not reflect ideas about the nature of reality that are [p. 385/386] prevalent in Africa. [. . .]

The purpose of the present article is to revisit our theory regarding religion and politics, nine years after its first formulation, in the light of various reviews and critiques that it has encountered. Our theory proceeds from the proposition that the religious ideas held by so many Africans – hundreds of millions of people – need to be taken seriously, and should be considered in their own terms in the first instance (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: esp. 16–21). [. . .] African modes of thought, we suggest, are neither more nor less than epistemologies that include ways of acquiring knowledge not normally considered

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III Gerri ter Haar, *How God Became African: African Spirituality and Western Secular Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
IV Stephen Ellis and Gerri ter Haar, "Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 387.
V Ellis and ter Haar, "Religion and Politics," 397–98.

within the scope of social science. We suggest that such epistemologies have validity, meaning that not only do all people have a right to think about the world in whatever way they choose, but that modes of perception unfamiliar to Western observers may – in theory, at least – be of universal application.

If this is so, it means that African ideas about religion and its relation to politics are important not only for understanding Africa, but may have the potential to inform our understanding of religion and politics more generally, in a world that is presently characterised by new alignments of these two fundamental elements. This is a capital point, which distinguishes our approach to the study of religion and politics from the many studies that, however excellent they may be, are based on the supposition of a separation of the religious and secular realms. Such studies almost invariably translate religious data (assumed to be a second order of truth at best) into sociological terms (assumed to correspond to reality). We argue for a [p. 386/387] different point of departure. In order to understand the relation between religion and politics in Africa, we suggest, it is more fruitful to take Africans' own views of reality as a starting point. Generally speaking, these include both material and immaterial realms.

A New Theory of Religion and Politics

All the evidence points to the fact that most Africans – like most people on the planet, for that matter – understand and interpret the world partly through the prism of religion. In other words, religion, whatever else it may be, is a mode of apprehending reality. Much, of course, depends on what is meant by 'religion'. There is a wide variety of definitions in existence. For present purposes, we have argued, the best way to proceed is not to assume that religion has the same meaning in all times and places, nor to use whatever definition the writer personally finds most pleasing. A better approach, we suggest, is to study the range of social phenomena observable in Africa, and only then to formulate a definition of religion that incorporates features relevant to its specific context. This then constitutes a working definition – not an attempt to classify religion in general, but a tool adapted for the purpose at hand (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 13–16). [. . .] Among the most salient features of African epistemologies, we have argued on the basis of empirical research, is a conviction that the material and immaterial aspects of life cannot be separated, although they can be distinguished from each other, much as the two sides of a coin can be discerned but not parted. To judge from the available evidence, religion in sub-Saharan Africa is best considered as a belief in the existence of an invisible world, distinct but not separate from the visible one, that is home to spiritual beings with effective powers over the material world. This is the definition that we used in *Worlds of Power*.

Another distinctive feature of religion in sub-Saharan Africa is its use of what may be termed a 'spirit idiom'. This refers to the widespread belief that the immaterial forces

perceived to be operating in the material world consist of, or are controlled by, individual spirits. These spirits are often imagined as having a name and a personality, and to have their abode in an invisible world. This spirit world is perceived to contain power, and for those who believe in it, this power is real. Belief in the existence of immaterial forces is common pretty much everywhere in the world, although [p. 387/388] these forces are often imagined in secular terms, for example as social or economic ones. No serious social scientist thinks that because something cannot be seen, it therefore does not exist. Furthermore, as we have argued, a social scientist or other analyst does not have to be a religious believer in order to study or understand religion. Our own analysis is not written from the point of view of a religious believer. However, for many observers, taking African religious ideas seriously requires thinking about religion in terms different from those with which they are most familiar.

[. . .] In the present case, the historically grounded theory that we propose tends to emphasise continuities rather than ruptures. Hence, we see current charismatic and neo-pentecostal or 'born-again' Christianity, for example, as a recent development in a long-existing mode of thinking about the spirit world rather than as a major historical rupture. This is in spite of the fact that 'born-agains' often make extravagant rhetorical claims to have made a complete break with the past (Peel 2006). In other words, the claim of a born-again Christian to have broken with the past is to be understood as an emic statement, as distinct from the etic position adopted by an academic analyst. [. . .]

Taking religious ideas seriously – the heart of our endeavour – challenges the academic disciplines in which the study of contemporary Africa is most often conceived. The basic reason for this is that social science has been developed over generations on the assumption of a separation [p. 388/389] between the secular and the religious realms. Other writers (e.g. Lal 1998) have pointed out that this separation reflects the historical experience of Europe, but not necessarily that of the rest of the world. The proper reaction to this awareness is not to reject social science as irredeemably Eurocentric, but to adapt its techniques in such a way as to encompass worldviews that are a product of histories different from those of European countries (Chakrabarty 2000). [. . . p. 389/390 . . .]

Any project of taking African epistemologies seriously, and attempting to incorporate them into a formal theory with the power to explain a range of social and political phenomena, is not an enterprise that concerns Africa alone. [. . .] Religion and politics are undoubtedly forming new patterns in many parts of the world. This does not mean, however, that a religious revival is taking place worldwide, as is often suggested. The new patterns of religion and politics discernible in Africa and other places are of course affected by phenomena such as state failure, globalisation and economic crises, as many commentators have pointed out, but that is not the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter, rather, is that many people in the world, just as in sub-Saharan Africa, consider power as having its ultimate origin in the invisible world. This, we argue, has a marked influence on the conduct of politics and on political attributes such as authority and legitimacy.

Religion remains a prism through which many people view the world. Worlds of Power investigates this proposition in detail in regard to sub-Saharan Africa. We show

that, for those who believe in it, spiritual power constitutes real and effective power. Thus, religion and politics become two facets of power that are in constant interaction. This is not always evident to observers of African politics, as African countries since colonial [p. 390/391] times have been officially governed through institutions based on a Western model of separation of church and state. This institutional architecture of government has tended to obscure the reality of spiritual power in Africa's public life. Like politicians the world over, Africa's political leaders spend most of their time in the pursuit or distribution of material resources, and their cultivation of spiritual power is usually more private than public. But, in any event, cultivating spiritual power is a vital component of a political career, as is widely attested by the popular media and radio trottoir.

This is why no study of African politics can afford to ignore the religious factor. A prime advantage of adopting our suggested definition of religion is that it enables us to consider religion and politics within a single field of power.

Some Issues of Method

Writing about religion and politics in the way we suggest has certain methodological implications. Among other things, it entails writing about religion in Africa in a manner that is objective, in the sense of not containing hidden assumptions about its ontological and moral status.

The latter requires particular attention to terminology. We have already noted (see above) that many reviewers of *Worlds of Power* assign to such categories as 'superstition' and 'magic' a range of phenomena that we prefer to classify as 'religious'. Reference to 'superstition' and 'magic' amounts to making unscholarly judgements as to what constitutes proper or 'real' religion, as opposed to improper types of religion. In similar vein, many anthropologists writing on Africa today use 'the occult' as a category to include various phenomena that we describe as 'mystical'. The word 'occult', although having a primary meaning of 'hidden', has a pejorative implication when applied to religious matters. All these labels carry a heavy ideological burden that should be set in historical context: for centuries, outsiders have tended to judge religious ideas and practices in Africa as both wrong and morally inferior. The use of such labels as 'magic', 'superstition' and 'the occult' implies that certain phenomena which in other parts of the world would be classified as religion, are better described by different terms in the case of Africa. This amounts to a form of exceptionalism, suggesting that a special vocabulary is needed for analysing Africa by reason of its supposed uniqueness. It is ironic that the charge of exceptionalism is sometimes made against our approach by anthropologists, who, we maintain, continue to struggle with the [p. 391/392] implications of the ethnographic method that has been so foundational in their discipline (e.g. Green 2006). [. . . p. 392/393]

In our view, sub-Saharan Africa has at least four common elements that make it a viable analytical unit for our purpose. These are, first, that religious cultures throughout the region show a marked tendency to posit the existence of a spirit world. Second, all of sub-Saharan Africa has a robust oral culture, notwithstanding the use of writing for religious purposes, in some places for many centuries. Third, African religious cultures have a strong idea of evil as a transcendental force. Fourth, all sub-Saharan countries have undergone a similar experience of colonialism in some shape or form, even Ethiopia and Liberia. All four factors have been significant in shaping people's religious ideas. [. . .]

In summary, then, we maintain that religion in Africa is grounded in modes of acquiring knowledge that both reflect and shape the ways in which people have viewed the world, past and present. If only for this reason, religion has an important bearing on politics, and indeed politics in Africa cannot be fully understood without taking its religious dimension into account. Although African epistemologies involve concepts that may be unfamiliar to many Europeans and North Americans, there is nothing in them that cannot be analysed by the conventional methods of social [p. 393/394] science, provided both the scope of investigation and the terms of analysis are considered with sufficient rigour.

Religion and Development

[. . .] It is a mistake to assume, as some authors do, that an improvement of material and institutional conditions would necessarily reduce 'the hegemonies of the spirit' (Green 2006) that are apparent in Africa, and would instead stimulate the language of liberal secularism. Nor can the symbolic language of religion be reduced to a cultural tradition reflecting the continuation of certain ancestral practices. Rather, a religious mode of apprehending reality (even one couched in a spirit idiom) constitutes an epistemology that is simultaneously traditional and modern, capable of updating and renewing itself as times change.

African epistemologies, then, include religious perspectives affecting popular understandings of concepts such as progress and development, but also justice, prosperity and others (Ter Haar & Ellis 2006). Consequently, Africa's economic and political progress should not be [p. 394/395] considered exclusively in terms of technical criteria such as macroeconomic indicators, nor should all the standard formulae of development be taken at face value. Nor should the ways in which Africans debate these matters be assumed to be apolitical because they are expressed in spiritual idioms. [. . .] For many Muslims, for example, good governance implies a society that is ultimately ruled in conformity with divine law. Among both Muslims and non-Muslims in Africa, the moral nature of power depends on the manner of its exercise, as we have suggested in *Worlds of Power* (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: ch. 7). Charismatic preachers preoccupied

with Satan are not necessarily externalising responsibility for the misfortunes of the society they live in, but may rather be considered as condemning the actual presence of evil within their society. Such criticisms are typically expressed in a spirit idiom and are often extended to national politics, as we have demonstrated at length in *Worlds of Power*. [. . . p. 395–397]

Spiritual Knowledge and History

[. . .] It is useful in this regard to consider the widespread sense of powerlessness that is often said to pervade African populations. Several sources – from Achille Mbembe (2000: 25–6) to the US National Intelligence Council (2005) – have noted the importance in Africa of the belief that the continent is threatened by vast forces that amount to something resembling a cosmic conspiracy. It is undeniable that Africa is indeed threatened by some massively destructive forces that can be quite precisely identified, including disease, debt and underinvestment. At the same time, however, many Africans also consider these conditions in a spirit idiom, seeing themselves as beset by evil forces that have a known material cause but that also have a spiritual dimension (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: ch. 3). The roots of this conviction that economic and political power has a dangerous spiritual aspect, which Africans can no longer control, can be located in [p. 397/398] the continent's history. Ultimately, this perceived lack of control dates from the colonisation and evangelisation of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that regarded indigenous spiritual forces as harmful, backward or demonic. A combination of ignorance and prejudice caused European colonisers and missionaries to despise many indigenous concepts of the spirit world (Ilesanmi 1995: esp. 54). It is rather disturbing to note that many secular analysts today appear to react in a comparable way, displaying bias or intolerance regarding manifestations of an interaction between sacred and secular aspects of reality as it is perceived by many Africans. [. . .]

In the circumstances of the early 1990s, many Rwandans were inclined to believe that their country was not able to enjoy the prosperity and fertility that, according to local religious and political ideas, emanated from the mystical force of imaana, traditionally channelled through the government. The work of the génocidaires associated with the army and the ruling party consisted in persuading many Rwandans to [p. 398/399] accept that the blockage of the necessary flows of virtue and fertility, simultaneously political and spiritual, was the fault of political opponents of the government. The interest of this point is not that it suggests an alternative explanation for the 1994 genocide. Rather, its importance is that it adds an extra dimension to explanations that are normally couched in uniquely secular-political terms. Ordinary Rwandans were moved to acts of genocide, spurred on by propaganda and fear, because they believed their society to be threatened not only by political and military upheaval, but by malevolent spiritual forces also. Only by taking this spiritual dimension into account does it

become easier to understand the awfulness of genocide: why otherwise 'good' people are moved to do unspeakably evil things (Juergensmeyer 2003).

[. . .] Religion is the emerging political language of our time. Already, in our original article (Ellis & Ter Haar 1998: 201), we noted that African politicians were challenged to use this language in a manner comprehensible to outsiders. We also noted that non-Africans needed to learn this language. This remains truer than ever: as with any language, learning to understand a spirit idiom takes time and application, but it can be done.

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12 Reinhard Schulze: *Islam as a Political Religion* (2010)

Translated and introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Reinhard Schulze (b. 1953) is Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Prior to joining the University of Bern in 1995, he held professorships at the universities of Bochum and Bamberg. While Schulze has worked on a wide range of aspects of Arab and Islamic social and intellectual history, the overarching focus of his work has been the relationship between Islam and modernity. In this regard, Schulze argues against perceived contradictions or an Islamic exceptionalism. He, instead, premises his work on the basic synchronicity and translatability of Islamic and European cultures and histories, as evidenced in his best-known monograph *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, published in English in 2002.

Schulze contends that assumptions of fundamental difference, incommensurability, or cultural determinism should be critically interrogated, a challenge he takes on for a variety of assumptions, including the widely established notion that Islam is a political religion lacking a distinction between religion and politics. From the perspective of a critical historian, the question should not be whether this notion is meaningful, let alone 'true', but rather how it came to be established. The importance of demonstrating the historicity, and thus contingency, of presently entrenched assumptions and statements is, after all, most pronounced when it comes to politicised claims of timeless truths or essential givens. Schulze locates the categorisation of Islam as a political religion in the middle of the nineteenth century. The text below is an English translation of key passages on this subject, taken from a substantially longer article, originally published in German in 2010.

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Reinhard Schulze. "Der Islam als politische Religion: eine Kritik normativer Voraussetzungen" [Islam as a Political Religion: A Critique of Normative Presuppositions]. In *Herrscherkult und Heilserwartung*, edited by Jan Assmann and Harald Strohm, 107–49. Paderborn: Fink, 2010; 111–12, 114–16.

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Translation by Florian Zemmin

The interpretation of Islam as "subjugation" or "subordination" (*submissio*) became significant at that moment when Protestants interpreted the concept of freedom theologically. Advocates of Reform Judaism also adopted this parlance. Thus, in 1841, the rabbi and philosopher of religion, Salomon Formstecher (1808–1889) emphasised: "The word Islam expresses the Jewish-pagan character that is imprinted on this mission by the combination of absolute and relative truth. If, in the objective development of the spirit, Christianity refers to the element that liberates itself from the bonds of nature, and thus demands absolute freedom, then Islam also refers to the element that escapes from the realm of nature, but does not realise this transition by means of freedom, but rather by means of unthinking devotion. Islam is slavish submission to the despotic command of God, and a Muslim is anyone who represents this submission in his way of thinking and acting [p. 111/112]."[1] Submission, in this view, was not related to worship, but was conceived as a political act. Thus, the basic difference between (Protestant) Christianity and Islam was formulated: Islam is a political religion based on submission, whereas (Protestant) Christianity is a "pure" (later absolute) religion based on freedom.

At the moment when power was abstracted as a state, the interpretation of Islam as a political religion expanded. The unity of "religion" (in the modern sense) and "power," postulated by the concept of submission, became a unity of religion and state. However, talk of the unity of religion and state did not initially refer to Islam, but to Judaism. "In order to secure power over the brute people, says the author, Moses linked to the Jewish national god, for his purpose was to establish an order of the state. In this way the priesthood came to the top, and political measures had to take on the character of divine decrees; religion and state became one."[2]

This was exactly the opposite of a free (i.e. absolute) religion, which could not be justified through anything other than itself, and which therefore inherently aimed at separation from the state and from politics. Islam, on the other hand, could not be put primary, because it was a conditional religion. It thus had to be understood as a secondary result. According to the Austrian Orientalist and diplomat Alfred von Kremer (1828–1889), following his reading of Ibn Khaldun, what was primary was the state. [. . . p. 112–114]

Kremer configured cultural history in a way that made Islam a secondary factor. He argued that the organism of the state was primarily determined by race. Kremer understood Islam as power (*Herrschaft*) that could be depicted in a historiography structured

1 [note 12 in the original] Salomon Formstecher, *Die Religion des Geistes: eine wissenschaftliche Darstellung des Judcnthums nach seinem Character, Entwicklungsgange und Berufe in der Menschheit*. Frankfurt am Main, 1841, 398.

2 [note 13 in the original] Thus in a review of August von Blumröder. *Die Religion nach ihrer Idee und geschichtlichen Erscheinung*. Sondershausen, 1839, in: *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung 243* (30.8.1840), 979.

according to dynasties. The state was thus the essential concept through which Islam was interpreted. From here, it was not a giant leap to claim that Islam was religion and state.[3] It was this very statement that came to differentiate Islam from other religions. It became the proprium of Islam.

[. . .]

From the 1860s onwards, Islam was finally stereotyped as a political religion based on the unity of religion and state. There was a correlation with modern Muslim self-interpretations, insofar as Ottoman authors (especially those associated with the so-called Young Ottomans) likewise claimed a unity of religion and state in the 1860s, and popularised the phrase that Islam is *dīn ve-devlet* ("religion and state"). In doing so, they did not yet make use of older Islamic textual traditions, which – as in the works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111)[4] – had defined religion and power as "twins" that were dependent on each other if they did not want to perish [p. 114/115]. Instead, they referred to the Ottoman ideal of power, according to which the sultanate had to protect the dynasty (*devlet*) and religion (*dīn*). The dynasty was taken to guarantee order, so the sultans had to protect the dynasty. [. . .]

The Young Ottomans strove to disentangle the empire from the personal dynasty and to reformulate the dynastic as an abstract "state." This led to a new conceptualisation of *devlet* as an impersonal "state." At the same time, the Young Ottomans defined "religion" as a field that was analogous to, but separate from, the state. Islam, which represented the claims of the Young Ottomans, was now defined twice: once as a religion and once as a state. In a sense, this represented the new elites' [i.e. the Young Ottomans'] claim to sovereignty over the dynastically constituted state. In the Ottoman citizenship law of 19 January 1869, all subjects in the empire were now called "Ottomans;" the name of the dynasty was thus nationalised (*verstaatlicht*). This meant that, henceforth, the nation had to defend "religion and state." The now popular phrase "Islam is the unity of religion and state" thus corresponded to the phrase "The nation is based on a

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3 [note 15 in the original] As Jacob Burckhart did, as early as 1868, in his work *Über geschichtliches Studium. Neues Schema* in *Aesthetik der bildenden Kunst: Über das Studium der Geschichte: mit dem Text der ‚Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen' in der Fassung von 1905. = Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe 10*. Hg. v. Peter F. Ganz. München, 2000, 212.

4 [note 16 in the original] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī on various occasions quotes the sayings "Religion and rule (*sulṭān*) are twins" and "Religion is the foundation, rule the guardian; what has no foundation is destroyed, and what has no guardian is lost". E.g. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī. *Mīzān al-ʿamal*. Ed. Cairo 1342 [1923/4], 86. This is morally justified with reference to Qur'an 2:251 "Had God not repelled a group of people by the might of another, corruption would have dominated the earth, but God is gracious to all". The Qur'an here refers to the ancient notion of the reciprocal "taming of man to fellow man" (Jan Assmann, *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*. Munich, 2006 [1995], 9). For al-Ghazālī, *dīn* is certainly no longer just "cult", nor does *sulṭān* mean "authority". Rather, [*dīn* connotes] religion as the totality of knowledge of God, cult, ethical views and practices [and *sulṭān* refers to] rule [p. 114/115] and actual power. Elsewhere, he spoke of kingship (*mulk*) instead of rule (*sulṭān*).

unity of religion and state." This manner of speaking [p. 115/116] fully corresponded to phrases that were also in use in England, France, and Germany at the time.

Analogous discussions took place in India, Iran, and, from 1870, in Arab countries. It is first and foremost on the level of wording that there is a convergence between "Islamic talk" of the unity of religion and state, and non-Islamic definitions that Islam as a political religion *could* not separate religion and state. In substance, Islamic parlance corresponded to the nationalisms of the nineteenth century. In turn, non-Islamic parlance defined Islam essentially in terms of politics, power and the state, and differentiated it (and Judaism) from any claim to the validity of a "free," unconditional religion.

The interpretation of Islam as a political religion was now common knowledge. The standard phrase was that "Islam had been a political religion from its birth."[5] After 1900, Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch also endorsed this judgement, which soon became the basis of Islamic scholarly interpretations of Islam, and remains so to this day. [. . .]

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5 [note 18 in the original] Pierre Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye. *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte, begründet von Chantepie de la Saussaye*. 4., vollständig neubearb. Aufl., edited by Alfred Bertholet u.a., Tübingen, 1925, 691; also in *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin* 93 (Basel 1908), 8.

13 Dmitry A. Uzlaner: *The Soviet Model of Secularisation* (2010)

Translated and introduced by Sebastian Rimestad

Introduction

Dmitry A. Uzlaner (b. 1984) studied philosophy and religious studies at the M. V. Lomonosov University in Moscow. In 2009, he completed his PhD (*kand. nauk*) on the neo-classical model of secularisation in Western sociology of religion. Since then, he has been interested in the 'post-secular turn', both as a theoretical concept and as an empirical process in contemporary Russia, including the discourse of traditional values that has been championed primarily by the Russian Orthodox Church. He has been the chief editor of the Russian-language journal "State, Religion, Church in Russia and Abroad" since 2012, while holding various teaching and research positions in Moscow. Moreover, he has been involved in a number of international research projects, most prominently "Postsecular Conflicts" at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, under the leadership of Kristina Stoeckl.[I]

The text below is a summary of part of Uzlaner's research on the history of secularisation theory, namely an analytical overview of the Soviet approach to "secularisation." It is an external perspective, which attempts to objectively pinpoint the differences between the Western and Soviet models of secularisation in the 1960s and 1970s, and their repercussions for the discussion of the term today. The text was published in one of the main Russian journals of sociology, called *Sociological Research*.

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Dmitry Uzlaner. "Sovetskaia model' sekuliarizatsii" [The Soviet Model of Secularisation]. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 6 (2010): 62–69.

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I His most important publications in English on this topic include: Mikhail Suslov and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds. *Contemporary Russian Conservatism: Problems, Paradoxes, and Perspectives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2019); Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds. *Postsecular Conflicts: Debating Tradition in Russia and the United States* (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2020); and Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner, eds. *The Moralist International: Russia in the Global Culture Wars* (New York: Fordham University Press 2022).

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Translation by Sebastian Rimestad

In recent years, most of the sociological theories of secularisation have been either refuted or subjected to the most detailed criticism. However, despite all this criticism, one thing is obvious – secularisation, that is, the loss of religion's social significance, is a real process that many societies around the world have gone through (and, in some places, these processes are still ongoing). This means that the phenomenon of secularisation needs a theoretical explanation. In this regard, it is reasonable to attempt a 'revision' of the existing models of secularisation. With this achieved, it will be possible to understand the foundation on which the new (or updated) model (or models) of secularisation is being built.

In previous publications, I attempted to analyse the Western experience of understanding secularisation, using the example of what I called the "neoclassical model" (Uzlaner 2008a; 2008b). This present article reconstructs the Soviet experience.[1] I propose conditionally calling the theoretical developments in the Soviet Union the "Soviet model of secularisation" (there have obviously been disagreements between different researchers over this, but I still dare to talk about a single model). Below I will outline the main provisions of this model, compare it with the Western (that is, neoclassical) [p. 62/63] model, and identify the strengths of the Soviet approach, which can prove useful in the future.

The formation of the Soviet model of secularisation largely repeated Western experience: it started in the 1960s and 1970s, when a number of authors began to actively discuss this topic in their publications. In Soviet sociology, the topic was addressed by Iu. A. Levada (1965), I. N. Iablokov (1971; 1972), A.G. Tvaltvadze (1968), as well as the authors of the collection *Towards a Society Free from Religion (The Process of Secularisation in a Socialist Society)* (Lopatkin 1970), and others. Like their Western colleagues, Soviet authors fundamentally relied on the legacies of certain classical thinkers when building their theories, in their case K. Marx, F. Engels, and V. I. Lenin. For ideological reasons, the ideas of the founders of Marxism-Leninism were adopted uncritically, and the legitimacy of these thinkers' positions was not questioned. Rather, academic research in the Soviet Union was concerned with reproducing their ideas, and using empirical research to confirm them. This uncritical use of classical ideas is one of the main differences between the Soviet model and the Western model, which took a critical look at, and even revised, some of the basic assumptions made in the sociologies of Weber, Durkheim, and not least Marx. Furthermore, in the West, sociological theories of secularisation immediately came under fierce criticism from religious thinkers and other sceptical authors, criticism which was not always fair, but was usually meaningful. The Soviet model lacked this kind of criticism.

1 [note 1 in the original] I was only able to find one article on this topic in existing literature. See *De neve* 1973.

However, this uncritical acceptance also had its advantages: Soviet sociologists openly set out all the philosophical premises on which they built their vision of secularisation. In the case of Western sociologists, such clarity was absent: sometimes they flatly denied (or failed to mention) that their model was based on some philosophical foundations that still needed to be substantiated, and that their model of secularisation could collapse if these premises turned out to be false. They believed that they were dealing with exclusively sociological problems that did not require any philosophy. The philosophical naivety of Western theories of secularisation has long been noted by their critics (Glasner 1977; Hadden 1987). Soviet authors, on the other hand, were consistent; they began with a presentation of general fundamental philosophical propositions, then moved on to general sociological concepts arising from them, and only then proceeded to a special scientific analysis. Thanks to this, the Soviet model turned out to be much clearer, more transparent, and consistent.

Logic requires that a description of the Soviet model should begin with a presentation of the ideas of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, but these ideas are so well known that I refrain from repeating them here. Let me simply note that, from the writings of Marx and Engels (1955; 1959; Marx 1955a; 1955b; Engels 1961), and Lenin (1968a; 1968b), it is possible to single out a completely finished model of secularisation.[2] Religion is an illusory superstructure, generated by an imperfect economic basis. This basis can be improved in accordance with objective laws, leading to the improvement of the superstructure. In the end, there ought to be a perfect base and a perfect superstructure. There is then no place left for illusory religion, since those flaws in the basis that led to its appearance have been destroyed. However, the elimination of religion does not happen by itself – in this process, the individual plays the most active role. Actually, Soviet sociologists only had to turn the implicit model of secularisation into an explicit one, and to detail certain provisions for this. [. . . p. 63/64]

What Did Researchers Seek to Comprehend within the Framework of this Model?

Soviet researchers focused on what happened to religion in a socialist society, and to some extent also in a capitalist one. Their task was to trace, and empirically substantiate, specific changes in the economic basis of society, and how these changes affected religion. However, unlike their Western colleagues, who strove exclusively for a neutral analysis, and denied any interest in the described process, Soviet authors also set themselves practical tasks. Religion was a harmful illusion that impeded the advancement

2 [note 2 in the original] This being said, none of the classics used the concept of "secularisation" in the contemporary sociological sense.

of humanity and society; therefore, the process of secularization was part of social progress that contributed to the development of humanity, and an individual's spiritual freedom, interests, and abilities. As R. A. Lopatkin (1970)[I] concluded, the secularisation of societal and individual life was a necessary condition for achieving all of the above goals. Thus, the study of the phenomenon of secularisation was not purely of theoretical interest, but also had practical ramifications: the sociologists wanted to understand the causes of secularisation, to identify what hinders it, and to give recommendations to help eliminate the harmful illusion of religion. Hence, many Soviet works on secularisation bore a similar title: "Reasons for the Existence and Ways to Overcome Religious Remnants" (Prichiny 1963; 1965; Stroitel'stvo 1966; Cherniak 1965).

What Was Their Main Postulate?

The answer to this question is obvious: as the objective conditions of human existence improve, religion weakens and eventually dies out. Secularisation is a natural consequence of the progressive improvement of society's economic basis; this improvement makes religion superfluous. Soviet researchers recognised the validity of the basic thesis of the Western model, that modernisation leads to secularisation; however, they considered this statement insufficient. It is necessary here to say a few words about how "secularisation" was interpreted in Soviet sociology, and the differences between this interpretation and the Western one.

The first task facing Soviet scholars who became interested in the problems of secularisation with renewed vigour in the 1960s was to develop the very concept of "secularisation" itself. In 1965, beginning his study of the phenomenon, Iu. A. Levada (1965, 171), quite in the spirit of Western researchers of that time, stated that "secularisation" was a term "which is very widespread, but does not have any strict definitions". The best definition was proposed by R. A. Lopatkin (1970, 19): secularisation is "the process of liberation from the influence of religion over all aspects and levels of the life of society and the individual, as well as the assertion in public and individual consciousness of the materialistic worldview and the systems of norms and values based on it as a necessary condition for the functioning and progressive development of society and the individual".

The main difference between the understanding of secularisation adopted in Soviet sociology and the Western interpretation was the identification of two sides: a negative and a positive side. Soviet secularisation was not just "the liberation from the influence of religion" (i.e. the negative side), but also "the assertion of a materialistic worldview"

I SR: This text is also reproduced in this volume, in English translation, see text no. 54.

(i.e. the positive side) (Lopatkin 1970, 19).[3] A full-fledged secularisation should combine the decline of religion with "the assimilation of the principles of scientific atheism by the people" (Lebedev 1970, 134). It was for ignoring the second, positive side of secularisation that Soviet authors criticised Western concepts. However, it was not only the concepts that were criticised, but Western society as a whole. Bourgeois theorists had failed to see a positive dimension of secularisation due to the imperfection of their society: "The positive side of secularisation comes into full force only under socialism, when all conditions are created for people to assimilate the scientific worldview, [p. 64/65] the spread of which has become massive" (ibid). Accordingly, under capitalism, "the very process of secularisation . . . does not reach its full completion on a large scale". Hence the shortcomings of the Western model of secularisation: "Apparently, to a large extent, this can explain the fact that secularisation is still considered by bourgeois sociologists of religion only as a negative process" (ibid). At the same time, of course, a number of correct implications of the Western model were recognised – for example, the idea that modernisation contributes to secularisation. However, another difference between the Western and Soviet understandings of secularisation was manifested here: if, in the Western model, secularisation was associated with a number of 'superficial' changes (modernisation), then in the Soviet one it was associated with a radical reorganisation of the basis of the entire socio-economic structure. As A. G. Tvaltvadze (1968, 192) wrote, "Marxist philosophy does not deny the dependence of secularisation on changes in social structures, expansion of communication ties, an increase in the role of science, mass transformation of culture, greater mobility of people, and other phenomena in society that accompany the process of its 'industrialisation'". In his opinion, there could be no question of any full-fledged secularisation until there was a change in the entire bourgeois formation, and no full-fledged model of secularisation could arise until "class struggle is recognised as one of the decisive factors of secularisation" (ibid).

How, and on What Material Basis, Was the Model Built?

Within the framework of the Soviet model, socialist society was proclaimed the perfect human society (Marx 1955c, 4), in which all the necessary objective conditions for the withering away of religion were created for the very first time. Accordingly, the task of researchers was to empirically demonstrate the course of this withering away, and the establishment of an atheistic (correct) worldview – the only one capable of giving

3 [note 3 in the original] Of course, by no means did all Soviet sociologists agree with this formulation of the question. For example, I.N. Iablokov (1972, 160) disputed the thesis that atheisation was the positive side of secularisation, arguing that, under socialism, many atheists had never been believers at all.

a person their much-needed happiness. Since there could be no question of any revision of the philosophical foundations of the model, any lack of secularisation, or any secularisation felt to be progressing at too slow a pace, required the researcher to identify the reasons that were preventing the emergence of the correct superstructure for the correct basis. These tasks were solved on the basis of empirical research, including noteworthy research in the Penza region, on the basis of which *Toward a Society Free from Religion* (Lopatkin 1970, 19), probably the best Soviet work on secularization, was produced.

Soviet researchers did not ignore developments in capitalist societies, but here they faced a somewhat different task: analysing the vitality of religions in Western countries, and showing the connection with the imperfection of the basis of bourgeois society (Shershneva 1987).

What Did the General Scheme Look Like?

The Soviet model of secularisation was built on the foundation of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. [. . .] Accordingly, the model of secularization was built into the general scheme of the historical development of mankind. This development was interpreted as progress from a less ideal stage to a more excellent one, and, finally, to the most perfect one, in accordance with the laws discovered by Marx. Religion was one of the indicators of imperfection; therefore, for objective reasons, it would weaken in the course of history, until, finally, it would completely disappear. Accordingly, secularisation, albeit in its most rudimentary form, began long before the appearances of capitalism or socialism. [. . . p. 65/66. . .]

The reasons why Soviet sociologists interpreted *religious* conflicts and disputes as secularisation, i.e. as steps towards the withering away of religion, are understandable: society was improving, and accordingly, religion was weakening, even if it looked like it was undergoing a transformation. Then, as if to confirm this interpretation, it was indicated that over time, secularisation had begun to take on an increasingly pronounced meaningful character, and finally, "from a certain point, mainly starting from the French Enlightenment, secularisation has gone beyond the struggle of progressive social forces with the church and has begun to include the struggle to overcome religion in general" (Lopatkin 1970, 14).

However, this was still only the prehistory of secularisation. Real secularisation began under the conditions of capitalist and socialist societies. In order to understand the Soviet model of secularisation, it is vital to introduce two important terms: the objective conditions and the subjective factor. [. . .]

Objective conditions for the process of secularisation have been created in modern societies (both capitalist and socialist), and only here (which is logical). The development of productive forces caused by the scientific and technological revolution led to a

radical reorganisation of life in those societies, and to the natural weakening of religion. However, the quality of these objective conditions is different in capitalist and socialist societies. With all the successes of capitalism, there has not yet been a change in the structure of society, making full-fledged secularisation impossible. Secularisation has instead remained in the first, negative stage. As for Soviet society, the basic objective conditions have been achieved, so secularisation in socialist society has been moving from the negative to the positive stage. Additionally, in socialism, under the conditions of a 'correct' basis, the subjective factor associated with the active struggle against religion began to play a key role.

Unlike Western theorists, for whom this aspect was not so obvious, Soviet sociologists clearly pointed out that secularisation does not occur by itself, that the active participation of social actors is necessary for its successful completion, and that it is pointless to consider it "external to the social class that is interested in carrying out secularisation" (Tvaltvadez 1968, 192). In part, this attention to the subjective side of secularisation was due to Lenin's parting words, that religion should not be taken as a personal, private matter. Even where the correct basis has been established, it is foolish to expect that religion itself will wither away without any help: first, it is possible that even in a socialist society, especially in remote places, the old order that feeds religious illusions can be preserved; second, in the superstructure – of which religion is a part and reflects the real basis – there are also so-called remnants, the overcoming of which requires real effort. In short, the subjective factor is involved in the realisation of this potency. [. . . p. 66/67. . .]

Accordingly, the combination of the subjective factor and objective conditions should result in successful secularisation and, ultimately, in the overcoming of religion. In a socialist society, all these conditions for secularisation were fully present, so the Soviet researchers rightly concluded that "in socialist countries, secularisation is at its most *thorough*" (Ugrinovich 1985, 194). The Soviet researchers did not limit themselves to simply developing and clarifying the theoretical foundations of the secularisation process. They were, themselves, active supporters of this process, participating in atheistic propaganda and the ideological opposition to churches' attempts to maintain their positions. Indeed, by virtue of the fact that the superstructure does not automatically react to a change in the basis, but has a certain scope for action, religions resist their decline. This resistance can take many forms, from rapprochement with reactionary regimes that impede change, to attempts at internal reform and adjustment to new circumstances. To comprehend the processes of religion's struggle with objective tendencies, a secularisation-sacralisation scale was introduced (sacralisation being "the spread, strengthening and deepening of ties to religious cults, giving material and ideal objects, consciousness, behaviour, and relations between people a 'sacred' religious meaning and significance" (Lopatkin 1970, 20). Accordingly, each event in the religious world was considered from the perspective of this scale, with the researcher assessing whether it contributed to secularisation or sacralisation.

Soviet researchers sought to substantiate their theoretical developments through empirical research aimed at revealing the real position of religion, primarily in a socialist society. [. . . p. 67/68. . .]

Not meeting many wholeheartedly committed believers in their studies, Soviet sociologists concluded that the main trend in modern religiosity was its natural decline (Ul'ianov 1970, 165). Strictly speaking, in the Soviet model of secularisation, even at the theoretical level, only decline was recognised as a possible change in religiosity: one could be either a wholeheartedly committed believer, or an aspiring atheist – there was no third option (Tancher/Duluman 1964; Andrianov/Lopatkin/Pavliuk 1966).

Empirical data collected in the vastness of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries seemed to confirm the veracity of the Soviet model of secularisation: the number of atheists grew, while the number of believers decreased (Ugrinovich 1985, 192–203). All of this allowed Soviet sociologists to consider their own reflections legitimate and justified.

What Conclusions Were Drawn about the Prospects for Secularisation?

In this regard, Soviet researchers were much more categorical than their Western counterparts: secularisation must end in the complete disappearance of religion. At the same time, as one of the researchers wrote, "secularisation, as a consequence of social progress, is a historically irreversible process" (Baikov 1970, 208). Moreover, while the creators of the Western neoclassical model positioned themselves as objective researchers who were not interested in either the success or failure of secularisation, the Soviet researchers clearly specified their sympathies: "the crisis of religion is a positive phenomenon, one of the links in the liberation of man from spiritual oppression" (Kurochkin 1969, 37). Finally, they not only sympathised with secularisation, but were ready to assist it to the best of their ability, participating in the strengthening of what was called the subjective factor.

This, in general terms, was the Soviet model of secularisation. As a conclusion, I would like to note its strengths, which may be useful for building an updated model of secularisation. First, there is the thesis that secularisation has not only a negative, but also a positive side. Leading Western researchers have also moved towards the analysis of this positive dimension of secularisation, albeit understood differently (Taylor 2007). Second, there is the thesis about the subjective factor, that is, the recognition that objective factors alone – be it modernisation, rationalisation, or even a socialist revolution – are not enough; the active participation of groups interested in secularisation is also needed. Attention to this factor is also increasing in the studies of modern scientists (Smith 2003). Third and finally, the philosophical integrity of the Soviet model deserves praise, given that this was lacking in the Western secularisation research of the time.

However, none of the merits of the Soviet model saved it from actual collapse. In this sense, it repeated the fate of the Western neoclassical model: while, empirically, it received more and more confirmation (from the 1960s onwards), its foundation was weakening. The political collapse of Soviet Marxism, of which the Soviet model was a logical part, marked its most serious crisis. Russian researchers, like their Western colleagues (indeed, even a little earlier than them), faced the need to create a new – or at least a greatly updated – model. However, while work in this direction began almost immediately in the West (Martin 2005; Casanova 2006), the Russian researchers abandoned any efforts of this kind for a while.[4] I would like to hope that this is a temporary pause, and the theoretical understanding of secularisation in Russia will continue. The developments of Soviet scientists may prove more useful than ever in this task.

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4 [note 5 in the original] Perhaps the only exception to this is the research activity of Iuliia Iu. Sinelina [1972–2013].

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14 S. N. Balagangadhara: *On the Dark Side of the "Secular"* (2014)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

S. N. Balagangadhara ("Balu"; b. 1952, Bangalore, India) is a professor emeritus at Ghent University, Belgium, where he held a chair in Comparative Science of Cultures (*Vergelijkende Cultuurwetenschap*). His research focuses on the comparison between Western and Indian culture, which he sees as being characterised by utmost difference. Though critical of what he sees as the unproductive self-reflection of many postcolonial studies, Balagangadhara nevertheless starts with a common postcolonial claim: The interpretation of non-Western cultures by the West is guided by central characteristics originating in Semitic theology, especially the idea that God gave religion to humankind, from which he sees the assumption of the universality of religion being derived. He not only questions this assumption, but also claims that the Semitic-Christian perception of religion shapes the analytic tools with which the West has understood cultures like India. He argues that the presupposition of the universality of religion leads scholars to treat Semitic religions and Hindu traditions as phenomena of the same kind, assuming that all "religions" are rivals competing over the truth. This idea includes the distinction between good and false religion. According to Balagangadhara, this equation of Semitic religions and Hindu traditions is a fundamental mistake, which is reproduced in the claim that a secular state can remain neutral with regard to different religious traditions. As soon as the state accepts the idea of religions competing over truth, about which the state has remained neutral, it has – according to Balagangadhara – already taken sides, because it has treated the Hindu traditions as if they made the same kind of truth claims. In his view, this problem is seen again in the quarrel about religious conversion, which is a very contested political issue in India – in several states conversion away from Hindu traditions has been severely restricted. The state, according to Balagangadhara, cannot remain neutral in the matter of conversion, because it is only the Semitic religions who try to convince others of their truth.

In the following text, Balagangadhara argues against those scholars of religious studies who have fundamentally questioned the use of the secular-religious binary. He introduces the thought that, in the Christian context, from where this distinction originated, the original configuration was, in fact, a triad. It was from the distinction between true religion and false religions that the notion emerged of the secular as a

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neutral space outside the conflict over religious truth. Based on this assumption, he has also critically argued against the adoption of secularism in a state like India. As – in his view – the distinction between religion and the secular always implies the distinction between good and false religions as its “dark side,” state secularism in fact promotes conflicts between religions, and eventually fosters religious violence.

With this position Balagangadhara stands in stark opposition to scholars such as Rajeev Bhargava (text no. 37, in section 2), who have argued that there are indeed Indian traditions which are indigenous sources of a secular state, and he comes close to Hindutva positions which fight religious conversion, but also engage in violent conflicts with Muslims in the country. Balagangadhara’s writings keep to a philosophical level when discussing the incompatibility between Semitic religions (competition) and Hindu traditions (no competition) with regard to the issue of truth. He does not discuss, however, the existing violent conflicts in the country, where groups linked to Hinduism violently compete with other religions not considered to be from Indian soil, and consider conversion away from Hinduism to be a form of violence against family, culture, and society.

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S. N. Balagangadhara. “On the Dark Side of the ‘Secular’: Is the Religious-Secular Distinction a Binary?” *Numen* 61, no. 1 (2014): 34–49.

Sins of a Distinction?

During the last decade, a great deal of attention has been paid to the distinction between the religious and the secular. Out of these discussions, the following consensus has emerged: making this distinction in the study of religion and elsewhere is problematic (Agrama 2010; Asad 2003: Casanova 2006: 21–24; Cavanaugh 2009; Fitzgerald 2007a; Fitzgerald 2007b; Fitzgerald 2007c; Starrett 2010). However, there is no equally clear agreement about *what* exactly the problem is, *why* it is a problem, and whether there is a *solution* to this problem. [. . .]

Broadly speaking, four types of arguments about the religious-secular distinction keep recurring in the literature: (1) the distinction is slippery or fluid; (2) the meanings of the words “religious” and “secular” have changed over multiple historical contexts; (3) the distinction is a binary or dichotomy; (4) it [p. 34/35] is essentialist in nature and this essentialism is unacceptable. I will begin by briefly examining the nature of these

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arguments in order to set up the problem. The first argument points out the fact that there is no hard and fast set of criteria to make the distinction. Even though the reason for this alleged absence will become clear later on in this essay, let me note here that the absence of a set of criteria can never be a good reason to abandon making a distinction. If anything, it should propel us in the direction of research that either provides such criteria or shows why it is impossible to do so.

Second, some scholars seem to think the contextual dependency of this distinction is some kind of an impossibility argument: the fact that the meanings of these words have changed over a period of time demonstrates the impossibility of providing context-independent criteria. This argument is too *general* to "prove" the impossibility of making a *particular* distinction. After all, it is a fact about all natural languages that meanings of words change over time and additional meanings accrue in different contexts and that, in some cases, the contexts are the only ways of disambiguating the meaning of a word, especially where a single word has several unrelated meanings. From this consideration *alone,* it does not follow that this distinction faces some specific unsolvable problems. Since it is not possible to make the radical claim that words do not have any meaning outside of the contexts where they occur, the occurrence of this distinction in multiple historical contexts with multiple meanings does not establish the case that, *therefore,* this distinction makes no sense to us in our context.

The next two arguments are philosophical in nature, but it is not clear what the philosophy in question is or even how it provides arguments against the distinction. The strongest logic that we know (the truth-functional propositional and predicate calculus) works with binary values and neither paraconsistent nor multi-valued logics "disprove" propositional or predicate calculus. Our electrical circuits are binary and so is the best arithmetic we can think of. Consequently, it is unclear why it is "wrong" to work with binaries or dichotomies.

Perhaps, the problem that these scholars wish to identify is not at all about binaries but about a mode of reasoning that logicians identify as a *fallacy* in informal logic: the mistake in reasoning commonly called the fallacy of the excluded middle (or as a "false dilemma"). Here, the problem is simple: in the case of logical contraries (both of which could be *false*), one argues for the truth-value of one contrary *based* on the truth-value of the other. However, the problem here is not that the distinctions are binaries but that they are *logical contraries.* In the case of two statements that divide the logical space into two [p. 35/36] exhaustive partitions such that only one of them could be true, no such problem arises. In other words, it is totally unclear whether people have problems with two-valued logics or are making heavy weather by falsely generalizing a specific fallacy as a problem for all reasoning that involves two values.

As far as the sin of essentialism is concerned, it is not at all obvious what kind of essentialism one is against or even why. The problem with essentialism appears to be this: one freezes the world into static essences and, therefore, one cannot understand the dynamic, changing nature of things. This charge is untrue, but, even if true, consider a counter-question: Would a dynamic "essentialism" be permitted then? After all, Aris-

totle, the grandfather of one kind of essentialism, and Hegel, the progenitor of another kind of essentialism, speak of dynamic essences. Their theories are predicated upon essences that develop, change, and morph. What is wrong with these kinds of essentialism? Furthermore, the distinction between the secular and the religious is empirical and not metaphysical in nature. Consequently, the charge of essentialism appears misplaced. Of course, one might want to say that it is not misplaced *in the sense* that scholars transform an empirical distinction into a metaphysical one. [. . .]

In short, it is not obvious what the problems are and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find a clear problem statement. The only consensus is that there is some kind of problem involved in making the distinction between the “religious” and the “secular” and that *any* such distinction is a binary. What I will now do, therefore, is attempt a clear problem statement beginning with the question: *to whom is this distinction a problem and why?* [p. 36/37]

A Christian Triad

Most of us know that, as a historical fact, Christianity made a distinction between the religious and the secular or the spiritual and the temporal. It is also widely known, even if one has not studied the history of the use of this distinction in Christianity, that the words “religious” and “secular” have acquired multiple meanings over the millennia. Further, I also suppose it is known that Christians considered their religion to embody “the truth.”

As a matter of logic (I have in mind the richest logic currently known, namely the classical propositional and predicate calculus), “truth” and “falsity” come as a pair: each is the negation of the other. From its earliest days, Christian theology has made the distinction between true and false religions – a distinction that Islam and Judaism also make (Assmann 2010). When Christianity made the distinction between the religious and the secular, we need to realize that it was not a binary but a triad instead: true religion, false religions, and the secular; or, the religious, the idolatrous (or the profane), and the secular (Markus 2006).

The predicates “truth” and “falsity” were applied to specific actions: true religion was the act of worshipping the true God, while false religions worshipped false gods. In this sense, any act of worshipping God was true religion; any and every act of Devil worship was false religion. The secular or religiously indifferent emerged as the leftovers: actions that belonged neither to true religion nor to false religion. That is, historically speaking, the notion of the secular emerged only after the distinction between the true and the false was made. [. . .]

In his De Spectaculis (197–202 C.E.), Tertullian [p. 37/38] argued that enjoying the pleasures of public shows was “inconsistent with true religion and true obedience to the true God” (Tertullian 1989: 80). Christians could not participate here, but were free to

engage in those practices that had been placed in the neutral secular sphere: public and private ceremonies related to betrothals, weddings, and name-giving ceremonies, the wearing of white togas, etc. In this way, the triad of true religion, false religion, and the secular drew the boundary between the Christian religious community and its pagan surroundings (De Roover 2011). This also shows that the distinction between the secular and the religious is not a "modern" one, no matter where one locates "modernity."

In colonial India, missionaries from different Christian denominations called upon the same triad in order to decide how they and their converts should relate to traditional practices of Indian society. Early modern Jesuits were in the habit of allowing new converts to retain certain local customs. However, critics not only accused them of permitting neophytes to carry on practices that were obviously idolatrous, but also charged the Jesuits with complicity in idolatry. In this "Malabar Rites" controversy, the above-mentioned triad came into effect. The papacy had to determine the status of these customs: Did they indeed belong to the realm of false religion and were they therefore incompatible with true religion? Or were these customs merely secular civil observances (Brucker 1910; Neill 2002: 75–79)? Later Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries raised similar questions about caste practices. It was crucial for them to determine whether the caste system was an institution embodying false religion and idolatry or only a secular civil institution, because this was a precondition for deciding which stance Christian believers were to take towards caste-related practices (Ballhatchet 1998; Dirks 2001; Forrester 1980; Sweetman 2007).

Because of the internal divisions within Western Christendom after the Protestant Reformation, the debates about the divide between true religion and idolatry intensified. As a consequence, the question of what was secular and what not cropped up again and again. [. . . p. 38/39] The sphere of the secular was constantly filtered by the notion of idolatry and only what was not idolatrous could be practiced by the Christian believers in their daily lives, precisely because it was considered secular or indifferent to religion. The secular, in this sense, had a "dark side," namely idolatry and worship of the Devil. "False" religions were always a threat to the practice of "true" religion. In the history of Christianity, the notion of the secular always required (and continues to require) the presence of the opposition between "true" and "false" religions.

To Whom Is the Distinction a Problem?

To Christian believers, there is no conceptual problem involved in making the religious-secular distinction, because their theology helps them specify what true and false religion are and, as a consequence, what the secular is. If that theology tells them that saluting the flag or kissing it is not to worship either the flag or the nation but merely to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's," then they would not accept a description that attempts to portray the act as a religious act (for such a description, see Fitzgerald

2007b: 3). The reason is not far to seek: the mere possibility of describing, say, nationalism or patriotism as "religious" acts does not make such acts religious, any more than the possibility of describing human beings as "children of God" makes us effectively into children of God (Hayes 1926; Juergensmeyer 1993:16). [. . . p. 39/40] Since the theology of the Christian believer enables him to distinguish between true and false religion, it also helps him in identifying the secular as something that does not belong to the domain of the religious, whether false or true. In other words, the believer *operates with a triad:* the religious, the idolatrous, and the secular. If one so chooses, he or she could simply say that the secular is anything that is not religious, with the proviso that the "religious" contains both true and false religion.

At the other end of the spectrum, consistent atheists would not face a problem either: to them, all religions are embodiments of false beliefs. The word "religion," in this case, is merely another name for "ideology" (which might mean something like "false consciousness" to the atheist). Thus, they efface the distinction between the religious and the secular. [. . .]

Everything that exists, the consistent atheist might say, is secular. By saying this, he or she would also have solved the problem of giving a definition of the "secular." Of course, by saying that religion is an ideology, such an atheist is not committed to denying its efficacy in the world: in so far as people's actions are directed by such an ideology, religion (and the institutions that emerge from it) have real and tangible effects in the world.

Thus, there are two groups of people to whom the religious-secular distinction is not a problem: to one, it is not a binary but a triad; to the other, there is only the "secular." The former group adds a third element to the binary and the latter reduces it to a monad. In either case, the distinction does not pose any problems. In short: the religious-secular distinction appears to be a problem *only to those* who insist that it concerns a binary distinction. In this sense, one conclusion is clear: *the problem is not one of distinguishing between the "religious" and the "secular," but one of insisting that this is a binary distinction.* Put more generally, the distinction between the "religious" and the "secular" poses problems *only in some particular contexts.* One such context is that of religious studies, where many scholars insist that the distinction is a binary. [. . . p. 40/41] The distinction between the religious and the secular is *not purely* a matter of *linguistics* alone. It is made within a theory about religion and, consequently, it is a theoretical distinction. To the believer, his theology makes this distinction; to the consistent atheist, his theory of ideology makes the distinction. Thus, the problems that arise in distinguishing between the secular and the religious are not conceptual problems endemic to the distinction itself.

If one argues that there are no "essential" and "universal" meanings to words like "religious" and "secular," one can only suggest that their meanings are context-dependent. If the meanings of words are dependent on the context, the distinction between the meanings of these words also depends on the context. In that case, too, one can only formulate the following conditional claim: *in certain contexts,* the binary distinc-

tion between the "religious" and the "secular" creates problems. Hence, I will address myself to the following question: What are the problems involved in making the distinction between the religious and the secular in some contexts and what are its consequences? Let me first speak about our social-political context, namely the context of liberal democracy, and then move on to touch very briefly upon our cognitive context, namely that of contemporary religious studies.

Liberal Democracy and False Religion

In a country like, say, the United States or Britain, multiple Christian groups live together. Each of these groups identifies different things as secular and different things as religious. [. . .]

In the absence of a universally accepted scientific theory about religion, there is only one route open to the state if it is not to favor one interpretation of religion above the others: it has to accept that multiple phenomena are called "religions" by its citizens. In the process of accepting this fact, the state [p. 41/42] has to take notice of the fact that some religions not only make the distinction between the domain of religion and those things that do not belong to this domain, but also that this distinction is actually a triad. Historically speaking, the Western liberal democracies *began by accepting the truth* of the Protestant theological circumscription of religion, which all three Semitic religions also subscribe to: *religion is the act of worshipping God* (De Roover and Balagangadhara 2007). Because the state cannot define what God is or what it means to worship this entity and yet hope to remain religiously neutral and impartial, it was compelled to transform truth-functional statements ("religion is an act of worshipping God"; "God is such and such an entity") into *claims about beliefs:* "Some citizens believe that religion is the act of worshipping God." However, the problem with this intentional statement is the following: if laws are promulgated which enjoin all the citizens to respect such beliefs held by their fellow-citizens, then the laws are not merely about what some citizens believe in ("some citizens believe that . . .") but also regarding *what their beliefs are about.* That is to say, all are enjoined to "respect" some actions of their fellow-citizens *because* the latter believe that such acts *worship God.* The state has to say that some acts (according to some citizens) are acts of worship and that these acts (according to the same citizens) are directed towards an entity called "God." [. . .] Here, the state had to settle the issue of truth: Which of all the competing religions were true? Because the state had to be tolerant with respect to all competing claims about religious truth, it took a neutral stance with respect to *particular truth claims.* That is, while the state confessed to its inability to determine the truth in matters of religion, it nevertheless accepted that *reli*[p. 42/43]*gions were candidates for truth.* This belief that religions can be true or false is presupposed by the liberal secular state (Balagangadhara and De Roover 2007).

Thus, in *the first conceptual step,* the state acknowledges that the question of "truth" in religious matters involves applying truth predicates to actions and entities. If that is the case, then it follows that some actions are true acts of worship, while others are false acts of worship. However, the state is not a source of theological authority and it cannot legislate what constitutes acts of worship, whether true or false. So, it transforms discussions regarding *beliefs about truth* into discussions about *the truth of beliefs* through a series of remarkable moves, which constitute *the second conceptual step.*

Having endorsed the belief that religion is an act of worship and that each religion is a candidate for truth, the state assumes *an agnostic position* with respect to truth. It refuses to say what makes some act into an act of worship by pleading *inability* to determine *the truth* in matters of religion. However, in so doing, the problem is only half-solved. The state might not be able to say what constitutes a "true" act of worship but what about "false" acts of worship? [. . .]

However, the truth in religious matters has already been defined in terms of the truth of beliefs held by some groups. Thus, the state plays the agnostic with respect to "false" religion by defining it as possibly "true" for some citizens in the polity. That is, that some acts are "not true" according to some people in its polity does not foreclose the possibility that the very same acts could be considered as "true" by other citizens at a later time. Thus, the state *transforms* claims about "false" acts of worship into possible claims about their "truth." In this way, it continues to be agnostic. [p. 43/44]

Now, the state can remain silent about the domain of the idolatrous or falsely religious, because the idolatry of one (say, the Roman Catholic Church according to the Protestants) is the true religion of the other (say, the Roman Catholic Church according to its self-description). In generalizing this claim across the domain of religion, the state bans *all talk* about "false" religions or the "idolatrous" from its vocabulary. *It banishes the notion of false religion* itself on the basis that some others *could see* the same as true religion.

If one banishes the notion of "false religion" from the domain of the "religious," where do the banished go? There is only place they can go to: the realm of the "secular." However, they are not explicitly admitted into the domain of the secular as the "purely" secular; they enter the secular domain under a false identity and, therefore, with false papers. [. . .]

Thus, the idolatrous becomes the dark side not only of the secular, but also of the very distinction between the religious and the secular. Because the state does not talk about the false religion, it admits the potentially religious into the domain of the secular. That is to say, the religious *enters the secular domain* even if it is clothed as the possibly (or only potentially) religious.

In this way, the state creates *the novel and modern domain of the "secular"* that is both continuous with and breaks from the earlier domain of the secular but one which exhibits two properties: (a) In so far as the secular is formally or conceptually distinct from the religious, the religious and the secular appear as a binary opposition. But this is merely the surface appearance. (b) Then there is the nature or structure of the secular

domain, which contains two sets of actions: actions that consensually do not belong to the domain of the religious *and* those actions which could *potentially migrate* to the religious domain. [. . . p. 44/45]

Consequently, we can now see how the modern secular domain is *both continuous* with the earlier notion of the secular and how it *breaks* with it. Insofar as the state endorses the triadic relationship between the religious and the secular, it remains continuous with the earlier distinction. And yet, it breaks from the old, insofar as it allows the "religious" to enter the domain of the "secular" by allowing for acts with uncertain truth-value to reside in the domain of the secular. Instead of true religion, false religions, and the secular, the modern state creates the triad of the religious, the potentially religious, and the secular.

The state legislates on issues that do not belong to the religious domain. That means acts that are *"potentially" religious are included in its legislations.* [. . .] In other words, despite the distinction between the religious and the secular, the *modern* domain of the secular is both "religious" and "secular." [. . . p. 45/46]

This leads to the second consequence. The early "secular" took form and shape as that domain which contained actions that were neither religious nor idolatrous. The implicit banishment of the idolatrous to the secular domain makes the modern secular become bloated and deformed: it now contains actions that could belong to the domain of religion and those that belong to the domain of the secular. Or, an implicit opposition emerges between the "religious" and the "secular" *within the domain of the secular itself.* Because not all secular actions (say, riding a bicycle or going to the hairdresser) are "potentially" religious acts, the religious triad is replicated and reproduced within the *modern* secular domain as three dyadic relationships: the secular and the "potentially" religious; the secular and the religious; and the religious and the "potentially religious."

The third consequence has to do with contestations. Because the modern domain of the secular contains "potentially" religious acts, any segment of the population can challenge the scope of the legislation and demand that some set of actions that appear to fall within the domain of the secular is actually religious. This contestation does not tell us that the distinction between the religious and the secular is a matter of power or ideology (or some mysterious expression of "power/knowledge" relationship) but that these sets of actions have uncertain truth-values. [. . .]

Thus the real opposition is not between the two domains, the religious and the secular, *but only between a part of the secular domain* (the "potentially" religious) *and the domain of the religious.*

The Possibility of Religious Freedom

Am I making the tired, old claim that the liberal secular state is inconsistent? No, I am not; I am saying the opposite: *the liberal state is entirely consistent* with respect to the moves it makes. Because the religious and the secular is [. . . p. 46/47] a triadic relationship, a set of complex dyadic relationships comes into existence. To appreciate its consistency, consider what the state does when it confronts the opposition between the secular and the religious within the domain of the secular. [. . . p. 47/48]

In short, the liberal state, in trying to transform questions about falsity into issues about "truth for others" is entirely consistent in allowing these others ("religious authorities") to tell its courts of law what that "truth" is. We cannot convict the state of inconsistency, but only argue that it accepts the "theologies" of Semitic religions.

One might be tempted to ask why the courts or the liberal state in general cannot simply accommodate the "lived religion" of the citizens, but seek to determine "truth" in religious matters instead. The reason must be obvious: the peaceful coexistence of multiple Semitic religions within the interstices of the modern Western world is possible precisely because the liberal state accepts the candidacy of religions for the status of truth, but then assumes an agnostic attitude towards the same. The kind of religious freedom that the liberal state allows is possible only because of this assumption. [p. 48/49]

From Triad to Dyad

What I have said so far is also applicable to our cognitive context, namely, the domain of religious studies. Scholars here assume (in most cases) an agnostic stance with respect to truth or fail in being consistently atheistic. The problem they then confront is of *their own making:* they accept Christian theology in an inconsistent way, attempt to *reduce a triad to a single binary* and thus face all the problems of the "idolatrous" parading as denizens of the realm of the secular. In contradistinction to the liberal state, which breaks the triad down into three dyads, the intellectuals attempt to reduce a triad into a single binary, which creates all kinds of problems.

The issue is not that of a dichotomous relationship between the "religious" and the "secular," but rather that of the relationships between the "religious," the "potentially religious" and the "secular." This is also the reason why, in challenging the distinction between the secular and the religious, scholars like Timothy Fitzgerald appeal to phenomena that the Semitic religions have already described as idolatry: the market, money, nationalism, sports, plays, etc. One reproduces old theological descriptions of these practices but believes that one is thereby providing a "religious" description of "secular" phenomena. All that one is signalling here is that the realm of the secular

today includes practices that were once considered as expressions of false religions but live on in the secular today as possibly religious acts.

In other words, I do not believe that there is any kind of problem about the existence of a binary distinction between the "religious" and the "secular." Even though the complex relationships between the religious and the secular are important, the distinction as such has no interesting implications for the study of human society. However, there is the phenomenon of the failed reduction of a triad to a single dyad, which has generated the issues that some of the intellectuals in the Western world face today.

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15 Matthew Engelke: *Secular Shadows: African, Immanent, Post-colonial* (2015)

Introduced by Magnus Echtler

Introduction

American scholar Matthew Engelke (b. 1972) has been a professor in the Department of Religion at Columbia University, New York, since 2018, after having taught anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science for more than a decade. He started his academic career with work on African Christianity, investigating a Ugandan church that rejected the authority of the Bible, before turning his interest to the United Kingdom, first with research on the British and Foreign Bible Society, and most recently researching funeral practices of secular humanists. The text presented here investigates the suitability of the secular frame for Africa. It formed part of a special issue, whose editors called for a joining of forces between postcolonial and post-secular approaches in the struggle against the violence and injustice of colonialism and secularism as the dark side of modernity.[I]

In his analysis, Engelke plays with the notion of shadows. He argues that Africa lies in the shadows of secularity, as, on the one hand, Africa is absent from academic discourse on secularity, and, on the other, secularism is of little importance in political debates in Africa. In this analogy, though, shadows are not only the absence of light – of enlightenment – with Africa as a dark or enchanted continent that is the equivalent of premodern Europe, as Charles Taylor suggested.[II] Rather, shadows are also distorted representations, twisted mirrors. Following Talal Asad's lead in studying secularity through its shadows (see text 56 in this volume), Engelke argues that Africa is neither religious, nor secular, but rather mundane, and hence the place providing the shadows that challenge Western conceptions of modernity.[III] With the third category, he tries to move beyond the religious-secular binary imposed by colonial regimes (cf. Josephson and Balaganghadara, texts 16, 14). This move addresses both Okot p'Bitek's critique of Christian scholars imposing "religion" on "atheistic" Africans, and Stephen Ellis and Gerri ter Haar's critique of secular scholars imposing the religious-secular distinction on "religious" African epistemologies (see sections on p'Bitek and Ellis / ter Haar, texts 4 and 11).

I Vincent W. Loyd and Ludger Viefhues-Bailey, "Introduction: Is the Postcolonial Postsecular?" *Critical Research on Religion* 3, no. 1 (2015), 19.

II Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 11.

III Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 16.

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However, it remains unclear how the mundane relates to the idea of critique. Engelke notes that Taylor's proposed historical trajectory from a transcendent to an immanent frame, in which religion is but one option, corresponds to Robin Horton's shift from closed to open systems, and that both transformations are driven by scepticism and doubt. Hence, critique is at the heart of these secular narratives.[IV] Engelke ends his article with the observation that the secular is "contingent naming," and that Africa's secular shadows, the mundane, "provide a helpful shelter from the heat" of secular critique. Certainly, humanists are calling on Africans to leave the shade: "Dare to think. Dare to doubt. Dare to question everything in spite of what the superstitious around you teach and preach. [. . .] African skeptics arise."[V]

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As late as 2006, the anthropologist James Ferguson could express concern about the extent to which Africa didn't figure in discussions, debates, and understandings of globalization. I say "late" because we had, by that time, been inundated by talk of the global for well-on twenty years, in academic and policy circles alike. [. . .]

Ferguson argued that this neglect mattered because the usual picture of globalization suggested a world of flows and worldliness: interconnection at all sorts of levels, in meaningful ways. This didn't really work for Africa, a continent which is, at best, patchily connected to the outside and is, in many corners, gripped by failures and crises. [. . . p. 86/87 . . .]

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IV For a challenge to the presumed secularism of critique, see Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

V Leo Igwe, "A Manifesto for a Skeptical Africa," in *James Randi Educational Foundation* (blog), 27 October 2012, accessed 26 June, 2024, http://archive.randi.org/site/index.php/component/content/article/37-static/1891-leo-igwe.html.

Ferguson's own metaphor is one of global "shadows." Africa is marked by global shadows, not global flows. And for him the trope of the shadow is not exhausted or even well captured by the long-standing image of Africa as "the dark continent." Ferguson (2006: 16) actually moves quickly over the question of Africa's darkness in this sense, even suggesting that, at least in academia, we have moved beyond the prejudice that Africa is "a continent defined by a lack of enlightenment;" inasmuch as it's a dark, shadowy place, he argues, it's because it's a place "where much is unknown, hard to make out, perhaps even unknowable." What Ferguson (2006: 16) really wants to highlight in the predication is another sense of the shadow – that of "*doubling*", of attachment to, and identity with, something. "A shadow, in this sense, is not simply a negative space, a space of absence" – as it might be in dark-continent imageries – "it is a likeness, an inseparable other-who-is-also-oneself to whom one is bound" (Ferguson, 2006: 17).

The sense of doubling – of reflection and refraction – is helpful for understanding Africa's place in the world. It builds on long-standing imageries that have emerged out of the colonial encounter. Yet I am not sure we can dismiss the matter of Africa's "darkness." Ferguson (2006: 15) says the image lingers "especially in popular and journalistic accounts." He is being forgiving of academia; it still shapes – or perhaps better, haunts – scholarly accounts, too. [. . .]

What I want to suggest in this essay is that Africa produces some pretty heavy "secular shadows" too. As with literature on the global, Africa has often been inconvenient – even apparently irrelevant – when it comes to the literature on the secular. Where is Africa in our analyses and understandings of the secular?[1]

In what follows I consider some of the ways in which various secular formations produce shadows in and for Africa – darkness, doublings, and likenesses vis-à-vis its chief modern other of the West. My considerations, which focus in the main on scholarship produced in the West, are neither systematic nor exhaustive. They are driven by the strong sense that further considerations are necessary: that Africanists need to think both with and against the larger debates taking place in the social sciences and humanities on secular studies.

Africa has certainly been inconvenient to those who still support a classic 1960s version of the secularization thesis. Critics of the thesis are quick to invoke Africa when they need figures of church growth to offset the focus on England or Sweden's empty pews. This isn't the kind of inconvenience with which I'm concerned. I do not think that our understandings of the secularization thesis – and still less the secular – are best framed in terms of numbers. That's not really what matters in terms of secular affects. Rather,

1 [note 1 in the original] Here and throughout the essay when I refer to "Africa" I am referring in particular to sub-Saharan Africa. I know this is problematic. But inasmuch as any such designation would be seen as problematic, you might say I'm picking my poison. Like Ferguson (2006), and like other anthropologists who work in specific, sub-Saharan African places (e.g. Piot 2010; Geschiere 2013), I'm frustrated enough by the ways in which anthropological particularism has hindered the discipline's contributions to larger debates that I'm willing to throw caution to the wind.

Africa – as both a place and an idea – is inconvenient more in terms of how, beyond its invocation in church attendance statistics (or growth of the *ummah*, or community), it relates to social thought and social analysis. It is in this sense that Africa lurks in the secular shadows, so to speak, passed over and never really considered – or, in line with Ferguson's interests in "the global," thought to be a double – like Europe, only slightly off; slanted and enchanted.[2] Africa is still often understood as the Europe of a time ago.

It is of course possible that one reason Africa lurks in the secular shadows is because the secular itself is such a shadowy, even phantasmagoric, term. It is possible that "the secular" has not been used much because it's not descriptively or analytically relevant. At the very [p. 87/88] least, we should note the secular's most significant other – "religion" – has long been suspect in the eyes of Africanists. "Religion" is an enlightenment term, a Western term, an imperial term.[3] What scholars have long called "African traditional religion" is no such thing; it is the colonial designation, driven, we might note, by the compartmentalizing logic of the secular – and, often, a "rational" and science-driven Christianity (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991). So if religion doesn't fit, why should anyone then go on to invoke the secular?

More than inconvenience, then, it has been irrelevance that marks our sense of Africa vis-à-vis the secular. As I'll go on to discuss, some African societies have even been referred to recently as "never secular" (Luhrmann, 2012).

This sense of irrelevance, of a never-land, is certainly evident in the realm of politics and statecraft. One of the most striking aspects of the work done by modernization theorists on Africa during the independence era is how little the secularization thesis figured. In Crawford Young's (1982) study, *Ideology and Development in Africa*, for example, the basic idea of a secular political settlement never merits sustained or central discussion; it is only ever mentioned in passing, such as in his discussion of Somalia's General Mohamed Siad Barre, who showed "no mercy for those who argued an incompatibility between Islamic theology and the secular faith" (1982: 66–67). David Apter's (1955) early study, *The Gold Coast in Transition*, doesn't get to anything like "secularism;" in fact it doesn't even get to religion. Apter begins the study with an apology for this, especially the omission of Islam and Christianity. He does say that when he speaks of anything "traditional," though, that should be understood to "subsume religious aspects" (1955: vii).[4] Inasmuch as the constitutions of the new sovereign states (such as Ghana) enshrined freedom of religion, secularism simply wasn't a central topic of interest or action. Since the first period of independence, in fact, constitutions have,

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2 [note 2 in the original] This is the title of Pavement's first LP; see http://crookedrain.com/records/slanted-and-enchanted/ (accessed 26 June 2014).

3 [note 3 in the original] Within African Studies this story has been most fully elaborated by Chidester (1996); see also Masuzawa (2005) for a broader account.

4 [note 4 in the original] One might argue that secularism wasn't addressed by the modernization theorists because it was assumed to follow modernization itself. Yet this can't explain why it was addressed in South Asia and North Africa.

if anything, been desecularized in various ways: framed with explicitly religious language or even declarations of faith. In 1996 the preamble of the Zambian constitution was amended to declare Zambia a Christian nation – a designation that was upheld and reiterated in 2013. Ghana's constitution of 1992 begins: "In the name of the Almighty God." [. . .] The Nigerian constitution of 1979 declares Nigeria a secular state. Yet, this has come under regular attack from a range of actors, leading one proponent of secularism (Abioje, 2013), who seems to be nearly alone in the wilderness, to decry what he sees as the sorry state of affairs. Many other states – Senegal, Mali, Zimbabwe – also have secular constitutions, yet they too, have come under question, especially in recent years, and in any case Africanists have devoted little time or attention to "secularism in Africa." The same can't be said of America, Europe, the Middle East, or, say, South Asia. There are huge literatures looking at secularism in these places.

The seeming irrelevance of the political secular extends to the first generations of African socialist regimes. African socialism was rarely an atheistic socialism – and never successfully so. Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, scoffed at the idea of it as something universal in shape, form, and meaning – as opposed to the Word of God. As a Christian, he wrote, the Bible was one thing and socialist tracts another; socialist books are "written by men; wise and clever men, perhaps – but still men" (cited in Young, 1982: 99). The liberation war in Zimbabwe was won by Marxist-Leninist and Maoist guerrillas who drew heavily and explicitly on the power of the traditional spirit mediums. Even in neighbouring Mozambique, where there was a systematic denunciation of "superstition" in a classic [p. 88/89] socialist-secularist register, it was never straightforward. [. . .]

Secularism as a political settlement has never been, and is not, a prominent concern in sub-Saharan Africa. Even where it does appear – occasionally in discussions of Nigeria, or South Africa (see Leatt, 2007) – it is often ancillary. As a principle of statecraft, secularism simply isn't part of the core vocabulary of African modernities.[5]

Why is this? One reason, I think, has to do with the fact that the European colonial powers found no strong traditions of "world religions" in much of sub-Saharan Africa. There was thus no presumed "religious field" to regulate. As Chidester's (1996) work makes clear, it took some time for the colonial powers even to recognize "tradition" as having the "religious aspects" about which Apter was eventually to write at the dawn of the independence period. Indeed it is worth noting that where we do see signs of secular statecraft, it is in those areas of sub-Saharan Africa where Islam did have a

5 [note 5 in the original] Where the Comaroffs (1991: 252) do address these issues, they note how "the sacred and the secular" were "critical tropes in the worldview of nineteenth-century Nonconformist missionaries," and that they "accepted – indeed positively urged – the separation of church and state." *Church*, of course, is an [sic] advised term here: it had nothing to do with the so-called religious lives of the African natives. In any case, as the Comaroffs go on to show, this avowed separation wasn't always maintained, contributing to a number of tensions, such as how to understand local Tswana chiefs as "political" authorities but not as "religious" ones. In other words, here we see hints of how the political and the religious, the secular and the sacred, get produced out of colonial encounter.

presence. Islam was religion enough. As we are long used to hearing, the secular and the religious are mutually constitutive; but where there is no "proper" religion – where it's just "African tradition" – there is nothing "secular" to be constituted.

A related answer might be developed in relation to the evolutionary logic of colonial governance and mission. Secularism follows a social-evolutionary logic; it is seen, by its proponents and architects, as an achievement of civilization. Therefore, secularism as a political project only makes sense in relation to a certain kind of society – those with "world religions," not just witchdoctors or spirit mediums.

All of this matters. It matters that secularism has seemed irrelevant in this sense. It suggests something about the emplacement of the African political. And inasmuch as secularism is a strand of social evolutionism, its absence here can both produce and reinforce Africa's ostensible darkness.

It is relatively easy to see that secularism plays a minor role if one focuses on secularism in an explicit sense. And after all, there is so much talk of "religion" in African public spheres. This, though – rather like the focus on numbers – is misleading on its own. Rather, one might argue, drawing on the influential work of Talal Asad (2003: 16), that the secular is best approached indirectly – indeed "through its shadows, as it were" – and that what we have in the Africanist literature is thus not a canon on the secular but a series of discussions and debates – about subjectivity, about ontology, even about statecraft – that otherwise reveal the secular. [. . . p. 89/90 . . .]

Building on Asad's approach, Hussein Ali Agrama (2012) (one of Asad's students), has recently drawn attention to "questioning secularism." By this he means two things: first, and most obviously, that we should never rest easy with our understanding of what secularism is, or does. It changes; it becomes localized; it, in fact, is not even an *it* – a thing. Yet Agrama also doesn't want to wholly surrender the concept to particularism. He is interested, after Asad – and, it must be said, many others (not all Asadians) – in approaching secularism "as a general historical phenomenon" (Agrama, 2013). This requires something of a base line. Second, then, and as this kind of base-line claim, Agrama argues that secularism's "form of power" (as he calls it) is questioning itself; it questions everything, including its own normative presuppositions.

I want to come back to this second point, but it is with a general anthropological questioning of categorization that we might continue. For if we take "secular" in what is often understood to be its original meaning – "of this world" – it quickly becomes clear that the secular/religious binary doesn't always work well in sub-Saharan Africa. This gets us back to the unease with which many scholars now approach "religion" in African contexts, along with its attendant binaries of immanent/transcendent, natural/supernatural, spirit/matter. One particularly good example of where such binaries fail us comes from the work of Igor Kopytoff (1971), based on research among the Suku, but drawing as well from studies of other Bantu-language groups. As Kopytoff points out, it had been common (and some might argue, still *is* common) to refer to African attitudes to the dead as worshipful. And yet the idea of "ancestor worship," he argues, "introduces semantic paradoxes" (1971: 138) where none exist, for the deadness of the

ancestors is not the relevant factor. Ancestors may be dead, but they are also elders, and it's this which gives them their status. "It is striking that African 'ancestors' are more mundane and less mystical than the dead who are objects of 'worship' should be in Western eyes" (1971: 140). The genius in Kopytoff's analysis is to break down the distinctions among the core structural-functionalist categories of classification – religion, kinship, politics – and show how, in Suku life, it is all part of something more fluid and porous.

Read today, in light of the burgeoning literature on secularism, Kopytoff's work might seem like a textbook example of that literature's purchase and appeal. Because in the process of working to show how neither death nor ideas of the supernatural are apt – ideas assumed to define the category of "religion" – in a sense what he shows us is that the best way to understand this world is in a secular frame, in an immanent frame. Here, of course, immanence has almost the exact opposite meaning assigned to it by Charles Taylor. This is not a "religious" world, Kopytoff tells us, but neither is it a disenchanted world. It is "immanent" because everything is present, everything is part of a single world, a continuum in which there is no break, radical or otherwise. It's all earth, no heaven. All here, no there. Transcendence is not key, at least not in the way Taylor conceives it. [p. 90/91 . . .]

In a recent set of reflections on *A Secular Age*, Simon During questions the comprehensiveness of Taylor's secular/religious rubric, pointing out that what's left out of this rubric is the mundane. "Ever since the Enlightenment, the secular has denoted not so much what lies beyond religion's interest and grasp but what contributes to its intermittent diminution, corruption, marginalization, and undoing. The mundane is the philosophical concept that names what stands outside that division between the secular and the religious" (During, 2010: 113). For During (2010: 113), what the mundane consists of are "those forms of life and experience that are not available for our moral or political or philosophical or religious or social aspirations and projects." This is not to say the mundane can have no moral or political consequences. During is thinking here in terms of trajectories – and if not teleological, at least "progressive." The mundane has no such trajectory in itself, or for itself. Citing Theodor Adorno, he refers to "'being, nothing else, without any further definition or fulfilment,' [which] might take the place of process, act, satisfaction" (in During, 2010: 116). In the African contexts I'm discussing here this should not be confused with a kind of static, unchanging, traditional life. [. . .] One could certainly argue, taking cues from During, that much of Africa is not a religious place, and still less a secular place, but, rather, a *mundane* place – that which lurks in the shadows, that which *provides* the shadows, for the West's conceptions of modernity and enlightenment. [. . . p. 91–93]

I want to shift now to the proposed difference between African traditional thought and Western science, for it's here that we get to the synergies with Taylor and debates about secular and post-secular formations. "What I take to be the key difference is a very simple one," Horton writes. "It is that in traditional cultures there is no developed awareness of alternatives to the established body of theoretical tenets; whereas in sci-

entifically oriented cultures, such awareness is highly developed. It is this difference we refer to when we say that traditional cultures are 'closed' and scientifically oriented cultures 'open'" (Horton, 1993: 222). [p. 93/94]

Taylor's characterization of a secular age is, in many ways, hinged on precisely this difference: the assertion that what marks secularity is "openness," as Horton puts it; *options*.[6] "We live in a condition where we cannot help but be aware that there are a number of different construals, views which intelligent, reasonably undeluded people, of good will, can and do disagree on" (Taylor, 2007: 11). This is not the condition of Evans-Pritchard's Azande. "A Zande is born into a culture with ready-made patterns of belief which have the weight of tradition behind them. Many of his beliefs being axiomatic, a Zande finds it difficult to understand that other peoples do not share them" (Evans-Pritchard, 1976: 202). Yet for Taylor the openness of a post-scientific-revolution worldview becomes its own kind of closure. Western science actually produces what he calls a "closed world structure" (Taylor, 2007: 560). It tends to push out anything transcendent. "Once one has taken the step into unbelief," he writes, "there are overwhelming reasons why one will be induced to buy into the official, science-driven story" (2007: 568). Even more than Horton, with his standard-issue measure of romantic appreciation of the African Other's ways, Taylor issues warnings about the sufficiency of science, of the secular. Yet in outline Horton's description of what becomes evident in the colonial encounter between Africa and the West is almost exactly the same as Taylor's description of what becomes evident in the wake of enlightenment within the West. For Horton (1993: 223), "we have two basic predicaments: the 'closed' – characterized by lack of awareness to alternatives, sacredness of beliefs, and anxiety about threats to them; and the 'open' – characterized by awareness of alternatives, diminished sacredness of beliefs, and diminished anxiety about threats to them." This could serve as a précis for the 800-page story in *A Secular Age*.

At the core of both versions of the story are the same protagonists. Whether in modern Africa or pre-modern Latin Christendom, what upsets the equilibrium is scepticism and doubt. In short, the core of the secular is critique.[7]

As things stand, critique is probably the strongest candidate for what marks the secular, what those who want to hold on to the secular (especially for political purposes) most vigorously defend. [. . . p. 94/95]

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6 [note 7 in the original] In his genealogy of the mundane, During (2010: 115) refers to the Greek version of breaking with mundane, which echoes that in Horton's anthropological example: "Before theory, the Greeks, like everyone else hitherto, lived inside their beliefs, true or false; inside an endless cycle of transitory events and passages."

7 [note 8 in the original] Taylor tells this story but doesn't fully own it; so do others (e.g., Brown 2009). In this sense, *A Secular Age* is a kind of ethnological reflection on how the natives of Latin Christendom think, and how those patterns of thought have changed over time. Again, then, even more than Horton, he wants to distance himself from the sufficiency of science. And back to During (2010: 115): the Greek break with mundanity is made possible by the emergence of "a disinterested and critical attitude toward the world."

As position takers, such critics forge a link between critique and the secular with particular commitment and verve. Yet the centrality of critique is also, by and large, the working assumption of other anthropologists who, like Mahmood, would be labelled antisecularist (at least by the anti-antisecularists). There can be "antisecularists" then, who nonetheless put some stake in the idea that critique is, in fact, secular. Tanya Luhrmann (2012) is one of these anthropologists.

What interests me about Luhrmann's work is how doubt – as secular critique – becomes pivotal for a certain kind of secular/religious divide. Although her own research is on neo-Pentecostals in the United States, she frames her analysis in relation to a set of non-Western, colonial and post-colonial cases (including Meyer's on Ghana and my own on Zimbabwe [see Engelke, 2007]), which she refers to (inspired by Joel Robbins) as "never secular" (2012: 372). [. . .]

It is not just any kind of doubt or option-taking that matters here. In the never-secular examples of Ghana, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere in the post-colonial world the doubt that's not recognized as a viable option is the one in "the transcendent at all." "In never-secular societies, where the reality of the supernatural as a category has not been profoundly questioned, doubt is focused on specific supernatural claims – the reality of non-Christian spirits, the validity of spiritually charged mechanisms, the efficacy of particular prayers" (Luhrmann, 2012: 381). It is true that in my own work, on an African apostolic church, the shift was from ancestors (Shona: *midzimu*) to the Holy Spirit (Shona: *mweya mutsvene*). This can be used to suggest that religious change in post-colonial contexts is change within a "closed system" á la Horton. With Kopytoff's conclusion in mind, however, and the lessons of historians of religion (Chidester, 1996; Masuzawa, 2005), we should not underestimate the extent to which religious change was also *change to religion*: that is to say, that what happened throughout much of colonial Africa was not a shift *within* transcendental and supernatural orientations but, rather, a shift *to* them.[8] Whatever else it suggests, the ethnographic record on sub-Saharan Africa makes it clear that transcendence and the supernatural can't be taken as the lowest common denominator of a secular/religious equation. Too often, it is. Yet in Shona, as in many other Bantu languages, and many other languages of erstwhile colonial subjects, there is no word for anything like "heaven" or "hell."

What transcendence does is make a certain kind of option – the "secular" option – necessarily of a different epistemological and even ontological order. What is it that authorizes this difference? A good argument could be made, I think, that the shift from "traditional" to "secular" would have been easier than that from "traditional" to "reli-

8 [note 10 in the original] A long time ago, Franz Boas' student, Paul Radin (1927), published a path-breaking book, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*. The whole point of this book was – as we might put it today – to counter the claim that critique is secular. One of Radin's (1927: 381–382) key examples is taken from the Amazulu, who "exercise their very great critical acumen and half-ironical skepticism" as a matter of course; "Everything in their life is subjected to it," he writes, "their ancestors, the nature of ecstasy, dreams, etc." I would like to thank Jojada Verrips for reminding me of this example.

gious" (i.e., Christian). In much of sub-Saharan Africa, what Christian missionaries [p. 95/96] and other religionists had to fight for was the introduction and necessity of the transcendent, of the supernatural. Maybe they would have had an easier cosmological go of it if they hadn't needed to foist heaven and hell on so much of the globe.

The question of a secular difference, when pegged to scepticism and doubt, can be further appreciated in two essays that stand, I think, as valuable precursors to current debates, by Karin Barber (1981) and Eric Gable (1995). Considering them can also help us wind down the discussion here.

Barber is among those who show how certain Western understandings of religion fail us in Africa. Among the Yoruba – and they are not alone in this – there is an important sense in which humans "make" gods (rather than God making humans). A god (*orisa*) is "maintained and kept in existence by the attention of humans" (Barber, 1981: 724); in the process of doing so, the humans constantly question, doubt, and occasionally berate the *orisa*. Yoruba is, in this sense, a culture of critique. And yet while this scepticism might at first blush suggest the Yoruba are good hermeneuts of suspicion, in fact, Barber (1981: 740; 741) argues, the scepticism is "at the heart of the Yoruba devotional attitude" and "in no way questions the existence of spiritual beings as a category."

Barber's case could be added to those discussed by Luhrmann; the Yoruba in this reading are never secular. Doubt – and the doom of any given *orisa* – is not doubt, or doom, of the system. They're still within – still "closed" in Horton's sense. Yet Barber (1981: 741) makes another important point, which is that with such a conclusion we're not asking an important question: "what are the differences of *structure* – the structure of society and of ideas – which allows something apparently similar to scepticism to play such a different role"? There is not space here to provide her full answer. But what Barber's work can help us recognize is a point that Agrama, in the contemporary moment, makes more explicitly: secularism's normative demands force not only particular ways of seeing, but also particular kinds of questions. Barber is "questioning secularism" too.

In Guinea Bissau, Gable found himself troubled by "native skeptics" (1995: 242) amongst the Manjaco. He was troubled because the scepticism seemed integral to their traditions, yet the default language in which this could be discussed would suggest they had simply become colonized moderns. All the men he profiles – who question the spirits, and, in particular, the content and form of a significant initiation ceremony (the *kambach*) – had, in local parlance, "seen France" (1995: 245). To fully appreciate the Manjaco's "pragmatic and disenchanted scepticism," though, he argues we need to take "an 'anachronistic' approach to Manjaco consciousness" (Gable, 1995: 242). This does not mean denying them history, not least the ruptures and transformations wrought during the colonial encounter. Rather, we need to move beyond the romance of tradition (something anthropologists are not always good at), especially where it suggests that anything African that looks modern has to be understood as aping the colonizer – as a "bad copy" of something Western (Gable, 1995: 252–253; see also Mudimbe, 1988). With Gable's point in mind, we might appreciate that saying the secular is irrelevant is partly commendable because it refuses a totalizing logic, yet is partly remiss, because,

in doing so, it reinscribes African difference and forecloses the interrogation of general historical phenomena. If critique can only be secular, then Africa can only be traditional (or failed modern). Yet for the Manjaco (as indeed, following Barber, for the Yoruba), the starting point of "religiosity" is scepticism – questioning – not faith. Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that doubt comes after belief. Just so, we can argue that in other times and in other places, belief comes after doubt, that pragmatism, rather than piety, forms the core of what we dub "religiosity." [p. 96/97]

So I am not arguing that we should bring sub-Saharan Africa into line – into the conversations, debates, and arguments taking place in relation to elsewhere. Neither, though, do I come to Robbins' (2013: 262) conclusion that post-colonial studies "would perhaps be better served either by shunning the secular/religious binary altogether or by returning to its initial ambivalence." "The loss of this post-colonial context has been a loss for studies of secularism more generally" (Agrama, 2013). As Vincent Lloyd and Ludger Viefhues-Bailey suggest in their introduction to this special issue, it behoves us to consider the ways in which the colonial, the modern, and the secular are related. To be sure, in some instances those relations are either weak or forced. Post-colonial studies of Africa, and the social dynamics and formations they trace, have not *lacked* the secular; they have often addressed the same or similar issues without recourse to this term – as I have suggested, for example, in relation to Hull's work on nursing staff in a KwaZulu-Natal hospital. We can't disentangle Africa from the West or "Latin Christendom." The particular forms that secularism takes are partially determined in relation to Africa. We have also seen how for prior generations of Africanist anthropologists the debates today over what, if anything, constitutes a secular age would have an uncanny ring. Between Horton in Nigeria in the 1960s and Taylor in Canada in the 2000s, there has been a transposition of registers in which open becomes closed and vice versa. One important point to take away from these observations is a simple one, although not always one that seems to be borne in mind. The secular is a contingent naming. It is a term with purchase but can be exchanged for others. Shadows – secular shadows – need not always be broken up. Sometimes shadows provide a helpful shelter from the heat.

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16 Jason A. Josephson-Storm: *The Superstition, Secularism, and Religion Trinary: Or Re-Theorizing Secularism* (2017)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Jason Ānanda Josephson Storm (b. 1976) is an American scholar who sees himself largely as a historian and philosopher of the human sciences. He received his MTS from Harvard University, and his PhD in religious studies from Stanford University. He has held visiting positions at several prestigious universities in France and Germany, and is currently Professor of Religion, and Chair of Science and Technology Studies, at Williams College.

Josephson Storm's research focuses on Japanese religions, European intellectual history from 1600 to the present, and theory in the study of religion. He aims to de-centre received narratives in the study of religion and science, particularly by challenging preconceived universals – such as 'religion' or 'the secular' – that serve as the foundations of various discourses.

In his first book, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (2013), Josephson Storm demonstrated how Japanese officials, under international pressure, came to terms with the Western concept of religion by 'discovering' religion in Japan, and formulating policies to guarantee its freedom. This book has become a classic in scholarship on the appropriation of the concept of religion in modern Japan.

Also closely related to the topic of *multiple secularities* is Josephson Storm's second book, *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. Here, he challenges the most widely held account of modernity and its rupture from the premodern past. The book traces the history of notions of disenchantment in philosophy, anthropology, sociology, folklore, psychoanalysis, and religious studies. He shows that the myth of mythless modernity emerged at the very time that Britain, France and Germany were experiencing a revival of spiritualism and the occult – and many founders of the new academic disciplines were deeply enmeshed in it. He argues that they developed notions of a disenchanted world, as a reaction against this burgeoning culture of spirits and magic.

The article we have selected for this volume discusses recent theories of secularisation, which challenge the assumption that secularisation is a necessary outcome of modernisation. Josephson Storm shows how a newer generation of scholars conceive

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of the secular as a special discourse of Christianity, specifically Protestantism, which constructed binary oppositions between the religious and the secular. In their view, the project of modernity, embodied in the nation-state, resulted in the construction of 'religion' as a marked category, from which the 'secular' appeared to be the neutral or unmarked background. However, Josephson Storm argues that rather than a binary opposition between the religious and the secular, there is a trinary formation in which superstition is opposed to secularism, which is opposed to religion. The text then discusses how secular states designate certain beliefs and practices as neither secular state truths, nor religious notions worthy of tolerance. These so-called superstitious beliefs and practices are often attacked by both religious and secular institutions.

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While a generation of theorists assumed that secularization was a necessary outcome of modernization, a newer group of scholars have come to understand the secular as a special discourse of Christianity (particularly Protestantism). In its most influential formulation this line of thinking amounts to the claim that Western Christendom (perhaps during "the Enlightenment") constructed a set of binary oppositions between the religious and the secular, Church and state, which it then attempted to impose globally, producing "religions" at the colonial periphery where it encountered resistance. In effect, the project of modernity embodied in the nation-state resulted in the construction of "religion" as a marked category from which the "secular" appeared to be the neutral or unmarked background.[1]

Furthermore, some of this newer cohort of theorists have argued that this process was founded on a contradiction, because even while the established churches were losing influence, certain Christian theological concepts and symbols were still being embedded in the state but in a new configuration. [p. 2/3]

Moreover, this grand trajectory was an expression of an attempt to exile religion from the public sphere either by depoliticizing it or rendering it into a private confession on the Protestant model. More recent research in this line has shown how "politicized" religion is often demarcated by liberal or secular governments as illegitimate

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1 [note 1 in the original] For examples, see Anidjar (2008), Asad (1993), Asad (2003), Taylor (2007), Dressler and Mandair (2011). See also Josephson (2012: 135).

"bad religion" in contrast to the legitimate putatively "good religion" that leaves the neo-liberal sphere largely untroubled. Bad religion is therefore exempted from notions of religious toleration, even as good religion is held up as compatible with other secular values, such as democratization (see Hurd 2015). All told, we might summarize the main innovation of recent secularization theory in the observation that the categories "secular" and "religious" are a fundamentally entangled binary: secularization is religious in several registers and the construction of "religions" can be secularizing.

In *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Josephson 2012), I attempted an intervention in this line of theorizing by suggesting the value of looking at it in terms of a trinary system. By way of explanation, genealogists of "religion" have located the category's formation in two key binaries. Talal Asad and company have called for religion and the secular to be considered together.[2] Serge Margel and Dale Martin have emphasized the dialectic between religion and superstition – on top of which, Michel de Certeau has noted that science formulates through rhetorical opposition to superstition.[3] Insofar as the secular claims to be a political instantiation of scientific modernity, it too produces superstition as its opposite. In some sense, I think all of these scholars are right, but they have each only described part of the system. Instead of binaries, I see a trinary formation in which superstition is opposed to secularism is opposed to religion. [. . . p. 3/4]

In summary, the nation state often designates what we might call "state truths," promoted by governments through funding and public support. The "religious," in secular states, is not expunged but often located in a protected realm. But to achieve legal privileges, religions frequently have to consent to being privatized, regulated, and often politically disempowered. In any state, though, certain beliefs and practices – "superstitions," "magic," "folk traditions" – are defined as neither secular state truths nor are they protected as religious notions worthy of tolerance. These so-called superstitious beliefs and practices are often attacked by both religious and secular institutions. Indeed, secular states often invest significant energy in purging the superstitious as the true enemy of modernity or secular governance. [. . . p. 4/5 . . .]

Looked at through the lens of the above trinary, we can see the French revolutionary government engaged in three different operations. First, it is articulating state-truths. These appear in official proclamations such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, which did not merely guarantee freedom of religion, but also for instance asserted the claim that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights" and "The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation." But they also appear in official textbooks and pamphlets. These claims are meant to be outside the realm of dispute and are asserted irrespective of religious freedom. Second, the French state designated a set of beliefs as a matter of conscience and in that respect protected (if transposed into the

2 [note 2 in the original] See especially Asad (2003), Dressler and Mandair (2011).

3 [note 3 in the original] See Certeau (1985), Margel (2005), Martin (2004). For an early attempt to appraise the origins of a superstition-religion binary see Benveniste (1969).

private sphere). Third, not all beliefs were protected but those beliefs designated as in conflict with established truths or as superstitions were purged.

By way of a further example, in 1868 a revolution brought a new government to power in Japan. In direct contrast to the French case, this was a monarchical revolution that established the Meiji Emperor as a sovereign ruler. [p. 5/6]

Nevertheless, as part of the process of embracing the trappings of a "modern" nation state, the Japanese government promulgated a constitution with guarantees of religious freedom. 6 Article 28 of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (1889) stated: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief" (See Josephson 2012: 231).

Article 28 paralleled many European constitutions which Japanese thinkers consulted for inspiration. For instance, the Constitution of Prussia (1850) included Article 12 which specified: "Freedom of religious confession, of association in religious societies (Art. 30 and 31), and of the common exercise of religion in private and public, is guaranteed. The enjoyment of civil and political rights shall not be dependent upon religious belief. But the exercise of religious liberty shall not be permitted to interfere with the civil or political duties of the citizen."[4] [. . . p. 6/7 . . .]

In the years that followed the national educational system worked to promote a new set of state truths (including everything from the divine sovereignty of the emperor to heliocentricism and other based scientific claims), while a set of legal cases pushed the Japanese government to concretize its notion of religious freedom. [. . .] Moreover, alongside guarantees of religious freedom, the state worked to police so-called "cults" or "pseudo-religions" that were described as backward and superstitious and therefore exempt from toleration. On top of which, the Japanese state launched an official educational campaign to encourage its populous to "avoid superstition" (*meishin o sakeyo*). [. . .] The elimination of superstition was simultaneous to the promotion of the national gods and alongside encouragement of toleration toward Christianity and protection of religious freedom.

These are far from the only examples of a state simultaneously guaranteeing religious freedom and working to purge superstition. [. . . p. 7/8 . . .]

To approach the issue from another vantage, the English journalist George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) is today famous for having coined the term "secularism" and for being an influential leader of the English secularist movement. Indeed, in popular sources he is sometimes referred to as the "Father of Secularism." Holyoake's version of political secularism was explicitly indifferent to religion as such. As he argued, "By its nature, Secularism is tolerant with regard to religions." (Holyoake 1896a, 68). [. . .] [T]he goal of a secular politics is not the elimination of religion but rather its privatization. Nevertheless, [. . .] Holyoake allied secularism with science, over and against superstition. Indeed, Holyoake frequently opposed secularism with "superstition" and

4 [note 7 in the original] Translated and discussed in Josephson (2012: 231).

wrote positively of storming "castles of superstition" (Holyoake 1896b: 30). So it might seem that in at least Holyoake's vision, "superstition" was the real enemy of secularism. [. . . p. 8–13]

In the nineteenth century, the term "superstition" reached perhaps a cultural apogee and certainly, once the term "superstition" attracts one's attention, its traces can be seen everywhere – in the writings of theorists such as Max Müller and J. G. Frazer, in nineteenth century newspapers, journals and ghost stories. "Superstition" is found in discussions of monsters, unlucky numbers, and the beliefs of "primitives." While its referent is generally to the anomalous – to a seemingly senseless collection of debris, superstition's construction as a category is anything but arbitrary. In part this was due to the rise of "science," which increasingly became understood to be the definitive source of knowledge, power, and even modernity itself.[5] As "science" began to be differentiated from natural philosophy it was formulated in opposition to [p. 13/14] pseudo-sciences, often described as "superstitions." But again, obstacles to science and obstacles to faith were one and the same. Scientists and secular political leaders inherited the theologians' list of superstitions, and indeed, they often attacked the same paradigmatic superstitions, such as astrology, magic, and spirits.

The preceding has been an attempt to show that notions of superstition were intrinsically entangled with the formation of a notion of the secular. I want to emphasize that this was a historically contingent process – the ideas of "superstition," "religion" and the secular (or scientific) shifted over time and much of what could be fit into any given category varied significantly. We have to take precisely *not* as given the meaning of superstition, religion, or the secular (much less science). The differentiation between these categories did not arise sui generously in a range of societies, but rather it is my contention that this category schema emerged in a particular European cultural horizon and then was exported, modified, and creatively reinterpreted across the globe. It was transmitted by not only international law, but also various new discursive systems connected to the rise of scientism and the like. Moreover, these categories were often constructed by excluding their negatively marked others. In this respect, the definition of legal categories like "religion" was often entangled in the formation of notions of its opposites, particularly "superstition." Nevertheless, European colonialists did not establish hegemony without significant resistance and Japanese and Chinese policymakers, for instance, were able to redeploy these categories to meet their own agendas.

In the last few pages, I'd like to put forward a few other observations [. . .] which I hope will be of use to further theorists of secularism.

First, I would like to emphasize that the secular is not primarily a *subtraction* of religion. Put in Hegelian terms, the secular results from an ongoing "sublation" (*Aufhebung*) of religion, which it simultaneously encapsulates, transforms and opposes. Some

5 [note 32 in the original] Discussed in greater detail in Josephson-Storm (2017).

secular concepts represent the transposition of religious concepts into a new key or configuration at the very moment they are presented as oppositional. [. . . p. 14/15 . . .]

Second, various religious "remainders" are embedded in the heart of particular secular ideologies. [. . .]

Third, the modern secular legitimates itself through the capture of science and deploys another putative opposition – science versus religion (see above). Secularism is here represented as an ideal scientific or technocratic state as opposed to theocratic governance (e.g. Holyoake 1896a: 50). [. . . p. 15/16 . . .] The combination of science and ideology determines the architecture of what appears to be possible – both physically and politically.[6] It gives form to secular appeals to practicality and determines the contours of the "worldliness" to which secularism is directed.

Fourth, the secular is generally presented as the real and the other as the allegory. Put another way, secularization produces doppelgangers – one marked as actual and the other as phantasm, e.g. political sovereignty (framed as real) and divine sovereignty (framed as allegorical or irrelevant). [. . .]

Fifth, secularism as a nation-state ideology is connected to what Foucault called "governmentality" in that it demarcates different spaces that it can classify and control such as education, health, and justice (Asad 2003: 201). Crucially, it does not work to eliminate religion, but to contain it within its own sphere. In this manner, secularism even protects religions from extinction by providing them with a clearly allotted function in the nation state.

Sixth, even so, there is one area the putatively secular nation-state attempts to fully exclude – that which is marked as "superstition." [. . .] I think that the main target of the technocratic state is not the elimination of religion, but superstition. [. . . p. 16/17 . . .]

Finally, I'd like to step beyond my earlier research. Originally, I had the notion that religion, superstition, and science were largely defined negatively by way of a kind of triadic exclusion. I also initially thought that European thinkers were only focused on attacking "superstition" as an obstacle to modernization and therefore were unable to recoup a third position. But more recently I have begun to reflect more seriously on the construction of the concept of "magic," which often functioned as both the paradigmatic "superstition" and for some European thinkers as a positive term. This led me to realization that triad was not always defined negatively and that the term "magic" could also possess a utopian function. [. . . p. 17/18]

Approached differently, the construction of science and religion as antagonists implied a third position representing where the categories both convene and collapse. Negatively valenced, it is understood to be *superstition* and in this respect appears as the double of either religion or science. Hence, a certain cross-section of scientists

6 [note 35 in the original] Given that ideologies produce their own logics, they can get away from the control of the governments and Ideological State Apparatuses that promote them. See Althusser (2008).

trumpeted the power of their respective domain by suggesting that all of religion was a superstition. Positively valenced, the third term is *magic*, which was often supposed to take the best elements of religion and science together or to recover things suppressed by "modern" science or religion. Indeed, most of what gets classified as contemporary esotericism or occultism came into being as an attempt to repair the rupture between religion and science.[7]

Restated in broad terms, once "religion" and "science" are formulated as opposing discursive terrains, religion-science hybrids become both threatening and appealing. They are threatening because they risk destabilizing the system's points of closure and because they suggest pre-hybrid and therefore supposedly premodern systems. But also they are appealing because they promise to heal the split between the two notionally opposed terrains. Moreover, the more "magic" becomes marked as antimodern, the more it becomes potentially attractive as a site from which to criticize "modernity." In this respect the secular state has historically been dedicated to purging superstition even as it proliferated enchanted religion-science hybrids that often served as either its own culmination or critique.[8]

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7 [note 38 in the original] See also Bergunder (2016).

8 [note 39 in the original] See Modern (2011).

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17 Markus Dreßler: *Religionization and Secularity* (2019)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Markus Dreßler (b. 1970) is Heisenberg Professor for Modern Turkish Studies at the Institute for the Study of Religion, Leipzig University, Germany. He studied in Marburg and Gießen, received a doctoral degree from Erfurt and gained his post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification at Bayreuth University, all in Germany. Dreßler also holds the Turkish post-doctoral qualification *Doçentlik*, and has held positions at several German universities, as well as at New York University, Oberlin College, and Hofstra University in the US, at TU Istanbul in Turkey, and at universities in Switzerland. From 2016 to 2019, he was a senior researcher at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" at Leipzig University. Dreßler's research interests cover a broad spectrum, ranging from religion, politics, and society in the late Ottoman Empire, to Alevi studies. He has a strong interest in the theory of religion and secularism. Among his notable publications are *Secularism and Religion-Making*,[I] *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*,[II] and *Islamicate Secularities in Past and Present*.[III]

Markus Dreßler's article on *Religionization and Secularity*, presented here, is a condensed version of a longer paper on the topic.[IV] Following extensive discussions in the context of the *Multiple Secularities* project, Dreßler attempts to introduce his own social-constructivist position, to bridge the perceived gap between the postcolonial epistemological critique of secularism, most notably put forward by Talal Asad (see text no. 56 in this volume), and the differentiation-theoretical *multiple secularities* approach of Burchardt, Kleine, and Wohlrab-Sahr (see texts no. 42, and 21). Dreßler suggests taking a closer look at the centrality of the political, namely state power, in the negotiations of

I Markus Dreßler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, eds., *Secularism and Religion-Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
II Markus Dreßler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
III Markus Dreßler, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Armando Salvatore, eds., "Islamicate Secularities in Past and Present," *Historical Social Research* 44, no. 3 (2019).
IV Markus Dreßler, "Modes of Religionization: A Constructivist Approach to Secularity" Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" 7, Leipzig, February 2019, https://doi.org/10.36730/2020.1.msbwbm.7

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religion's place and role, adding another reference problem to Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr's original four-field scheme (see also Khan, text no. 25). Inspired by Asad, he asks for the incorporation of a rigorous analysis of the historically contingent, interdependent dynamics through which the religious and the secular are established as distinguishable units in the boundary-making process. Dreßler suggests looking at these processes through the notions of religionization and religion-making (see Van der Veer, text no. 28).

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Markus Dreßler. "Religionization and Secularity." In *Companion of the Study of Secularity*. Edited by HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities," Leipzig: Leipzig University, 2019, www.multiple-secularities.de/media/css_dressler_religionization.pdf.

This entry[1] discusses four concepts: religionization, religio-secularization, religio-secularism, and religion making. They are proposed as heuristic devices for the analysis of the processes through which social structures, practices, and discourses come to be understood as 'religious' or 'religion.' Since all of these concepts relate to the demarcation of boundaries between religious and non-religious domains, they are devices for analyzing the formation and maintenance of secularities.

This entry is based on the premise that processes of religionization and practices of religion-making have been intertwined with processes of secularization and politics of secularism. If we take a constructivist approach to religion, we must consider how to position secularity, conceived in terms of conceptual distinctions and structural differentiations,[2] within this dynamic. It is suggested that, at least for the modern context, secularity can be regarded as a product of processes of religio-secularization and practices of religion-making. As with the Multiple Secularities approach, the constructivist approach to religion advanced here is interested in the historical conditions under which certain assemblages of knowledge and structures were and continue to be related to religion and secularity. [p. 1/2]

1 [note 1 in the original] This text is a condensed version of Markus Dreßler, "Modes of Religionization: A Constructivist Approach to Secularity." *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 7, Leipzig, February 2019, https://www.multiple-secularities.de/media/wps7_dressler_religionization.pdf.

2 [note 2 in the original] As developed in the *Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities* research project. See Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Research Programme of the HCAS 'Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities.'" *Working Paper Series of the HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"* 1, Leipzig, March 2016, http://ul.qucosa.de/api/qucosa%3A16727/attachment/ATT-0/.

Religionization and Multiple Secularities

Religionization is proposed as a heuristic term that highlights practices through which religion is homogenized and reified. The term emphasizes the processes through which certain assemblages of knowledge, expressed in discourses and practices, are densified and become recognizable as 'religion.'

Religionization is the subject of a growing body of academic literature – though not all scholars employ the term. The work of Talal Asad, which investigated the discourses and practices through which 'religion' was first bounded and reified in the modern West, still is a major reference point in this debate. In *Genealogies of Religion* and *Formations of the Secular* he developed a genealogical perspective on the formation [sic] 'religion' and its modern binary other, the 'secular.'[3] He aspired "to problematize 'the religious' and 'the secular' as clear-cut categories but also to search for the conditions in which *they were* clear-cut and were sustained as such." "I wanted to ask," he explains, "'what are the conditions in which these dichotomies, these binaries, *do* seem to make sense?'"[4]

One can draw a parallel between Asad's consideration of the conditions in which the religion-secular binary appears to make sense and the "reference problems" for secularity, which Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt formulated in their initial framing of the Multiple Secularities research project.[5] [. . .] "Reference problems" are specific historical situations and societal circumstances that prompt secularity in terms of a cognitive separation between two spheres, as well as a cultural commitment ('guiding ideas') to maintaining this distinction. [p. 2/3]

Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt suggest four ideal-typical reference problems for secularity:

> (1) the problem of individual freedom vis-à-vis dominant social units [. . .]; (2) the problem of religious heterogeneity and the resulting potential or actual conflictuality; (3) the problem of social or national integration and development; and (4) the problem of the independent development of institutional domains.[6]

In the modern period, the problem of the legitimation of government, compounded by the centralizing state's increasing powers, and the negotiation of the place and role of religion that this legitimation engenders, may be seen as a further reference problem for secularity. It highlights the question of the political in the modern condition, which

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3 [note 3 in the original] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

4 [note 4 in the original] Talal Asad in David Scott, "Appendix: The trouble of thinking. An interview with Talal Asad," in *Powers of the secular modern: Talal Asad and his interlocutors*, ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 298.

5 [note 5 in the original] Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, „Multiple secularities: Toward a cultural sociology of secular modernities," *Comparative Sociology* 11, no. 6 (2012): 881.

6 [note 7 in the original] Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, "Multiple secularities," 887.

may "be regarded as the vantage point through which this antagonism/binary [of religion and the secular] is constantly reinforced."[7] Furthermore, it points to the mutually constitutive impact of religion (defined vis-a-vis the political) and secularity (constituting itself vis-a-vis religion), and, more broadly, to the processes through which the religious/secular and similar binaries (such as religion/culture) are evidenced as means of describing, making sense of, and thus ordering the human experience as well as social formations in the modern world.

Comparable to these reference problems, Asad's concern with the conditions under which binary distinctions "do seem to make sense" indicates the importance of taking context into consideration when analyzing how 'religion' is being evidenced in the modern period. However, in contrast to the Multiple Secularities project, which conceives of conceptual distinctions as responses to specific social structures and reference problems, Asadian critique inquires primarily into the epistemic forces through which the evidence of the secular – taken for granted by the Multiple Secularities perspective – is established. Irrespective of this principal difference, a social constructivist position that recognizes the social reality of conceptual distinctions and structural differentiations with regard to religion, while at the same time being interested in how this reality is being established, [p. 3/4] thus acknowledging its contingency, provides an opening for a dialogue between the Multiple Secularities perspective and Asadian genealogy.

Religio-Secularization and Religio-Secularism

Resonating both with the genealogical method and with the Multiple Secularities focus on conceptual distinctions, as well as structural and institutional differentiations related to such distinctions, religionization in the modern context may be conceived in a constructivist manner as "the signification of certain spaces, practices, narratives, and languages as religious (as opposed to things marked as secular)."[8] Recognizing that religionization understood in this manner is inherently related to processes of secularization and politics of secularism, the term religio-secularization seems appropriate to capture and emphasize this interrelation.

Accordingly, the term 'religio-secularism' is proposed to denote the knowledge regime that legitimizes processes of religio-secularization and strives for the normalization of such processes. For the modern period, we can

7 [note 8 in the original] Markus Dressler, "Beyond religio-secularism: Toward a political critique," *The Immanent Frame*. February 25, 2014. https://tif.ssrc.org/2014/02/25/beyond-religio-secularism-toward-a-political-critique/.

8 [note 9 in the original] Markus Dressler, "Religio-secular metamorphoses: The re-making of Turkish Alevism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76, no. 2 (2008): 281.

> use the notion of “religio-secularism” to put emphasis on the manner in which the concepts of religion and the secular have been intertwined, forming a semantic continuum constituted by the oppositional way in which they are pointing to each other without being able to be defined independently from one another. It also points to how secularism and religionism are corresponding worldviews and practices.[9]

One side effect of the described dynamic of religio-secularism is that, to the extent that we (contemporary students of religion) are often confined to a positionality, which is based on a modern and Western knowledge formation,

> it has become almost impossible for us to rethink religion in nonpolitical ways. What I mean by “nonpolitical,” simply, is an intellectual space that makes it possible to conceive of religion in a manner that [p. 4/5] does not necessarily implicate the political directly as a point of reference against which the domain of religion is demarcated.[10]

Religion-Making

From a social constructivist perspective, we can understand ‘religion,’ ‘the secular,’ and their respective derivatives as social realities that are not given, but the product of continuous negotiation and objectification. This implies that we need to focus on agency in processes of religio-secularization and the specific locations in which religion and the secular are produced, bounded, and distinguished against the background of particular contexts.[11]

The term religion-making aims to shed light on the multiple layers of agency in religionization processes. A distinction between three major dimensions of religion-making – from above, from below, and from a pretended outside – has been proposed for that purpose.[12]

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9 [note 10 in the original] Dressler, “Beyond religio-secularism;” see also Yolande Jansen, “Beyond comparing secularisms. A critique of religio-secularism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, ed. Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

10 [note 11 in the original] Dressler, “Beyond religio-secularism.”

11 [note 12 in the original] Peter Beyer, “Conceptions of religion: On distinguishing scientific, theological, and ‘official’ meanings,” *Social Compass* 50, no. 2 (2003); Markus Dressler, “ The social construction of reality (1966) revisited: Epistemology and theorizing in the study of religion, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 31, no. 2 (2019).

12 [note 13 in the original] Arvind-Pal S. Mandair and Markus Dressler, “Introduction: Modernity, religionmaking, and the postsecular,” in *Secularism and religion-making*, ed. Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21–22.

These dimensions reflect different ensembles of actors with different interests, and different positions of power, all of which are involved in politics of religionization and may form powerful symbioses.[13]

'Religion-making from above' can be defined as "a strategy from a position of power, where religion becomes an instrument of governmentality, a means to legitimize certain politics and positions of power."[14] The notion refers to

> authoritative discourses and practices that define and confine things (symbols, languages, practices) as "religious" and "secular" through the disciplining means of the modern state and its institutions (such as law-making, the judiciary, state bureaucracies, state media, and the public education system).[15] [p. 5/6]

What needs to be added is a reference to international institutions with legal and political authority, which are also important agents of religion-making.[16] Trevor Stack has further argued that "religious-secular distinctions have been crucial to the way in which modern governments have rationalised their governance and marked out their sovereignty."[17] The double perspective articulated by Stack is important: distinctions between the religious and the secular are employed as a mode of governance, and as a way of legitimizing claims to political sovereignty.[18] Connecting religion-making politics to secularity, understood as a product of politics of distinction, Stark's assertion is very much in line with the notion of religion-making from above. It also connects the top-down mode of religion-making with the reference problem of the legitimation of government discussed above.

'Religion-making from below' can be defined as

> politics where particular social groups in a subordinate position draw on a religionist discourse to re-establish their identities as legitimate social formations distinguishable from other social formations through tropes of religious difference and/or claims for certain rights.[19]

It is important to understand that discourses can only establish their dominance through subordination of other discourses. Whether in appropriating or in subverting terms, religion-making from below therefore needs to be analyzed in relation to religion-making from above. The language of religion employed by particular groups for

13 [note 14 in the original] The chapters in Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, eds., *Secularism and religion-making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) offer empirically rich and theoretically engaged perspectives on various modes of religion-making and how they interrelate.

14 [note 15 in the original] Mandair and Dressler, "Introduction," 21.

15 [note 16 in the original] Mandair and Dressler, "Introduction," 21–22.

16 [note 17 in the original] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond religious freedom: The new global politics of religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

17 [note 18 in the original] Trevor Stack, "Introduction," in *Religion as a category of governance and sovereignty*, ed. Trevor Stack, Naomi R. Goldenberg and Timothy Fitzgerald (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1.

18 [note 19 in the original] Stack, "Introduction," 3.

19 [note 20 in the original] Mandair and Dressler, "Introduction," 21.

their particular purposes is an expression of particular stakes and interests, responding to particular contexts, traditions, and the struggle over their interpretation. The notion of religion-making from below aims to acknowledge and underline that those who are in a subordinate position, such as groups that draw on the language of religion as a means to improve their particular social positions, may have considerable agency in religionization politics. Investigating the potentials and constraints of this agency should be one of the aims [p. 6/7] of the inquiry into the processes of the making of religion as well as the secular.

Scholarly work within the religio-secular field needs to reflect on its own position and "the siding effects of academic work."[20] Such work can easily become a tool for the vindication of particular political positions, both with regard to the justification and normalization of notions of 'orthodoxy,' as well as with regard to narratives of victimization. This brings us to 'religion-making from a pretended outside,' identified as "scholarly discourses on religion that provide legitimacy to the first two processes [of religion-making, from above and from below,] by systematizing and thus normalizing the religious/secular binary."[21] That the role of the academic study of religion is more complex than naïve imaginations of it as an impartial surveyor of given religious phenomena might suggest, and that it has itself often been implicated in the discursive reification of religion was commented on very early on by Wilfred Cantwell Smith.[22] Subsequent critical initiates of the discipline, such as Jonathan Z. Smith, author of the famous phrase "religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study",[23] inspired students of the following generation to focus in more detail on the role of scholars in the construction of religion.[24] The 'religion-making from a pretended outside' perspective is also indebted to Edward Said and subsequent post-colonial critics of academia's involvement in colonial politics of religionization.[25] It is important to consider how scholarly religion-making is interrelated with the other discussed modes of religion-making, in particular with religion-making from above. Tomoko Masuzawa's *The Invention of World Religions*[26] is

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20 [note 21 in the original] Bjørn Ola Tafjord, "Scales, translations, and siding effects. Uses of 'indígena' and 'religión' in Talamanca and beyond," in *Religious categories and the construction of the indigenous*, ed. Christopher Hartney and Daniel J. Tower (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 168.

21 [note 22 in the original] Mandair and Dressler, "Introduction," 21.

22 [note 23 in the original] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The meaning and end of religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

23 [note 24 in the original] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, religions, religious," in *Critical terms for religious studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

24 [note 25 in the original] For example Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing religion: The discourse on sui generis religion and the politics of nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

25 [note 26 in the original] See also Beyer, "Conceptions of religion."

26 [note 27 in the original] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

an [p. 7/8] example of such a dual perspective, as are the contributions of other authors in the post-colonial tradition.[27]

It might be useful to reflect on cultural encounters, and the translations and negotiations of new and old concepts and practices that they engender as an additional arena of religion-making. Studies on intercultural exchanges from early modern imperialism, and the concomitantly expanding missionary project, through to the age of colonialism have contributed greatly to our understanding of the dynamic character through which modern notions of religion and, consecutively, secularities have emerged globally.[28] Reflection on the increasing entanglements of knowledge with regard to religion and secularities since the early modern period adds a historical dimension that can serve as a corrective to a too narrowly modern framework for religionization. Notions of encounter, translation, and entanglement also challenge overly static conceptualizations of the particular locations from which religion-making is undertaken such as those defined in the three agency-centered modes of religion-making discussed above.

The notion of religion-making has been meant as a heuristic device for inquiry into the continuing construction of concepts of religion, the secular, and their derivatives, as well as the social formations related to these concepts. The distinction between modes of religion-making aims to render visible the complexities and interrelations between various interests and corresponding knowledge arrangements behind religionization processes and the historical constellations that they respond to.

Conclusion

It has been argued that in the modern context processes of religionization are intrinsically related to processes of secularization and that their mutual affirmation, corroborated by secularist politics, is reflected in the formation of secularities: conceptual distinctions and [p. 8/9] structural differentiations, through which both religion and the secular become recognizable and which therefore both reflect and contribute to a religio-secular episteme.

From the perspective of the Multiple Secularities project, the notions of religionization and religion-making highlight the historical and dynamic character of the formation of secularities against the background of changing discourses about religion, often triggered by specific reference problems. Informed mainly by social constructivism and post-colonial approaches, the notions of religionization and religion-making are meant to offer complementary angles on the epistemological, social, historical, and political

27 [note 28 in the original] Such as David Chidester, *Savage systems: Colonialism and comparative religion in southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).

28 [note 29 in the original] Thomas F. Banchoff and José Casanova, eds., The Jesuits and globalization: Historical legacies and contemporary challenges (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2016).

factors that shape and influence (1) discursive distinctions between the religious and its various others/outsides, (2) structural differentiations between religious and non-religious domains, and (3) the relationship between discursive, material, and structural dimensions in the formation of such distinctions and differentiations.

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18 Li Xiangping: *Explaining 'Legitimacy' and 'Sacrality'* (2019)

Translated and introduced by Yee Lak Elliot Lee

Introduction

Li Xiangping (b. 1958) is a professor of sociology at East China Normal University. First trained as a historian of religion, researching early Chinese ancestral worship, in 1996, he shifted his focus to the sociology of religion (SOR), researching contemporary Chinese Buddhism. Li's thinking critically engages with Western SOR's applicability to the diversified belief systems in China. Lately, he has stressed the differentiation between private and public in Chinese society, and the path dependencies of the interactions between power and both secular and religious beliefs in China. Li is one of China's leading proponents of a sociology of the sacred (cf. sociology of religion).[I]

The article translated in excerpts below was originally published in Chinese, as an overview of the development of SOR in China over the past 40 years. Its central concern is the translatability of SOR theories from the West to research about China, and Li's proposal of breaking free of the current structural functionalist paradigm, without falling into a self-Orientalism of Chinese society. The translated excerpts begin with the concept of "religion," and how its Chinese translation, *zongjiao*, with its original connotations in classical Chinese, reflects a different understanding of religion – one based on public rituals. Extending C.K. Yang's understanding of communal religious practices as "diffused religion," Li argues for a classical Confucian (and also Weberian) understanding of "institution," to form a new framework for studying the role of religion in Chinese society. Instead of contrasting institutionalised religions with the secular, Li argues in favour of a dynamic understanding of how communal religion, as one form of the sacred, interacts with societal power across the public-private axis. Li argues that it is only by reconsidering these fundamental questions of SOR in China – instead of either an unreflective acceptance or an apologetic rejection of Western SOR theories based upon the religious-secular dichotomy – that Chinese academia can develop its own theory of religion.

With regard to secularity, Li's arguments illuminate the necessity of paying attention to different social forms of religion and their relationship to society. In his view, sacrality is not confined to organised religions that are clearly demarcated from their

I See Li Xiangping and Zhang Hongbin, "'Shensheng' yanjiu sanshinian: Li Xiangping jiaoshou fangtan" "神聖" 研究三十年－李向平教授訪談 [Thirty Years of Research on the "Sacred": An Interview with Professor Li Xiangping], *Xueshu yuekan* 《学术月刊》, no. 7 (2017): 180–84.

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social environment. The distinction between the religious and the secular, which is based on the sociology of Christianity, is therefore not suitable for capturing the social significance of sacred relations in China.

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Translation by Yee Lak Elliot Lee

4 Conflicts in the Definition of Religion and Its Interpretations

Critics have claimed that local [Chinese] and foreign scholars in the field of China studies have long been confined to the pitfalls of Orientalism – treating China as the "other", or solely and merely an object of research. [p. 18/19][I] Accordingly, a dominant research approach focuses on the cultural specificities and differences between China and the West. To a certain extent, the sociology of religion (SOR) in China has also tended toward the "sociology of Christianity". [According to critics,] SOR concepts and theories have been developed purely on the basis of Western experiences. Thus, they can hardly be applied to the reality of China,[1] and would encounter various difficulties in being adapted to China's SOR research.

Note: Translated with permission of Li Xianping.

1 [note 25 in the original] Lu Yunfeng 卢云峰, "Chaoyue jidu zongjiao shehuixue: jianlun zongjiao shichang lun zai huaren shehui zhong de shiyong xing wenti" 超越基督宗教社会学：兼论宗教市场论在华人社会中的适用性问题 (Beyond Sociology of Christianity: And Discussing the Adaptability of Religious Market Theory in Ethnic Chinese Community), *Shehuixue yanjiu* 《社会学研究》, no. 5 (2008): 81–97.

I YLEL: Section 1 and 2 of Li Xiangping's article are general literature reviews on the sociology of religion scholarship produced in China in the past 40 years; section 3 discusses the problem of the legitimacy of religion in socialist China. These sections are not translated here. In conversation with the author, we standardised the translation of the Chinese "*shengshenxing*" 聖神性 as "sacrality" (*Sakralität in German*), denoting the Durkheimian understanding of the "sacred as social", in contrast to "sacredness" or "holiness" (*Heiligkeit* in German), which denotes the essential transcendental quality of the sacred, as understood in the phenomenology of religion. Traditional Chinese characters are used to illustrate the original Chinese words in this translation; however, simplified characters are used for references written in simplified Chinese cited by the author. The translator would like to thank the author, Li Xiangping, for authorising this translation, Hubert Seiwert for his editorial comments, and Wing Sun Lee for his assistance in the early stage of translation.

Firstly, because the concept of "*zongjiao*" 宗教 [i.e. 'religion'] originates from the Western notion of "religion", and from Christianity in particular, it mainly refers to the belief in a god or gods. The modern Chinese concept of religion, like politics, economy, culture, and custom, was first adopted into Chinese from the Japanese language, by late Qing intellectuals. In this process, the concept has been shaped by various forces, especially state power. The category of religion (*zongjiao*), as it is employed by Chinese scholars today, has been formed against the backdrop of specific developments in, and the revitalisation of, religions in China. These developments include religions' adaptation to new economic, social, and political transformations,[2] and the co-action of politics and the economy.[3] Even though the term "*zongjiao*" is also used in Chinese classical texts, the definition and meaning of "*zongjiao*" in Chinese religions are different from those of "religion" in Western Abrahamic religions. This is mainly thanks to the Confucianist, Buddhist, and Daoist understandings of the term *zongjiao*. Although the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism include ritual worship of supernatural beings, they are in no way confined to *solely* dealing with supernatural beings.

In Confucianism's understanding of *zongjiao*, *zong*, the first element, refers to the hereditary familial relationship, the veneration of ancestors, and the patriarchal clan system;[II] *jiao*, the second element, means the transformation of society through teaching or pedagogical instruction. The meaning of *jiao* includes cultivation through rites and music,[III] education about the three fundamental social relationships and five constant virtues through the rectification of names,[IV] and the idea of those lower in the

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2 [note 26 in the original] Xiao Fengxia 蕭鳳霞 (Helen F. Siu), "Fangsi lishi renleixue" 反思歷史人類學 (Reflecting on Historical Anthropology), *Lishi renleixue xuekan* 《歷史人類學學刊》, no. 2 (2009): 105–137.
3 [note 27 in the original] Stephan Feuchtwang 王斯福, *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China* 《帝国的隐喻：中国民间宗教》 (New York: Routledge, 1992 / Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2008).

II YLEL: The patriarchal clan system, or *zongfa zhidu* 宗法制度, refers to the political-economic system of inheritance, based on the succession of the firstborn male of the first wife, and on the ritualised veneration of the deceased patriarch. It was formalised in the Western Zhou dynasty (1045–771 BCE), and was practised first and foremost by the royal court and its nobility, thus anchoring the state political system onto familial organisation. Formalised discourses about the patriarchal system became an essential part of Confucian pedagogy and, in the post-Qin era (i.e. after 207 BCE), were included among its classics, through the development of the exam for Chinese imperial bureaucrats. As the Chinese cultural-political network expanded, *zongfa zhidu* spread to a broader area, and became increasingly popularised, partly as a result of the fact that the "civilising mission" of the imperial bureaucracy had a strong Confucian identity. Throughout the late-imperial period (Ming and Qing dynasties; ca. fourteenth to early twentieth centuries), there was a systematic adoption of the patriarchal clan system by local societies as a result of the development of neo-Confucian orthodoxy, the expansion of imperial state power, and increased socio-economic competition within local societies.
III YLEL: Confucian classics consider rites and music, or *liyue* 禮樂, to be means for cultivating personal and collective virtues and sensibilities.
IV YLEL: Here, the original phrase is *gangchang mingjiao* 綱常名教. This is a set idiomatic expression, referring to the traditional social and moral norm or ideal of the Confucians. Gangchang includes the three fundamental social relationships (gang) – namely father-son, lord-subject, and husband-wife – and

hierarchy following the example of those on the top. In Buddhism, the two elements of *zongjiao* appear in the distinction between the "schools of *zong*" (*zongmen* 宗門) and "schools of *jiao*" (*jiaomen* 教門).[V] [The meaning of *zong* and *jiao* in Buddhism is explained as follows:] "There are those with a first-class faculty of wisdom [*prajñendriya*] who hear it [i.e. the Buddhist doctrine] once, their heart-minds attain a sudden awakening, and their cultivation of *bodhipakkhiyā dhamma* is perfected; this capacity is called '*zong*'. There are those with a second-class or lesser faculty of wisdom, who continuously practice the *dhamma*, and are gradually awakened to the truth; this capacity is called '*jiao*'".[VI] Daoism's understanding of *zongjiao* sees the "*Dao*" as its highest belief – the source that transforms and generates the myriad creatures – and seeks to cultivate the means for immortality. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism's understandings of *zongjiao,* their respective understandings of the sacred, and how they construct sacred relationships,[VII] are all distinct from those of the Western religions. Only "*li*" 禮 [rites] and rituals could cover the factual content referred to by the contemporary concept of religion, with its socio-moral institutions, religious doctrines, thoughts, religious rituals, and other ceremonies.[VIII] The unique meaning of "*zong*" [in *zongjiao*, i.e. religion] puts

the five constant virtues (*chang*) – benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), wisdom (*zhi* 智), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信). *Mingjiao*, which literally means the transmission of "names", is another name for *lijiao*, or the teachings of the rites; put simply, *Mingjiao* is yet another name for Confucianism. *Mingjiao* places its emphasis on the rectification of the names of things, *zhengming* 正名, so that proper relationships and proper intersubjectivity can be maintained in the cosmos (nature and society). This reliance on the unification of the signifier and the signified in Confucian social theory has its roots in ancient shamanistic practices of Central China. Thus, the maintenance of gangchang is transmitted through properly rectified names.

V YLEL: Here, *zongmen* usually refers to the different sectarian schools in Buddhism, which have doctrinal or theoretical differences and dissimilar transcendental goals. *Jiaomen* refers mainly to the different teachings on Buddhist practices that lead to liberation. Chan or Zen is the first school that distinguished itself as a *zongmen*, meaning that it does not rely on teachings in scriptures, but rather the non-verbal transmission of enlightenment.

VI YLEL: "上根一聞，頓了自心，圓修道品，即名為宗。中下聞之，進修道品，漸悟真理，即名為教。". This is a quote from Master Yinguang's 印光法師 (1861–1940) *Zongjiao buyi hunlan lun* (Zong *and* Jiao *Should Not be Excessively Mixed*), written around 1913 or 1914. The text was Yinguang's emic Buddhist intervention against the then trendy word *zongjiao* from Japan, translating the concept of "religion". Venerable Master Chuanyin, the former President of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), wrote a series of commentaries about Yinguang's text and published them in *Fayin*, the official journal of the BAC, between 2011 and 2013. See, for example, Shi Chuanyin 釋傳印, "*Zongjiao buyi hunlan lun* jiang ji (yi)" 《宗教不宜混濫論》講記(一) [Commentary on Zong *and* Jiao *Should Not be Excessively Mixed*, 1], *Fayin* 《法音》, no.10 (2011): 40–47.

VII YLEL: According to the author, *shensheng guanxi* 神聖關係 (sacred relations) is the "relationship within the sacred, i.e. the relationship between what is sacralised and those who are subjected to the sacralised."

VIII YLEL: The semantic scope of *li* is certainly broader than what is usually covered by the concept of "ritual". One has only to consider the matters managed by the Ministry of Rites (*libu* 禮部) in the Chinese imperial states from the Sui-Tang dynasty onwards (ca. sixth to tenth centuries CE). Apart from ritual

its emphasis on the moral order of humans, whereas "*jiao*" focuses on the pedagogical transmission of this moral order. The direction and performance of religious rituals are social affairs and, at the same time, religious practices. As these rituals take form in a community shaped by power relations,[IX] their religious character is often blurred.[X] But, if the expression of power is emphasised via the theoretical imperative to "establish the teaching through the way of the gods" (*shendao shejiao* 神道設教),[XI] and by controlling the gods through sacrifice, the "public"[XII] significance of religion as a common social concern becomes obvious.

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sacrifices, divinations, and registration of religious personnel, the ministry was also in charge of foreign diplomacy, translation, military ceremony, imperial examination, astronomy, and culinary culture.

IX YLEL: Rather than requiring a Durkheimian unmasking of ancient Chinese rituals, to demonstrate how ritual manifests social and power relations, the classical Chinese texts provide an emic theory of ritual that demarcates ritual space and moment from ordinary social spacetime. In the ritual space, participants would learn to act according to their proper social roles and behaviours, sometimes by reversing the roles they held outside the ritual space. For example, according to the *Book of Rites* (*Ji tong*, 131/26: 13–14), during the ritual designed to transform a deceased emperor into an ancestor, the deceased is to be impersonated by his grandson, so that the deceased's son (the new emperor) would serve his own son (the deceased's grandson) as if he were instead his deceased father. In this way, the son and the grandson learn the proper social and power relations, which are in reverse outside of the ritual. Michael Puett uses this example to argue for the central role that the disjunction of ritual and non-ritual spacetime plays in the inculcation of proper relationships within the former, in the emic Chinese theory of ritual (see Michael Puett, "Critical Approaches to Religion in China," *Critical Research on Religion* 1, no.1 (2013), 95–101). In this sense, Li Xiangping's emphasis on rituals being both social and religious, and not reducible to purely the former, could be read as a critique of the predominant structural functionalism in China's SOR, with references to the Chinese understanding of ritual.

X YLEL: Here, the author explicates "the original meaning of religion" as referring to the "sacred features that emerged out of religion". However, these features are blurred, as they are confined by politics and other forms of power. Furthermore, supernatural references in rituals could be blurred or treated with indifference by state-ritual performers, according to Confucian understanding. One may recall the saying of Confucius in the *Analects* (3: 12), that "one sacrifices *as if* present. One sacrifices to the gods *as if* the gods were present." Thus, the ontological status of the supernatural is obscured and turned into an epistemological state within a ritual performance. It is stated even more explicitly in *Xunzi* (19: 32), that sacrifices "are regarded by the gentlemen as matters of the human ways, and by the commoners as matters of the ghosts". Thus, in certain strands of Chinese thought, ritual practices are distanced from references to the supernatural that are usually regarded as the content of "religion". For more about the "secular" reading of rituals in classical Chinese texts, readers should consult the excerpt of *Xunzi* in the pre-modern Chinese section of the *Multiple Secularities Sourcebook*, Vol. 3.

XI YLEL: "*Shendao shejiao*" is a quote from the *Book of Changes* (Guan hexagram), in which it is said that, after observing the spirited way of heaven, the sages established their teachings such that all under heaven would be brought into submission.

XII YLEL: *Gonggong* 公共 is conventionally translated as "public". However, contemporary PRC theorists generally dismiss the equation of "*gonggong*" with the "public" in Habermas' sense, as they oppose the idea of an inherent antagonism between the state and the "public sphere" or "civil society", which they regarded as being based on Eurocentric historical experiences of the rise of the bourgeoisie. To them, the state is part of the "public", and the people are part of the state-constituted political order, either because the revolutionary state of the PRC represents the "people", or because the political organ-

[In pre-modern China,] religious sacrifices were divided into two kinds: one being public religious sacrifices under the control of the state; the other one being private religious sacrifices, conducted by ritual specialists (*wushi* 巫師) or monks, which are available to private individuals. Regarding the ethics of private sacrifice, they simply required a specific moral sincerity, and particular moral obligations under the protection of the concerned gods. These sacrifices did not involve shaping the individual's moral character and his or her way of life, and they especially did not form the moral standards of social life or social actions. Correspondingly, Chinese society dealt with god(s)-human relations or religions – which derived their code of ethics and their modes of belief from their respective god(s)-human relations[XIII] – by largely embedding them within a "public society" that was considered "totally sacred". As a result, even in contemporary Chinese society, popular beliefs and the five major religions [Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, and Protestantism] mostly include a corresponding relationship between public supervision and private belief, which gradually became the internal logic of religious change in the forty years of China's reform and opening up.[4] Thus, religion has to take the form of social organisations to be able to participate directly in the organisation of society. Private religion has no communal characteristics; thus, it has no public social function. Instead, it is confined to individual spiritual salvation. It constitutes Chinese people's private "religiosity", whereas religious activities operating on the level of [public] ritual institutions are defined as "religions".

isation in historical China depends on the co-penetration and collaboration between the central state and local society. They prefer "people's society" over "civil society". See, for example, Wang Shaoguang, "Shehui jianshe de fangxiang: 'gongmin shehui' haishi renmin shehui?" 社會建設的方向: "公民社會"還是人民社會? [Direction for Social Development: "Civil Society" or People's Society] *Kaifang shidai*《開放時代》, no. 6 (2014): 26–48. The author Li Xiangping asserts that, in China, *gonggong* (public) is actually *gongzhong* 公眾 (the masses).

XIII YLEL: Here, the author invokes his concept of "*shenren guanxi*", 神人關係, (god(s)-human relations): the relationships between the believers and their respective gods or objects of belief, as understood by the former. The author regards this as the foundational variable in his relational theory of religion's institutionalisation. However, not all god(s)-human relations are religions, in the sense of "*zongjiao*", with their requisite public or social ordering functions. See translator's endnote xxiii.

4 [note 28 in the original] Li Xiangping 李向平, "*Zhongguo dangdai zongjiao sishi nian de bianqian luoji: Zongjiao xinyang fangshi de gongsi guanxi ji qi zhuanhuan shijiao*" 中国当代宗教四十年的变迁逻辑 – – – 宗教信仰方式的公私关系及其转换视角 (The Forty-Year Logic of Change in China's Contemporary Religion: Public-Private Relations in Ways of Religious Belief and Their Changing Perspective), *Fuzhou daxue xuebao*《福州大学学报》, no. 4 (2018): 5–12.

C.K. Yang has utilised the concept of "diffused religion"[5] (*hunhe zongjiao* 混合宗教)[XIV] to illustrate the characteristics of Chinese religions, similarly to what has been described above. However, Yang argues that, under the conditions of social change in contemporary Chinese society, the development of this diffused religion would, to a certain extent, need to transform from the social form of "diffusion" to one of "specificity". In this process, these religions would reconstitute, for example, their mode of organisation, objectives, values, institutions, and procedures. This process of going from "diffused" to "specific" is the inevitable result of the differentiation of societal spheres, and the institutional differentiation of modern society. It not only affects the relationship between religion and society, but moreover, it is an inevitable developmental tendency in the transformation of contemporary Chinese society itself.

Nonetheless, what should be called "religion", what is institutional religion, and what is diffused religion?[XV] All these are fundamental questions in China's SOR, related to contesting definitions, the specific social character of religion, and the forms of religious belief. They also relate to the sharp contrast between Chinese traditional religions' polytheism, and the monotheism of the Abrahamic religions. More importantly, the answers to these questions largely condition and confine the formation, evolution, and theoretical preferences of contemporary China's SOR, which engenders contradictory explanations of the relationship between religion and society.

It would appear that, to date, China's SOR and contemporary religious studies have primarily focused on popular beliefs, and secondarily on Christianity. A small minority

5 [note 29 in the original] Liu Chuangchu 劉創楚 (Lau Chong-Chor) and Yang Qingkun 楊慶堃 (C.K. Yang), *Zhongguo shehui: Cong bubian dao jubian* 《中國社會 – – – 從不變到巨變》 (Chinese Society: From Static to Radical Transformation) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1989).

XIV YLEL: C.K. Yang (*Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967]) developed his conceptual dichotomy between "diffused" and "institutional" religions, to contrast the institutional diffusion of Chinese religions with the institutionally independent and differentiated Western religions, following Joachim Wach's "identical" and "special" religions. However, the translations of Yang's concept into Chinese have led to Yang's argument being misunderstood for a long time. Chinese academia has long overlooked Yang's own semantic translation of "diffused religion" and "institutional religion" as "*hunhe zongjiao* 混合宗教" and "*duli zongjiao* 獨立宗教" respectively – which, when read literally, more or less mean "mixed religion" and "independent religion". Yang's own translation aims to highlight the question of whether or not Chinese religion is institutionally differentiated. Yet, Chinese academia has long been translating his conceptual pair literally as "*kuosan zongjiao* 擴散宗教" and "*zhidu(xing) zongjiao* 制度（性）宗教", which has erroneously placed the emphasis on the existence or degree of institutional organisations in Chinese and Western religions. See Lu Yunfeng 卢云峰, "Lun 'hunhe zongjiao' yu 'duli zongjiao': jianlun *Zhongguo shehui zhong de zongjiao* zhi jindianxing" 论"混合宗教"与"独立宗教" – – 兼论《中国社会中的宗教》之经典性 [On "mixed religions" and "independent religions" – An essay on the classical nature of "Religion in Chinese Society"], *Shehuixue yanjiu*, no.2 (2019): 75–94.
XV YLEL: Here, the author used the conventional translation of Yang's concepts as "*kuosan zongjiao* 擴散宗教" and "*zhidu zongjiao* 制度宗教", see translator's endnote xiv.

of studies have also looked at Islam, while Buddhist and Daoist studies are, for the most part, entirely lacking. This is an effect of how most researchers have come to understand and apply C.K. Yang's concept of "diffused religion" [*kuosan zongjiao*, see note XIV]. For example, the emergence of the study of popular religious beliefs and religious ecology theory (RET)[XVI] is closely tied to the prevailing research question of whether a religious belief system has an organised form.

Popular beliefs are Chinese society's most traditional beliefs. They have been the research subject of multiple disciplines, such as ethnology, history, and anthropology. Yet there was, for a long time, a lack of similar sociological reflections. However, following the transformation and development of Chinese society, and given popular beliefs' relationship with the local economy, religious policy, and the social system, as well as their influence on people's lives, social order, economic development, and communal politics, research on popular beliefs gradually became a focus of attention. It has thus entered the research horizon of SOR.[6] Focusing on the development of popular beliefs in the context of contemporary social change, a scholar contended,

> for a long time, popular beliefs could hardly assume a proper social position. Thus, they could only exist in the people's realm, and could hardly realise a social and public nature.[XVII] Popular beliefs have mostly been dragged into the construction of 'intangible cultural heritage'. In this process, they have assumed a subsidiary role amongst the many trendy developments in the new rural culture and local economic boom. Thus, there is the absence of a distinct subjectivity [of popular beliefs]; further, there is a lack of effective social policy support. As a result, popular beliefs are in a state of being embedded in society but, at the same time, are largely ignored by social policy.[7]

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6 [note 30 in the original] Wang Shouen 王守恩, "Minjian xinyang yanjiu de jiazhi chengjiu yu weilai quxiang" 民间信仰研究的价值、成就与未来趋向 (The Value, Achievement, and Future Trends in the Study of Popular Beliefs), *Shanxi daxue xuebao (zhexue shehuikexue ban)* 《山西大学学报(哲学社会科学版)》, no.5 (2008): 40–46.

7 [note 31 in the original] Zhao Cuicui 赵翠翠 and Li Xiangping 李向平, "Bei 'shehui zhengce' xuanzhi qilai de minjian xinyang" 被"社会政策"悬置起来的民间信仰 (Popular Beliefs that Are Suspended by "Social Policies"), *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao* 《西北民族大学学报》, no. 1 (2014): 6.

XVI YLEL: For introductions to "religious ecology theory" developed in contemporary China, see Philip Clart, "'Religious Ecology' as a New Model for the Study of Religious Diversity in China," in *Religious Diversity in Chinese* Thought, ed. by P. Schmidt-Leukel et al. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 187– 99; and Daniel Mohseni Kabir Bäckström, *Religious Ecology and Sinofuturism: Religious Studies and Modernities in Contemporary Chinese Discourse* (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2019).

XVII YLEL: The concept of the "people's realm" or *minjian* 民間 (lit. among the commoners or the people) is an emic concept often compared with "civil society" in Western liberal democracies. It highlights an unofficial realm of society, where communications and actions happen with an ambiguous level of legitimacy or recognition by the state. Yet, certain academic trends in the PRC refuse to equate *minjian* with "civil society", so as to downplay antagonistic relations between this unofficial realm and the state, and give room for the state's presence in the *minjian* realm. See endnote xii above. Contrasting with *minjian*, *shehuixing* 社會性 and *gonggongxing* 公共性, which are translated as "social and public nature" here, refer to something with more legal, cultural, and political legitimacy across the country.

This scholar suggests conceiving of a pathway for integrating popular beliefs into society at the level of public social policy. [p. 19/20] She urges that "it is imperative in the reconfiguration of popular beliefs to integrate them with social development, thus forming an independent and autonomous type of popular belief organisation."[8]

Furthermore, the issue of religious ecology, which addresses the relationships between religions, can be understood as a problem relating to religions' institutionalised and diffused modes of development. The scholarly concept of "religious ecology" refers to the existence of various religions in society. The fundamental propositions of religious ecology theory are as follows: under normal circumstances, different religions would restrict or constrain each other, and naturally achieve equilibrium. Each thus assumes its own role, and occupies its own niche in the marketplace of religions, to satisfy the needs of different people. However, where there is improper artificial interference, the mutual dynamics and equilibrium between various religions are disrupted.[9]

The common view regards religious ecology theory as vital, because it effectively explains the expedited development of Protestantism in China after the reform and opening up. On the one hand, [as religious ecology theory holds] this is because Buddhism, Daoism, and their popular modes of belief have usually been regarded as superstitions. On the other hand, traditional popular beliefs lack the advantages of institutional religion. Thus, people discard traditional beliefs, and convert to Protestantism to satisfy their religious needs. The reason is that, in previous religious policy, the effects of institutions have been magnified by the concept of "institutional religion".

Yet, "institution" (*zhidu* 制度) is itself a classical Chinese concept. Nevertheless, in SOR discussions, it is understood as a foreign one, used to form the binary contraposition between "institutional religion" and "diffused religion".

Although the sociological concept of "institution", in Max Weber's sense, can be understood as the installation of rationalised social practices [which would include popular religious practices], Chinese traditional popular beliefs are stressed in scholarly discourses as being non-institutionalised forms of belief, following the concept of diffused religion. Thus, the search for new forms of the mutual adaptation of religion and society via Chinese popular beliefs has been confined to exploring Chinese popular beliefs' diffused functions [instead of their institutional effects].[XVIII] [. . .]

8 Ibid, 6.

9 [note 32 in the original] Duan Qi 段琦, "Zongjiao shengtai shiheng yu zhongguo jidujiao de fazhang" 宗教生态失衡与中国基督教的发展 (The Loss of Balance in Religious Ecology and the Development of Christianity in China), *Dangdai zhongguo minzu zongjiao wenti yanjiu* 当代中国民族宗教问题研究, no. 13 (2009), 13.

XVIII YLEL: Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the institutional effects of Chinese popular beliefs were engendered through their incorporation into, contestation with, and control by, imperial bureaucracy, instead of being institutionally independent and autonomous – like the Western church as an ideal type. Thus, in one correspondence, Li Xingping stresses that a meta-level religious typology bringing

On this meaning of "*zhidu*" [which in modern sociology means "institution"], Kong Yingda[XIX] and Cheng Yi's[XX] commentaries [on the classical texts of the *Book of Changes* and the *Record of Rituals*] explain that *zhidu* originally referred to the kings' or sages' imitations of the heavenly *Dao*, or Way. For example, when it is said [in the *Book of Changes*] that "the sky shows its figures, and the sages act accordingly", and that "the sages have established legal judgments and measures [*zhidu*] to regulate",[XXI] the aim was to allow the human world to operate in proper order. Since "judgements and measures" (*zhidu*) have been transmitted by the sages, and conform with the heavenly *Dao*, they must be constantly observed and practised. This is why it is said that "sages establish *zhi*" or "sages create *zhi*". Even in the contemporary sociological understanding of *zhidu*, institutions require the public to collectively observe specific procedures of conduct and codes of action, and refer to those regulations or standards formed in specific historical conditions, such as law and custom.

From this point of view, the [modern] concept of institutional religion seems to weaken the institutional requirements for governing religions, by contrasting it with – and simultaneously emphasising – diffused religion as a characteristic of Chinese religions. This research strand only one-sidedly demonstrates how "diffused religion" adapts to contemporary society, and that "diffused religion" is inherently unable to unite and order grassroots society, given that it understands these religions of the masses as only focusing on individual self-interest.

5 A Sacred or Secular Problem

In any case, China's sociology of religion has, in recent decades, gradually expanded its research scope, exploring the dynamics between Chinese religions and society from

out the institutional effects of Chinese popular beliefs should be categorically distinct from C.K. Yang's independent "institutional religion".

XIX YLEL: Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648 CE) was a Tang-dynasty Confucian philosopher, and a 32nd generation descendent of Confucius. His most crucial work is the *Wujing zhengyi* (*Correct Meaning of the Five Classics*), which became the official commentaries on the Five Classics.

XX YLEL: Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107 CE) was a Song-dynasty neo-Confucian philosopher, whose rationalist epistemology and emphasis on the cosmic principle *li* 理 were foundational to the development of later neo-Confucian thoughts.

XXI YLEL: This is a commentary on the Jie hexagram of the *Book of Changes*. When read as nouns, *zhidu* philologically refers to two closely linked inventions of ancient rulership. The word *zhi* 制 pictorially means "the cutting of timber," which relates semantically to "the making of judgment according to legal measurements". *Du* 度 pictorially means "to measure the length with a hand", extended to mean both legal and physical measurements. See entries for "制" and "度" in the *Multi-Function Chinese Character Database*, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi-mf/search.php?word=%E5%88%B6 and https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi-mf/search.php?word=%E5%BA%A6 respectively.

various angles. Focusing on religion in the context of modernisation and social changes in China, primarily through case studies and analyses of religious phenomena there, China's SOR has continuously tailored its research subjects, research output, and ways of problematisation, to the local situation. At the same time, a new batch of SOR works has emerged, bearing the mark of the era they have been written in. These works cover topics from the co-adaptation of religion and society, to functionalist theories of religion; from the church and denomination model in Christian studies, to institutional studies of Chinese religions. In particular, research about the relationship between religion and society has illustrated that Chinese religions have already adapted to the socialist social system, and are able to exercise their proper social service functions.

In this regard, many scholarly works – from those on the definition of religion, to those on the concrete ways in which Chinese believe in religion; from research perspectives focused on the state and social relations, to the discussion of the mode of Chinese religious and social dynamics; from sociological studies of "diffused religion", to those on "popular beliefs" – have departed from the classical theoretical framework in Western SOR based on the sacred versus secular dichotomy. Instead, by viewing Chinese religious experiences through the lens of the interaction between religion and society, they gradually form a specific research framework for China's SOR. Its theoretical discourses and discussions mostly still tackle the conceptual dichotomies between sacred and secular, and between religion and state, that are found in Western SOR. In particular, theories and methods aiming to understand Chinese religions have all shown that, if China's SOR research wants to transcend "Christian" SOR, it must first go beyond the classical secularisation theory of Western religions, and construct its own theories and concepts of the sacred, and of sacred relationships.

Since the 1980s, the concept of "religious legitimacy" has been the primary conceptual tool for SOR to discuss the possibility of religions' adaptation to a socialist society. Discussions surrounding the question of religious sacrality are closely entangled with the question of how to go beyond the Euro-American way of discussing the relationship between the religious sacred and the secular, leading to specific contributions and academic discourses.

The theme of the secularisation of religion, which contrasts with the formation of religious sacrality, used to be one of the classical SOR research topics. However, this was declared an old paradigm in 1993,[10] which saw the emergence of a new paradigm in SOR, one which pointed to the contradiction between empirical studies and the presumptions of the old secularisation paradigm. New theoretical explorations have been maturing, which have disputed and challenged the secularisation paradigm. Even Peter Berger, the sociologist of religion who first theorised the secularisation of religion, has given up his earlier theory of secularisation after 30 years. Instead,

10 [note 33 in the original] R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no.5 (1993): 1044–1093.

he proposes a theory of "de-secularisation" under the conditions of globalisation, to re-explain the latest development of religions in America and the world in those 30 years.[11] This theoretical shift highlights the changes in Euro-American SOR. As a result of this theoretical shift, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, "religious market theory" was seen as one of the most influential SOR theories. It employs theories and methods from economics [p. 20/21] and investigates religion based upon empirical analyses, a series of technical concepts, and the construction of a theoretical framework.[12] Nevertheless, the market theory unavoidably faces similar challenges to those encountered by secularisation theory. For example, some discussions express doubts over its applicability and explanatory power, and point to an alleged Christian-centrism.

Turning to the shock encountered in contemporary China's social transformation, which can be compared to the shock of a theoretical paradigm shift, this can be said to reflect the fundamental problems that confront a traditional civilisational state[XXII] in its modernisation process. These problems are: how to actualise the separation between ultimate concern and instrumental rationality; how to solve the puzzle of [the state's loss of] sacrality under the conditions of institutional change in China's modernisation process and, to an even greater extent, how to reconfigure a sacrality that validates such social transformation or institutional change. These problems regarding the possible outcomes of the relationship between sacred and secular in social transformation, and the way religion acquires and actualises its legitimacy in contemporary society, directly affect the development of SOR research in China. [. . .]

While attempting to transcend classical secularisation theory of the West, scholars in China have started to discuss the question of Chinese religions' secularisation.

11 [note 34 in the original] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview [Secularism in Retreat]," *The National Interest*, no. 46 (Winter 1996/97): 3–12.

12 [note 35 in the original] Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* 《信仰的法则》 (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2000 / Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chuban she, 2004).

13 [p. 21 note 2 in the original] Gao Shining 高师宁, "*Guanyu shisu hua wenti*" 关于世俗化问题 (Regarding the Secularisation Question), *Shijie zongjiao wenhua* 《世界宗教文化》, no. 4 (1995): 1–9; Gao Shining, "Shisu hua yu zongjiao de weilai" 世俗化与宗教的未来 (Secularisation and the Future of Religion), *Zongguo renmin daxue xuebao* 《中国人民大学学报》, no. 5 (2002): 34–38.

XXII YLEL: The concept of a "civilisational state" (*wenming guojia* 文明國家) has gained currency in Chinese academic, political, and popular discourses (similar trends are observable in India, and probably in Russia and Iran). It has been coined to circumvent the inadequate descriptive power of the conventional dichotomous concepts of traditional empire and modern (nation-)state in describing cultural-political territorial entities that project a continuous identity and institutional state structures into a distant past. Thus, it is mainly used to describe countries such as China, India, Russia, and Iran, highlighting their difference from Western modern states, to justify their different developmental pathways. Their continuity, cultural specificity, and internal coherence (read unity) are usually emphasised. See, for example, Guang Xia, "China as a 'Civilization-State': A Historical and Comparative Interpretation," *Procedia* 140 (2014), 43–47.

For example, Gao Shining's articles "Regarding the Secularisation Question" and "Secularisation and the Future of Religion" provide an in-depth introduction to, and exploration of, the definition and patterns of secularisation.[13] Furthermore, scholars have also described and analysed the secularisation characteristics of contemporary Chinese religions. Examples of their works include Feng Dan's "Secularising Tendency of Chinese Religions in the Period of Social Transformation,"[14] Gong Zhebing's "Current Situation and Secularisation Characteristics of Religions in Wuhan: A Field Study of Current Urban Religious Work,"[15] and Li Xiangping's "Socialisation or Secularisation? Sociological Examination of the Development of Contemporary Buddhism in China."[16] Through investigating the concept of *shisu* 世俗 [the secular] in traditional contexts and classical texts, combined with the analysis of relevant cultural or religious beliefs, these publications regard the relationship between Chinese society and Chinese religions as a special kind of embedding, instead of an oppositional binary of sacred versus secular (*shensheng yu shisu* 神圣与世俗). Given this, the concept of secularisation can hardly be applied to China's SOR discourses. Therefore, instead of using the concept of "secularisation", it would be more helpful to comb through the "socialisation" of sacrality in Chinese religions, and discuss the possibility and outcome of the socialisation of contemporary Chinese religions, from the perspective of the interactions between "public religions" and "private beliefs".

The prevailing secularisation model of religion obviously cannot describe the religious phenomena of every country and region in the context of globalisation. Thus, China's SOR should transcend the sociology of Christianity, and the classical secularisation theory of Western religions.[17] For this purpose, [Chinese] academia should continuously engage with and revise the prevailing concepts of "sacred" and "religion", gradually formulate Chinese approaches to SOR, and turn its attention back to the essential characteristics of religious social life. Thus, the research theme in the study of Chinese religions and their modes of belief is not the single problem of the sacred,

14 [note 36 in the original] Feng Dan 冯丹, "Shehui zhuanxing qi zhongguo zongjiao de shisu hua qingxiang" 社会转型期中国宗教的世俗化倾向 (Secularising Tendency of Chinese Religion in the Period of Social Transformation), *Xueshu jiaoliu* 《学术交流》, no.5 (1998): 96–98.

15 [note 37 in the original] Gong Zhebing 宫哲兵, "Wuhan shi zongjiao de xianzhuang yu shisu hua tedian: dangqian chengshi zongjiao gongzuo tianye diaocha zhiyi" 武汉市宗教的现状与世俗化特点 – – – 当前城市宗教工作田野调查之一 (Situation of Religions and Their Characteristics in Wuhan: One of the Field Studies of Current Urban Religious Work), *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 《宗教学研究》, no. 3 (2003): 83–88.

16 [note 38 in the original] Li Xiangping 李向平, "Shehui hua, haishi shisu hua? Dangdai fojiao fazhang de shehui xue shengshi" 社会化， 还是世俗化? – – – 中国当代佛教发展的社会学审视 (Socialisation or Secularisation? Contemporary Chinese Buddhist Development under the Spectacle of Sociology), *Xueshu yuekan* 《学术月刊》, no. 7 (2007): 56–61.

17 [note 39 in the original] Ji Zhe 汲喆, "Ruhe chaoyue jingdian shisu hua lilun: ping zongjiao shehui xue de sanzhong hou shisu hua lunshu" 如何超越经典世俗化理论 – – – 评宗教社会学的三种后世俗化论述 (How to Surpass Classical Secularisation Theory: Review of Three Post-Secular Discourses in Sociology of Religion), Shehui xue yanjiu 社会学研究, no. 4 (2008): 55–75.

or the problem of the secular. Instead, it is a problem of sacrality and the mechanism of its public-private expression. This issue is also related to the different forms of defining religion in China and abroad, which in turn rest on various aspects, ranging from the definition of sacred, to practices related to sacrality. The core problem of defining religion in China and elsewhere can be seen in the social construction of sacrality, rather than the worshipping of one or many gods. Research reveals the logic in practising and constructing a mode of belief that shapes a belief community's sacralised social relationships. The most crucial factor is the possession and control of sacred resources by those who construct the sacralised relationships, because the distribution of sacred resources is the essential strategy for establishing relationships between believers and their objects of belief, i.e. their gods.[XXIII] Building and transforming sacralised social relationships of a religious community, its modes of belief, and the configurations of the community's religion, is a dynamic social process.[18]

6 China's Sociology of Religion in the "New Era"

In the theory and method of SOR, religions and their systems of thought – as subjects of research – enter the discursive field of SOR as a social phenomenon. Therefore, religions' sacrality, social nature, and forms of expression can be regarded as SOR's basic questions to investigate, forming the fundamental basis of the relationship between religion and society. Moreover, sacrality, social nature, and their expressions – as contemporary Chinese SOR's foundational theoretical questions – are determined by Chinese religions' history and current characteristics.

Following the translation and publication of a series of SOR theories, Chinese scholars have gained a deeper understanding of the sociology of religion. Their research has paid more attention to empirical evidence and scientificity, having gradually shifted away from isolated empirical research, towards combining field studies and theoretical analysis, and away from purely qualitative research, towards combining qualita-

18 [note 40 in the original] Li Xiangping 李向平 and Li Feng 李峰, "'Shenren guanxi' ji qi xinyang fangshi de goucheng: jiyu 'changsan jiao' diqu de shuju fengshi" "神人关系"及其信仰方式的构成 – – – 基于"长三角"地区的数据分析 ("Divine-Human Relationship" and the Formation of Its Mode of Belief: Based on Statistical Analysis in the Yangzi Delta Region), *Shehui xue yanjiu* 社会学研究, no. 1 (2015): 174–191.

XXIII YLEL: As a strategy for avoiding structuralist or institutionalist essentialism dominating China's SOR, Li Xiangping suggests bridging the studies of Chinese religions and monotheistic religions through the search for a new common analytical framework. He proposes looking into how the sacralised social relationships (*shensheng guanxi* 神聖關係) of (religious) communities are dynamically derived from their understanding of the relationships between themselves and their respective gods or objects of belief (*shenren guanxi* 神人關係 or *xinyang guanxi* 信仰關係). See the article in footnote 19 [endnote 40 in the original].

tive and quantitative research methods. Furthermore, a great weight has been given to unearthing the uniqueness of Chinese religions, and developing Chinese versions of SOR theory. In this way, abundant resources and experience have been accumulated to develop the discipline, and investigate religions and religious behaviour. [. . . p. 21/22. . .]

Indeed, China's SOR has, in recent years, been extensively developed by combining Western theories with the reality in China. Two strands of thought can be distinguished: Firstly, there is research that treats religion as an independent variable, consistent with the classical Western SOR paradigm. However, this risks deviating from the social reality of China, and getting caught in the circular reasoning of deriving religious theory from the predefined concept of "religion". Secondly, there is research that treats religion as a dependent variable. This line of thought is more comprehensive when considering the influence of society on religion – and has developed the three paradigms of religious market theory, religious ecology theory, and field of power theory. However, it is unclear whether the different assumptions about society underlying these three theoretical approaches can truly reflect the social reality of contemporary China, and arrive at a two-directional analytical approach that "analyses religion through society and elucidates society through religion".[19] These are challenges facing the development of a Chinese SOR.

Generally speaking, there are some particular shortcomings in the formation of a distinctive knowledge system in China's SOR. First, there has been insufficient inspiration taken from traditional belief systems. Chinese religious experiences have not been consciously taken as a founding element for knowledge production here. Second, there has been inadequate conceptualising and systematising of Chinese experiences, differentiating of field studies from theoretical abstractions, or engaging in dialogue with Western theories. Third, the experience and significance of Chinese religions and their forms of belief have not been comprehensively and thoughtfully discussed in the field of SOR theory. There is still a lack of in-depth and systematic research on the historical characteristics of Chinese religious beliefs and the sociological characteristics of sacred relationships.

In particular, China's SOR research methods have mostly been confined to functionalist approaches. At one stage, religious studies in China were dominated by structural functionalism, which is inclined to focus on the distinction and identification of different religious practices, and usually regards one type of practice highly, whilst devaluing others. Structural functionalism deeply penetrated every part of China's religious studies. For example, in the typology of institutional versus diffused religion, preference is given to the latter, and functional arguments are used to demonstrate the legitimacy and sacrality of religion in contemporary society. Structural functionalism also

19 [note 42 in the original] Li Feng 李峰, "Huidao shehui: dui dangqian zongjiao shehui xue yanjiu fanshi zhi fansi" 回到社会: 对当前宗教社会学研究范式之反思 (Back to Society: Reflection on the Current Sociology of Religion Paradigm), *Jianghai xuekan* 江海学刊, no. 5 (2013): 95–100.

stimulated scholars' general interest in interreligious relations, and the corresponding religious ecology theory, resulting in the reconstruction of the binary contraposition in interreligious relations, that is, those between traditional Chinese and "foreign" religions. To some extent, this directly affected Chinese scholars' in-depth comprehension and rational analysis of the problem of localising SOR, and even disrupted the advancement and refinement of the theoretical questions relevant to the localisation process. In such a context, scholars easily confine their perspective to the paradigm of the "sociology of Christianity". They tend to see both theory and method of SOR as originating from Christian civilisation, which cannot be used to explain China's religious experience and Chinese beliefs. This leads to two opposing research preferences, i.e. either a complete rejection of foreign theory or full adoption of Western theory and method. Reacting to this problem, many publications have attempted to discuss the particular sociological characteristics of China's religious questions. Still, at the same time, they have no alternative to the theory and method of Western SOR to rely on. Conversely, some publications rely on traditional religious teachings – e.g. Buddhist or Daoist teachings, or Islamic theology – to criticise Western SOR theories, resulting in a lack of in-depth dialogue between Chinese experiences and Western theory. This conceals the real problems in developing a distinctive Chinese SOR.

On the one hand, epistemologically, mainstream modern Western theories are founded on the rational individual. Many scholars in China rigidly apply these theories to the situation of Chinese religions, thus often leading their research in the wrong direction. On the other hand, those who oppose this research direction or advocate knowledge localisation usually confine themselves to empirical studies, disregard theories, or simply subscribe to the doctrines of traditional beliefs. Furthermore, some scholars attempt to initiate dialogue with Western theories merely by illustrating Western theories, and conclude that they are unsuitable for the situation and research of Chinese religions, without positively contributing to China's academic discourse and theory. This is generally the same with other disciplines in China studies. It is regrettable that, in most fields, [we Chinese] have not been able to form our own independent academic theories.

In the face of the tremendous social transformation in the relationship between legitimacy and sacrality in China's New Era,[XXIV] what should China's SOR be, and what

XXIV YLEL: *Xinshidai* 新時代, or "New Era", is a political concept denoting a new period of Chinese history, marking a new phase of modernisation and national rejuvenation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. Its use was first seen after Xi Jinping's assumption of power in 2012, and particularly gained currency after "Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" was written into the Constitution in 2017. One of the major motifs and missions for academia in the PRC in the "New Era" is to create Chinese discourses that would contribute to a better representation of the country (or "to tell China's story well" 講好中國故事) and contribute to China's discursive or soft power internationally. China-based empirical studies, critical reflective adaptations of foreign theories, and the construction of Chinese theoretical discourses, form the backbone of scholarly works in the "New Era".

could it do? These questions relate not only to the professionalisation of China's SOR, but also to testifying to the ability and attractiveness of China's SOR. The question is whether it could become a public good that provides systematic methods for comprehending Chinese people's spiritual lifeworld and its sacrality.

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19 Florian Zemmin: *Secularism, Secularity and Islamic Reformism* (2019)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Florian Zemmin (b. 1981) is Professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) at Freie Universität Berlin. Immediately prior to joining Freie Universität in 2021, Zemmin was a senior researcher at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernity" at Leipzig University. His main fields of work are Near Eastern conceptual history, Islamic reformism, Arabic sociology, and theories of modernity and secularity. As his overarching aim, Zemmin relates Islamic and Arabic fields of knowledge to broader theoretical considerations, intending to not only apply (or reject) extant theories, but to constructively modify them. His PhD thesis, submitted to the University of Bern in 2016, did this with the concept of 'society,' an Islamic conception of which he traced in the journal *al-Manār* (Cairo, 1898–1940), the prominent mouthpiece of Islamic reformism.

The article that we partially reprint below draws on this work on Islamic reformism, but was specifically written for the programmatic considerations of the *Multiple Secularities* research centre. Here, we omit most of the historical contextualisation and examples from Arabic sources and instead focus on his main argument, namely that the relating of religion and society – rather than that of (traditional) Islam and the (modern) West – is constitutive for Islamic reformism. When one focusses on this relation, not only can secularity be located within an Islamic framework, but Islam even appears to be an alternative equivalent to 'secularity.'

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If we consider Islamic Reformism, it becomes very clear why it is important to distinguish between secularism and secularity as the *Multiple Secularities* approach does. 'Secularity' denotes a situation in which religious and secular aspects are distinguished, both in terms of structural differentiations and in terms of conceptual distinctions.

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'Secularism', by contrast, refers to the political demand for greater separation between religion and the secular. Islamic reformists have rejected secularism almost unanimously as an external political regime that evolved in Christian Europe and is alien to Islam. However, they have been operating with the conceptual distinction between religion and the secular. They have elaborated this distinction firmly within an Islamic framework to the extent that, in a sense, Islam itself has taken the place of 'secularity', as will be shown. [. . . p. 1/2. . .]

In modernity, references to and creative appropriations of European ideas and concepts are characteristic not only of Islamic Reformism, but of Islamic intellectual trends in general. Much scholarship on Islamic history was produced under the assumption that modernity had evolved in Europe only and was then exported to the Islamic world, which had allegedly previously been in decline. Some even thought they could date the onset of modernity in the Islamic world to the landing of Napoleon near Alexandria on 1 July 1798. Both the Islamic and the European elements of this oversimplified view have been disproved. Numerous studies have established intellectual and socio-political changes that dismantled the proposed paradigm of Islamic decline. Equally, scholars have increasingly highlighted the entangled history of modernity and the contributions to modernity made by non-Europeans, challenging the view that modernity originated in Europe alone. Today, the condition and understanding of modernity is most adequately viewed as emerging from the colonial encounter itself.[1] This implies that European hegemony is part of modernity, but that the hegemonic European variety of modernity itself has an entangled genealogy and is but one particular variation of more common conditions.

That being said, the conventional typology that distinguishes between three modern Islamic intellectual trends is still made on the basis of the intellectuals' differing positions on European modernity. According to this typology, traditionalists want to retain their Islamic tradition as it had been, without engaging with modernity; westernised Muslims think that the European way is the only possible realisation of modernity and ought to be followed; and Islamic reformists want to critically select aspects from European modernity and at the same time reform Islam in order to harmonise it with modernity. [p. 2/3]

While this typology provides an initial ideal-typical orientation in a complex intellectual landscape, it has two major problems: firstly, it is formulated from the perspective of the reformists, who appear as the sensitive middle path between two extremes; secondly, and more fundamentally, it identifies tradition with Islam and religion, and contrasts it with modernity, which is identified with Europe and secularity.[2]

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1 [note 4 in the original] See: Dror Ze'evi, "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle East," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004).

2 [note 5 in the original] For a critical discussion of this conventional typology, see: Florian Zemmin, *Modernity in Islamic Tradition. The Concept of 'Society' in the Journal al-Manar (Cairo, 1898–1940)* (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 155–60.

Since modernity is a common condition that was epitomised by Europe, but shared more widely, Islamic positions are better understood not via their overt relation to Europe, but rather via their conception of the relation between religion and society. After all, the negotiation of this relation has been at the centre of different conceptions of modernity, in both Europe and the Islamic world. Secular actors posited that modernity could be grounded in society alone, since humans are by nature rational social beings. From this perspective, religion is either considered to be obsolete or validated as culture. Religious actors, in turn, argue that society, which was first perceived as secular from their perspective, is not sustainable without being based on religion. Whether this religious argument is regarded as a mere reaction to dominant secular actors or whether the latter is said to have emerged from transformations in the theological field, depends on the narrative of modernity one wants to tell – as originating as a counterpoint to or from within religion. What matters is that in modernity, non-religious and religious actors both are concerned with the issue of societal order and hence also share in secular premises and arguments, which they either regard as immanently self-sufficient or as in need of being grounded in transcendence.

The integration of a religious perspective on society and a societal perspective on religion is, in fact, constitutive for Islamic reformists. Islamic reformists strongly rejected claims that secular society was self-sufficient and asserted that society needed religion. This religion that society was in need of was, notably, a religion to be transformed according to the demands of society. In this integrated perspective, Islamic reformists mirrored religious actors in European societies. Take, for example, the following statement by the German Rabbi [p. 3/4] Ludwig Phillipson from 1855: "Religion has so long abandoned society, that it is scarcely a matter of surprise if society has in its turn abandoned religion. The two thus parted must be reunited."[3] For Islamic reformists, the desired unification of religion and society was possible only based on Islam, which according to them was the only truly modern religion, perfectly fulfilling the demands of society and conforming to universal reason and progress.

The representatives of Islamic Reformism on whom we shall focus here are those long identified as its most influential protagonists. Whether under the name of reformism, modernism, or *salafiyya*,[4] almost every textbook on modern Islamic trends, names the following three individuals as foremost representatives of the intellectual trend under consideration here: Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838/39–1897), his disciple Muhammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) and ʿAbduh's pupil Rashid Rida (1865–1935). [. . . p. 4–8. . .]

3 [note 6 in the original] Ludwig Philippso[n], *The Development of the Religious Idea in Judaism, Christianity, and Mahomedanism, considered in twelve lectures on the history and purport of Judaism, delivered in Magdeburg, 1847, by Dr. Ludwig Philippsohn; translated from the German with notes by Anna Maria Goldschmid* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmas, 1855), ix.

4 [note 7 in the original] On the genealogy of the term *salafiyya* and the (non-)usability of Salafism as an analytical category, see: Henry Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

A central issue within Islamic Reformism [. . .] is which parts of the secular sphere are to be granted autonomy. Let us approach this issue in five steps. First, in Islamic Reformism, principles of modern politics, like a consultative government, can be legitimised as inherently Islamic or as independent from, but conforming with, Islam. Second, the acceptability of an argument also hinges on the concepts adduced, as the alternatives of *dīmūqrāṭiyya* and *shūrā* show. Third, claims of politics being self-sufficient and not subject to Islamic principles are refuted by the majority of Islamic reformists whose programme includes a political dimension. Fourth, Islamic reformists mainly disagree over which aspects of Islam belong to the religious and which to the secular sphere and how close the connections between both spheres ought to be. Fifth, elaborations of an Islamic political order operate with secular premises. This was also the case in Rida's conception of the caliphate.[5] Overall, the dominant reformist argument against secularity as a self-sufficient, external order and for the connection of religion and the secular in Islam does not deny the distinction between religion and the secular, but rather integrates this distinction, and thus secularity, within Islam.

This constellation, which is constitutive of Islamic Reformism, is summarised in a claim that is only seemingly paradoxical, namely that Islam does not require secularity, because it contains secularity [p. 8/9] in its very essence. A first articulation of this can be found in a debate between Muhammad ʿAbduh and Farah Antun.[6] On the surface, this debate was about the philosopher Ibn Rushd and the role of reason and science in Islam and Christianity, but the real issue was the possibility of a civil government. To Antun, this was possible only based on the emancipation of politics from religion, a process that he argued had happened in the European Enlightenment and to which Christianity was more susceptible than Islam. ʿAbduh objected that the very need for reason to emancipate itself from religion was particular to the Christian religion. Islam, by contrast, accorded reason its due autonomy and politics in Islam was essentially civil. In short, and to slightly systematise and update ʿAbduh's wording, Islam does not require the separation of religion and the secular, because it in its essence recognises and sustains secularity. This foundational claim was elaborated more explicitly later, for example, by the contemporary European Islamic reformer Tariq Ramadan. Ramadan shifted from an outright rejection of secularism, and especially the French laicité, to considering secularity as also being appropriate to the Islamic religion.[7] In Muslim publics today, the concept of *ʿalmāniyya* ('secularism', 'secularity') mainly func-

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5 [note 18 in the original] Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform. The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashid Riḍa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), 158–86; Abdulkader Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse* (London: Hurst, 2009), 110–11.

6 [note 19 in the original] Alexander Flores, "Reform, Islam, Secularism: Farah Antûn and Muhammad Abduh," in *Entre reforme sociale et mouvement national: identité et modernisation en Egypte (1882–1962)*, [, 565–576] ed. Alain Roussillon (Le Caire: CEDEJ, 1995).

7 [note 20 in the original] Florian Zemmin, "Integrating Islamic Positions into European Public Discourse: The Paradigmatic Example of Tariq Ramadan," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 8, no. 1 (2015) [, 121–46].

tions as "the other side of Islam", while at the same time, if not as explicitly, this other side can be integrated into Islam.[8]

When conceptualising secularity within Islam, reformists resorted to several classical distinctions, mainly from the field of jurisprudence. The most significant conceptual distinction in this regard is that between *ʿibādat* and *muʿāmalāt*, between cultic or religious matters and matters relating to human interactions or secular affairs. [. . .] Another important conceptual pair used to distinguish between religion and the secular is that of *dīn* and *dunyā*, which in their Qurʾanic usage referred to the sacral cultic sphere and the social world protecting that [p. 9/10] cultic sphere from the profane.[9] Al-ʿAzm, for example, distinguishes firmly between the purely religious section (*al-qism al-dīnī al-maḥḍ*) of the shariʿa and the purely worldly section (*al-qism al-dunyawī al-maḥḍ*).[10] Other classical Islamic concepts used in modernity to validate the secular sphere and to strengthen the role of reason for discerning human interests in that sphere are the concepts of *maṣlaḥa* (common, public interest) and of the *māqaṣid al-sharīʿa* (the goals of the *sharīʿa*).[11]

The fact that these distinctions are made within Islam has four main effects. First, it makes it rather easy for Islamic reformists to shift from a secular to a religious position and back. Second, the connections between religion and the secular can be continuously loosened or tightened. Third, the factual secularity of reformist Islam is often blurred and difficult to perceive from the outside. Fourth, Islamic actors might themselves deny their secularity, which they associate with the other side of Islam, not dissimilar to many proponents of secularity considering Islam as their other.

It should be clear that it was from a particular secular perspective, explicitly operating with the concept of secularity, that I have identified the factual secularity of modern Islam. From this perspective, Islam does not appear to be fully secular, for the distinction between religion and the secular remains somewhat blurry and has not been explicated as such. However, if we shift our perspective, the same holds true the

8 [note 21 in the original] Daniel Kinitz, *Die andere Seite des Islam* (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

9 [note 22 in the original] Reinhard Schulze, "On Relating Religion to Society and Society to Religion," in *Debating Islam. Negotiating Religion, Europe, and the Self*, ed. Samuel M. Behloul, Susanne Leuenberger, and Andreas Tunger-Zanetti (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 346.

10 [note 23 in the original] As pointedly summarised by Rashid Rida in: Salih bin ʿAli al-Yafiʿi, "Shakl Hukumat al Islam wa-Daʿf al-Muslimin bi-Istibdad al-Hukkam," *al-Manar* 7, no. 23 (1905): 912.

11 [note 24 in the original] On the modern reconceptualisation of *maṣlaḥa* and *maqaṣid*, see: Anver M. Emon, *Islamic Natural Law Theories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), esp. 36, 195. On Rida's usage of *maṣlaḥa*, see: Dyala Hamzah, "From *ʿilm* to *Ṣiḥāfa* or the Politics of the Public Interest (*maṣlaḥa*): Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and his Journal *al-Manâr*," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual (1880–1960): Empire, Public Sphere and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood*, ed. Dyala Hamzah [, 90–127] (London: Routledge, 2013). On contemporary reconceptions of the maqaṣid: Felicitas Opwis, "New Trends in Islamic Legal theory. *Maqaṣid al-Shariʿa* as a New Source of Law?," *Die Welt des Islams* 57 (2017).

other way round: Islamic reformists can identify secularity as factually Islamic,[12] but would insist on it not being fully [p. 10/11] Islamic, for it has not fully harmonised the relation between religion and the secular. From a secular perspective, then, Islam can partially function as secularity, whereas secularity from a modern Islamic perspective can function partially as Islam.

To view Islam and secularity on a par requires a *tertium comparationis* that is neither Islam, nor secularity. This *tertium* is the relation between religion and society, as becomes clear when one looks at the common conditions and reference problems underlying both Islam and secularity and when one tries to shift perspectives between overtly secular responses and Islamic responses to that reference problem. Taking a bird's-eye-view then, both Islam and secularity are overarching guiding ideas to elaborate the modern distinction between religion and society.

This basic constellation can of course be elaborated very differently. The distinction-yet-connection of religion and the secular in Islamic Reformism can give way to ensuring the mutual relation and relative autonomy of both spheres and thereby mirror the dominant ideal-typical arrangement of secularity. It is equally possible, both in Islam as in secularism, that one side denies the autonomy and validity of the other, either subsuming religious aspects under a secular standpoint or secular aspects under the standpoint of religion. Which of these options becomes hegemonic hinges less on cultural resources, let alone religious dispositions, and more on socio-political circumstances. Whichever way the distinction-yet-connection of religion and the secular in Islam plays out, it should be clear that it does not express an alleged timeless essence of Islam, as many modern reformists themselves as well as orientalists claim,[13] but is instead a modern arrangement that mirrors claims to the secular being self-sufficient.

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12 [note 25 in the original] See also: Shaden M. Tageldin, "Secularizing Islam: Carlyle, al-Sibaʿi, and the Translations of 'Religion' in British Egypt," *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (2011): 128.

13 [note 26 in the original] Dietrich Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam* (Sheffield/Oakville: Equinox, 2011).

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20 Aziz al-Azmeh: *Secularism in the Arab World* (2020)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Aziz al-Azmeh (b. 1947 in Damascus) has, since 2002, been a professor at the Central European University, which is now located in Vienna after being forced out of Hungary as a consequence of repressive measures of Viktor Orban's government. After achieving an MA at the University of Tübingen, al-Azmeh completed his PhD in Oriental studies at Saint Anthony's College in 1977. While his academic training and career predominantly took place at European institutions, and his historiographical works extend to classical Muslim scholars and Islam in late antiquity, al-Azmeh has also continued to address contemporary issues in Arab countries, not least questions of modernity and secularity. Most of his monographs and contributions were published in Arabic, and al-Azmeh's eminence in Arabic debates is further underlined by his being awarded the Republican Order of Merit in 1993, by the Tunisian president Ben ʿAli, for services to Arab culture. Whether the secularist politician Ben ʿAli was also motivated by al-Azmeh's advocation of secularism cannot be ascertained.

By contrast to a prominent stance in Arabic debates, al-Azmeh is known for conceiving of secularisation not as a particular ideology, but rather as a universal historical process to be acknowledged in Muslim societies, too. This conception, and what it is countering, is indicated in the title of his 1992 book *al-ʿAlmaniyya min manẓūr mukhtalif* (*Secularism from Another Perspective*), an English translation of which was published in 2020, including a new preface, an excerpt from which we reproduce below. While the book as a whole provides a historical trajectory of secularity, in the preface, al-Azmeh positions his own theoretical considerations concerning secularity in relation to other positions and approaches. He notably advocates sociological and historiographical analyses, as opposed to what he considers culturalist and identitarian conceptions of civilisation. Al-Azmeh sees a culturalist agenda behind theories of there being multiple configurations of modernity or – with explicit reference to the *Multiple Secularities* research program – of secularity. Moreover, he draws direct connections between such current theoretical programs and certain historical ideologies. This is not the place to sketch possible responses to al-Azmeh's rhetorically sharp criticism, which partially makes for a productive challenge and partially seems to border on polemics. The fact that al-Azmeh continues to defend secularisation as an objective and potentially universal historical process is, in any case, significant when mapping current theoretical positions in debates about secularity, and potentially refining them.

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Secularism and the Sociology of Fate

In a gentler version of Carl Schmitt's decisionism, post-colonialist academic work, in some of which Schmitt assumes oracular status, transposes what it sees as moral or political imperatives into cognitive ones. Correlatively, it privileges identity, understood in terms of culturalist differentialism, as a category of analysis and as the locus of irreducible value and voice conjoined. The sociological redactions of destiny and fate to be found in work on Islamism are of this type: Islam, which overdetermines societies nominated as Muslim, being their ethnological nature, becomes ineluctable destiny. In this perspective, sociology is the least of inputs. Note the discursive precipitation of decisionism here: this sociology of fate is primarily an apologetic discourse for special pleading, and primarily rhetorical, its sociologistic facet being related to the residual language of the academic milieu in which it is communicated. Discussions of secularism are particularly apt here, as Islamism and secularism appear as a contrastive pair. Charles Taylor opens his grand and vastly learned *A Secular Age* with an explicitly contrastive reference to Islam,[1] suggesting that the issue of secularism in Europe has to a large extent come to be relevant because Islam is perceived as a recalcitrant and bothersome presence, an impression to which many Muslim organisations and individuals have been contributing amply and enthusiastically.

The sociologistic redaction of destiny is the outcrop of historist vitalism: the idea that societies are held together by trans-historical dispositions that trumps actual historical dynamics, except in so far as it deranges the authentic nature of society. Historist discourse here typically involves topics of decline, often conflated with change overall, taken for disease, senescence, infection, estrangement of essence, decomposition, de-specification. The result of such diremptions of essence will, according to this perspective, inevitably be an inauthentic grotesque, what Spengler termed a Pseudomorph. Note that the [p. xxx/xxxi] conceptual morphology of vitalism here is meta-

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1 [note 44 in the original] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

physical, and more specifically Neo-Platonic, one of substance, plenitude of being, and privation of being.

Civilisations[2] and similar figures of organism do not change in real ways, but can be adulterated, soiled, and, indeed, defiled by forms of derangement – such are modernity or secularisation, both in this perspective, conditions of inauthenticity and heteronomy. One may well note the way in which organismic metaphors lend themselves to sonorities of pathos. The diseased and unnatural humour is treatable homeopathically, with the restoration of tradition, by return to roots, carried by nostalgia and identitarian reaffirmation. Thus, the idea that Arab societies, being in essence on this reading Islamic societies rather than societies that contain actual Muslims, need to and will inevitably return to an initial condition of purity after confrontations, challenges, and periods of contamination with extraneous agents, colonial regimes, and modernising elites, that had deranged the body politic and the body social, but did not sully the fastness of origins.

What is missing here is the concrete: that traditions and practices are plural and arranged in a system of internal distribution and relations domination in any given social unit; that judgements upon the activity or inactivity of cultural elements and upon analytical utility of culture is dependent on the precise object of analysis; that tradition and the appeal to tradition under the aspect of culture is here rather, as in atavism and primitivism, more a politico-discursive resource for those who invoke it than an actually identifiable entity. If tradition were to be taken for an entity, it would rather be an object of anthropological study in so far as it is a hypothesis put forward to account for observed repetition, rather than to be this repetition itself[3] – this last point is especially pertinent to any comment on Asad. In contrast: Clifford Geertz, often referred to as a patriarch of culturalism, was nevertheless an anthropologists' anthropologist and could therefore not be a cultural determinist of this or any other stripe. His [p. xxxi/xxxii] ethnographic work, which is of the highest possible order, impelled him to question very seriously and in practice the analytical value and operationalist use of the notion of culture. With reference to Bali, he highlighted "the tendency for the divisive effect of social institutions to predominate over the unifying power of cultural ones", affirming that "few political elites can have as intensely sought loyalty by means so ingeniously designed to produce treachery as did the Balinese"[4].

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2 [note 45 in the original] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (New York and Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), ch. 2.

3 [note 46 in the original As in conservative discourse generally, classically expressed by Edward Shils, "Tradition", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971): 122–159 – but see Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 32–34; Pascal Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication. A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 2–4, 32–37, 79–86; Marc Augé, *Le sens des autres. Actualité de l'antropologie* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 28–29; Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ch. 7.

4 [note 47 in the original] Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 45.

The sociological redaction of destiny would have things otherwise. Arab societies, and Iranian society as well, being congenitally predisposed to an ethnological destiny expressed in what is generally known as Islamic culture or Islamic civilisation, are captive to – and, to some, protected by – a congenital cultural incapacity for change of real consequence. The changes undergone by these societies over more than a century had been heteronomous, and in the final analysis a charade. Abidance is captive to the parameters of origin, of the initial condition.[5] We have here a notion of culture as a prison of social instinct rather than as a field of human action, including improvement, culture being regarded as a self-subsistent thing rather than a property of individuals and groups,[6] a sui generis, irreducible subject rather than an attribute, overdetermining history, society, and change.

To recapitulate: all revivalist and thus vitalist movements, and their associates and adjuncts within the academy, speak of a return to unadulterated origins, and of the ontological impossibility of departure therefrom. All invoke redactions of destiny, considered as inevitable forces of nature, compelling societies to regress to initial conditions prevailing before the Fall, now called colonialism or rule by secularising elites, invoked in their turn as clichés. Such are, for instance, the invocation of traditions with no regard to its social topography and on an impossible assumption of social and cultural homogeneity, or indulgence in "civilisational analysis" or "civilisational dialogue" rather than addressing history, again on an assumption of internal homogeneity for each unit involved. My assumption is that civilisation is [p. xxxii/xxxiii] not an invariant and homogeneous social form but, in the most suggestive phrase of Marcel Mauss, a hyper-social system of social systems. Civilisation in recent civilisationist discourse acts as a rhetorical figure of historist continuity, rendering "civilisational analysis" an endless elaboration of clichés intended to represent an essence of congenital predispositions – all playing on vitalist and organismic metaphors in the sub-Spenglerian versions current today, with Huntington as a prime example.

At present, invocations of identity and native voice proffer a programme of what Taylor called, rather delicately, a politics of recognition – a politics that, when performed on the ground, at points of concrete application, has generally devolved more often than not to a politics of self-affirmative identitarian bluster, generally unmannerly to degrees that must surely challenge anyone's appetite for recognition. Advocacy of recognition in these terms yields a communalist template premised on the self-enclosure of human collectivities, and their cultivation of origins, expressed in traditions, spawning particularistic and exclusivist claims to ethics and politics. Culture is here beyond the reach of sociological and historical analysis. Often counterposed to what is taken for

5 [note 48 in the original] This concept is very well thought through by Sudipta Kaviraj, "Outline of a revisionist theory of modernity", *European Journal of Sociology* 46 (2005): 497–526.

6 [note 49 in the original] Dan Sperber and Nicolas Claidière, "Defining and explaining culture (comments on Richerson and Boyd, *Not by genes alone*)", *Biology and Philosophy* 23 (2008): 283–292, at 291–292.

a teleology of the Enlightenment, this is a reverse, an oddly retrojective teleology that seeks the future in the ineluctability of the past.

Among other things, this decorous perspective yields nominal pluralisation and multiplication quite commonly, seemingly without end, with multiple modernities and multiple secularities emerging effortlessly and recognisably. If underdeveloped countries, including those identified as Islamic, cannot in this perspective really be said to have modernised or secularised but that they had rather been disfigured, or that they be unwilling and incapable congenitally of improvement, they can nevertheless condescendingly be included in the conversation politely, and said to have modernised or secularised multiply and in their own particular ways. This is all seemingly innocent, straightforward, and matter-of-fact, but adrift conceptually. I used the term Islams, which has often been misread without the intended irony, and placed in the flow of reclamations of voice and the cognitive Saturnalia of Difference and so forth. Yet this usage sought to reinstate and encourage a critical, properly historical analysis of the themes generally treated simplistically and stereotypically, not to dissolve a category – here, Islam – into senseless plurality, nor to dissolve the categories of Islam and of Modernity into skittish revelry, or a redemption of authenticity.[7] Islams and Modernities [p. xxxiii/xxxiv] and other works were intended, in contrast, to reaffirm the purely nominal character of the category "Islam", and to argue against its use as a classificatory, analytical, or causal concept.

What was most explicitly intended is not the effacement of general analytical concepts, but the reinstatement of history against culturalist claims for abidance. Multiplying secularities or modernities, and other targets of this rhetoric of categorical deflation, cannot free historical reality from either secularisation or modernity as objective historical dynamics.[8] Such multiplications are unmistakably impelled less by the need to take due conceptual note of empirical findings than by a culturalist agenda. Infirming secularisation in "the longue durée of civilisational history", such thinking in terms of "cultural diversity", appealing to such matters as "spiritual ontologies" and searching for "cultural meanings", yields, it is claimed, a "cultural sociology of secular modernities".[9] But such a procedure, it has been well noted, will have a scattering effect, depriving concepts of analytical utility,[10] in effect effacing the concept entirely by the overlay of respectful multiplication. There is in this kind of advocacy a blanket reduction of social process and of history to culture; one cannot, it is claimed, see secularisation as

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7 [note 50 in the original] Compare the historiographic multiplication of the Enlightenment in the most perceptive analysis of Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, religion and the enigma of secularization: A review essay", *The American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 1061–1080, at 1066–1069, 1075–1076.

8 [note 51 in the original] Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, xiii–xiv.

9 [note 52 in the original] Marian Burchardt and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Multiple secularities: Religion and modernity in the global age", *International Sociology* 28 (2013): 605–611, at 605–607.

10 [note 53 in the original] Sheehan, "Enlightenment", 1075.

occurring “outside culture”,[11] whatever it is that may be understood from “outside” and inside, or from an entity that is so bounded.

These terms of the discussion perforce carry the semantic energy of the keywords just mentioned as they are used politically today, and carry the drift of a Spenglerian/Huntingtonian/Dugin orientation, judging matters in terms of predeterminative origins or persistences rather than by dynamic process. It works in terms of ethnological destiny, rather than by empirical considerations from sociology. It inflects undeniable empirical variety and unevenness towards vitalism and historism, and causes the fact of variety to drift semantically to the sheer multiplicity of thin empirical wedges, each sui generis. For quite apart from empirical concerns, it seems incontestable [p. xxxiv/xxxv] that much of the intent propelling multiplicationism can be understood in terms of a protocol of intercultural courtesy reminiscent of “interfaith dialogue”, and a token of adherence to the celebration of diversity by means of conceptual diplomacy – a manifest case in point of transposing normative interest into cognitive propositions, the ought transmuting into an is. The term “multiple” here is itself the performance of an ethos, of belonging to a particular politico-cultural place rather than another, supporting particular constituencies against others in a conflictual environment, changing the valence of a statement from negative to positive, from the lack of advancement to multiple forms of development. Such multiplication amounts ultimately to mincing words, like saying gosh and golly, darn and sugar, to euphemistic usage, a socio-linguistic phenomenon of evasion and circumvention, a rhetorical figure of attenuation, belonging together with the apotropaic to a common class of quasi-magical enunciations.[12]

Yet concepts and categories, and these include modernity and secularism, are by definition general, pertaining to the whole class of phenomena that they organise, and cannot, as is sometimes charged, be “monolithic”: they can become monolithic only when voided of conceptual sense and rendered into fetishes, like the notion of identity in its various redactions as culture or religion and so forth. Concepts deployed comparatively cannot be held captive to nominal multiplication, each a multiple sui generis, but must rest on generic commonality: comparison between elements of a category indicates an analytical grid of variations in which differences are regarded as variant members of the class of phenomena constituting the category, not as sui generis individuals. Similarities and differences are variations rather than signals of the generic specificity of each term of comparison. In conceptual terms, variations indicate particular instances that mediate the general and the individual.[13] Regarded thus, multiplication-

11 [note 54 in the original] Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr, “Multiple Secularities”, 606.
12 [note 55 in the original] Émile Benveniste, “Euphémismes anciens et modernes”, in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Vrin, 1966), 308–314; “Euphemismus”, in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, eds H. Cancik et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988–2001), s.v.
13 [note 56 in the original] A recent book written in this spirit and attentive to the weight of empirical detail is that of Murat Akan, *The Politics of Secularism: Religion, Diversity, and Institutional Change in France and Turkey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

ism is a variant of nativisim and identitarianism. One had better either use a concept in its generality, or drop it. [p. xxxv/xxxvi]

There is clearly in these discussions a fundamental confusion between the modernity/secularism package of analytical categories, and normative recognitions, misrecognitions, ambivalences, resistances, or denials of these processes. Both modernity and secularism are objective processes, correlative with each other, global, instantiations of which are related by a process of combined and uneven development [. . .]. As long as the discussion is misrecognised when pitched at the level of normative perception by actors or victims, and the actual process described in terms of triumph, disquiet, or grievance, the chances of a productive discussion are reduced substantively. Such a pitch has become quite normal, with secularism in India egregiously reduced to "a credo",[14] ignoring actual social and political processes and transformations, or, in a study of the German Democratic Republic, defined, with a lowering of the sociological gaze, as "an interpretative frame",[15] or, finally, as with Asad, pronounced with grandiose pathos to be a "regime of truth".[16] Truth itself is in this perspective multiple, voided of cognitive implication, with no reference to any regime of ascertainability and verifiablity, thus used indifferently for any sort of bunk or fantasy: this is a regime of alternative facts.

Being general by definition, concepts are quite naturally applicable outside the immediate circumstance of their emergence and initial use. One is surprised that few post-colonialists have had qualms about using, outside Western Europe, the concepts of the economy and of society, which were made possible, named, and articulated in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively,[17] yet declare loud reserve when the discussion pertains to the categories of secularism and religion, while often extolling Foucault as Weber is simultaneously declared to have been snarled by European conditions. Secularism in a world of solipsistic multiplicity and incommensurability is required conceptually to be entrapped in the frame of its conceptual emergence. Thus, we find secularism, very commonly today, [p. xxxvi/xxxvii] defined as post-Christian, a sort of "Christianity in sheep's clothing",[18] and denied in other settings, at best relegated to one among many multiple and sui generis secularities. In parallel, the applicability of the category of religion to Islam is denied, on the specious presumption that it emerged in post-Reformation Europe.

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14 [note 57 in the original] T. N. Madan, "Secularism and the intellectuals", *Economic and Political Weekly* 29/18 (1994): 1095–1096, at 1095.

15 [note 58 in the original] Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Thomas Schmidt-Lux, and Uta Karstein, "Secularization as conflict", *Social Compass* 55 (2008): 127–139.

16 [note 59 in the original] See the discussion of Enayat, *Islam and Secularism*, ch. 2.

17 [note 60 in the original] On economy: Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); on society: Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

18 [note 61 in the original] Jonathan Sheehan, "Thomas Hobbes, D.D.: Theology, orthodoxy, and history", *The Journal of Modern History*, 88 (2016): 249–274, at 251.

This last point shall be revisited below. Secularism is in this perspective construed as a movement within religion (one notes that culture and religion are often used interchangeably in this type of discourse, especially with regard to Islam), rather than what it was historically, part of a broader process of societal and cultural differentiation. There is an assumption not only of the overdetermination of society and of history by religion, but also of societal homogeneity. Correlatively, it is noteworthy that the grafting of secularism onto the history of Christianity is much in vogue now; like many others, including the majority of secularism's Islamist critics, Asad concurs entirely.[19] This is a variation on an older trope of denigration directed at the Enlightenment, of the French Revolution, later at Marxism, and now at secularism. This is in the long tradition of denigrating all of these in their turn by construing them as eschatological movements, from Herder and de Maistre to Carl Schmitt, taking in the Frankfurt School, with a period of special flourishing in anti-Communist Cold War polemics that continue to thrive today.[20] Secularism as post-Christianity continuous with its Christian parent is a facile and impressionistic meta-historical position that collapses before historical investigation, not least given the pseudo-historical historicist readings of the relation between state and Church in Europe, which are exceedingly complex and by no means uniform, and cannot accommodate this assumption of continuity and internal emergence. It rests on superficial [p. xxxvii/xxxviii] associations, including ones between psychological states that characterise revolutions and messianic stirrings.[21]

In this historist and vitalist regard, secularisation is taken in a rather cavalier manner for the subtraction of religion, curiously with its continued existence under another, spuriously secular signature, as Enlightenment or Communism. Subtraction in these discussions often refers to institutional transformations whereby religious institutions were turned around and taken over, but such transformation within is slight overall, differentiation having spawned different types of institution, and the subtraction argument is anchored more firmly in the anti-modern figure of nostalgia for the sublime than in empirical realities of history. Secularisation (and modernisation: the two are often interchangeable in many discussions) is thereby construed as

19 [note 62 in the original] It is appropriate here to indicate that Asad's ideas in this respect and in many others have for long been common in the Arab World, with a variety of inflections and in a variety of idioms. The post-colonial position is stated with greater penetration and sustained by broader reading, albeit without the emblematic authorities invoked in Europe and the US, by, for instance, the late, ex-Marxist culture-Islamist ʻAbd al-Wahhāb Al-Masīri in a wide-ranging debate towards the end of his life: ʻAbdalwahhāb Al-Masīri and ʻAzīz Al-ʻAẓma, *Al-ʻilmānīya taḥt al mijhar* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1990).

20 [note 63 in the original] Richard Shorten, "The Enlightenment, communism and political religion: Reflections on a misleading trajectory", *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8 (2003): 13–37; Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, ch. 8.

21 [note 64 in the original] Cf. Judith Shklar, "The political theory of utopia: From melancholy to nostalgia", *Daedalus* 94 (1965): 367–381, at 373, 375. For an excellent discussion, Shorten, "The Enlightenment".

a form of loss,[22] of alienation, what Taylor regretted poignantly and eloquently as the "excarnation", of "buffe[r]ed" selves, in the secular "wasteland".[23] This is the consequence of "immanence" – hence the "immanent frame" web facility that many readers of this book will be familiar with – that had set aside transcendence with its sense of "fullness",[24] a usurpation of the authentic, a privation of essence, a state of unwholesomeness, a disnature. All of these terms are nebulous and mystifying, emanating from anti-modern Romanticism, and convey pathos rather than determinate sense. In counterpart to this is generally suggested the mystique of reaffirmation – a premise for "recognition" – and, often enough, restoration of an idyll obscured by history, including that of an Islamic prelapsarian utopia or life taken for an Islamic discursive tradition. All of these are poetical terms redolent of the occult, once one subtracted the pop-psychological aspects and vocabularies that one encounters often in these types of utterance.

In the final analysis, the specious character of the subtraction and persistence model is that it posits a morphological continuity between historical formations that does not obtain in the real world, and extrudes all consideration [p. xxxviii/xxxix] of historical breaks, structural transformations, innovations, and functional differentiations that came with modernity, which are central to this discussion [. . .]. The fact is that the anachronism of the subtraction thesis is based on a prior, underlying analytical premise, that of the relation between secularism and Christianity, and this will bring us back to deterministic historism, culturalism, and traditionalism, and their joint rhetorical trope, that of the return of religion as to an initial condition of authenticity and fullness to which history is irrelevant.

This prior analytical premise is conducted in the form of pseudo-historical narrative. I shall refer here to two types of analysis, influential in broadly different disciplinary academic milieux. One is in the broadest sense historical in orientation, represented in sociological analysis and in psycho-conceptual history, best represented respectively by the major work of Casanova and Taylor. The other type is distanciated from history by a distrust expressed in the name given to the undertaking, called genealogical, with only a very remote claim to anthropology, represented here by various widely quoted essays by Talal Asad. Claiming to be an insider's – "emic" is a common term – recasting of the past in light of the present, genealogists compose pedigrees, virtual histories of ethos positive and negative.

We are told, yet again, that secularisation is "identified with a particular civilizational trajectory",[25] one that is described by Taylor at length with reference to the North

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22 [note 65 in the original] This point stressed by Blumenberg, in his defence of modernity: Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. R. M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 116–120, 533, and passim.

23 [note 66 in the original] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 613–614, 722. 37–42, 138, 307–321, 448–490, 770.

24 [note 67 in the original] See the comments of Craig Calhoun, "Review of Taylor, *A Secular Age*", *European Journal of Sociology* 49 (2008): 455–461.

25 [note 68 in the original] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 36.

Atlantic region, to which he adds psycho-historical factors of the embedding and disembedding of individuals in quite mystifying terms, full of pathos but eluding concrete sense, some that were highlighted already. This amounts to a comprehensive disapproval of modernity in the tragic mode, often without reference to the overarching and pessimistic Roman Catholicism of this position.[26] Reference to criticisms of capitalism by Marx, when speaking of fetishism of the commodities, of alienation, and of religion,[27] would have enriched considerably discussions of this attitude of discontent and disenchantment with civilisation, and taken it in a more constructive direction. [p. xxxix/xl]

Yet for all the high-grade philosophical skills one receives from Taylor habitually, his discussion of separate civilisational trajectories remains meta-historical, guided by the conflation of historical dynamics with an essentialist ethnology of the West as overdetermined by Christian traditions understood monolithically, and in a view of progress and of the Enlightenment blurred by melancholy aversion. The unstated assumption is that Europe's had been "societies of faith", a cliché that historical research has moderated very considerably and nuanced beyond the proportions that would make this supposition serviceable for the sort of argument discussed here. Casanova, some of whose arguments also stand on this silent presumption, is yet enough of a robust sociologist to state that the assumption that pre-modern Europeans were more religious than today is one "in need of confirmation";[28] the same will extend to super-Islamisation of Muslims both today and yesterday. Yet Casanova perpetrates a similar, common conflation, when he claims that secularism is the product of a specifically Western modernity, and that it is therefore "fundamentally and inevitably post-Christian"[29] – the postist locution having the effect rhetorically of disclaiming a break with previously regnant forms of Christianity, and discursively of extruding history, both as tendential dynamic and as conjuncture, and eliminating the weight of historical breaks. Casanova insists generously that the multiplication of secularism, like that of modernity, should "open the possibility that other religions may also play a role in institutionalizing their own patterns of secularization",[30] thus locating these processes within religion, with an unspoken assumption that religion, presumably taken for a culture in the sense of historist culturalism, overdetermines the development of a particular historical formation.

Casanova claims further that secularism first arose as a Western theological category.[31] This conveys a close fit with the traditionalist and civilisational – culturalist –

26 [note 69 in the original] See Matthew Rose, "Tayloring Christianity", in https://www.firstthings.com/article/%202014/12/tayloringchristianity (accessed on 27 April 2018).

27 [note 70 in the original] These are much more nuanced and complex than is usually admitted – see Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (London: Verso, 2010), ch. 5.

28 [note 71 in the original] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 16.

29 [note 72 in the original] José Casanova, "The secular, secularizations, secularism", in *Rethinking Secularism*, eds Craig Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer and J. van Antwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54–74, at 63.

30 [note 73 in the original] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 234.

31 [note 74 in the original] Ibid., 61.

discourse here proffered, but its meaning is, on closer examination, uncertain. I am not aware of secularism as a Christian theological category as such, although secularisation in canon law applies to persons [p. xl/xli] and properties removed, temporarily or permanently, and in various proportions, from Church control, by dispensation or by force. Dubbing whatever is related to religion or the Church as "theological" is unhelpful, mystifying, and allows for impressionistic affirmations. I am not aware of secularism as a specifically Christian category either. Clearly quotation of New Testament fragments about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's, wrenched out of context, and overinterpreted as the first and last word on Christianity and politics, is a show as poor as it is common. What one is left with is a drift that can be seen more clearly when Islam is spoken of, namely, the drift, presented as self-evident common sense, towards identifying past with future, and identifying culture, civilisation, and religion, and, indeed, towards rendering religion the defining element of both, the arbiter of destiny.

In this way, the idea that secularism, one outgrowth of social differentiation occurring with global modernity, might involve a common transgeographical social dynamic, however uneven and varied, and have common global characteristics, both graspable by an overarching concept, is made to devolve to an illusion or a lie, at best a colonial or elitist imposition or instrument of manipulation and justification. It is trumped by the inexorable march of sociological destiny. There is, with Casanova, and as a clear consequence of historism, a meta-historical assumption of incommensurable historical itineraries, multiple modernities, denominated by him as post-Hindu, post-Confucian, and post-Muslim.[32] Post-Muslim modernity in this register would be vulnerable to the view, becoming increasingly more common and emerging from similar assumptions, that Islam – without qualification – according to one historian working with the same meta-historical template, be necessarily at odds with modernity, which is incompatible with Islam's "ontological and theological commitments".[33] This is a specious and often contra-factual type of historical argument that Casanova shares with very many others – and these include Hindu and Muslim culturalists of various hues, cultural nationalists, and fundamentalists, who have been putting forward this point for a long time now.

Patronising multiculturalist impulses apart, the global dynamic of ideological post-colonialist vitalist historism is one of European origin and impulse, [p. xli/xlii] one that was internalised and made local everywhere, in a variety of forms and to varying extents. It would be pertinent to stress here that the polemics against Eurocentrism are often incoherent in that they use the various possible senses of the term interchangeably, often misconstruing Eurocentred historical analyses as ideologically Eurocentric. This is why ideas about "provincializing Europe" are so manifestly delu-

32 [note 75 in the original] Ibid., 64.

33 [note 76 in the original] Michael Alan Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 292.

sional, for Eurocentrism in regarding modern history has solid empirical foundations, and is surely more than just an ideological gloss. There may well be ethical or political foundations for such postures of denial, but it is clearly illegitimate to transpose these imperatives into cognitive propositions, and to correct political asymmetries by a kind of cognitive decisionism and the assertion of cognitive nativism.

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21 Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr: *Comparative Secularities* (2020)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Christoph Kleine (b. 1962) is Professor of the History of Religions specialised on Japan and Buddhism at Leipzig University, Germany. From 1999 to 2006, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (b. 1957) was Professor of Sociology of Religion at the same university; since 2007 she has held a chair in Cultural Sociology there. Together, the two founded and manage the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" (2016–2024), funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.*

In view of the controversies over applying the concept 'religion' as an analytical category when investigating pre-modern, non-Western cultures, Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr ask how one can still pursue the history of religion or historical sociology of religion beyond the West or global modernity. They argue that, on this issue, scholars of religion have roughly polarised into two camps: there are (1) those who reject the cross-cultural use of 'religion' as a comparative concept and (2) those who believe they cannot do without it. In their article, Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr propose an approach that acknowledges the cultural dependence and historicity of concepts such as 'religion' and the 'secular,' without negating the possibility of historical research on pre-colonial non-Western societies relevant to the study of both. Their approach aims to investigate the emergence of social and epistemic structures in various cultures – forms of differentiation and distinction – that have enabled the reorganisation of socio-cultural formations into religions (religionisation, see Dreßler, text no. 17) and thus facilitated the formation of *multiple secularities* in global modernity. In other words, Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr do not presuppose that 'religion' and 'the secular' (or certain equivalent concepts) have always been meaningful categories in all societies. They argue instead that every culture conceptualises social differentiations (social structures), making distinctions (epistemic structures) between nexuses of social activities. These distinctions provided conceptual resources in the respective processes of appropriating a new globalised knowledge regime, and new principles of social organisation, such as secu-

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larity, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Accordingly, pre-modern social and epistemic structures informed the ways in which culture-specific forms of secularity were implemented. In other words, the authors suggest that a thorough examination of pre-modern social and epistemic structures is required, in order to account for the multiplicity of secularities in global modernity.

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Christoph Kleine and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr. "Comparative Secularities: Tracing Social and Epistemic Structures Beyond the Modern West." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 33, no. 1 (2020): 43–72; 44–45, 47–62, 64–65.

In the following programmatic contribution, which only occasionally and for illustrative purposes refers to historical examples mainly from Japan, we make an attempt to bridge the gap between two polar positions that have emerged within the academic study of religion and related disciplines. These positions[...] can – in an ideal-typical way – be described as follows: one approach emphasises the historicity and specificity of "religion" and related categories, like "the secular," that emerged in Europe and spread globally in the course of colonialism, and sees their scholarly use as a continuation of colonial or imperialist aspirations for power. The other approach, however, emphasises both the legitimacy and necessity of using meta-language concepts for the comparison of Western and non-Western, and even modern and premodern cultures. We see the bridging between these poles as necessary for stimulating new research which is not limited to "the West" and its concepts and yet takes the insights of post-colonial perspectives into account. The task we set ourselves is: how can historical research about non-European and premodern cultures continue to yield information that is interesting for religious studies as a whole without presupposing the universality of religion as a given reality or even as a useful concept for cultural comparison? Starting from a perspective informed by differentiation theory[...] we intend to show that genealogy and comparison, historicisation and generalisation can mutually fertilise each other. We assume that the diversity of secular-religious relations in the world today is caused by the varying epistemic and social conditions and preconditions under which different societies have historically appropriated Western models of secularism.

Without anachronistically applying or projecting predefined comparative concepts such as "religion" or "the secular," we nevertheless want to show that some forms of conceptual distinction and social differentiation, which as such can be found in any culture, have either been used as resources or could be adapted along the lines of

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Western differentiation logics because of structural analogies and/or functional equivalence. Accordingly, we suggest to investigate these endogenous forms of conceptual distinction and social differentiation and their impact on the ways in which Western knowledge regimes – including the [p. 44/45] religious-secular divide – and institutional arrangements – including the legal and organisational separation of "state and church" – were appropriated in colonial or quasi-colonial situations. [. . . p. 45–47. . .]

Instead of asking whether religion *existed* in pre-modern non-European societies, we should ask why some socio-cultural formations *could become* religions (in counterdistinction to something secular) through contact with "the West" in a process of "religionization" (Dreßler 2019) since the nineteenth century (e.g. Buddhism in Japan), whereas others *could not* (e.g. rice growing). [p. 47/48. . .]

The approach presented here tries to start with as few premises and presumptions as possible. We do *not* start with definitions of "religion" or "the secular." What we intend to do instead is to look at the trajectories that connect modern notions of religion and the secular with earlier forms of distinction and differentiation.[. . .] Accordingly, we do not take the search for semantic equivalents of these European terms as our starting point. [. . .]

Our conceptual work starts with the observation that modern Western concepts of "religion" and "the secular" have been appropriated and "glocalised" in rather diverse ways in non-Western societies. In an evident allusion to Shmuel Eisenstadt's concept of "multiple modernities" we speak of "multiple secularities,"[. . .] because Western normative concepts of secularism (i.e. ideologies aiming at a separation of "religion" and "the secular") may be *the* reference points in global modernity, but still there is not just one single way of dealing with these. By "secularities" we mean interrelated epistemic and social structures in which given social configurations are conceptually cast into a binary taxonomy in terms of classifying things as either religious or nonreligious by relevant actors. As a rule, the boundaries thus drawn are blurred, variable and negotiable, but what is more: they are controversial and a source [p. 48/49] of conflict in present times. Thereby we distinguish "secularity" as a specific mode of distinction by which social differentiation is conceptualised as a *binary schema* from "secularism" as a philosophical-political program and related practices, and from "secularisation" as a "process of differentiation, including diminishing mutual influences between religion and other social domains, as well as the decline in religious participation and belief" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012: 881).[. . .] It is important to note at this point that "secularity" is not an emic term but a comparative concept – a concept constructed as an ideal-type but inevitably associated with a rather vague prototype formed by Western notions of secularism.

[. . . p. 49/50] To give a very simple example, one may ask, why "Buddhism" was classified as a "religion" (or rather: *shūkyō* 宗教) in modern Japan and rice growing was not. Was this classification based on family resemblances with the prototype (i.e. Christianity) of a polythetic class "religion" established in early modern Europe? Or was Buddhism seen as a member of an endogenous polythetic class in premodern Japan

already (e.g. as *shūshi*宗旨), a class which grouped together socio-cultural formations and nexuses of "integrated and dispersed practices" (Schatzki 1996: 173) labelled as "religion" today? In the latter case, an emic system of classifications, which was highly compatible with Western ones, may have facilitated a rather unproblematic adoption of religion/*shūkyō* as a generic category in Meiji Japan (1868–1912). In a similar vein, R. Bhargava, with reference to developments in premodern India, talks about "critical junctures"[. . .] in Indian history that opened up "conceptual spaces" and built "conceptual resources that provide the cultural preconditions for the development of modern secularism in India" (Bhargava 2010: 160, 165, 170).

In other words, we not only ask *how* certain socio-cultural formations (e.g. Buddhism) became (or did not become!) religions in a process of "religionisation" (Dreßler 2008: 281; 2013: 65f), as most discursive and genealogical approaches hitherto do (e.g. Josephson 2006). We additionally ask *why* these socio-cultural formations became religions while others (e.g. agriculture) did not. By applying the genealogical approach to premodern, non-Western societies and tracing endogenous social and epistemic structures (e.g. taxonomies and systems of classification) that may have become relevant as social conditions and conceptual resources in the processes of appropriating and modifying (or rejecting) Western social institutions and knowledge regimes, our approach aims to overcome the dilemma in which the academic study of religion seems to be trapped. While avoiding the anachronistic use of "religion" as a generic term, the uncritical application of the concept to different cultural contexts, and the presupposition that "religion" is a universal phenomenon, we likewise avoid European exceptionalism, scholarly isolationism, and radical incommensurabilism. We "assume that every society in history knows variations of internal differentiation" and "develops taxonomies to organise a hypercomplex world by classifying natural and cultural facts in an abstract manner in order to provide orientation within this world" (Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr 2016: 10). While some of these forms of epistemic and social structuration proved to be quite compatible with modern Western ones, others were not. In any case, [p. 50/51] the respective differentiations and distinctions have their own genealogies and can be compared with those in other societies in order to find similarities *and* variations and account for these – even when comparative concepts such as religion are avoided.[. . .] This entails the basic question to what degree societal differentiations and conceptual distinctions are culturally specific or transcultural (though not necessarily universal). Although we consent to "critical realism" which "insists on the variability of social-causal structures across time and space and thus rejects the assumption that social patterns are universal" (Steinmetz 2004: 382), historical scholarship strongly suggests that there are considerable limitations to the range of variations, which enables us to compare these on a higher level of abstraction (Shore 1998: 53). [. . . p. 51/52. . .]

As said before, the multiple secularities approach aims at the identification, genealogy, entanglement and comparison of pre-colonial social and epistemic structures in various regions that arguably became relevant for culture-specific ways of organising the relationship between religion and the secular in modern times.

The search for social structures that enable or promote a specific epistemic structure in the sense of a binary conceptual distinction between the "religious" and the "secular" (or something functionally or structurally analogous) is of particular importance in our approach.

On an abstract level, we use the term "social structures" mainly to refer to "societal differentiation," whereas "epistemic structures" (including cultural semantics) mainly refers to "conceptual distinction." [. . . p. 52/53. . .]

It remains a decisive question, however, whether different cultures share similar principles of structuring society. This has for centuries been implicitly presupposed by the assumption that, for instance, "religion" is a universal subdomain of human societies all over the world.[. . .] The Multiple Secularities approach, however, does not simply adopt such a universalist premise but sets out to explore *whether* different cultures carve out comparable social domains, "in which structure is recursively implicated" and which "comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space" (Giddens 1986: 25). And we ask whether and how common "modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction" (Giddens 1986: 25).

As important as it is to realise that social activities are structured *and* structuring, this does not help us in our search for the specific social structures that may have become relevant as culture-specific conditions under which Western normative principles such as "secularism" were appropriated by local actors. When it comes to social structures, sociology usually distinguishes between three interrelated levels or dimensions of social differentiation:

1. The macro-level → social systems, "nexuses of activities" (Stowers 2008: 442), social fields, etc.
2. The meso-level → organisations, etc.
3. The micro-level → individuals, situations of interaction. [p. 53/54]

When talking about "religion" or "religions," it often remains unexplained which level is referred to. "Religion" in the singular obviously refers to a segmented social system (macro-level) which is maintained by "religions" in the plural, i.e. by religious organisations (meso-level). Individuals (micro-level) are the acting subjects of religion and/or the functionaries or representatives of religions. Situations of interaction are the situational contexts in which religion is demarcated as such. However, empirically the matter is much more complicated. What we call socio-cultural formations is located, so to speak, between the macro and meso levels. [. . . p. 54/55. . .] While it is extremely difficult to identify social fields or systems on the macro level as such, it is relatively easy to discern and observe such (mostly self-reflective) formations, which regularly spawn organisations such as "churches," "monastic orders," etc., i.e., organisations usually labelled "religious" today.[. . .] Therefore, they are a good starting point for identifying a specific structural element of a given premodern and non-Western society that suggests

itself as a functional and/or structural equivalent of "religion." If the same socio-cultural formations that are subsumed under the category "religion" today were subsumed under an emic category "xx" in a given premodern culture, it is reasonable to assume that this emic category shares a number of features that are today attributed to the social field "religion." [. . .]

Obviously, it is much harder (but by no means impossible) to delineate the social field or domain ("religion" in the singular) within which socio-cultural formations such as a Buddhist *saṅgha* or a Christian church ("religions" in the plural) strive for dominance and which is constituted by a specific subset of structured and interrelated human activities. Formulated as a hypothesis: a social sub-domain in the macro-sociological sense becomes apparent when a plurality of such organisations (or more generally: socio-cultural formations), [p. 55/56] today categorised as religious, are perceived by the actors at a given time and in a given place standing in a relationship of competition and substitutability to one another – which makes them de facto functional equivalents. In such cases, they act as representatives of a segmentally differentiated societal sub-domain or nexus of integrative and dispersed social activities. [. . .]

Whether or not it is appropriate to call the contested premodern social field in question "religion," and regardless of whether or not "religion is a fairly typical example of the human creation of contingent yet surprisingly stable social and institutional reality" (Stausberg 2010: 365), rather than being something very special, uniquely European, is of no relevance at this point. Religion as a distinctive subset of human activities has no "birth hour," just as little as specific religions as distinctive socio-cultural formations have! In other words: that which we habitually call religion for pragmatic reasons and for comparative purposes takes shape slowly and gradually. Religion is not simply "there" from one moment to the next. The becoming of religion or a religion in the modern understanding of the term is a gradual, evolutionary process without a definite beginning and without a predictable, let alone predetermined end. Under certain historically contingent circumstances, cultural elements condense into complex socio-cultural formations that can further differentiate themselves as social sub-domains and compete with other phenomenologically and functionally similar formations for dominance in a distinct social field of action that we now call religion.

For our approach it is actually irrelevant whether religion and secularity existed, say, in pre-modern Japan. The answer to this question depends solely on one's defining criteria. Even if one makes the existence of religion as a social fact dependent on the existence of religion as a concept, it cannot be [p. 56/57] denied that the appropriation of the concept is based on existing epistemic and social structures that have a long history and facilitate or complicate the process of appropriation. [. . .]

In view of the debates over the validity of the binary model of secularity, it should be stressed once again that we do not claim that this is the only possible interpretation of social reality – far from it. It is a special-purpose taxonomy, which serves certain, mostly political purposes in a broad sense but is irrelevant in other contexts. Furthermore, it has been rightly pointed out that various phenomena obviously elude clear

assignment to one of the two sides of “religion” or “the secular,” e.g., superstition (cf. Josephson-Storm 2017), spirituality, occultism (cf. Bergunder 2016b), spiritualism, magic, etc. However, this does not reduce the effectiveness of the binary structure, which is only [p. 57/58] an expression of a certain, often strategic view of the world. The (inevitable) emergence of (at least) a “hidden ‘third’” (van der Veer 2014: 115), which cannot be clearly assigned to the religious or the secular, is, according to our preliminary analysis, the consequence of the above-mentioned process of “religionisation,” which produces a binary constellation we call secularity. [. . .]

Comparative studies of Europe and various Buddhist-influenced societies in Asia suggest that the establishment of monastic organisations and the concomitant “struggle between military and temple nobility” (Weber 1985: 690) considerably promotes the development of binary schemas – i.e. epistemic structures that frame and legitimise an institutional separation – that we call “secularity.” Taxonomic constructions, by means of which the social environment is pressed into a binary pattern that reflects this power struggle, are however not an exclusive symptom of Western-dominated modernity. In Buddhist dominated societies in premodern Asia, we find social constellations that are quite reminiscent of the one in medieval Europe. If Pollack (2016) is right in his assumption that the competition between the papacy and the empire, which culminated in the investiture dispute, paved the way for the specific European form of secularisation, it is not unlikely that analogous power structures may have fostered binary distinctions between mundane and supramundane nomospheres – i.e. normative systems that seek to comprehensively regulate the lives of those belonging to them – in other parts of the world too. In fact, the power constellations in medieval Japan[. . .], Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan[. . .] and even Sri Lanka[. . .] were not quite dissimilar, and in all these countries we find binary concepts of legitimate rule based on a duality of two interdependent nomospheres. [p. 58/59]

In short, such concepts akin to our ideal type of secularity seem to easily emerge in social contexts in which not only strong clerical institutions exist, but especially when these are (at least partly) monastically organised as in Christianity and Buddhism. Monasteries as heterotopias (Foucault 2013) often represent institutionalised nomospheres in which a thoroughly rationalised, salvific way of life is cultivated, which as it were holds up the mirror to the inevitably imperfect (mundane; *sezoku* 世俗) way of life outside the monastery walls as a “counter-design.” [. . .]

We define epistemic structures as socially generated, culturally anchored and transmitted patterns of perception and interpretation that pre-structure the perception and interpretation of the natural and social environment. Such epistemic structures manifest themselves in conceptual distinctions, such as abstract categories, general and specific taxonomies, or classification systems. The search for epistemic structures would result, for example, in the question of whether and how people in the non-European cultures of premodern times conceptually distinguished between different nexuses of social activities on the semantic level. As a first step, therefore, we must identify the implicit distinctions of integral activity bundles that can be elaborated into explicit tax-

onomies or classification systems. As a second step, we must ask whether these epistemic structures have served as conceptual resources that facilitated the appropriation of modern, Western-dominated knowledge regimes. In the context of conventional comparative religious studies, the question would rather be: do these epistemic structures have sufficient similarities with modern Western (or now global?) structures to be considered either as precursors or even as equivalents of "religion"? [p. 59/60 . . .]

The question is whether, in the context of certain institutions, we can also identify certain types of symbolic order. Symbolic order, however, is created by the identification of similarities and differences, in short: by the drawing of distinctions. In this section, we will therefore deal with distinctions in terms of how people classify and categorise their social environment. We presume that people always and everywhere make sense of their natural and social environments by way of classification that endows a hypercomplex world with meaning and enables orientation in it. [. . .] However, the relationship between social structures and systems of classification is by no means easy to describe. We suppose that there is always some tension between praxis-based social structures and the communicable conceptualisation of a social order, which usually serves as the legitimisation of a given social structure. [. . . p. 60/61]

We should not however, assume that social classifications and knowledge regimes simply mirror social structures. Conversely, social structures are not just the manifestation of knowledge regimes. In other words, all systems of knowledge and classification, all social facts, all taxonomies are socially situated and thus indissolubly linked to social structures within which they are constantly negotiated and which can be changed in the process of negotiation. Accordingly, the relationship between structures and taxonomies is not unidirectional but dialectical: the way in which people classify their social environment has repercussions on the given social structures within which they act. Furthermore, individual actors as recipients, bearers and producers of knowledge are not bound to one particular social structure and may thus adopt various epistemological frameworks in accordance with the social setting they are situated in at a given time. People use different taxonomic distinctions according to situation and purpose. The above-mentioned conceptual distinction of a mundane and a supra-mundane nomosphere would be an example for a special-purpose taxonomy, the special purpose being the legitimisation and safeguarding of the institutional autonomy of the Buddhist orders (*jike*寺家), i.e., the predecessors of organisations legally defined as "religious corporations" (*shūkyō hōjin*宗教法人) today, from government bodies, i.e., predecessors of modern state institutions. [. . . p. 61/62. . .]

Referring back to the previous statements on dual power structures as presumed factors conducive to the formation of binary modes of distinction, it is not surprising that these are primarily invoked in discursive contexts that are concerned with preserving, strengthening and legitimising institutional autonomy, namely the autonomy of monastic or "religious" institutions. As is the case with the concept of the "two cities/ states" (Augustine), the "Doctrine of the Two Swords" (Gelasius) or the "Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms" (Luther), the medieval Japanese paradigm of "the interdependence of

the ruler's nomosphere and the Buddha's nomosphere" (Kleine 2013b, 2018) – just like analogous ideologies in Tibet, Mongolia and Bhutan[. . .] as well as in Sri Lanka – was initially propagated by representatives of monastic institutions and only later adopted by representatives of state institutions. Such binary configurations, we assume, make an appropriation of the "religious-secular-divide" under Western influence appear downright natural. Again, the decisive point here is not to claim that there was some kind of secularity (as if secularity, or religion for that matter, was something objectively existing) in premodern Japan, Tibet, Mongolia or what have you, but to draw our attention to potential linkages between binary concepts such as "the interdependence of the ruler' nomosphere and the Buddha's nomosphere" (*ōbō buppō sō'i*王法佛法相依) and the "religious-secular-divide" introduced by Western powers in the nineteenth century.

To sum up: we have tried to demonstrate that a causal relationship between social and epistemic structures relevant to the appropriation of Western normative principles such as secularism and the concomitant formation secularity can, in many cases, be established when we combine institutional history, i.e., genealogies of organisations that became "religions" in modernity, with conceptual history, i.e., genealogies of concepts that facilitated the adoption of Western concepts such as "religion" and "the secular." [. . . p. 62–64. . .]

With our approach, which we understand as a proposal for research in the history and sociology of religion, we want to build a bridge between two polar positions, between two approaches that differ considerably in their views on how the study of religion can or should deal with non-Western and premodern societies. One the one hand, the classical sociological theory of differentiation and the traditional history of religion represent, roughly speaking, a Eurocentrism disguised as universalism, which categorises the world according to a Western classification system and presupposes institutional orders without adequately considering the classification systems and forms of institutionalisation of the cultures examined. Conceptual-historical, genealogical, and discourse-theoretical approaches, mostly informed by postcolonial and post-structural thought, focus on the historically contingent formation of religion and other Western categories and their significance for the reorganisation of non-Western regimes of knowledge, governance, and social order since colonial times. While doing so, they usually also ignore the social and epistemic structures that were effective in non-Western societies as historical dispositives in these processes of social and epistemic reorganisation.

We therefore propose an alternative approach that avoids both the universalist assumption of the former and the particularist (and potentially incommensurabilist) position of the latter by taking as *tertium comparationis* not "religion," but "secularity," i.e., a comparative concept that is *determined* not substantially or functionally, but *formally or structurally*, i.e., as a state of social differentiation and a corresponding binary mode of conceptual distinction. This binary mode, to be sure, is neither natural nor artificially *constructed* by us but rather conceived of as a social construction *observed* by us. In this way, we avoid the anachronistic application of Western categories to pre-

modern, non-European contexts and instead look at endogenous practices of distinction and differentiation, which stand in a potential genealogical relationship to the categories and orders of knowledge appropriated under colonial or quasi-colonial [p. 64/65] conditions. Thus, we do not claim that "religion" or "the secular" are universal categories. But we believe that pre-existent social and epistemic structures have had a decisive influence on the way Western orders of knowledge have been appropriated and institutionalised. Accordingly, we assume, for instance, that it was no mere coincidence that Buddhism in Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century "became a 'religion'" (Josephson 2006) or *shūkyō* without major problems [. . .]. At the same time, however, we recognise that the process of "religionisation" in the sense of "the signification of certain spaces, practices, narratives, and languages as religious (as opposed to things marked as secular)" (Dreßler 2008: 281, 2013: 65f) has strongly changed Buddhism as a denominationally organised socio-cultural formation – e.g., through the elimination of "superstitious" elements, emphasis on doctrinal and confessional aspects, the formation of certain bureaucratic structures, etc. In other words: we examine the structural conditions under which premodern socio-cultural formations became "religions" in global modernity and culture-specific forms of "secularity" emerged.

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22 Mitsutoshi Horii: *Eurocentrism and Anachronism of Multiple Secularities* (2021)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Mitsutoshi Horii (b. 1977) is an associate professor at Shumei University in Japan, currently working at its overseas institution, Chaucer College Canterbury in the UK. He completed his PhD in sociology at the University of Kent in 2006, with a focus on Buddhist priests and temples in contemporary Japan, and their struggles to define themselves as 'religious.'

While completing this work, he felt increasingly constrained by the existing sociological discourse that gave the concept of 'religion' an ontology of its own, as if 'religion' actually existed as a universal aspect of human life. Horii concluded that 'religion' is essentially an empty signifier, the content and conceptual boundaries of which are constantly changing according to the norms and social context of its use. The critical deconstruction of the concepts of 'religion' and 'secularity' are thus an ongoing project for him.

Indeed, in recent years, few authors have been so passionate about showing that the distinction between the 'religious' and the 'secular' is a modern Western invention, for which there are no equivalents outside of Western modernity. Accordingly, Horii, who in this respect stands in the tradition of Timothy Fitzgerald (text no. 10), is one of the most resolute critics of the approach of *multiple secularities*, which starts from the assumption that there may have been analogous epistemic and social structures outside of Western modernity that have thus been available in global modernity to facilitate the appropriation of a modern concept of secularity.

In the article selected for this volume, Horii attacks the *multiple secularities* approach directly, especially Christoph Kleine's (text no. 50, in section 2) theses with regard to premodern Japan. He accuses the approach of being both Eurocentric and anachronistic. He begins by opposing Kleine's suggestion that the *seken-shusseken* binary (the old Buddhist distinction between mundane and supramundane affairs) may have facilitated the institutionalisation of the religious-secular distinction in the late nineteenth century in Japan. Resorting to (rather dubious) secondary literature, Horii claims that the distinction between immanence and transcendence historically emerged only in the civilisations of India, Judea, and Greece, but not in other places such as Japan. He concludes that there was no transcendental/secular dualism in Japan,

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and that the country was characterised by a tighter embeddedness in a sacralised social nexus.

In the same vein, Horii then discusses the premodern Japanese conceptual pairing of *ōbō* and *buppō* – the ruler's nomosphere and the Buddha's nomosphere – which Kleine has regarded as another, related binary that facilitated the appropriation of the modern religious-secular dichotomy. As the Buddhist temples, representing *buppō*, were an integral part of the ruling system, and shared responsibilities with the government or *ōbō*, the dyad of *ōbō* and *buppō* did not, according to Horii, constitute an epistemic/structural dualism.

Horii concludes that the problem with studies on *multiple secularities* lies in their tendency to impose religion and secularity as universal ontological categories onto non-modern or premodern ways of living. Consequently, in order to understand the construction and indigenization of the religious-secular distinction in each locality, the use of 'religious' and 'secular' as analytical categories ought to be avoided.

Bibliographical Information

Mitsutoshi Horii. "Eurocentrism and Anachronism of Multiple Secularities." Chap. 7 in *'Religion' and 'Secular' Categories in Sociology: Decolonizing the Modern Myth*, 203–37. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021: 221–28, 232–33.

Seken/shusseken as Immediate/Transcendent

One of the strategies for multiple secularity scholars to justify their claim that there were secularities in premodern Japan is to 'investigate the emergence of social and epistemic structures in various cultures – forms of differentiation and distinction' (Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr 2020, p. 1) that have facilitated reorganization and institutionalization of beliefs and practices into 'religious' and 'secular' (also see Kleine 2019). Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr (2020, p. 6) stress that they 'do not take the search for semantic equivalents' of 'religion' and 'secularity' in the premodern Japanese context. They are instead trying to identify the historical emergence of dualism, which potentially had made relatively easy the subsequent institutionalization of the religious-secular distinction in the late nineteenth century.

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According to Kleine (2013, 2019), one of such dualisms would be the *seken-shusseken* binary. Kleine (2013) is right to point out that Indian [p. 221/222] Buddhism constructed the distinction between the two notions of *laukika* and *lokottara*, which can be translated as 'immanent' and 'transcendent' respectively. If we take the position that the transcendent-immanent distinction can be translated as the religious-secular binary, the Indian Buddhist distinction of *laukika* and *lokottara* is very similar to the modern construction of the religious-secular distinction. As Kleine (2013) again correctly observed, the Sanskrit concepts of *laukika* and *lokottara* were translated into Chinese with the ideographs of 世間 (*shijian*) and 出世間 (*chushi jian*), respectively (see also Gentz 2013, p. 125).

These Chinese words were imported to Japan with Chinese Buddhist scriptures, and read in Japanese as *seken* and *shusseken*. In my view, this is the point that Kleine gets wrong. Kleine (2013) appears to assume that these Indian concepts were understood in the same way between India, on the one hand and the Sino-Japanese context, on the other. In the context of Japan between the sixth and eighth centuries, Kleine (2019, p. 21) claims as follows:

> The introduction of Buddhism and its eventual elevation from a clancentred cult to a state cult had an enormous and long-lasting impact on many levels. First of all, the introduction of a system of beliefs and practices that provided cognitive and normative orientation based on a radical duality of immanence and transcendence gave rise to a form of basic societal differentiation into a 'secularised' rule of state institutions, symbolically headed by the emperor, responsible for mundane (*seken* 世間) affairs on the one hand, and a socio-cultural formation responsible for supra-mundane (*shusseken* 出世間) affairs, namely Buddhism, on the other.

It is important to highlight, however, that these Chinese terms 世間 (*shijian*) and 出世間 (*chushi jian*) did not mean the dualistic notion of 'immediate' and 'transcendent' (or 'mundane' and 'supra-mundane,' as quoted above) when they were brought to Japan with the arrival of Buddhism between the sixth and eighth century. Rather, in Japan, Buddhist texts were interpreted 'based upon the standpoint of Absolute Phenomenalism' (Nakamura 1964, p. 351). Giving the example of the Japanese Buddhist concept of 'enlightenment' (*Honkaku*), Nakamura (1964, p. 351) argues:

> On the Asian continent, the word for enlightenment meant the ultimate comprehension of what is beyond the phenomenal world, whereas in Japan [p. 222/223] the same word was brought down to refer to understanding things within the phenomenal world.

The problem in Kleine's (2013, 2019) argument is that his narrative generally takes for granted the distinction between 'immediate' and 'transcendent' (or 'mundane' and 'supra-mundane'). He assumes that this distinction somehow can be maintained through the process of translations and interpretations. However, according to Loy (1996), this distinction historically emerged in the civilizations of India, Judea, and Greece, but not in other places such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Japan. In the context of the transmission of Buddhism from India to China and Japan, Loy (1996, p. 163) further clarifies the issue as follows:

> From the east Asian perspective, the distinction between this phenomenal world of samsara and a 'higher,' sacred reality is a fundamental determinant of Indian ways of thinking. We can find some elements of such a distinction in Chinese and Japanese culture – most of them imported with Buddhism – yet those cultures were not affected to the same extent. Quite opposite, from an Indian perspective it is the absence of a transcendent/secular distinction that explains many of the characteristics of Chinese and Japanese culture.

Then, he pushes his argument further to conclude that in the civilizations developed in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Japan, for example, 'there was no transcendental/secular dualism' and they are characterized by 'tighter embeddedness in a sacralised social nexus' (Loy 1996, p. 169).

This is the premodern context where Buddhist concepts, which originated from India, such as *seken* and *shusseken*, were read and interpreted in Japan. The semantics of *seken* and *shusseken* did not construct the sense of dualism resembling the immediate-transcendent distinction.

In addition, Kinya Abe (1995, pp. 32–97) demonstrates in his historical survey that, during roughly the same historical period as that of Kleine's (2013, 2019) study, amongst the literal elite, the term *seken* meant the network of human relations in which the individual was deeply embedded. In this context, *shusseken* referred to one's seclusion from *seken*. Nevertheless, being *shusseken* is still encompassed by *seken* in a wider sense, which meant the totality of the world. The notion of *seken* in this sense denoted the entirety of the premodern Japanese universe, which included both visible (or manifested) and invisible (or latent) realms, both worlds for the living and for the dead, and every being of humans and [p. 223/224] non-humans regardless of being sentient or non-sentient. In addition, in this premodern Japanese cosmology, the default state of all existence and nonexistence is imagined as transient. In this light, it is clear that the *seken-shusseken* distinction cannot be conceptualized in terms of dualism.

If one wishes to identify the binary opposition to the idea of *seken*, it should be the concepts such as *muen*, *kugai*, and *raku* as studied by Yoshihiko Amino (1996) and further developed by Masatoshi Ito (2008). These notions denoted, in the premodern context of Japan, the renunciation of conventional human relations (*seken*). However, the realms, which were referred to by these terms cannot be characterized as 'transcendent.' Rather, they were characterized by the value orientations and sensitivities which are largely in common with the ones we find in modern individualism and the market economy (Amino 1996; Ito 2008). This indicates that it is the binary opposite of premodern Japanese *seken*, rather than *seken*, that could be translated as the state of being akin to the modern secularity of liberal democracy.

ōbō and buppō

The third conceptual scheme I would like to discuss is the premodern Japanese dyad of *ōbō* 王法 ('the ruler's law') and *buppō* 仏法 ('the Buddha's law'). Kleine (2013) argues that between the beginning of the ninth century and the latter half of the twelfth century, the conceptual pairing of *ōbō* and *buppō* constructed an *emic* equivalent of the religious-secular dichotomy. More recently, he avoids conceptualizing this pairing in terms of 'equivalents' but as a structural/epistemic differentiation which subsequently facilitated the construction of the modern religious-secular distinction in the late nineteenth century (Kleine 2019; Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr 2020). Although he modified his approach slightly, Kleine still assumes the separation between *ōbō* and *buppō* in the structural and epistemic sense in the premodern Japanese context. I think this is problematic.

Toshio Kuroda's (1980, 2001) influential *kenmon taisei* theory, for example, concludes that the dyad of *ōbō* and *buppō* was interdependent like right and left or up and down. The dyad of *ōbō* and *buppō* represented an 'internal' interdependency: 'the idea that the state and Buddhism were dependent on each other as the wings of a bird or the two wheels of a cart' (Adolphson 2000, p. 15). In this context, the dyad of *ōbō* and *buppō* is not [p. 224/225] characterized by separation, as assumed by the modern religious-secular dualism, but by the unity of the two.

Building upon Kuroda's theories, Adolphson (2000) complicates the issue even further by highlighting the ternary (not binary) differentiation in the power structure from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. During this time, the Japanese ruling structure was made up of three power blocs: the court nobility; the warrior aristocracy; the leading Buddhist temples. The leaders of these three blocs 'ruled the realm together by sharing responsibilities of government and supporting each other's privileges and status' (Adolphson 2000, p. 11). In this context, *buppō* represented the epistemic/structural power of Buddhist temples, which were in fact 'socio-political institutions integral to the government' (Adolphson 2000, p. 19) and constituted the mechanism of the power sharing with *ōbō*, which was represented by the court nobility and the warrior aristocracy. Major Buddhist temple complexes constructed self-governed domains, which maintained the extraterritorialities from the other two ruling powers. Temples also constructed in their territories the domains which were governed by the norms akin to what people in the twenty-first-century call 'individualism' and 'market economy' (e.g. Ito 2008; Amino 1996). Given this, it is difficult to assume that the dyad of *ōbō* and *buppō* constituted an epistemic/structural dualism.

Buddhism and the Practice of Rice Growing

The final dualism I would like to critique is the one with Buddhism and the practice of rice growing. Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr (2020) use the examples of Buddhism and the practice of rice growing in order to demonstrate pre-existing epistemic and structural dualism upon which the modern western categories of the religious and the secular could be implemented with relative ease in Japan in the late nineteenth century. They claim:

> To give a very simple example, one may ask, why "Buddhism" was classified as a "religion" (or rather: *shūkyō* 宗教) in modern Japan and rice growing was not. Was this classification based on family resemblances with the prototype (i.e. Christianity) of a polythetic class "religion" established in early modern Europe? Or was Buddhism seen as a member of an endogenous polythetic class in premodern Japan already (e.g. as *shūshi* 宗旨), a class which grouped together socio-cultural formations and nexuses [p. 225/226] of "integrated and dispersed practices" (Schatzki 1996: 173) labelled as "religion" today? In the latter case, an emic system of classifications, which was highly compatible with Western ones, may have facilitated a rather unproblematic adoption of religion/ *shūkyō* as a generic category in Meiji Japan (1868–1912). (Kleine and Wohlrab-Sahr 2020, p. 8)

Klein [sic] and Wohlrab-Sahr argue that in late nineteenth-century Japan, the Meiji government could apply the term religion to the existing order because they had already shared specific epistemic and structural similarities to what had been already regarded as 'religion' in the West. They claim that, for example, this is why Buddhism was almost automatically regarded as 'religion,' while rice growing was not.

In my view, however, this is not really an accurate analysis. 'Religion' was essentially a category of governance. The Meiji state used this category to domesticate rival institutions and value orientations under the new orthodoxy of its constitutional regime. For the Meiji state, its obvious rivals were Christianity, Buddhism and sectarian Shinto, but not the rice-growing tradition. By being classified as 'religions,' these rivals were given constitutional freedom, but they were systematically excluded from the power structure and subordinated to the state.

We can also conceptualize these 'religions' within the Meiji constitutional regime as 'vestigial states.' They are 'the institutional and cultural remainders of former sovereignties surviving within the jurisdictions of contemporary government' (Goldenberg 2015, p. 280). In this perspective, what is classified as 'religions' by the government in power are actually state-like 'structures' and 'cultures.' The notion of 'culture' here can be rephrased as collective rituals and representations. The thesis of religions as vestigial states points out that the category 'religion' is used by the government as a management technique, by which a vestigial state is granted as 'religion' with limited recognition and functionality and domesticated within the jurisdiction of the government currently in power.

This echoes Trent Maxey's (2014) study of the category 'religion' within the context of Meiji statecraft. He summarizes this as follows: 'Efforts to shield the state from competition with Christianity, from Buddhist disaffection, from internecine conflict

among Shinto priests [. . .] led to the political construction of religion as a category to be rendered distinct from the state' (Maxey 2014, p. 3). All these three were specific [p. 226/227] institutions and value orientations that could threaten the new state orthodoxy. First, Christianity was long feared by the Japanese rulers as a potential cause of major revolt (e.g. Paramore 2009; Ion 2009), while Euro-American powers demanded freedom to practice Christianity in Japan. In other words, the older idea of religion as Christian Truth and Protestant civility, which drove Euro-American power to Japan, was transformed into mere private belief, in the Lockean sense. In this way, Japanese authorities attempted to domesticate Christianity.

Second, Buddhist temples, as reminiscent of the Tokugawa ruling structure, were redefined as private associations which dealt with matters of belief which is located with the inner realm of individuals. This generated a sense of rivalry amongst Buddhist elites directed towards Christianity. There was a series of intellectual and institutional efforts to represent Japanese Buddhism as a civilizing force, equal or superior to Christianity (e.g. Snodgrass 2003; Krämer 2015).

Finally, the so-called 'sectarian Shinto' was the product of doctrinal disputes within the Shinto tradition, which could disrupt the utilization of Shinto symbolism and rituals by the state for nation-building (e.g. Zhong 2016). Thus, the category of religion was utilized to contain these disputes as a matter of personal belief. By classifying these three groups as 'religion', the Meiji government guaranteed their constitutional freedom, but importantly, on the condition that they were not disrupting the public order. In other words, by classifying them as 'religion,' the Meiji constitutional regime domesticated its rivals under its authority. Importantly, the category 'religion' was reserved only for these three 'religions.' Other value orientations and practices outside the 'religion' category were regarded as 'evil teaching' or 'pseudo-religion.' They were likely to be classed as 'superstition' (*meishin*), which were perceived to be a threat to public order. This was because officials and intellectuals regarded these as backward beliefs and practices which went against the national drive towards 'enlightened civilization.' It must be noted that the development of this classification scheme was parallel to the expansion of Japanese colonial territories in East Asia. This specific typology was in fact utilized by the Japanese colonial administrators as a tactic of governance in Japanese colonies, most notably, in the Korean peninsula, in the early twentieth century (see Isomae 2012, pp. 235–263; Anderson 2017).

In this sense, the practice of rice growing would not be a candidate for 'religion,' as it did not pose a threat to the state. However, hypothetically speaking, if the new state's modernization/Westernization drive [p. 227/228] enforced a wheat-based diet on the people, the practice of rice eating could have been regarded as uncivilized. Further, if farmers disobeyed the state wheat-growing mandate, and maintained their rice-growing tradition with associated communal rituals, all these could have been regarded as 'superstition,' therefore, subject to persecution. Importantly, the practice of rice growing could have a chance to be 'religion' only if it could develop a state-like structure, which could challenge the government in power. In reality, the practice of rice growing was

not organized to challenge the government's authority. In addition, 'rice' might have been classified as non-religious by the Meiji state partly because its historical association to imperial rituals as well as gaining the status of 'national' diet central to the state's food policy (see e.g. Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). [. . . p. 228–232. . .]

Chapter Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the modern Western notion of 'religion' has been exported all over the world, and has been institutionalized in a variety of ways in many parts of the world. Importantly, the institutionalization of 'religion' has created the ostensibly non-religious realm of secularity, which is often authorized as the representation of the natural order of things as opposed to the private irrationality of religion. Thus, in this [p. 232/233] specific sense, we can assume the existence of multiple forms of secularities around the world.

There has been a number of studies in the so-called 'multiple secularities' or 'variety of secularisms' published in recent years. These studies generally recognize the parasitic relationship between the categories of religion and secularity and the globalization of this conceptual distinction and its institutionalization as well as a variety in its meaning between different localities. At the same time, these studies tend to suffer from one common problem. That is when they discuss the construction of the religious-secular distinction in a specific locality, the same discourse tends to carry the *sui generis* ideas of religion and secularity as if they are universal ontological categories.

When we study non-modern, non-Western, or premodern ways of living, it is vital not to project *sui generis* ideas of religion and secularity upon them. Even when they have the categories of religion and secularity, we must refuse to have *sui generis* ideas of religion and secularity, but examine the process of the construction and the indigenization of the religious-secular distinction in each locality. They are not the equivalent of the religious-secular distinction of the modern West, but reflect unique norms and imperatives of each statecraft which utilize the category 'religion' to domesticate its rival value orientations. Analysing this requires not to utilize 'religious' and 'secular' as analytical categories.

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2 Contingencies, Trajectories and Entanglements – Between Continuity and Rupture

Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Our interest in the multiplicity of forms of conceptual distinctions and institutional differentiations in relation to religion is not limited to questions surrounding whether equivalents to the secular-religious binary exist outside 'the West' and before modernity, and, if so, to how they could be meaningfully reconstructed and represented. There is also a strong *historical and processual dimension*; this was evident in the texts presented in section 1, and becomes even more so in this section.

Our initial interest in *global secularity* stemmed from an examination of the existing diversity of religious-secular arrangements. This led to questions about the conditions under which these arrangements emerged, about the endurance (or ephemerality) of particular patterns, about similarities and differences, and about historical relationships. Is it possible to identify different *trajectories*, and what do they depend on? How do emerging patterns relate to the historical circumstances under which they have been developing – e.g. to the dominance of a certain religious tradition or to configurations of religious plurality, to internal or external power configurations, or to *contingent* historical events that, in hindsight, could be identified as having constituted *critical junctures*? How *entangled* are the historical paths and emerging patterns? Did they mutually influence each other, or did they emerge independently – even if sometimes in a surprisingly similar manner? Which modes, mechanisms and directions of entanglements can be reconstructed? Is the globalisation of 'Western' modernity overpowering and homogenising all other trajectories, or is there a more complicated historical interplay of appropriations, adaptations, and impositions at work? What is the relative significance of *discontinuities* and *historical ruptures*, on the one hand, and of *continuities* and *path dependencies*, on the other? It is with these questions in mind that we have selected the texts collected in this section.

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The 'Western' Path: An Exceptional Development?

A recurrent theme in the debate is the question of a supposed 'Western' *exceptionalism*, a question that goes back to the founding moments of the social sciences.[I] Some of the approaches to be found in this section, such as that of Harold Berman (text no. 26) or Charles Taylor (text no. 40), underline the supposed singularity of the European or 'Western' – which often also means Christian – path. Whereas Berman points to the important role of the Catholic church, which was already highly institutionalised by the eleventh century and – so his argument goes – paved the way for the establishment of a secular legal system, Taylor locates the emergence of an "immanent frame" in Christian theology, finding therein the transcendent underpinnings of our present situation. He notably favours an understanding of 'secularity' that is specific to the 'Western' context, namely that of belief having become optional, while he sees other understandings of 'secularity,' most notably structural differentiation, as not being peculiar to 'the West'. Sadly, neither text could be reprinted in this volume, due to the respective publishing houses' prohibitive regulations regarding open access publication. In both cases, therefore, only a small section is quoted.

Peter Beyer (text no. 43) also takes his starting point from a supposed specific 'Western' arrangement: the "Westphalian model" of church and state. This long-dominant model relied on the differentiation between religion and the state, *and* on the dominant religion ensuring socio-political cohesion. It thereby created a close link between religion and citizenship. This model, Beyer argues, is about to lose its influence. The global transformation of religion also transforms the secular, which has come to be identified with the state. The newly emerging "post-Westphalian" condition, according to Beyer, implies the lessening of the association between religious and national identity, and thereby gives way to a variety of patterns.

Jörg Stolz (text no. 35) offers an only slightly updated version of the classical secularisation approach. He presents new research on secularisation in Europe, albeit based on strong assumptions that religion and modernity are fundamentally incompatible. Of specific relevance for him is the idea of a "secular transition,"[II] which is assumed "to take exactly the same trajectory, at the same speed, and in the same functional form" worldwide. According to Stolz, differences are only seen in the "point in time when the country embarks on the transition." We note here that while this model has been used in the 2020s to interpret worldwide survey data on religion, it had to grapple with many regions that did not behave in accordance with its basic assumptions. It is precisely this asserted universal global trajectory that many of the other texts presented in this section argue against.

I See Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest [1992]," in *Essential Essays, Volume 2: Identity and Diaspora*, edited by David Morley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 141–84.

II See David Voas, "The Continuing Secular Transition," in *The Role of Religion in Modern Societies*, edited by Detlef Pollack, and Daniel V. A. Olson, 25–48 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

The Iranian philosopher Abdolkarem Soroush addresses the 'Western' path from another angle (text no. 29, not reprinted for copyright reasons). He presents a general trajectory – related to 'modernity', and ultimately rooted in Greek philosophy – that laid the foundations for secularism. Implying a long-term shift from duties to rights, and towards the 'scientification' and rationalisation of social and political thought, Soroush's thinking on this topic closely resembles Max Weber's notion of disenchantment. Soroush does not see this trajectory as being in contradiction to a strongly religious society in principle, but does consider it to very much contradict "the guardianship of the jurist" (*velayat-e faqih*) and "the Islamic government" (*hokoumat-e Islami*) that prevail in postrevolutionary Iran.

All these texts represent scholarly work dealing with *longue durée developments,* with paths emerging in 'the West' and ultimately defining its social and political imaginary. Some of them also presuppose a spread from 'the West' to other regions – or understand the generalisation of this development to be a necessary consequence of 'modernisation.'

The authors assume a *continuity* of the differentiation processes whose roots stretch back into history – processes in which modern institutions like law, the state, and a secular public sphere are rooted. Some address *contingent* events as *critical junctures* that were decisive in this development, whereas others, like Beyer and Soroush, highlight recent developments in the global context that appear to pose significant challenges to such established paths.

Cultural Incompatibility or Specific Historical Paths: The Indian Debate and Its Implications

Whereas the texts already mentioned deal with the emergence or waning of specific features of 'Western' secularity, without denying the existence of forms of religious-secular distinctions and differentiations in other parts of the world, other authors have explicitly discussed the *compatibility* or *incompatibility* of the 'Western' path with 'non-Western' histories. They have also alluded to the – often colonial – conditions involved in the establishment of modern secularity. Questions regarding the impact of specific colonial settings and fundamental cultural compatibility – of *genesis* and *validity* – are closely interconnected in this debate. This has prompted some notable attempts to search for 'indigenous,' 'autochthonous,' or 'local' (re)sources of secularity that might have contributed to modern developments, or would at least lend them legitimacy. This is yet another indication of how inextricably intertwined scholarly and political arguments are in this debate.

The debate was especially vivid in India, where we find both fierce critics and resolute defenders of 'secularism.' A paradigmatic discussion emerged in the 1980s[III] amid the rise of Hindu nationalism and a series of violent incidents, often directed against

III Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999).

Muslims. In this context, the modern secular state was perceived as inadequate and incapable of dealing with these conflicts. India's long tradition of interreligious tolerance, some authors argued, had far more capacity in this regard than secular politics. This diagnosis was then given a principled twist, and at least partly turned into an assumption that modern secularism was 'culturally alien' to India. Critics of modern secularism, such as Ashis Nandy[IV] and T. N. Madan (text no. 27) alleged that it was supported and instrumentalised by a secular elite amid a deeply religious population. Other scholars, including Romila Thapar[V] and Rajeev Bhargava (text no. 37), responded to such allegations by locating religious-secular arrangements in Indian history long before the advent of colonialism, thereby indigenising what others declared to be alien, and claiming ancient resources for political secularism – thus emphasising continuities between modern forms of secularism and 'local' historical arrangements of religious plurality. Sudipta Kaviraj (text no. 46) criticises both romanticised depictions of traditional societies *and* untenable self-images of 'Western' modernity. He points out the importance of the specific 'shape' and 'sequence' of modernisation processes, especially in postcolonial societies. Different paths to modernity would imply different arrangements between the state and its elites, the people, and religion.

Some recurring themes of this discussion have been present in scholarly works at least since the 1960s, when authors like Louis Dumont (text no. 23) were already discussing the possibly ancient roots of the present political-religious situation in India. Dumont sees the relationship between the king and the Brahmin as an early example of a clear distinction between two spheres, but also as an example of the ongoing subordination of the political to the religious. Others, like J. Duncan M. Derrett, have perceived the role of the king in relation to the Brahmin as being much more manipulative.[VI] Arguing from a historical materialist perspective, Iqtidar Alam Khan (text no. 25) lessens the strong claim of an ancient religio-philosophical Indian tradition of tolerance, focussing instead on tangible power conflicts and issues of maintaining power. Khan draws attention to the economic interests of the religiously plural ruling class. He also emphasises the active role of the state in shaping religious policy in pre-colonial India. In terms of the *multiple secularities* framework, it could be argued that Khan emphasises the preservation of power and dominance as the *societal reference problem* in the development of a specific Indian form of secularity.

Similarly to Khan, Peter van der Veer (text no. 28) attributes pre-colonial arrangements of religious tolerance in India to the necessities of maintaining power in a plural setting, establishing a shifting balance of power that was eventually disturbed by the British colonial administration. Van der Veer argues that the enforcement of colonial

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IV Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," *Alternatives* 13, no. 2 (1988): 177–94.

V Romila Thapar, "Is Secularism Alien to Indian Civilization?," in *Indian Political Thought: A Reader,* edited by Aakash Singh, and Silika Mohapatra (London: Routledge 2010), 75–86.

VI Derrett J. Duncan M., "Rajadharma," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (1976): 597–609.

measures that were meant to establish a secular state unintentionally hardened religious boundaries, and eventually created the opposite effect. Here, it was the encounter between the (post)colonial nation state and a religiously diverse society that led to the "production of religion" and to different trajectories of secularity. Similarly to Nandy, Madan, and Kaviraj, van der Veer stresses the importance of the colonial period as a rupture, fundamentally transforming earlier settings.

The idea that history can provide conceptual resources for secularity in the present is also found in literature on Judaism, such as Menachem Lorberbaum's *Politics and the Limits of Law*.[VII] As historian David Biale (text no. 38) argues, premodern predecessors of Jewish secular thought sometimes furnished arguments that could be appropriated, adapted, and transformed, to fit a secular agenda. While it would be anachronistic to use the term 'secular' for these premodern ideas, the social context of modernity, as Biale argues, "cast them in a new light, making it possible to view them as genuine precursors."

An Ancient Worldly State but No Secular-Religious Binary: The Chinese Path

Scholars on and from China tend to relate to the European development and its model of the 'Westphalian state' quite differently to their Indian colleagues. While the Indian debate revolves around the question of whether the differentiation between religion and politics is an adequate model for India's deep religious diversity, the crucial point in the case of China seems to be that it never had a strong, centralised religious organisation equivalent to the Catholic church, and thus no strong secular-religious binary developed there.[VIII] Consequently, the state was not restricted or challenged by religious organisations, and itself had a strong ideological underpinning, directly aiming at the moral education of its citizens. Wang Gungwu (text no. 30) stresses the continuity of modern developments with historically deep-rooted structures of Chinese society. Despite fundamental differences in the worldviews of traditional Confucian elites and today's communist leadership, he argues that there is a *continuity* in their secular orientation. This supports the assumption that forms of contemporary secularity and secularism are influenced by cultural traditions and institutional *path dependencies* with a longer historical reach. And what is more, secularist ideas that originated outside Europe may have inspired the development of European forms

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VII Menachem Lorberbaum, *Politics and the Limits of Law. Secularizing the Political in Jewish Medieval Thought* (Stanford, NJ: Stanford University Press, 2001).

VIII Hubert Seiwert, "Säkularisierung und Säkularität im chinesischen Altertum," in *Grenzen der Religion: Säkularität in der Asiatischen Religionsgeschichte,* edited by Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, Christoph Kleine, and Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz (Göttingen: V&R), 197–236.

of secularity – contrary to the widespread notion of a unidirectional diffusion of Western concepts and principles. Heiner Roetz (text no. 48), for instance, draws attention to a rather unexpected *entanglement*, by showing how some of the secularist ideas of the European Enlightenment were partly based on a particular perception of the Chinese state. In doing so, he complicates positions that assume secularisation to be a purely 'Western' invention.

Japan: An Emerging Binary Independent from the West?

A certain strand of postcolonial critique, which regards modern distinctions and differentiations labelled as 'secularism' as being alien to 'non-Western' contexts, is also relevant to the debate on Japan. It has been claimed that neither the notion of 'religion' nor that of the 'secular' (Fitzgerald, text no. 10 in section 1) are adequate here, and that both have been imposed by the 'West.' Isomae (text no. 45) argues that 'non-Western' countries were forced to adopt 'Western' models, in order to be recognised as autonomous states, and to defend themselves against colonisation. He sees the introduction of the concept of religion and the distinctions it entails as a central element of a forced process of 'westernisation.'

In a similar direction, but eventually more conciliatory, Shimazono (text no. 39) identifies challenges in applying theories of secularisation to Japan. In his view, 'Western' concepts of religion are inappropriate for describing socio-cultural formations in East Asia. However, he does not advocate the wholesale abandonment of the concept of religion, nor that of secularisation, but instead proposes that the respective historical and cultural contexts should be taken into account. He suggests presupposing a *multiplicity* of forms of religion, and thus of secularisation. Similarly to Kaviraj's approach towards global modernity, he argues that in order to globalise concepts and theories originally shaped by 'Western' experiences, one should stop taking 'Western' concepts and theories as universal models.

Ian Reader (text no. 31) has directly questioned Fitzgerald's claim of the incomparability of the Japanese and 'Western' developments. Instead, he argues that analogous distinctions to the religious-secular binary were indeed quite common in premodern Japanese culture. Christoph Kleine (text no. 50) underlines this argument, by pointing to institutional presuppositions of religious-secular differentiations, such as the autonomous development of Buddhist institutions, and the peculiar strategy of legitimising the eternal rule of the imperial family by claiming their descent from the gods. Both can be interpreted as institutional prerequisites that have generated *path-dependent* processes, with long-lasting effects on the way in which the Japanese appropriated principles of separating the religious from the secular in a modern nation state.

Christian Orthodoxy in the Post-Communist World – An Alternative Model within Europe

For its critics, classical secularisation theory's empirical and theoretical limits are exemplified by the current developments in Eastern Europe. These critics argue that post-socialist societies are not just a robust exception to classical theories, but fit into a global development in which religion is undergoing a revitalisation and enjoying increasing relevance. In this global development, Western Europe might – at most – be regarded as an *exception*.

As in the debates on and in other parts of the world, scholars have been sceptical as to whether the development of (Orthodox) Eastern Europe can or should be described in categories and generalising theories from 'Western' scholarship at all. Instead, they see post-socialist developments from the perspective of regional, *path-dependent* specificities, while keeping *global entanglements* in mind. Kristen Ghodsee (text no. 36) tries to extend the criticism of 'Western' concepts of secularism beyond colonial contexts, arguing that we can find "alternative definitions of secularism" that do not fit into the conventional 'Western' understandings of secularism. Ghodsee analyses Bulgarian history to reconstruct a particular understanding of secularism, in which religion has not gained its social significance as an *individual* spiritual commitment, but has, since medieval times, worked as a "core constituent element of ethnicity and national identity," based in a broader theoretical tradition of the Byzantine principle of 'symphonia'. With the category of 'symphonic secularism,' she seeks to describe an alternative trajectory and configuration of secularism within Europe, but beyond 'the West.'

Similarly, Miklos Tomka (text no. 33) points to the development of two different cultures in Europe. He argues that religion in 'the West,' as a cultural system, has moved towards rationalisation and differentiation; Eastern Orthodoxy, by contrast, has moved towards artistic expression and a sense of wholeness. Premodern social conditions and popular piety survived, which limits the relevance of institutionalised religion. This argumentation highlights features that are also pointed out in the comparison between Western Christianity and Islam.

Andrey Shishkov (text no. 41) is concerned with a shorter, but historically no less influential trajectory. He describes how the legacy of certain traits of Soviet secularisation (see also Lopatkin, text no. 54 in section 3, and Uzlaner, text no. 13 in section 1) – such as the oppression and hyper-privatisation of religion – has inaugurated a specific process of "desecularisation" in post-Soviet Russia. In this particular case, he argues, privatisation – understood as the restoration of religion in the private sphere – alongside the growing public influence of the Orthodox church and its involvement in secular affairs, reflect a process of "desecularisation," rather than secularisation, in post-communist societies. At first glance, this seems somewhat contradictory when viewed through the lens of classical secularisation theory.

An Islamic Pattern?

As already discussed in section 1, Muslim-majority countries are often taken as an exemplary case of the secular-religious divide being a poor fit. However, the scholars whose texts we present here draw a more nuanced picture. Significant voices have decidedly questioned the preeminent assumption that Islam has not historically known a separation between politics and religion. Scholars have delved deep into Islamic history to show that, even as far back as the classical age of Islam, arguments supported a differentiation of spheres – whether between politics and religion or between religion and science.[IX] Since the 1970s, Indonesian public intellectual Nurcholish Madjid (text no. 24) has proposed to the Indonesian public the idea of a continuous Islamic path towards modernisation and secularisation, drawing strong distinctions between modernisation and 'westernisation.' Adapting 'Western' theories of modernisation, and combining them with theological arguments, Madjid outlines a long-term process of secularisation – understood as rationalisation – in Indonesia, linking it directly to the advent of Islam, which introduced monotheism and fundamental distinctions between worldly and otherworldly affairs. Madjid adheres to this narrative in a subsequent text from the late 1980s (also reprinted here), but – in light of the contemporary heated public debate – asks for the abandonment of all terminology related to the secular, in favour of "more precise and neutral technical terms."

Gudrun Krämer (text no. 47) argues not only that functional differentiation has shaped modern societies in the Arab Middle East, but also that – contrary to popular claims – religion and politics were not indistinguishable in premodern Islamic history. That being said, (political) Islam claims a central role in much of the Arab world, developing a hegemonic understanding of religion that makes secularity – and the debates thereon – a difficult issue.

Making reference to Latin and Persian *Mirrors for Princes*, Neguin Yavari (text no. 51) has even argued that the "twinning" of religion and kingship was as present in Islamic history as it was in Christian history, and might even be considered "a global political concept, operational in multiple, concurrent but non-synchronous contexts, *none* of which are original to it."

Azmi Bishara (text no. 44) stresses the *historicity* of secularism, and rejects essentialist claims, such as that of secularism being more compatible with Christianity than with Islam or any other religion. Bishara underlines the priority of democracy, and the danger of secularist ideology becoming identitarian in nature, such that a political conflict becomes a conflict between Islam or Islamism and the secular or secularism (and the two sides' respective supporters or adherents), rather than a struggle between (supporters of) democracy and (supporters of) despotism. Thus, he argues, the focus

IX Rushain Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims Distinguish the Religious and Secular? The *Dīn–Dunyā* Binary in Medieval Islamic Thought," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 2 (2020): 185–225.

should not be on religion itself, but rather on "patterns of religiosity" as various, changing, and transformative social phenomena, which can never be separated from the patterns of secularisation that overlap with them, becoming a self-contained structure in a society.

Multiplicity of Developments and Cultural Entanglements

Although some texts discussed here question the linear transferability of 'Western' concepts to other parts of the world, most of them do not argue that their cases are entirely incommensurable with such 'Western' concepts. Several authors suggest that there is a range of *trajectories* and *paths* that were taken when relating religion and the secular to each other. José Casanova (text no. 32) deals with the relationship between globalisation and secularisation, aiming for a "less Euro-centric comparative analysis of patterns of differentiation and secularisation in other civilisations and world religions."

Juan Cruz Esquivel (text no. 49) has related this perspective to the concept of 'laicity,' which is often considered 'originally' and 'authentically' French. Laicity is then defined as the institutional autonomisation of the political from the religious, going beyond a mere separation of church and state. Esquivel, however, argues that laicisation processes have not all unfolded in the same way, but depend on each country's hegemonic cultural matrix and historical configuration. Whereas in some European countries, the state was historically constructed through its separation from the Catholic church, in the United States the state constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom from the start. For his analysis of the Argentinian case, Esquivel briefly describes the specific historical trajectory that has led to a formation that he calls "subsidiary laicity," in which the continuity of a strong Catholic influence on the political culture comes together with contemporary processes of pluralisation, democratisation, and secularisation, to form a specific amalgam. Consequently, Esquivel speaks of "multiple laicities" being formed in different national contexts.

As the terminology suggests, this approach can easily be linked to the *Multiple Secularities* project. In an early article on *multiple secularities*, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (text no. 42) develop the concept of "secularity" as it relates to the differentiation between religion and other spheres of action, and explicitly distinguish it from secularism and secularisation. They distinguish four different ideal types of secularity that constitute specific solutions to common societal "reference problems" and that are expressed in terms of "guiding ideas." The authors suggest looking at the multiple forms and arrangements of secularity, caused by different cultural underpinnings, that is, the different meanings attached to them.

The mutual *entanglement* of different secular developments must not be neglected. As mentioned above, Heiner Roetz (text no. 48) argues that China was a source of

inspiration for the Enlightenment in Europe. According to his view, early ideas on the possibility of a secular state headed by an enlightened, rational monarch were thus not the sole product of isolated reflections and power struggles in Europe, but were influenced by such cultural encounters. Similarly, Jean Baubérot (text no. 34) claims that laicity in France did not develop in historical isolation, but came about through *cultural transfer*, not only from China, but also from Mexico – to add another Latin American example to the discussion.

As diverse as the perspectives presented here are – variously representing the struggle over the *genesis* and *validity* of secular-religious differentiation, the (re)construction of different *contingent paths* towards contemporary forms of secularity with an emphasis on *continuities* or *ruptures*, or a focus on global *entanglements* – they ultimately all support the view that something like *global secularity* did indeed develop: as a globally entangled, and inherently political debate on distinctions, but also in terms of similar yet distinct patterns of differentiation that can be traced through a historical lens.

23 Louis Dumont: *The Conception of Kingship in Ancient India* (1962)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Louis Dumont (b. 1911, Thessaloniki, Ottoman Empire; d. 1998, Paris) was a French anthropologist and sociologist.[I] He studied mathematics, before studying religious history and ethnology under Marcel Mauss in Paris, and then working for some years at the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires. During the Second World War, he was a prisoner in Germany, but was given the opportunity to learn Sanskrit in Hamburg. This laid the foundations for his research in southern India, and his subsequent work as a lecturer in Indian sociology at anthropologist Evans-Pritchard's department at the University of Oxford. In 1955, Dumont became a professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

In his doctoral thesis, and, subsequently, in essays in the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, which he had co-founded, he dealt with his major themes of hierarchy and individualism. In his 1966 book *Homo Hierarchicus*, Dumont analyses a complex society as a whole, lending this analysis a historical dimension. His approach here was much more sociological than that of many contemporary anthropologists.

Dumont was also interested in the comparison of different societies, with regard to their conceptions, ideas, and values – for example, the hierarchically structured caste society in India, in contrast to the individualistic and more egalitarian society of the modern Occident. For him, studying India provided models of thought and concepts that enabled him to better understand his own culture. In his later book, *German Ideology*, first published in 1991, he provides a comparative analysis of German and French ideology, European culture, and cultural interaction. For this book's contributions to sociology, he was awarded the European Amalfi Prize for Sociologists and Social Sciences.

Louis Dumont was a knight of the French Legion of Honour, and an honorary member of both the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He held honorary doctorates from the universities of Chicago and Lausanne.

In the selected text, Dumont deals with the conception of kingship in ancient India, and with the distinction between the brahmin and the king. The two, he argues, are

I For more on Dumont's biography, see the obituary: Andreas Buss, "Louis Dumont, 1911–1998," *Internationales Asienforum* 30, no. 1–2 (1999): 223–24.

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dissociated, but each depends on the other's function, albeit in different ways. Through this dissociation, according to Dumont, the function of the king in India has been *secularised*. From here, a differentiation has occurred between the realm of values and norms, and the realm of force. Later developments would have been impossible if the king had not, from the beginning, left the highest religious functions to the priest.

Bibliographical Information

Louis Dumont. "The Conception of Kingship in Ancient India." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 6 (1962): 48–77; 48–59, 75–77.

[. . .][1]
There is an abundant modern literature dealing with kingship, and political organization in general, in ancient India. This study is an attempt at summing it up, and setting in a comparitive, sociological perspective the findings of classical philologists and historians. It is restricted to the conception of kingship as distinct from its actualities, first because there are good sociological reasons for beginning in that manner, and also because the former aspect is practically better known at present than the latter.

If, to be called historical, a study has to be aimed primarily at detecting changes between one period and another, then this study should not be called historical, for, on the contrary, it is concerned in the first place with something permanent. Just as actual happenings or "behaviour" are understood within an appropriate conceptual framework, I also think that actual historical changes cannot be understood, or even identified, before one has gained some general idea of "what it is all about". On one point, I shall submit that the supposition of an important, but entirely imaginary historical event can profitably be replaced by the understanding of a relation of extremely remarkable permanence.

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1 [note * in the original] This paper contains the main part of two University Lectures given in London, at the School of Oriental and African Studies, in October 1961, with the sub-title: "An Anthropologist's View". A development dealing with the non-monarchial states is left out, while a few footnotes are added. [. . .]

The Ruler and the Priest from the Brahmanas Onwards

1 Brahman and kṣatra in the Brahmanas

We must begin from the classification of society into four *varṇa*. First Hocart, and still more precisely than Hocart, Dumézil has [p. 48/49] shown that the hierarchical enumeration of the four *varṇa* was based on a series of oppositions, the principle of which was religious.[2] The first three classes, respectively priests, princes and herdsmen-husbandmen, are taken together as twice-born or as those bestowing gifts, offering sacrifices and studying (the Veda) as opposed to the fourth class, the *śūdra*, who are devoid of any direct relation to religion, and whose sole task it is to serve the former without envy (Manu, I, 88–91).

Among the three kinds of twice-born, the first two are opposed to the third, for to the latter the Lord of creatures has made over only the cattle, to the former all creatures (Manu, IX, 327). It is worth noting that this particular opposition is the least frequent of all in the texts. On the contrary, the solidarity of the first two categories, priests and princes, vis-à-vis the rest, and at the same time their distinction and their relative hierarchy are abundantly documented from the Brahmanas onwards. Before entering into this, however, let me stress the importance of Hocart's and Dumézil's observation: the possibility of replacing a linear hierarchical order by a system of oppositions, which in fact underlies it, applies not only to the *varṇa* scheme, but to the modern system of castes (*jāti*) as well; in this the two systems are homologous, and this explains how it is that people pass so easily from the latter to the former. As to the principle of the oppositions, if it is religious in both cases, there is however a difference. In the matter of caste, the opposition is essentially between purity and impurity, and it is susceptible of indefinite segmentation.

Rather than of the first two classes, the Brahmanas (the texts called *brāhmaṇa*) treat of their principles, resp. *brahman* and *kṣatra* (both neuter). They go together, they are often designated as "the two forces", and they are to be united. Similarly in Manu (IX, 322) Kshatriyas and Brahmans cannot prosper separately but only in close association. But, as soon as this necessary union has been [p. 49/50] stated, the hierarchical distinction between "the two forces" manifests itself (Pañcaviṃśa Br., XII, ii, 9); the *brahman* does not fall under the jurisdiction of the *kṣatra*, the *brahman* being the source, or rather the womb, from which the *kṣatra* springs, is superior; the *brahman* could exist without the *kṣatra*, not conversely. For, while both the Brahman and the Kshatriya can offer the sacrifice, only the Brahman can operate it. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VII, 19sq.)

2 [note 1 in the original] Georges Dumézil, *Mitra Varuna*, Paris, 1940, p. 43. (ed. 1948, p. 76), etc.; J.M. Hocart, *Les Castes*, Paris, 1939, p. 69; both quoted in *Contrib.*, II, p. 52.

gives a striking formula to this when it groups behind the *brahman* those who eat the oblation, and behind the *kṣatra* those who do not, not only the Kshatriyas, but implicitly at any rate the Vaishyas and Shudras as well. Let us stress with Dumézil that the opposition we find here is not between two particular *varṇa* but between the Brahmans on the one hand, and all the rest on the other; this opposition separates in two the whole series of the *varṇa*-s. Similarly, we have seen that the pair Brahman-Kshatriya opposes itself, not so much to the sole Vaishaya, but rather to all the rest. The fact is general, not only for the *varṇa*-s but for the castes as well, and it is essential. Regarding sacrifice, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa draws the logical consequence: the king must, through appropriate rites, be identified with a Brahman during the performance of the sacrifice, and be made to leave this identification at the end of the ceremony.

Other passages illustrate the necessary solidarity, distinction and hierarchy of the two functions:[3] in the *aśvamedha* there are two lute players, one, a Brahman, plays by day, the other, a Kshatriya, by night (Śat. Br., XIII, 1, 5, 2 sq.); elsewhere the Brahman seems to put himself beyond the authority of the king: "Here is your king, o people; Soma is the king of us, Brahamans"[4] (Śat. Br., V, 3, 3, 12, *vājapeya*), or "the priest makes the king weaker than himself, and [p. 50/51] thus he [the king] will be stronger than his enemies" (*Śat. Br.*, V, 8, 4, 15, cf. *Ait. Br*., VIII, 9).

2 King and Chaplain

The relation between the spiritual principle and the principle of *imperium* is fully seen in an institution which embodies it in a personal form and commands perhaps in a great measure the abstract formulation. It is not enough that the king should employ Brahmans for the public ritual, he must also have a permanent, personal relationship with one particular Brahman, his *purohita*, literally "the one placed in front". We translate *purohita* as chaplain, but we must bear in mind the idea of a spiritual delegation or vanguard, the idea almost of a *major ego*. The gods do not eat the offerings of a king devoid of a *purohita* (Ait. Br. VIII, 24), so that the *purohita* presides, as *hotṛ* or *brahman*

3 [note 2 in the original] The different characteristics I enumerate have been distinguished by Albrecht Weber, *Indische Studien*, X, 1, Leipzig 1867, p. 1 sq.; the quotations are often in Dumézil (*Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, Paris, 1941, p. 44, etc.), *cf.* also *Śat. Br.*, V, I, 1, 12 (distinction); the *brahman* produces the *kṣatra: Śat. Br.* XII, 7, 3, 12 (*sattra*, it filters milk).

4 [note 3 in the original] The interpretation of this statement has been recently revised by Heesterman (J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, The Hague, Mouton, c. 1957, p. 75–8). This author says that it should not be taken as a juridical statement, he adds much that is relevant for its understanding, but concludes that it consists in an identification, only half-veiled in mystery, of the king with Soma. This is difficult to admit: there seems to be in the statement at least an element of mental reservation. Later in the ritual the king will be straightforwardly identified with *brahman*. The author does not seem to make any difference between the two. One misses here the sense of a progress, a development in the sacrifice as found in Hubert and Mauss's Essay (*Contrib.* I, p. 7; cf. similarly *Contrib.* III, pp. 15–6).

priest, i.e. as sacrificator or controller, to royal sacrifices. Moreover, the king depends on him for all the actions of his life, for these would not succeed without him. The *purohita* is to the king as thought is to will, as Mitra is to Varuna (*Śat. Br.*, IV, 1, 4, 1 sq.). The relationship is as close as a marriage (Ait. Br. VIII, 27). As the Rig Veda has already said: "He lives prosperous in his mansion, to him the earth bestows all its gifts, to him the people obeys by itself, the king in whose place the Brahman goes first" (IV, 50, 8, transl. Dumézil). Temporal authority is guaranteed through the personal relationship in which it gives preeminence over itself to spiritual authority incarnated in the *purohita*.

3 The Brahman as dependent in fact

Concretely, the relation between the functions of priest and king has a double aspect. While spiritually, absolutely, the priest is superior, as we have just seen, he is at the same time, from a temporal or material point of view, subject and dependent. And conversely the king, if spiritually subordinate, is materially the master. The former, ideological aspect of the relation is not unknown in the West on the level of values, but it takes in this case a particular form, largely because the spiritual element is here embodied in a person. It is obvious that the second, the "practical" aspect is important in fact. It is the combination of both aspects which actually constitutes the situation, a relation of mutual [p. 51/52] but asymmetrical dependence. And it is remarkable that our brahmanical authors have not reserved their attention for the former aspect. One the one hand they proclaim: "In truth, there are two kinds of gods, for, indeed, the gods are the gods, and the Brahmans who have studied and who teach the sacred lore are the human gods" (*Śat. Br.*, II, 2, 2, 6, transl. Eggeling). On the other hand they also occasionally recognize that the function of *purohita* is the livelihood of the Brahmans, that the king protects the Brahmans and the law (Ait. Br., VIII, 17), that the chaplain walks behind the king, among his suite, and that king and *purohita* may come into conflict, so that it is useful for the Brahman to keep to himself a certain formula at the king's consecration in view of possible reprisals (*Pañcaviṃśa Br.*, XII, 8, 6; XVIII, 19, 8; etc.).

Still more remarkable is the characterization, in one passage of the *Ait. Br.* (VII, 29), of the three other *varṇa* from the view-point of royal power. The representative of a Brahmans' lineage, intent on recovering the patronage of a king, draws a dark picture of the condition of the other classes which, he says, only the proper distinction of sacrificial foods separates from the royal lineage. The Brahman is represented as "one who receives gifts, one who drinks [*soma*], one who searches for food, to be moved at pleasure"; the Vaishya is "tributary to another, food of another, to be oppressed at pleasure"; the Shudra "servant of another, to be rejected, to be killed, at pleasure." In modern times, this remarkable description has often been taken as contradicting the numerous affirmations of Brahmanical preeminence. Some scholars have sought to explain the discrepancy they perceived by attributing the two kinds of statements to different environments, or times. Actually, the difference lies in the point from which the situ-

ation is viewed and the dependency of the Brahman in relation to royal power or, one would almost say, to mere force, accompanies the fact that his preeminence is located on a different plane. In approximate, Western, terms, the situation arises because the distinction between spiritual and temporal being carried out in an absolute fashion. We have to do with the two opposite faces, with the two complementary aspects of the real concrete relationship. We can say this with some assurance, as we can observe, in the Indian villages of today, a similar relation between the Brahmans on the one hand, and the dominant caste on the other. The caste which we call dominant because it enjoys the main rights in the soil reproduces [p. 52/53] the royal function at the village level. It is noteworthy that the Brahmans, already in the remote period of the Brahmanas, if they more often proclaimed their spiritual preeminence, were also at the same time conscious of being temporally dependent. This double relation thus appears to be anterior to the caste system proper, and yet it would appear, on analysis, as its essential [characteristic],[I] one which is not met anywhere else. This fact struck James Mill, and W. W. Hunter has expressed it in a remarkable manner:

> from very ancient times, the leaders of the Brahmana caste recognized that if they were to exercise spiritual supremacy, they must renounce earthly pomp. In arrogating the priestly function, they gave up all claim to the royal office. They were divinely appointed to be the guides of nations and the councillors of kings, but they could not be kings themselves.[5]

4 Comparative significance of the fact

This complex and characteristic relation between priesthood and kingship, Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, is fundamental in itself and in its implications, and a brief reflection will be useful for locating it in a comparative perspective. The fact has surprised modern authors, most of whom, without conceiving it clearly, have tried to explain it as the result of a hypothetical struggle between the two classes, and have interpreted in that sense certain legends to which we shall return hereafter. They have written of a struggle for the first rank (Lassen), or for "the presidency, even spiritual" of the society (Dumézil), or, conversely, of a struggle for "practical power" (*Vedic Index*). They

5 [note 4 in the original] W. W. Hunter, *Indian Empire*, 3d ed., p. 136, quoted, together with James Mill, in: N. N. Law, *Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, Oxford, 1921; p. 44–5. On the dominant caste, cf. *Contrib.* II, p. 53; I, pp. 27–34.

I MWS: In the original version of the paper published here, characteristic is misspelled "chatacteristic". In a slightly reworked reprint, this has been corrected. Louis Dumont. "The Conception of Kingship in Ancient India." Appendix C in Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, trans. Mark Sainsbury, Louis Dumont, and Basia Gulati, 287–313. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. Where spelling or other specific items of information have been corrected in the 1999 version, the corrected, rather than the original information is given in square brackets such as here.

are not all of one mind; however, among the different tendencies, one is the persistent rationalist and "anti-clerical" mentality according to which the priests are suspected of having "usurped" something (James Mill). While the idea that there has been a struggle between Brahmans and Kshatriyas at one or another period of ancient Indian history is found in the works of indologists, it flourishes still more freely in second hand considerations. This shows that we encounter here a deep-rooted inclination of western minds when confronted with the Indian institution, as for instance when the guarded pronouncements of Hopkins on [p. 53/54] the subject are interpreted by the sociologist O.C. Cox in a rigid and affirmative fashion.[6]

Let us take a different path and look at the relation between king and priest, not as a contingent trait for which a conjectural historical struggle might account, but as a necessary institution. The first obstacle we encounter lies in the way we conceive the hierarchy of a society. As we live in an egalitarian society, we tend to conceive of hierarchy as a scale of commanding powers – as in an army – rather than as a gradation of statuses. One may note *en passant* that the combination of the two aspects seems to have been anything but easy in a number of societies, for there are many instances of sovereigns whose eminent dignity was coupled with idleness. Precisely, the Indian case is one in which the two aspects are absolutely separated, and this apparently was the first reason of surprise. Further, the very word hierarchy, and its history, should recall that the gradation of status is rooted in religion: the first rank normally goes, not to power, but to religion, simply because religion represents, for those societies, what Hegel has called the Universal, i.e. absolute truth, in other words because hierarchy integrates the society in relation to its ultimate values.

This is borne out, I think, by the exceptional place of Indian society in a comparison bearing on kingship. In most of the societies in which kingship is found, it is a magico-religious as well as a political function. This is common-place. In Ancient Egyptian or Sumerian kingship, or in the kingship of the Chinese empire for instance, the supreme religious functions were vested in the Sovereign, he was the Priest *par excellence* and those who were called the priests were only ritual specialists subordinate to him. Comparing this with the Indian situation, there seems to be a simple alternative: either the king exerts the religious functions which are generally his, and then he is the head of the hierarchy for this very reason, and exerts at the same time political power, or, this is the Indian case, the king depends on the priests for the religious functions, he cannot himself operate the sacrifice on behalf of the kingdom, he cannot be his own sacrificer, instead he "puts in front" of himself a priest, the *purohita*, and then he looses the [p. 54/55] hierarchical preeminence in favour of the priests, retaining for himself power only.

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6 [note 5 in the original] See mainly J. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, 2d ed., I, p. 287 sq., and Keith and Macdonell, *Vedic Index*, II, pp. 249, 255–6; G. Dumézil, *Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus*, p. 43; for Mill, see note 4 above; E. W. Hopkins, 'Ruling Caste', *Journ. Amer. Or. Soc.*, 13, 1889, pp. 57–376; O. C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race*, New York, 1948, p. 102 sq.; also C. Bouglé, *Régime des Castes*, p. 181.

This is, I think, the point which most modern philologists have failed to grasp, and for this they cannot be blamed, since modern anthropologists too have sometimes thought that the rank of the king depended more on his exercise of power than on his religious qualifications.

Through this dissociation, the function of the king in India has been *secularized*. It is from this point that a differentiation has occurred, the separation within the religious universe of a sphere or realm which is opposed to the religious, and roughly corresponds to what we call the political. As opposed to the realm of values and norms it is the realm of force. As opposed to the *dharma* or universal order of the Brahman, it is the realm of interest or advantage, *artha*. We shall follow some developments in which the implications of this fundamental fact become apparent. All these can, in my view, be traced back to this initial step. In other words, they would have been impossible if the king had not from the beginning left the highest religious functions to the priest.

Incidentally, one might ask whether the king, while not having the first role in the brahmanical, the so to say official ritual, did not nevertheless retain something of the magico-religious aspects which universally adhere to his function and person. We shall see that the texts answer this question positively.

But to return to supposed evolutions or changes, we may say, speaking comparatively, that in India the king has lost his religious prerogatives. It is not impossible that this happened through a process which would have taken place in the vedic period. If the Brahmans may be said to have "usurped" anything, it would be that, and that only. On the contrary, from the time of the Brahmanas until our days, the stability of the formula shows that neither the Brahman nor the king have arrogated anything belonging to the other. It happened that certain Brahmans became kings, blending in their person, on first sight, the two functions. (But this is only an appearance, since in actual fact there is no reason to suppose that a Brahman king did not employ a Brahman priest to perform the sacrifice on his behalf.) But in the matter of principle, the Brahmans as such have never claimed political power. Even in our days, they are content in essentials with guaranteeing spiritual merits to acts which are materially profitable to themselves [p. 55/56] and of which the *gift* is the prototype. To give to Brahmans is basically to exchange material goods against a spiritual good, merits. The gift embodies, in its particular way the very relationship with which we are dealing.

5 Legendary Conflicts

The legends of the classical period which tell of conflicts between Brahmans and Kshatriyas do not, in my view, reflect a struggle for supremacy between the two classes. On the contrary, they confirm in general what has just been said, for, far from putting in question the relation between the two, they take it, on the contrary, as established. For instance, when the Kshatriya *Viśvāmitra* tries to appropriate the magical cow of the Brahman *Vasiṣṭha*, he is driven to acknowledge that brute force is powerless against the

magico-religious force which defends the right of the Brahman, and he finally decides to transform himself into a Brahman through austerities. [. . . p. 56/57. . .]

In one element of the cycle of *Viśvāmitra*, the Brahman perhaps tries to usurp kingship, I am referring to the legend of *Satyavrata* in which Pargiter saw a Kshatriya ballad reflecting real occurrences. *Vasiṣṭha*, the king's chaplain, does not prevent the prince Satyavrata from being unjustly banished for twelve years, and during that time he acts as a kind of regent. No rain falls. In the end, *Viśvāmitra* places *Satyavrata* on the throne again "in spite of the gods and of *Vasiṣṭha*". The drought is most probably a sanction against the fact of usurpation. But this is not particular to this tale, the feature will be found again, and here itself the myth of *Pṛthu* also leads us to the magico-religious relations between society and nature.[7] [p. 57/58]

Origin Myths and Theories of Kingship

6 The State of the Question

The ancient literature provides a number of myths or legends relating to the origin of kingship. These tales have, exceptionally, been the object of some kind of comparative treatment. Moderns scholars have found, in some of these texts, undoubted analogies with modern western theories of the social and political contract. This was very agreeable to some Indian scholars who have, during a period when their country was struggling for independence, been carried away by their enthusiasm and national self-respect. The fact has been recently very lucidly analysed by R. S. Sharma. Indian scholars were irked, on the one hand, by the dominant stress laid by western scholarship on the religious side of the Indian heritage, and they were pleased to find an opportunity to throw into relief the non-religious aspects of it. On the other hand, their modern education as well as the new political climate in their country has imbued them with a deep respect for modern political philosophies. Hence the temptation to present the former in the language of the latter, and sometimes this went so far as to proclaim that ancient India has surpassed the Greeks, and, at least, equalled the moderns. Such superficial views have been aptly criticized by more settled and perceptive Indian scholars (Ghoshal, Kane, etc.). But the matter has, in India, become classical, without much effort being made to understand the really surprising convergences with western thought, and to locate the current which led to them within the vast and complex whole of Indian ideas.

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7 [note 6 in the original] The texts are brought together in Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, I, 2d ed., p. 296 sq., particularly p. 388 sq. for the different versions of the cycle of *Viśvāmitra* and *Paraśurāma. For Śunaḥśepa (parallel between Ait. Br. and Rāmāyana), R. Roth, in Indische Studien, II, p. 112–23. Excessive kings: Muir, loc. cit., p. 306 sq., Arthaśāstra, I, 6. On Veṇa* and *Pṛthu,* see here § 7. F. E. Pargiter on Satyavrata: *Journ. of the Roy. As. Soc.,* 1913, p. 885–904.

Let us, to begin with, take Professor P. V. Kane as our guide. Two currents are found, and sometimes intermingle. In the one, kingship is in some manner a divine institution – although it would not be apposite to speak of a "divine right" of kingship (D.R. Bhandarkar). This tendency is obviously ancient, "primitive". In the classical, and even to some extent in the Vedic texts, the king is identified with the one or other god by reason of his nature and some of his functions. This should not surprise one unless one were to imagine, rightly or wrongly, that the Brahman would logically have reserved to himself identifications of that kind. In the two most notable texts of the Mahabharata, the legend of *Manu* and the myth [p. 58/59] of *Pṛthu*, it is the supreme god who gives a king to mankind, at the request either of men or of the gods, in order to put an end to a state of anarchy and degeneracy.

In the other current, kingship has an entirely different character; it is based on, or it has its origin in, a "contract" between the future subjects and the future king. The clearest exposition is found in Buddhist canonic literature in *pāli*, in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, and is taken up again in the *Mahāvastu*. Let us note that, in the corresponding Hindu version, the legend of *Manu* in the Mahabharata, as well as the Arthashastra, this contractual view does not in the least exclude the divine or quasi-divine quality of the king. What strikes one immediately in this tendency, in contrast with the other, is the quite profane notion of kingship it exhibits: the king is just someone who is put in charge of the maintenance of public order, in exchange for which service his subjects leave to him a part of the crops they harvest. It is this lay, specialized aspect which, in the first place, brings this "contract" near the political speculations of the modern West. In order to grasp the genesis of this state of mind, let us start from its opposite, i.e. from magico-religious kingship as ethnology has revealed it.[8] [. . . p. 59–75]

8 [note 7 in the original] Probably all modern Indian authors dealing with ancient Indian polity have a chapter on the question. The most militant views are in K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, [1924], 3d ed., Bangalore, 1955; it is a characteristic of the period that they intrude even in a work like that of D. R. Bhandarkar, *Some Aspects of Ancient Hindu Polity*, Benares, 1929, see p. 126–68, but this author has seen that it was difficult to speak of "divine right" in a polytheistic milieu. In contrast, U. N. Ghoshal, *Hist. of Hindu Political Theories*, London etc., OUP., 1923 [more recently *History of Indian Political Ideas*, OUP., 1959], sketches the perspective of the "contract theory" from the Digha Nikaya onwards; he sees in the divine creation of the king in the Mahabharata a reaction against "the individualist tendencies of the buddhist canon" (*HPT*., p. 268). Against the latter statement, P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra,* III, p. 28–37 recalls how old the notion of the divinity of the king is; Ghoshal has rejoined ("Hindu Theories of Social Contract and Divine Right", *Ind. Hist. Quart*., XXIV, 1948, p. 68–70). Recently, R. S. Sharma, who recognizes the nationalist inspiration of certain exegeses (*Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, Delhi, etc., M. Banarsidas, 1959, p. 1–13.), examines the "contract theories" in relation to the "historical context of their sources", but this is in fact a materialist interpretation of the differences which leaves out, I believe, the essential.

Conclusion

I have tried to set in a global and comparative perspective some well-known data about the way kingship was conceived in ancient India. This led me to emphasize two main events or stages. The first event, which really sets the stage for Indian history, is the secularization of kingship laid down in the *brahman-kṣatra* relationship. It invites us to revise some current notions about the relation between hierarchy and power. The second event, or stage, is more complex. It has appeared to us under two forms: on the one hand in the idea of contractual kingship, which appears to emanate from renouncers, on the other in the theory of *artha*, not unconnected with the renouncers' individualism and their negation of brahmanical values, but constituting a politico-economic domain. This domain is, in the dominant tradition, *relatively* autonomous with regard to absolute values. In so far as it is autonomous, there is at this stage a rough parallel with the modern western development, and this leads to a generalizing hypothesis, namely that such a domain as we know it necessarily emerges in opposition to and separation from the all-embracing domain of religion and ultimate values and that the basis of such a development is the recognition of the individual.[9] [p. 75/76]

9 [note 17 in the original] The main point in this hypothesis is to formulate a relation between two domains or "systems" with which the anthropologist busies himself. One apparent difficulty, which has been cursorily mentioned here itself (p. 59) and in another context (*Contrib.* V, p. 37, §3), should perhaps be more explicitly discussed here. It can be objected that the very word of polity (politics, political) comes to us from the Greek *polis*, and that, even if we lay aside its actual political constitutions, ancient Greece confronts us, in the thought of its philosophers, with a political domain which is neither opposed to religion as a system of ultimate values nor based on the individual. But precisely Greek speculation is markedly different from that of Machiavelli and Hobbes, it differs from it as political philosophy from political science; the one, essentially normative, starts from the society or state, the other, in principle at any rate empirical, starts from the individual. In philosophy as in religion, everything is governed by ultimate values, and this is why Plato's ideal state is a hierarchical society. In other terms, philosophy is, or at any rate begins, within the sphere of religion (or more precisely of ultimate values of the general type), the political domain as the moderns think of it is not yet there. At the same time, philosophy differs from religion in that ultimate values are not given from revelation, tradition or faith, but discovered or established by the sole use of human reason. (There is nothing new here regarding the relation between philosophy and religion, cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen in* [sic!] *die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Michelet, Stuttgart, 1940 [*Sämtliche Werke*, Band 16 [sic! 17]], I, p. 92). As reason argues in fact through particular men, the recourse to reason could not but lead to the recognition of the individual, as with the Stoics, and with the Moderns reason was to become the weapon of the individual.

It is not passing a value judgment on ancient philosophy, nor denying the part it played in the genesis of the individual in the West, to say that political [philosophy], and that of the Greeks in particular, represents on the whole, between the two extremes I have been considering, an intermediary stage in so far as the yardstick it applies to society and state is not the individual but is derived from all-embracing ultimate values, as in the religious sphere. It might then be asked whether it is advisable to define the political sphere as narrowly as I have done. As this is the (dominant) modern conception of it, within which we live, and which the sociologists or anthropologists consciously or not carries with him, I think it is at any rate necessary to distinguish it, under one name or another, if confusion is to be avoided.

Certainly, the similarities with the West are the more striking, when the wide differences in the context are kept in mind: difference in the point of departure as recalled above, difference in the genesis and situation of the individual (only implicitly referred to in this paper; compare *Contrib.* IV, p. 42, 46 with *idem*, V, p. 36–7), difference also in the final result: in India the autonomy of the domain remains relative, and within it economics and politics remain undifferentiated. It would seem that, here as regarding religion (*Contrib.* IV, p. 51, note), the difference with the West lies less in the development itself, or its principle, than in the fact that, on the Indian side, the development took place *within* the given framework without altering it or emancipating itself from it. To stress the point, let me anticipate on another study and say that in the West, the political sphere, having become absolutely autonomous in relation to religion, has built itself up as an absolute: comparatively, the modern "nation" embodies its own absolute values. This is what did not happen in India. It could not happen, I suppose, as long as the politico-economic realm was only relatively autonomous, and this in turn could not be otherwise while the individual remained, in essence, outside the social world.

I shall not engage here on the wide question of Indian history, to which we hope to return in these pages, but only note a welcome paradox. Here, as when dealing with religion, while primarily concerned with permanent characteristics, I have been led to recognize an historical development, I mean a development which is not only chronological, but meaningful in the Indian set-up as compared with the Western. Furthermore, while far from assuming at the start that Indian history should be reducible to Western schemas (*Contrib.* I, end of p. 21), I end by stating a parallelism. This is in strong contrast with the approach of some modern histor[p. 76/77]ians. They follow Marx [on all but one point]: where – quite rightly from his point of view – he saw stagnation they want to find movement, even if only that of physical change instead of meaningful change. They appear to attempt to vindicate India's reality in Western terms. I think it is better to try and curb our terms to India's reality. The search for meaning delivers development, the search for changes does not deliver history.

Let me end by drawing attention to some of the limitations of this attempt and to their reasons. I have not considered factual happenings, as distinct from ideas, and as in the main the inscriptions can reveal them. But, apart from questions of fact, I have been impelled to leave out many aspects of the matter for a quite different reason, which may cause some surprise. It is because they show the need for a formulation of the Western phenomena themselves sociologically more satisfactory than that at present available, at least to my knowledge. At first sight, it would seem that our side of the picture is better known, and that all the effort has to be directed at the Indian side. But, if this is in a sense true, it is also a fact that our institutions and forms of thought have rarely been formulated in comparative terms. Actually, it is only because the Indian situation is, on some points, so clear-cut and logical that one is emboldened to put forward the beginning of a comparative view. But one is very soon made to acknowledge that, to proceed any further, one should begin with sweeping one's own doorsteps. The comparative task imposes itself, whether in considering religion we discuss the type of ultra-

mundaneity and the place of monachism in Christianity; whether, here itself, we touch on the assumed struggle between "temporal" and "spiritual" agencies, or, to refer to a notion of which great use is being made at present, when we speak of feudalism (which should be analysed into clearly defined features). The time has perhaps come when the mirror which anthropologists direct at other societies should be turned back by them on ourselves, when we should try and formulate our own institutions in comparative language, i.e. in a language modified by what we have learnt of different societies, however incomplete it still is. About the difficulty of the task there is no doubt. But this might well be the royal road for the advancement of sociological understanding.

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24 Nurcholish Madjid: *On Secularisation* (1972, 1987)

Translated by Sahiron Syamsuddin and Johannes Duschka and introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Nurcholish Madjid (1939–2005), also known as Cak Nur, was a prominent student leader and leading public intellectual in Indonesia.[I] He had a notable – and at times controversial – public impact, especially on debates concerning religious tolerance, and the relationship between Islam, nationalism, and modernisation. Madjid became chairman of the Indonesian Muslim Students' Association (HMI) in 1966, at the time of President Suharto's bloody coup, and the beginning of his New Order regime. Madjid publicly supported the Suharto regime's modernisation attempts, and became the most prominent representative of a newly emerging Muslim middle class in Indonesia in the 1980s. Despite this, it is believed that it was Madjid's advice and influence that eventually led to Suharto's peaceful resignation in 1998.

In 1968, Madjid received a BA from the State Institute of Islamic Studies in Jakarta. Later, in 1984, he received a doctoral degree from the University of Chicago, where he studied under Fazlur Rahman. At Chicago, he was strongly influenced by Marshall G. S. Hodgson's conceptualisation of 'Islamicate civilisation.' Madjid's first book, *Khazanah intelektual Islam* (*The Intellectual Treasures of Islam*),[II] was published in 1984; a collection of his earliest writings was published in *Islam, kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (*Islam, Modernity, and Indonesianness*) in 1987.[III] In the late 1980s, Madjid established

I For biographical information on Nurcholish Madjid, see Martin van Bruinessen, "Nurcholish Madjid, Indonesian Muslim Intellectual," *ISIM Review* 17 (Spring 2006): 22–23, accessed June 26, 2024, https://www.academia.edu/2542656/Nurcholish_Madjid_Indonesian_Muslim_intellectual; Mark R. Woodward, "Nurcholish Madjid," *Islamicus*, 2017, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20170907141852/http://islamicus.org/nurcholish-madjid/; Carool Kersten, "Madjid, Nurcholish," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Devin J. Stewart (Brill: 2019), accessed June 26, 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_36047; M. Nauman Khan, "Nurcholish Madjid," *Salaam*, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://salaam.co.uk/biographies/index.php?action=single&post_id=2525.

II Nurcholish Madjid, *Khazanah Intelektual Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984).

III Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1987).

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the *Yayasan Paramadina*, a highly successful intellectual think tank for the emerging Indonesian Muslim middle class. During his tenure as a visiting professor at McGill University in Montreal, he wrote *Islam. Doktrin dan peradaban* (*Islam. Doctrine and Culture*), which was published in 1992.[IV]

The two texts presented in this section, from 1972 and 1987, mark a shift in Madjid's position in the Indonesian public debate on the concept of secularisation, during the New Order era. As early as 1970, Madjid introduced the idea of an Islamic path towards modernisation and secularisation (see Jackson, text no. 73) to the public, drawing strong distinctions between modernisation and 'Westernisation,' and between secularisation as a social process of rationalisation and secularism as an anti-religious ideology. Adapting 'Western' modernisation theories for his purposes, and combining them with theological arguments, Madjid lays out a long-term secularisation (understood as rationalisation) process for Indonesia, which he directly relates to Islam's introducing both monotheism and basic distinctions between this-worldly and heavenly affairs to the archipelago. He considers these two ideas to have been decisive factors in social rationalisation processes (see Iqtidar, text no. 59). His narrative of a progressive desacralisation of human affairs is strongly reminiscent of Max Weber's idea of disenchantment (see Becker, text no. 1, Soroush, text no. 29). In the second text, from 1987, Madjid primarily adheres to his narrative, but, in light of the heated public and academic debates (see Krämer, text no. 47), and the misreadings that followed his public call for secularisation, he now advocates abandoning all terminology related to the secular, in favour of "more precise and neutral technical terms."

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IV Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam doktrin dan peradaban: sebuah telaah kritis tentang masalah keimanan, kemanusiaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992).

Translation by Sahiron Syamsuddin and Johannes Duschka

Once Again on Secularisation [1972]

Introduction

Among the reactions to the working paper on renewal that I put forward in the early 1970s, there was disapproval of my use of the term secularisation (*sekularisasi*). This was probably the strongest type of reaction to the paper. So, I thought it would be worth explaining the term in a more comprehensive way.

Even though I had stressed in the paper that secularisation did not mean the application of secularism, which is a separate ideology with a function close to that of religion, some friends still raised this objection, arguing that secularisation without secularism is impossible. [For them,] secularisation is nothing but the application of secularism. It is analogous to the term 'Islamisation' (*islamisasi*) which means the application of Islam.

Of course, 'neonisation' (*neonisasi*) (a term of Indonesia's own making) means the replacement of ordinary electric light bulbs with neon bulbs. Similarly, 'dieselisation' (*dieselisasi*) is the replacement of petrol motors with diesel engines that use diesel fuel. However, simply equating the connotations of these complex social terms with technical terms is inaccurate.

For example, the term 'socialisation' (*sosialisasi*) in the English phrase *socialized medicine*, is certainly not an application of socialism. In capitalist countries [p. 297/298] like Great Britain, the socialisation of medicine is taking place at a rapid pace. This is also the case in the United States of America, which is, famously, the champion of opposing socialism.

In religious (Islamic) terminology, we can observe something similar. For example, regarding 'war', which is obligatory for Muslims as a defensive measure. In one Qursanic verse that considers war obligatory, the term used is *qitāl.* This has the same root as the word *qatl*, which means to kill. Should we also interpret *qitāl* as killing, such that God obliges us to kill each other (the literal meaning of the word *qitāl*)? In war, killing does occur, but the main purpose of war is not the killing *an sich.* [If its main purpose were only to kill enemies], it could be understood that to fight a war was to commit the crime of murder. In this case, there is what is called a *contradictio in terminis* (according to the law of dialectics – again a foreign term – or the law of unity of opposites): in the obligatory or justified war, there is an element of murder, which is forbidden. However, war is not (generally) possible without killing. So, [depending on the context of its use,] 'killing' may signify different concepts, which then results in different, perhaps even opposite, normative evaluations: one is forbidden, and the other is obligatory.

The same applies to the term 'secularisation'. 'Secularism' and 'secularisation' are, in different or opposite contexts, prohibited or enjoined. What is forbidden is

obvious: namely the application of secularism, with the consequent elimination of belief in the existence of God. What is commanded, on the other hand, is numerous. Even the religion of Islam, if examined thoroughly, started with the process of secularisation first. In fact, the teaching of monotheism (*tauhid*) is the starting point for the process of secularisation on a large scale. [p. 298/299]

Negation and Affirmation

To understand this issue, let us look more carefully at the meaning contained in the first sentence of the *shahāda* (*syahadat*) [creed]. This sentence divides the line between those who are believers and those who are non-believers. It contains two meanings: *negation* and *affirmation*. The words “there is no God” are a negation, and the words “but Allah or God Himself” are an affirmation. Notice how Islam, which teaches monotheism (*tauhid*), begins with a teaching that completely negates (Arabic term: *nafy li-l-jins*) a god or *ilāh*. Paying attention to this is very important. In the *shahāda*, it is immediately followed by the exception, that is, there are no gods except one, namely God Himself, or Allah (Allah is *ilāh* with the prefix *al* as a *definite article*). Thus, the negation of divinity in the *shahāda* is a limited negation, not an absolute one. This is because this [an absolute negation] is not what is intended. What is intended is to liberate people from the various types of beliefs in gods that have been adopted so far, and then strengthen belief in the true God.

If we were to discuss the matter a little more broadly, it could be described as follows: Religion (Islam) says that the first human beings (Adam and Eve) were taught the correct belief. Certainly, the teachings were simple at first, according to the capacity of human understanding. Thereafter, they were perfected gradually, through the sending of the apostles. These messengers, in addition to bringing teachings about belief or a more complete religion, were tasked with guiding humanity, which had begun to deviate from the previous teachings. Finally came the apostolate of the Prophet Muhammad. He was the last messenger of God, with a final and universal task. [p. 299/300]

Historical Perspective

In order to gain a clearer picture of the process, we will look at the subject from a historical perspective. And we have to narrow it down further, taking our own homeland as an example. According to historians – as taught in schools – Indonesian people originally embraced a belief in animism or dynamism.

Then came Hinduism and Buddhism, which are considered to be more advanced than these original beliefs. However, Hinduism and Buddhism tolerated animism, and even absorbed it into themselves. This resulted in the remnants of animism remaining evident in the practices of Hinduism and Buddhism in Indonesia, such that, when Islam

arrived, this new religion faced a situation in which people had not changed much [since antiquity] in terms of their beliefs. Then Islam taught [them] the *shahāda*, which is the foundation of monotheism (*tauhid*).

Interaction between Animism and Monotheism (*Tauhid*)

Now, what did the interaction between animism (possibly plus Hinduism) and monotheism (*tauhid*) look like?

The process of interaction was as follows: At first, the animist, before entering into the Islamic faith, had to give up their beliefs altogether. This meant that they could no longer believe that 'things' – objects in the world around us – had spirits or powers that needed to be coaxed and tamed through worship. They had to see these things as they were, objectively, neither exaggerated nor diminished. This meant a great deal for the animist, for they were used to seeing all objects in such a way that their attitudes toward them constituted [p. 300/301] spiritual or religious activities. Matter and spirit, or body and soul (*jism* and *rūḥ*), became one, and were indistinguishable. For the animist, there were no objects that were just objects (objective objects), but rather they were all containers of spirit, or soul, which demanded worship. All actions were located within the sphere of religious activity.

It is even clearer if we look at the actions of the animist regarding illness and its treatment. An illness was not viewed in terms of what exactly it was, its causes, and possible cures. Illness, for them, was directly connected with spirit, or soul – it was the influence of an evil spirit. As a result, the only treatment for any illness was a spiritual one: either to expel the evil spirit, or to persuade it to leave, or to ask another, good spirit for help. Thus, even curing illness was a religious practice. Indeed, no single human activity could be separated from the religious circle. Human behaviour, such as starting a farm, opening a waterway, tilling a garden and so on, was always coupled with religious rituals or ceremonies. Remnants of such practices – as mentioned earlier – can still be observed today.

What is important to note about the animist attitude is that, for the animist, there was no such thing as a pure object. Therefore, it was impossible for them to approach objects as objects. Beyond the physical form of the object, they sought its spiritual meaning: whether it brought curses or good fortune. They did not understand the object according to its material nature, let alone conquer and use it, as is the norm in our century. Essentially, for an animist, all objects and daily activities were determined by religious prescriptions. Not a single part was left to be discovered by mankind with their creativity. [p. 301/302]

Then came Islam, with its uncompromising teaching of monotheism (*tauhidnya*). Through monotheism (*tauhid*), an animist was taught to see things as they really were: they could approach them as objective objects, understand, use, and master them. How they approached such objects depended very much on the animist's intelligence, and not

on their devotion in performing religious ceremonies. Thus, with monotheism (*tauhid*), the animist underwent a massive secularisation process. All the objects that were once revered, and hence had an afterlife and a spiritual or religious value, were now cast down to earth, and viewed as nothing more than mere earthly objects. The objects were thus rendered mundane (*diduniawikan*) or secularised (*disekularisasikan*). Now, the former animist approached the objects in their own capacity as a human being, a thinking being. They thought about the objects as objects: their occurrence, their laws, and how to master or use them. In this thought process, the former animist was no longer dependent on religious rituals; they were free. And their knowledge of the object was free, independent and outside of spiritual matters. Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana briefly explains the matter in his book (in English), *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution*[I]:

> One of the characteristics of Islam that clearly distinguishes it from Hinduism is its uncompromising monotheism (*monoteismenya*). Also, contrary to Hinduism and the indigenous religions of Indonesia, where animals, humans, and supernatural forces are not sharply differentiated, and can be confused with each other, Islam gives man a special position, above nature, animals and plants, thanks to the separation of man from God, and from the worlds of animals and plants. Man is given the opportunity to build his own world, guided by his intellect. Islam also differs from indigenous Indonesian and Hindu cultures in that it opens the door to the growth of secular (*sekular*) (worldly (*duniawi – penulis*)) [p. 302/303] scientific institutions that are autonomous from religious influence, by allowing freedom of thought and inquiry.

As we know, Sutan Takdir is a great authority in philosophy.

The fact that the first sentence of the *shahāda* contains the negation of the object of worship, god, is a clear recognition of the human tendency to unnecessarily worship anything. Why is this so? Because humans fundamentally need security. However, facing the realities of life, humans find many things that can cause insecurity. Fundamentally, humans feel insecure about things or objects that they do not know or understand. In short, humans, in the early stages of mankind, hardly understood anything that existed. This horror gave birth to the opposite action, that of worship. Humans began to worship everything that they found strange: mountains, dense forests, rivers, animals, and events – such as the occurrence of lightning, lava, floods, and so on. In fact, even the things closest to them were subjected to worship. Of course, this resulted in the world becoming increasingly incomprehensible to them. This is because all their actions begin with an attitude of 'not understanding'. Thus, when human history proceeds in this way, it goes nowhere, making no progress whatsoever.

The only way forward is to release mankind from these shackles: The belief that the world is incomprehensible must be overcome. And that means completely changing the belief system altogether, namely [such] that humans are fully authorised to understand

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I JD: Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Indonesia: Social and Cultural Revolution* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966).

the world. Only God, the Creator of the world, is incomprehensible. Therefore, He is the [only] One who deserves to be worshiped. As for the rest of the universe, it is just the opposite: it must be unlocked, understood, mastered, and used. The Prophet said: "Think of the universe, and do not think of God, its Creator." [p. 303/304]

God's Mandate

To conclude this discussion, it should be emphasised that, for an animist, all objects in the world have religious significance. More importantly, the animist approach to these objects is entirely spiritualistic, always connected to religious rites or ceremonies. Meanwhile, for someone who has accepted the testimony that "there is no god but God Himself", the approach towards the objects of this world should be directed by what these objects are, both in regard to their natures and the laws that govern them. Such an approach has nothing to do with matters of ritual or worship. A person's success in approaching something worldly (*duniawi*), then, does not depend on their diligence in worship or religious activities, but on the extent to which they exert their intellectual abilities.

Intelligence, reason, or intellect (or whatever we call it) is a type of ability that is specifically only possessed by human beings; according to religious teachings, it is a 'mandate' (*Amanat*) from God. The Holy Book describes how God once offered the mandate of the mind to the universe: the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. However, all of them objected, and refused to accept it. Then, it was finally accepted by mankind. In accepting the mandate, human beings faced a risk, because they became thinking creatures that could be right or wrong. If one thinks, and turns out to be right, then one will be rewarded. On the other hand, if one is wrong, one will encounter bad consequences (Q 33:20).[II] Yet, it is precisely this intelligence that elevates humans above other creatures. In fact, in accepting the mandate, humans transcended the status of angels, who are creatures purely of virtue or, for that matter, Satan, who is a creature purely of evil. [p. 304/305]

In fact, intelligence is the equipment of human life, which will accompany all humans as long as they are part of this mortal world. Scholars explain that a human life is at first equipped with instincts, which it possesses from birth; these are then appended by the senses, as the human life develops and feels that instinct alone is not enough. Up to this point, humans are only on the same level as animals. The next attribute, then, is intelligence, which is more *complete* than the senses. With intelligence, humans can solve and overcome many of the problems of their lives in this world. But there is still something that cannot be solved by intelligence alone – namely the knowledge of that which is related to

II JD: I was not able to verify the paraphrased content in Sura 33:20, the given reference seems to be an error in the original. All further citations from the Quran follow the translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, The Qurʾan: A New Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004–2005). Deviations from this translation for contextual reasons are indicated by square brackets.

the spirit, the spiritual, and the afterlife – that is, knowledge of the religious field, including divinity. Hence, revelation, the direct teaching from God to mankind through His messengers, is the final fulfilment of human life. This is how it is taught in religion, especially in Islam. Therefore, human acceptance of the existence of revelation and its contents is not an intellectual activity, but a matter of guidance and direction received from God.

Caliph of God

One conception of mankind, according to Islam, is that the human is the highest being (*ahsan-u taqwīm*), the pinnacle of God's creation. Because of this superiority, mankind has been given the noble status of 'God's caliph on earth'. This status is the first thing that God reveals about mankind. Caliph means *successor*. Thus, mankind is God's successor on earth, meaning that affairs on earth are entrusted to mankind. Indeed, God [p. 305/306] gives instructions on how to take care of the world, but only in outline. He does not give detailed instructions, nor a detailed description of this world, but instead hands down a tool that will enable humans to understand and find solutions to their problems here in this world (*dunia*), namely reason or intelligence. In surah *al-Baqarah*, it is explained that the angels objected to the appointment of mankind ([in the form of] Adam) as God's 'viceregent' on earth, arguing that they knew in advance that humans would do much damage on earth, and would kill each other, while the angels were more entitled to be caliphs, because they were always devoted to God and always did good. But God says that He knows the advantage of mankind over the angels: reason, or intelligence, such that humans are able to receive and understand teachings, and to recognise the world around them. Eventually, the angels recognised the superiority of mankind (Adam), and they submitted to him [Adam] – [all, that is,] except Satan.

This is the episode surrounding God's creation of mankind[, as it is told] in the Holy Scripture. The reiteration of this famous religious doctrine here is to emphasise that mankind's superiority in the form of intellect, reason, rationality, or whatever it is called, is the reason for humans being honoured as God's caliphs on this earth. And with that rationality, humans develop themselves and their lives here in this world.

Hence, there is a correspondence between secularisation and rationalisation. Because the core of secularisation is to solve and understand this-worldly problems, by mobilising the intellect or reason (*rasio*). Furthermore, there is also consistency between rationalisation and desacralisation. This is because a rational approach to an object or problem that has become sacred or *taboo* is impossible. Before we can reach a rational solution and understanding of something, [p. 306/307] we must free ourselves from *taboos* and sacredness. To return to the principle of monotheism (*tauhid*) as stated in the *shahāda*, people must be determined not to taboo things. God is the one who is taboo, and therefore impossible to be understood by humans through reason. By starting from the *shahāda*, humans can solve their life problems by unlocking the potential abilities that exist in themselves, namely intelligence.

The Day of the World [*yawm al-dunyā*] and the Day of Religion [*yawm al-dīn*] (Hereafter (*Akhirat*))

There is one more thing that needs to be explained in relation to secularisation: namely, the Islamic concept of the existence of a 'Day of the World' and a 'Day of Religion'. Any denial of the existence of this clear concept is a symptom of an apologetic tendency. This tendency is also evident in the attempts of some of our thinkers to argue that Islam is more than just a religion; it is *al-dīn* – and is thus more than other religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, the Magians (*Majusi*),[III] and others. In fact, the Scripture explains that Judaism, Christianity, the Magians, and others – even the religions of the pre-Islamic Arab polytheists (*Jahiliah*) – are also called *al-dīn*. So, there is clearly no difference. The content of the teachings, whether they are broader or narrower, is a secondary issue.

The description of the Day of Religion in the Holy Book, as we all know, is found in surah *al-Fātiḥa*. There, it is mentioned that God is the owner of the Day of Religion. As above, the interpretation of the words *yawm al-dīn* as the Day of Judgement, or otherwise, is a secondary issue, and is nothing more than the opinion of the interpreter. The words *yawm al-dīn* are quite common in the Holy Scripture. One occurrence, which quite explicitly describes the Day of Religion, is found in: "What will explain to you what the Day of [Religion] is? Yes! What will explain to you what the Day of [Religion] is? The Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another; on that Day, command will belong to God." (Q 82:17–19). This verse implies that the Day of Religion is a time in which the laws governing human relations no longer apply, while the entirely individual relationship between humans and God takes effect. In other words, at that time, secular, or worldly (*duniawi*), laws are no longer in effect, and only heavenly laws apply. By contrast, in the Day of the World, which we are currently living in, the laws of the Hereafter are not yet in effect. The laws that govern our lives are the laws of human society. Indeed, these laws are not purely of mankind's own creation, but also of God's creation (*sunnat allāh*), though they are not described as religious doctrines. It is humans who must try to understand these laws, using the intelligence that has been bestowed upon them, and then utilising their knowledge to organise the life of their society.

Therefore, it is explained that human beings should pay attention to both aspects of life: observing religious teachings as well as possible in order to prepare for life in the Hereafter or the Day of Religion, and living their this-worldly life in a way that follows all the relevant principles, especially in public life, or in association with their fellow human beings. In the Holy Book, the former is called *ḥabl min allāh* (relationship with God), and the latter is called *ḥabl min al-nās* (relationship with fellow human beings). By believing in revelation, we know that there is a relationship with God. This belief, or faith, comes

III JD: Followers of an ancient Persian religion identified with Zoroastrianism, see Michael G. Morony, "Maḏjūs," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Second Edition Online*, ed. P. J. Berman (Brill: 1955–2005), accessed July 29, 2024, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4751.

from God's guidance – it is not a purely intellectual activity. Thus, we should hold tightly to the rope from God. This means that in matters of religious life, Muslims should only be guided by God's revelation, in the form of the Holy Book, and not be divided. [p. 308/309]

However, through the activity of thinking, we understand the forms of human relations, and deal with problems according to what they are, which is not a question of ritual. To reiterate what was emphasised at the beginning of this paper, a person's success in dealing with and solving worldly problems does not depend on their diligence in performing religious ceremonies or worship, but on their intelligence, breadth of knowledge, and objectivity. Thus, after believing (accepting and practising religious teachings to the best of one's ability), one must make serious use of one's intellect to thrive in this world. It is mentioned in the Qurʾan: "Say (Prophet), 'I advise you to do one thing only: stand before God, in pairs or singly, and think'" (Q 34:46). There are many references to thinking in the Scripture, in relation to both religious matters and worldly matters. One of them is the following: "He has subjected all that is in the heavens and the earth for your benefit, as a gift from Him. There truly are signs in this for those who [think]" (Q 45:12 [sic; 45:13]). Here, it is emphasised that those who will be able to understand and then utilise nature, are those who think, or are rational. And that, in these modern times, is proven beyond doubt.

About *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*

There is one more thing that can shed light on secularisation, namely the teachings contained in the *basmala* phrase. [p. 309/310]

The first is the meaning of the words *bi-ism allāh*, which translates as 'in the name of God' (but is usually translated as 'in the name of Allah', which is incorrect). The words *bism-i ʾl-Lāh* indicate the value of human activity as God's representative, or caliph, on earth, as explained earlier. The words also imply that there is room for human freedom.

The second is the meaning contained in the words *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*. Both are derived from the root word *raḥma* (love). Thus, both *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* mean 'the Compassionate One', because they are [nominalised] adjectives. But why do they both have to be mentioned, rather than just one of them? This certainly has a broader implication. The commentators explain that *al-Raḥmān* refers to the nature of God's love in this world (according to worldly norms), while *al-Raḥīm* refers to the nature of divine love in the Hereafter (and thus also according to heavenly norms). The difference between worldly and heavenly norms was explained earlier.

Thus, God, as *al-Raḥmān*, will always reward those in this world who live their worldly lives appropriately. God's love does not depend on one's faith or belief, but rather on one's knowledge of secular matters. And God, as *al-Raḥīm*, will always reward those in the Hereafter who prepare themselves correctly, namely by following the teachings of His religion. Thus, *al-Raḥīm's* love depends on one's faith, rather than knowledge. *Al-Raḥmān's* love is given to human beings as creatures of society, in a rela-

tionship with fellow human beings in and around nature, and *al-Raḥīm's* love is given to human beings as individual creatures in a relationship with God alone. Therefore, if we desire happiness in this world and in the Hereafter, we must have faith and knowledge at the same time, [p. 310/311] and then both faith and knowledge will colour our deeds. This is because our deeds, in the form of daily activities, must be motivated by the right intentions, in accordance with the voice of our conscience (heart, *ḍamīr* or *fuʾād*) which has been sharpened, sensitised, and enlivened by faith and worship, or spiritual activities, and illuminated by proper scientific or rational calculations. The combination of both faith and knowledge, with their respective approaches, should be present in every Muslim. And it is very dangerous to mix the two approaches. For, in reality, the appreciation of spiritual or religious values is not the result of an all-rational activity and, vice versa, we cannot approach worldly matters with spiritual methods. The two have different spheres, although there is a close affinity between faith and knowledge: the affinity between the source of motivation, or inner drive (intention), and the knowledge about the right way to perform an activity or charity.

Secularisation Revisited[...] [1987]

First, it should be pointed out that I am making a principal distinction between secularism and secularisation. Secularism is a closed ideology, an ideological system that is separate and independent from religion. The essence of secularism is the denial of any other life beyond this-worldly life. From an Islamic perspective, secularism is the modern manifestation of *dahriyah* [materialism or atheism], as indicated in the Qurʾan: "They say, 'There is only our life in this world: we die, we live, nothing but time destroys us.' They have no knowledge of this; they on-[p. 339/340]ly follow guesswork." (Q 45:24) Clearly, secularism is incompatible with religion, especially Islam.

Sociological Definition of Secularisation

Secularisation, by contrast, can indeed be defined as a sociopolitical process tending towards secularism, its strongest implication being the idea of a (total) separation of religion from the state. However, this is not the only meaning of the term secularisation. Another meaning of the term is sociological, rather than philosophical, as used by Talcott Parsons and Robert N. Bellah. Parsons points out that secularisation, as a sociological process, mostly implies the liberation of society from the shackles of superstition in some aspects of life. And that this does not mean the elimination of religious orientation in the norms of society.[1] In fact, the

1 [note 2 in the original] Parsons, (et al.), Theories of Society: Foundation of Modern Sociological Theory (New York: Free Press, 1961).

process of liberation from superstition can only occur because of the impetus of a form of religious orientation, especially monotheism (*monoteisme*), or as a logical continuation of it. This is Robert N. Bellah's view, for example, when he points out the characteristics of the classical Islamic society (the time of the Prophet and a*l-Khulafāʾ al-Rāshidūn*) which he considers to be a modern society. Bellah mentions several structural elements of classical Islam that are relevant to his argument (that classical Islam is modern): namely strong monotheism (*monoteisme*), personal responsibility before God, radical devaluation or secularisation of the tribal institutions of pre-Islamic (*jahilia*) Arabia, and, finally, a democratic political system. To be clear, regarding secularisation, he says that classical Islam has carried out a "radical devaluation, one might legitimately say secularisation, of all existing social structures in the face of this central God-man relationship. [p. 340/341] This meant above all the removal of kinship, which had been the chief locus of the sacred in pre-Islamic Arabia, from its central significance." In other words, the process of "radical devaluation" or "secularisation", in Bellah's sociological view, stems from monotheism (*monoteisme*), which resulted in the devaluation of tribal and familial institutions that, in the pre-Islamic era, were central to the sense of sanctity of the almighty God alone.[2]

Thus, the use of the word 'secularisation' in sociology implies liberation, namely the liberation from an attitude of sanctification that is out of place. It therefore implies desacralisation – i.e. the removal of taboos and sacredness from objects that should not be taboo or sacred. If projected onto the modern situation of Islam today, Robert N. Bellah's secularisation would take the form of eradicating heresy, superstition, and other polytheist practices, all of which take place under the banner of returning to the Book and to the Sunnah in order to purify religion. I have argued that such secularisation, as per Bellah's sociological view, is a consequence of monotheism (*tauhid*). Monotheism (*tauhid*) calls to direct every activity of life towards God, for His pleasure; this, for some, is precisely a form of sacralisation of human life. This is not wrong, and is, in fact, in accordance with Bellah's sociological understanding – which I also embrace – because it implies the transfer of sacralisation from an object of nature (creature) to God Almighty. The tribal institutions, as Bellah calls them, were only one – albeit the most important – object of worship in pre-Islamic society (*jahilia*). In fact, the pre-Islamic (*jahilia*) Arabs also sanctified and worshiped other objects, all of which, in Islam's view, were manifestations [p. 341/342] of polytheism (*shirk*). The only One who is holy is God (*subhān-a ʾl-Lāh*). Since only God is sacred, all activities, in order to obtain their true meaning, must be sincerely and genuinely directed to Him alone, for the sake of truth (*al-Haqq*).

2 [note 3 in the original] See Bellah, Beyond Belief (New York: Harper &Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 151.

Controversy Over the Concept of Secularisation

However, although the sociological notion of secularisation has been widely used by social scientists, it must be admitted that there is an ongoing controversy surrounding the term. This is reflected in the debates and polemics surrounding Harvey Cox's book *Secular City*. The difficulties arise from the fact that the European *Enlightenment* gave birth to the philosophy of secularism as an ideology that is specifically anti-religious.[3] It is quite difficult to determine when the process of secularisation, in its sociological meaning, ends, such that it becomes an implementation of this philosophical secularism. This seems to be the basis for Mr. Rasjidi's rejection of my use of the term secularisation. If this assumption is correct, his objection is quite reasonable and acceptable, namely that secularisation cannot be separated from the philosophical secularism resulting from the European *Enlightenment*. The 'secularisation' issue gets even more complicated if we look at Richard Hunt's edited work, *The Role of Religion in a Changing World*.[4] In it, Hunt says that even the desire to have a good household appliance such as a refrigerator has secularising implications, consciously or unconsciously. [p. 342/343]

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a significant difference between the sociological and philosophical definitions of 'secularisation'. And because of how controversial the terms 'secular', 'secularisation' and 'secularism' are, it is wise not to use these terms, and rather replace them with other, more precise and neutral technical terms.

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3 [note 4 in the original] Peter E. Glasner, The Sociology of Secularization (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 34.

4 [note 5 in the original] Dalam Mizan, Jakarta Vol. I No. 3, 1984.

25 Iqtidar A. Khan: *The Secular State in India: Historical Perspective* (1976)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Iqtidar Alam Khan is an Indian historian, whose work focused on the Mughal period.[I] Khan was an alumnus of, and then later professor at, the Centre of Advanced Study in History at Aligarh Muslim University, a post from which he retired in 1994.[II] He wrote important biographies on early Mughal nobles and aristocrats.[III] Later, he shifted his attention to the religious policy of the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605), producing several 'revisionist' articles that were critical of the imperial and cultural-nationalist schools of history writing in India. These works, typical of the so-called Aligarh school – of which he was a central figure – were marked by empirical rigour and a profound engagement with the Persian sources. The Aligarh school was further characterised by a non-orthodox reading of Marxist theory and historiography, and its consequent interest in economic and political explanations for Akbar's religious politics.[IV] Some of Khan's works on Akbar were recently compiled in *India's Polity in the Age of Akbar.*[V] Khan's other major areas of interest are gunpowder and military technology in the Mughal period, and medieval archaeology.[VI] His articles on the Sultanate and the pre-

I I would like to thank Farhat Hasan from Delhi University for providing first-hand biographical information, and for putting Khan's work into context for me.

II Harbans Mukhia, "Iqtidar Alam Khan's Latest Books on India's Medieval History Unearth Hidden Secrets," *Mpositive.in*, May 14, 2021, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.mpositive.in/tag/professor-iqtidar-alam-khan-dept-of-history-amu/.

III Iqtidar Alam Khan, *Mirza Kamran A Biographical Study* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964); Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a Mughal Noble: Muni'm Khan-i-Khanan, 1497–1575* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973).

IV Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Presidential Address: The Middle Classes in the Mughal Empire," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 36 (1975): 113–41, accessed 26 June, 2024, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44138840; Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Marx's Assessment of the Islamic Tradition," *Social Scientist* 11, no. 5 (1983): 3–15, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://doi.org/10.2307/3517099. See also Harbans Mukhia, "The Past Cannot be Righted by Inflicting Wrongs on History," The Wire, 3 August 2015, https://thewire.in/history/the-past-cannot-be-righted-by-inflicting-wrongs-on-history.

V Iqtidar Alam Khan, *India's Polity in the Age of Akbar* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2016).

VI Iqtidar Alam Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms*: *Warfare in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Iqtidar Alam Khan, *Researches in Medieval Archaeology: Caravanserais, Buildings, Other Remains from Sultanate and Mughal Times* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2021).

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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Mughal period were republished as a collection titled *Studies in Thought, Polity, and Economy of Medieval India*.

In his text on *The Secular State in India*, presented here, the Marxist influence on Khan's analytical perspective is evident, but apparently does not impose the same ideological constraints that we see in contemporaneous Soviet texts (see Uzlaner text no. 13 and Lopatkin text no. 54). Based on his interest in economic and political history, Khan offers an alternative view of India's frequently invoked tolerance of religious traditions (see, for example, Bhargava text no. 37 and Madan text no. 27), and criticises the picture of the state as having been a neutral arbiter since ancient times (see also van der Veer, text no 28). Instead of looking for the roots of tolerance within the religious content of the different traditions present in India, Khan draws attention to the material interests of the religiously plural ruling class, and their basic solidarity, which is linked to their social position vis-à-vis the exploited classes. He relates changes in religious policy to economic developments and availability of resources, and emphasises the active role of the state in shaping religious policy in precolonial India. In terms of the *multiple secularities* framework, it could be argued that Khan puts emphasis on the preservation of power and dominance as a societal reference problem for the development of a specific Indian form of secularity (see Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr text no. 42 and Dreßler text no. 17).

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The idea of a secular state totally free from any legislative or administrative functions "respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting free exercise thereof" had been conceived and became a dominant trend in Europe during the eighteenth century.[1]

This concept was an integral part of the rationalist thought of eighteenth-century Europe which, with the *transformation* of the social base from *feudal* to *capitalist* production relations, tended to become the ruling idea displacing obsolete feudal values based on Christian teachings. In other words, secularism could become prominent in Europe as a result of an ideological struggle that developed side by side with the revolutionary movements aimed at replacing the feudal elements in power by the

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1 [note 1 in the original] The words within quotes are from President Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists Association in 1802, Cf. Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State* 1963, p 17.

bourgeoisie.[2] The nineteenth-century European state having a secular orientation was thus the product of a variety of complex processes relating to production relations as well as superstructural aspects peculiar to the social development in the west. This state can hardly serve as a comparable model for understanding the modern Indian state representing the bourgeois-landlord power supported by a culturally fragmented semi-[p. 165/166] feudal base. The dominant ideology of the Indian state, a sort of 'liberal nationalism', an eclectic combination in varying degrees of European liberalism with revivalist attitudes, remains essentially *irrational* and *prescientific* in content.[3]

What is termed as 'Indian secularism' is in reality only an extension of the medieval tradition of ideological eclecticism dictated by the persisting religious and cultural plurality of the ruling class.[4] In Indian secularism the emphasis is not on the separation of state from religion but on its role as an arbiter between religions. Such a state would also act as a promoter and, reformer of the dominant religion or religions.[5]

Sometimes an attempt is made to make out the case that the attitude of religious tolerance implied in the above concept springs from the ancient religious tradition of lndia.[6] It is argued that religious tolerance is a built-in feature of the Hindu attitude which tends to the view that all religions are true and that each one of them can be a medium for personal realisation.[7] But this interpretation has serious drawbacks. First, this view is a gross oversimplification in so far as it fails to take into account several important currents of ancient Indian thought which were at variance with the philoso-

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2 [note 2 in the original] "When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist idea [sic], feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie." – Marx, *Selected Works,* Vol I, Moscow, 1957, p 67.

3 [note 3 in the original] Compare, M. N. Roy, Radical Humanist. Bombay. 14 May 1950. reproduced in *Secularism in India*, edited by V. K. Sinha, 1968. p 154.

4 [note 4 in the original] For an explanation of the eclectic theory of Akbar's kingship see *Dabistan-i Mazahib,* ed Nazar Ashraf, Calcutta, pp 431–32, where it is maintained that bis philosophy of "Sulh-i-kul" was partly motivated by a desire to employ elements of diverse religious beliefs. Compare Ather Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb*, 1966, p 16.

5 [note 5 in the original] For the characteristic features of the modern Indian state, see Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, pp 216–34, Cf, Setalvad, Secularism Patel Memorial Lectures, 1965, pp 17, 22. The concept of a state capable of arbitrating between religions was propounded for the first time in its modern content in a resolution passed by the All-India Congress at its Karachi session (1931) wherein, while affirming the ideas of religious liberty and adequate protection to the minorities, it was asserted that "the state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions". Radhakrishnan later developed the same idea specifically pointing out that it should not be confused "with secularism or atheism".

6 [note 6 in the original] Radhakrishnan, quoted by Prakash Luthara, *The Concept of a Secular State in India,* 1964. p 155.

7 [note 7 in the original] For a summary of Radhakrishnan's argument that this attitude, which manifested itself in a systematic manner in Vedanta philosophy accounts in a large part for the absence of religious persecution in ancient India, see Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, p 147.

phy of Vedanta.[8] Secondly, this view ignores totally certain stark facts of history which testify against the assumption that there did not exist religious persecution in ancient India. [. . .] [W]henever there arose within Hinduism tendencies that were incompatible with each other, the likelihood of state's intervention in support of one of them was always there. It is no doubt true that on many occasions such religious differences were sought to be resolved through eclectic compromises. [. . .] Such inst-[p. 166/167]ances however are not sufficiently numerous to support any generalisation regarding the tolerant nature of the Indian character.[9]

In this connection a casual suggestion of Kosambi deserves some consideration. It might serve as an alternative hypothesis in a study of the origins of Indian secularism. Kosambi has pointed out that *the attitude of religious tolerance or otherwise* in ancient as well as medieval India was to *a certain extent* related to *the availability of resources.* A tolerant or eclectic attitude would become pronounced during the period of comparative *prosperity* but it would tend to recede into the background in a situation of *scarcity* and fall in revenues. [. . .]

The Delhi sultanate had few parallels in the ancient Indian history in so far as Islam, a religion with a well-defined legal and ethical code and having proselytising propensities, came to be established as the dominant ideology. [. . .] The *Shariat* no doubt treats non-Muslims as second-rate citizens and is generally regarded as the chief theocratic aspect of the socalled Muslim states of medieval India. But interestingly enough, it came to be tacitly accepted by most of the sections of the ruling class including large segments of the regional Hindu chiefs, as a workable legal basis for keeping together a highly centralized structure. Under the non-Muslim successor states of the Mughal empire in northwestern India, the Sikh principalities, there existed *qazi's* courts in each *sarkar* and *pargana* to abjudicate in criminal cases involving Muslims as well as non-Muslims.[10]

This may however suggest that even some of the ostensibly [p. 167/168] 'theocratic' features of the Muslim states of medieval period were not so out of tune with the Indian tradition as one would normally tend to think. [. . .]

As a matter of fact one can discern a fairly clear element of continuity in the development of imperial administration in India from the time of the Mauryas down to the Mughal period. Throughout this time, the theory of state remained unaltered in one significant respect; the state power had always been visualised as an instrument for main-

8 [note 8 in the original] Compare M. N. Roy, "Radhakrishnan in the Perspective of Indian Philosophy," *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, edited by Arthur Schilpp, New York, 1952, p 548, quoted from Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, p 157.

9 [note 12 in the original] Kosambi, op cit, p 29. [reference relates to note 9 in the original: Kosambi, *Myth ond Reality*, Bombay, 1962, p 29.]

10 [note 17 in the original] Compare. Grewal, "The 'Shariat' and the non-Muslims of Batala", paper read before the session of the Punjab History Conference in which the author has established, on the basis of Batala documents, that under Ranjit Singh the criminal cases continued to be adjudicated in accordance with 'Shariat'. See also Baron Charles Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab,* 1970, p 317, wherein it is mentioned that Ranjit Singh appointed General Avitabile as qazi and governor of Lahore.

taining the division of the people into four orders and for enforcing the distinctions between the 'low-born' and 'high-born' (or 'twice-born'). [. . .] There is near unanimity between Kautilya, Barani and Abul Fazl, who among themselves represent three major ideological currents of the Indian tradition, namely, Brahminical Hinduism, Orthodox Islam and the philosophy of mystic dissent from orthodox extremes. Despite obvious divergences in the theoretical approaches of these writers, on the basic issue of the class and cultural bias of the state their positions are amazingly similar.[11] [. . .]

"A peculiar feature of the state in Medieval India was that it served not merely as protective arm of the exploiting class, but was itself the principal instrument of exploitation."[12] While this state machine of exploitation and mass terror left the various religious establishments by and large free to look after themselves, it took care that their share in the total surplus was not denied to them.

[. . . p. 168/169. . .]

The Delhi sultanate and the succeeding Muslim states, despite their theocratic features and the fanatic zeal of some of the rulers, seem to have served the interests of the Hindu religious establishments as effectively as the kingdoms of the pre-Turkish period. This is borne out by a survey of the Sanskrit literature of the Muslim period. One is struck by the total absence of "any sign of protest on the part of the Sanskritists", mostly brahmans, which is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the nonbrahman writers of the *bhakti* school who wrote in the regional languages.[13] On the other hand, the examples of unrestrained praise showered by the Sanskrit literati upon the Muslim rulers are innumerable. In this respect no distinction is made between a tolerant king like Akbar and those well-known for their bigotry.[14] This phenomenon, particularly in its negative form, i.e. absence of any protest against Muslim rule in the contemporary Sanskrit literature, is an ample indication that the material interests of the brahmans as a group were adequately protected under the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal empire. One may attribute this to the general improvement in the position of the [p. 169/170] people under a highly-centralised state.

[. . .]

One may therefore be emboldened to generalise that the rise of a centralised state in India during the 13th century was a process that served, to one or the other degree, the interests of all the sections of the ruling class, including the religious establishments, both Hindu and Muslim, the nature of the dominant religious ideology notwithstanding.

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11 [note 20 in the original] Compare Abul Fazl. *Ain-i-Akbari. Vol 1. tr by* Blochmann, p 4: 'Kautilya's *Arthasastra*', tr by R. Shamasastry, Mysore, 1967, p 7: Zivauddin Barani, *Fatahwa-i Jahandari,* summary tr by Muhammed Habib and Afsar Umar, *The Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanate,* Kitab Mahal. p 97.

12 [note 21 in the original] Irfan Habib. op cit, p 257. [refers to reference in note 15 of the original: Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 1963.]

13 [note 29 in the original] Cf. Dev Raj Chanana. "The Sanskritist and Indian Society". *Enquiry,* New Series. Vol II. No 2. Monsoon 1965, p 53.

14 [note 30 in the original] Ibid. p 52. For example. an orthodox Muslim ruler like Mahmood Begra is referred to as "the protector of Hindu Dharma" and it is claimed that his father Muzaffar had helped Shri Krishna against Kalikala.

From time to time the medieval Indian state tended to identify itself with one or the other *religious ideology* reflecting the *cultural predilections* of the *dominant sections* of the ruling class. But this was not necessarily the indication of a breakdown in the *basic solidarity* of the *exploiting classes.* At best such a tendency would be symptomatic of a new adjustment among the ruling groups, allowing greater centralisation and consequently more ruthless exploitation of the producing classes in the interest of 'consuming classes'. The rise of one particular religious tradition as the dominant ideology often caused visible retrogression in the political authority of certain sections of the ruling class. However, it did not inevitably bring about a corresponding fall in the financial position of the group as such. [. . .] That might explain why large sections of the ruling groups belonging to different religious and cultural categories continued, by and large, to cooperate with each other even at times when ostensibly the state tended to follow a policy of intolerance and discrimination against those not following the dominant religion. A case in point for example was the willing [p. 170/171] cooperation of the Rajputs with Akbar during 1568–79, a period when, sliding back from the tolerant and liberal attitude of the early sixties, Akbar bad been succumbing more and more to the temptation of identifying himself with orthodox elements.[15]

It is well known that the 'secular' nature of the modern India state does not inhibit it from regulating and reforming the rituals and practices of different religions, particularly those of Hinduism. It has adopted a number of measures which amount to a policy of promoting 'reform' in Hinduism through legislation. This naturally leads, in certain situations, to *the formal association of the state in the religious functions and performance of rituals.* A similar attitude, though less pronounced, can be noticed with regard to Islam and Sikhism.[16] Donald Eugene Smith has credited the British with introducing the "revolutionary principle that it was within the province of the state to regulate and change the society by legislation". This principle, he correctly points out, was established as a consequence of a tendency on the part of Hinduism to look to the state for the management of its affairs. But Smith is certainly ill-informed when he makes the categorical statement that "the right to legislate in matters of social and religious customs was first asserted only in the British period". Equally untenable is Smith's assumption that the pre-British rulers had no "legislative powers".[17]

Regarding the function of the sultan to frame *zawabit,* a set of laws distinct from *Shariat,* there is a whole chapter in *Fatawa-i-Jahandari.*[18] For the medieval period there is available specific evidence that such *zawabit* were actually made and remained enforced for considerable periods. In many cases these laws violated the spirit of *Shariat.* Some of the cases that are discussed below go to suggest that at times through

15 [note 35 in the original] See my article, "The Nobility Under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy", *Journal o/ the Royal Asiatic Society,* 1968.

16 [note 36 in the original] Cf. Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, pp 216–62.

17 [note 37 in the original] Compare, Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, pp 216–31, 304.

18 [note 38 in the original] Compare, Muhammad Habib and Afsar Umar, op cit, pp 64–71.

these *zawabit* the state not only promoted reform in both the major religious traditions, Hinduism and Islam, but also participated in the management of religious institutions. The evidence suggesting formal association of the Muslim state with the performance of Hindu rituals is also not entirely lacking.

The intervention of the Muslim state in the regulation of the practice of *sati* came at a very early stage. On the authority of Ibn Batuta it is known that during the Tughlaq period the re-[p. 171/172]latives of a woman planning to perform *sati* were bound by law to inform the local *shiqdar* who would send one of his agents to be present on the scene to prevent coercion.[19] It seems this kind of law continued to exist throughout the sultanate period but it cannot be said with any degree of certainty as to what extent it was actually enforced in different parts of the empire. In placing a ban on the burning of young widows whose marriage had not been consummated,[20] Akbar only further extended the operation of a *zabitah* already in existence at least since the Tughlaq period. Such a law continued to operate until the fall of the Mughal empire. Even during Aurangzeb's reign one comes across instances of the administration's intervention in the cases of alleged coersion [sic] of widows to perform *sati*.[21] This aspect of the Muslim state's 'interference' with Hindu religion was basically different from the attitude reflected in the measures like imposition of *jiziah* or ban on idol worship. The law against *sati* was reformist in character and was not motivated by the desire to humiliate Hindus or win converts for Islam. It would further appear that this intervention of the state had a considerable impact at least in the Doab region, where the administration was more effective.[22]

[. . .]

Occasionally certain *zawabit,* negating the principles of *Shariat,* were also enforced. For instance, one may refer to the rules framed by Balban justifying prostration before the king,[23] some of Humayun's measures recorded by Khwandamir[24] and a number of *zawabit* introduced by Akbar, such as discouraging child [p. 172/173] marriages and

19 [note 39 in the original] Ibn Batuta, quoted by Habibullah, op cit, p 326 [refers to reference in note 14 of the original: Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India,* Allahabad, 1961]. Compare Gibb's translation wherein it is not mentioned that the agent of the 'shiqdar' would be present at the time of the burning of a widow, *Travels in Asia and Africa,* London. 1969, pp 191–92.

20 [note 40 in the original] Badauni, op cit. Vol II, p 336. [reference refers to note 23 of the original: Badauni, *Muntakhabut-Tawartkh*, Vol II.]

21 [note 41 in the original] Cf. *Waqa-i Sarkar Ranthanbor wa Aimer,* copy of the Rampur manuscript. Department of History, AMU, Aligarh, Vol I.

22 [note 42 in the original] By the time British authority was established in India the incidence of *sati* in the region covered by UP and Bihar bad become negligible, while it was widely prevalent in Bengal and Rajputana. In the nineteenth century, more than five hundred cases of *sati* were reported in the districts around Calcutta every year. Donald Eugene Smith, op cit, p 217.

23 [note 45 in the original] Compare, Habibullah, op cit, p 163.

24 [note 46 in the original] Khwandamir, *Qanun-i Humayuni,* edited by Hidayat Hosain, Calcutta. 1940.

those between cousins and near relations,[25] prohibiting the circumcision of young children.[26] As a matter of fact Akbar came very close to prohibiting polygamy. He was prepared to make an exception only when the wife failed to give birth to an heir.[27] The ban on cow slaughter and rules prohibiting the slaughter of any kind of animals on certain days during the week were yet other *zawabit* of the same nature which continued to operate for a considerable time even after Akbar's death.[28]

The earliest piece of evidence regarding the participation of the Muslim state in the establishment of Hindu religious institutions dates back to the Tughlag period. There exists an inscription dated Vikrama year 1385 (AD 1328) found at Batihagarh (Madhya Pradesh) which announces the construction of a *gow-math* on Muhammad bin Tughlaq's order. [. . .] Again according to a contemporary Jain treatise, Muhammad bin Tughlaq visited Satrunjaya temples and performed "some facts of devotion appropriate to a leader of Jain Sangha".[29] This evidence points to a similar situation as the one that existed during the early phase of the East India Company's government. Apparently the political authority found it difficult to keep away from "the impure and degrading services of the pagodas",[30] an indication that the ancient conventions regulating the relationship between the state and Hindu religious institutions continued to carry considerable force under the Muslim dynasties as well.

Such as [sic] impression is further reinforced by the evidence from the Mughal period. After his break with the orthodoxy in 1579, Akbar went out of his way in projecting his image as the sole arbiter between various creeds and religions professed by his subjects.[31] Regarding Hinduism Akbar had assumed certain functions unprecedented in the history of the Muslim state in India. According to traditions surviving among certain communities, he used to give verdicts determining the relative position of groups within a caste. For instance the brahmans of Madhya Pradesh proudly recall the fact that Akbar had recog-

25 [note 47 in the original] Abul Fazl. *Ain-i Akbari,* Vol I. tr Blochmann: pp 287–88.

26 [note 48 in the original] Badauni, op cit, Vol II, pp 301–2.

27 [note 49 in the original] Abul Fazl. *Ain-i Akbari,* Vol III, translated by Jarrett, edited by Sarkar, 1948. p 449 and Badauni. op cit. Vol II, p 258.

28 [note 50 in the original] Badauni. op cit. Vol II. pp 261, 303, 321–22. Compare *Tazkira-i Pir Hasu Teli,* Ms Department of History. Aligarh Muslim University. ff 30b–37a, wherein it is maintained that the ban on cow-slaughter continued under Jahangir as well.

29 [note 52 in the original] M. B. Jhavery's *Comparative and Critical Study of Mantrasastra,* p 28, quoted by Mahdi Hasan, op cit. p 321. [reference refers to note 51 of the original: Mahdi Hasan, *Tughlag Dynasty*, 1963.]

30 [note 53 in the original] Ct Romash Chandra Banerjee, "The State Patronage to Hindu and Muslim Religions", *Bengal: Past and Present,* Vol LVI, January–June 1939, p 26, wherein are reproduced extracts from a memorandum submitted to the government by nearly two hundred civil and military officers, including clergy, of the company's government in Madras, referred to in 'The Court of Directors Despatch', dated October 1837.

31 [note 54 in the original] Compare, Abul Fazl's summary of *Mahzar* (1579), *Akbar Nama,* Vol III, pp 269–70. A deliberate attempt is made to create an impression that Akbar had been empowered to arbitrate not only between the orthodox schools of Muslim jurisprudence but also between different religions and sects.

nised them as the 'highest and purest' among all the brahmans.[32] Akbar is also credited with building a temple in Kashmir "for the purpose of bind-[p. 173/174]ing together the hearts of unitarians in Hindustan, and especially those of His worshippers that live in the province of Kashmir".[33] The Persian inscription that had been composed by Abul Fazl for this temple, in its form as well as content, reminds one of Asoka's edicts.

[. . .]

Such features were by no means confined to the states dominated by Islam. These were to be noticed in a more pronounced form in a Hindu state. With regard to Indian Islam, the Hindu rulers tended to adopt the same kind of supervisory role which they would have towards Hinduism. A conspicuous example indicating the above tendency was the communication of the raja of Calicut to Shah Rukh Mirza seeking his permission to introduce his name in the Friday sermons in the mosques of Calicut.[34] Under the same category would come the Maratha state's policy of providing funds for the maintenance of mosques and such other Muslim establishments situated within the *swaraj* territory.[35]

In conclusion, it may be said that the secular features peculiar to the Indian state are essentially the product of the persisting religious and cultural plurality of the ruling class since ancient [p. 174/175] times. Partly, no doubt, these features were necessitated by a tendency on the part of Hinduism, and to a lesser degree on the part of Indian Islam as well, to look upon the state for the management of their affairs and for promoting reforms in their systems of beliefs and rituals. Any attempt to explain the modern Indian state's 'neutrality' in religious matters in terms of 'tolerant nature of the Indian character' supposedly shaped by this or that tendency of ancient or medieval Indian thought would at best be regarded as wishful thinking. Indian secularism in reality is an extension of certain aspects of traditional relationship between the state and the religious establishments that, it seems, continued to carry considerable force from the Mauryan times onwards. These aspects of the state are discernible, although in a slightly altered form, under the Muslim dynasties as well. The state's 'neutrality' in religious matters would seem to have acquired prominence with the rise of successive highly centralised empires ensuring the availability of greater surplus to be shared among the ruling groups. On the other band, any crises in an imperial system leading to or resulting from a fall in total surplus would be accompanied by tensions among various ruling

32 [note 55 in the original] Cf. Dev Raj Chanana, op cit, p 54.

33 [note 56 in the original] Muhammad Askari Husaini, *Durrul Manshur,* quoted by Blochmann, *Ain-i Akbari,* Vol I. English translation, pp liv–lv.

34 [note 59 in the original] Kamal al-din Abdul Razzaq, British Museum, Or 1291, f 204b cited from Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment,* Oxford, 1964, p 20.

35 [note 60 in the original] There exist a large number of grants of this nature. To quote at random, one may refer to a *sanad* dated AD 1746–47 giving a grant of one and a half bigha of land for "the expenses on account of *chiraghbatti* and other services" of a newly-built mosque in the village Mahagiri Pakhadi in *qasba* Thana, Cf. *The Peshwa's Diaries,* Vol II, document number 171, p 101. (For this reference I am indebted to my colleague Dr Mahendra Pal Singh.)

groups over the sharing of the available resources which in turn would lead to religious intolerance and even persecution. Such a swing would be sharper in the case of a state dominated by an aggressive and proselytising religion like Islam. But it is worth noting that the Maratha empire under the Peshwas manifested similar tendencies, though the tensions that were generated had caste rather than religious overtones.

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26 Harold J. Berman: *Law and Revolution. The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (1985)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Harold J. Berman (b. 1918 Hartford, Connecticut, d. 2007 New York) was an American legal scholar and an expert in Soviet and Russian law, comparative and international law, legal history, philosophy of law, and the relation between law and religion. For decades, he was a law professor at Harvard Law School, and – after his retirement there – at Emory University School of Law, where he held the prestigious Robert W. Woodruff Professorship.

During his military service in London, he became interested in the – worsening – relations between the Western allies and the USSR. He started to learn Russian, and the workings of the Soviet legal system, and finally became one of the leading scholars of Soviet law in the US and beyond. He spent extended time periods in Moscow, and led a lawsuit there in an (unsuccessful) effort to collect the copyright royalties of Arthur Conan Doyle from the government of the USSR. He even received an invitation from the Soviet Academy of Sciences to teach a course on the American Constitution at Moscow University.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Berman became the founder and co-director of the American Law Center in Moscow, a joint venture of Emory Law School and the Russian Ministry of Justice. In 2000, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Russian Academy of Sciences Law University.

In his later years, Berman co-founded and co-chaired the World Law Institute, which opened the first Academy of World Law at the Central European University in Budapest in 2000, and later a similar programme in Moscow.

From early on, Berman developed an interest in the interrelation between law and religion. As a senior fellow, he helped establishing Emory's Law and Religion Program, and was one of the founders of the Journal of Law and Religion.

In his most influential work *Law and Revolution* (1983), which due to copyright issues we cannot present here in longer excerpts, he argues against the assumption that modern legal systems originated in the sixteenth century. Instead, he argues, it was the rise of papal authority in the eleventh century, with its own canon law, that jump-started modern law:

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"The first of the great revolutions of Western history was the revolution against domination of the clergy by emperors, kings, and lords and for establishment of the Church of Rome as an independent, corporate, political and legal entity, under the papacy. The church, now viewed above all as the clergy, would work for the redemption of the laity and the reformation of the world, through law, in the direction of justice and peace. This was, however, only one side of the Papal Revolution. Another side of it was the enhancement of the secular political and legal authority of emperors, kings, and lords, as well as the creation of thousands of autonomous, self-governing cities. Still another side of it was the enormous expansion of economic activity, especially in agriculture, commerce, and crafts. Still another was the founding of the universities, and the development of the new sciences of theology and law. There were other sides as well. The Papal Revolution had, in short, the character of a total change. It envisioned not only a new heaven but also a new earth. The Investiture Struggle was only part of it. The Gregorian Reformation was only part of it.

The Papal Revolution had been in preparation for at least a generation. The first overt steps toward it were taken by the papal party in the 1050s and 1060s. In 1059 Pope Nicholas II, at the Synod of Rome, for the first time forbade lay investiture and established a procedure for election of popes by the cardinals, thereby taking the power to appoint the pope away from the emperor. In 1075 Pope Gregory VII threw down the gauntlet in his Dictates of the Pope. From 1076 to 1122 wars were fought in various parts of Europe between supporters and opponents of the papal authority and its program. Eventually, compromises were reached. Neither side was wholly victorious.

It was this total upheaval that gave birth to the Western legal tradition."[I]

In 2004, Berman published a second volume, *Law and Revolution II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Western Legal Tradition*. There he developed the argument that the German Reformation of the sixteenth century and the English Revolution of the seventeenth century together gave birth to a new civil order, separate from religion.

Both these volumes contribute to the exploration of Western history as a process of differentiation between religion and the legal or civil sphere, a process in which Christian churches played an influential role. Both volumes develop an argument for the specificity of the Western development, which resonates with certain postcolonial positions arguing that the Western process of secularization was provoked by the conflict between papacy and monarchy, which has no correspondence in the Islamicate world or other parts of the world. Sometimes, this argument is employed to question the legitimacy of a secular state in the present.

Due to his position on the role of the church in the rise of Western modernity, Berman influenced scholars of the sociology of religion, such as Detlef Pollack, who

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I Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 520.

see a specificity in the Western development toward secularization, especially in the differentiation of social spheres.[II]

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Due to copyright restrictions, no excerpt from the text could be reprinted in this publication. We thus can only rely on the reader's own consultation of the original source.

II Detlef Pollack, "Religion und gesellschaftliche Differenzierung: Sozialhistorische Analysen zur Emergenz der europäischen Moderne," *Zeitschrift für Religion, Gesellschaft und Politik* 4 (2020): 203–8.

27 Triloki N. Madan: *Secularism in Its Place* (1987)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Triloki Nath Madan (b. 1933) is an Honorary (Emeritus) Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Economic Growth in Delhi.[I] He was born to a (Hindu) Pandit family in Kashmir, and depicts the past co-existence of Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir as having been a kind of a composite culture of intercommunal harmony, before religious differences were politically exploited.[II] He earned his PhD in Social Anthropology from the Australian National University in 1959, with a study of the Pandits of Rural Kashmir, which later became his first book.[III] In 1966, he was appointed Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Economic Growth. In the course of his career, he has held several guest and visiting positions in the US, Japan, Australia, France, and the UK. In 2008, Madan received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Indian Sociological Society. Some of his many publications include *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (1997), *India's Religions: Perspectives from Sociology and History* (2004), and *Images of the World: Essays on Religion, Secularism and Culture* (2006).[IV]

I For biographical information on Madan, see: "Curriculum Vitae," *Institute of Economic Growth*, January 2010, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20110725182448/http://www.iegindia.org/tnmadancv.pdf; Ute Wegert, "Die Säkularismus-Debatte in Indien: Indigene Tradition oder hegemoniales Konzept?" (Diss., Leipzig University 2014), accessed 26 June, 2024, https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:15-qucosa-184141, esp. 63–66; Triloki Nath Madan, "Am I an Educated Person? Reflections on 'Becoming' and Being': Tenth Foundation Day Lecture, 2016," National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://niepa.ac.in/download/Foundation%20day/Tenth_Foundation_Day_Lecture.pdf; Triloki Nath Madan and Sudhir Chandra, "T.N. Madan in Conversation with Sudhir Chandra," *Pratilipi*, accessed 26 June, 2024, http://pratilipi.in/2009/03/tn-madan-in-conversation-with-sudhir-chandra/.

II Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Critiquing Secularism," in *India Revisited: Conversations on Continuity and Change* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76–77, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195689440.003.0009.

III Triloki Nath Madan, *Family and Kinship: A Study of the Pandits of Rural Kashmir* (Bombay: India Publishing House, 1965).

IV Triloki Nath Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Triloki Nath Madan, ed., *India's Religions: Perspectives from Sociology and History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Triloki Nath Madan, *Images of the World: Essays on Religion, Secularism and Culture* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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Madan himself divides his academic career into three distinct periods: 1) the study of family relations and kinship, 2) the study of the medical profession, and 3) the study of religion.[V] Given the context of this volume, it will come as no surprise that the text presented here is an early example from the third of these periods. Madan's *Secularism in Its Place* is – together with Ashis Nandy's *Anti-Secularist Manifesto*[VI] – undoubtedly a key source for the heated Indian intellectual debate on secularism in the 1980s and 1990s. This debate continues to the present day, as documented by the later texts of Rajeev Bhargava and Sudipta Kaviraj (see text no. 37, and text no. 46). Madan published this critical essay in the context of the resurgence of religiously imbued conflicts, known as communalism in India, and the rise of the Hindu right, which has been underway since the late 1980s.[VII] For Madan, one of the major problems for the realisation of political secularism in India is the simple fact of the prevailing religiosity of the majority of the people. In his view, the forces that had led to the partition of India, and the formation of two separate nation-states – India and Pakistan – as a result of communal politics, are still virulent. For Madan, these forces are not expressions of religious difference per se, but rather of its political instrumentalisation, which cannot be contained by political secularism (see van der Veer, text no. 28, Asad, text no. 56, Mahmood, text no. 64). Interestingly, his central argument seems to oscillate between outright particularism – stressing the alienness of ('Western') secularism to the cultures of South Asia – and the reconstruction of a deeply rooted, but historically contingent, trajectory of the distinctions between the religious and the secular in contemporary India, which would need to inform any political intervention to quell these conflicts.

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Triloki Nath Madan. "Secularism in its Place." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (1987): 748–58.

By asking me to speak to you here this evening, you have done me an honor, and I am grateful for it. I also know that you expect me to say something worthy of discussion: of my ability to do so I am doubtful, but I will try. You will have to show me great indul-

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V Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, "Between Custom and Conduct," *The Hindu*, July 1, 2011, accessed June 26, 2024, https://www.thehindu.com/books/between-custom-and-conduct/article2150742.ece.

VI Ashis Nandy, "An Anti-Secularist Manifesto," *Seminar* 314 (October 19859: 14–24).

VII Sushmita Nath, "Narratives of Secularity in 20th-Century India," in *Companion to the Study of Secularity,* edited by HCAS "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" (Leipzig: Leipzig University, 2019), accessed 26 June, 2024, www.multiple-secularities.de/media/css_nath_narrativesofsecularity.pdf.

gence, for the theme I have chosen, namely the prospects of secularism in India, is not only of immense significance but also very complex, and the time at my disposal is very limited. I will take a great deal for granted and plunge straight into my subject.

We live in a world which we call modern or which we wish to be modern. Modernity is generally regarded as both a practical necessity and a moral imperative, a fact and a value. When I say this I am not using the word "modern" in one of those many trivial senses which I trust we have by now left behind us. Thus, by modernity I do not mean a complete break with tradition. Being modern means larger and deeper things: for example, the enlargement of human freedom and the enhancement of the range of choices open to a people in respect to things that matter, including their present and future life-styles. This means being in charge of oneself. And this, you will recognize, is one of the connotations of the process of secularization.

You will recall that the word "secularization" was first used in 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe, to refer to the transfer of church properties to the exclusive control of the princes. What was a matter-of-fact statement then became later, after the French Revolution, a value statement as well: on November 2, 1789, Talleyrand announced to the French National Assembly that all ecclesiastical goods were at the disposal of the nation, as indeed they should have been. Still later, when George Jacob Holyoake coined the term "secularism" in 1851 and led a rationalist movement of protest in England, secularization was built into the ideology of progress. Secularization, though nowhere more than a fragmentary and incomplete process, has ever since retained a positive connotation.

As you know, "secularization" is nowadays generally employed to refer to, in the words of Peter Berger, "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols" (1973: 113). While the inner logic of the economic sector perhaps makes it the most convenient arena for secularization, other sectors, notably the political, have been found to be less amenable to it. It is in relation to the latter that the ideology of secularism acquires the most salience.

Now, I submit that in the prevailing circumstances secularism in South Asia as a generally shared credo of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impracticable, and as a blueprint for the foreseeable future impotent. It is impossible as a credo of life because the great majority of the people of South Asia are in their own eyes active adherents of some religious faith. It is impracticable as a basis for state action either because Buddhism and Islam have been declared state or state-protected religions or because the stance of religious neutrality or equidistance is difficult to maintain since religious minorities do not share the majority's view of what this entails for the state. And it is impotent as a blueprint for the future because, by its very nature, it is incapable of countering religious fundamentalism and fanaticism.

Secularism is the dream of a minority which wants to shape the majority in its own image, which wants to impose its will upon history but lacks the power to do so under a democratically organized polity. In an open society the state will reflect [p. 748/749] the character of the society. Secularism therefore is a social myth which draws a cover over

the failure of this minority to separate politics from religion in the society in which its members live. From the point of view of the majority, "secularism" is a vacuous word, a phantom concept, for such people do not know whether it is desirable to privatize religion, and if it is, how this may be done, unless they be Protestant Christians but not if they are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs. For the secularist minority to stigmatize the majority as primordially oriented and to preach secularism to the latter as the law of human existence is moral arrogance and worse – I say "worse" since in our times politics takes precedence over ethics – political folly. It is both these – moral arrogance and political folly – because it fails to recognize the immense importance of religion in the lives of the peoples of South Asia. I will not raise here the issue of the definition of religion: suffice it to say that for these peoples their religion establishes their place in society and bestows meaning on their life, more than any other social or cultural factor.

Unable to raise the veil of its illusions, the modernist minority in India today is beset with deep anxieties about the future of secularism in the country and in South Asia generally. Appeals are made day in and day out to foster a modern scientific temper, of which Jawaharlal Nehru is invoked as a principal exponent. Books are written and an unending round of seminars held on the true nature and significance of communalism and how to combat it. In fact, there is much talk these days in the highest political quarters about the need for stern legislative and executive measures to check the rising and menacing tide of majority and minority fundamentalism and revivalism, and this even as the so-called Hindu society continues splintering.

An astonishing (or should one say impressive?) consensus among Indian Muslims about preserving the Shari'a, or "holy law," against what they consider the legislative onslaught of a godless state but others call the indispensability of a common civil law as a foundation of the modern state, was witnessed in 1986 in connection with the rights of Muslim divorced women (the Shah Bano case). This has now been followed by the biggest-ever public protest by Muslims since Independence forty years ago, held at New Delhi on March 30, 1987, to demand full possession of a sixteenth-century mosque in the city of Ayodhya in north India, which was built after Babar's invasion at what Hindus believe to have been the birthplace of godincarnate Rāma. The whole country held its breath, fearful of a counter demonstration of strength by the Hindus; it took place but luckily there was no major communal flare-up. Meanwhile, Sikh and Hindu fundamentalists continue to face one another in Panjab, and innocent people are killed every day by Sikh terrorists. Social analysts draw attention to the contradiction between the undoubted though slow spread of secularization in everyday life, on the one hand, and the unmistakable rise of fundamentalism, on the other. But surely these phenomena are only apparently contradictory, for in truth it is the marginalization of religious faith, which is what secularization is, that permits the perversion of religion. There are no fundamentalists or revivalists in traditional society.

The point to stress, then, is that, despite ongoing processes of secularization and deliberate efforts to promote it, secularism as a widely shared worldview has failed to make headway in India. Obviously what exists empirically but not also ideologically

exists only weakly. The hopes about the prospects of secularism raised by social scientists in the years soon after Independence – recall the well-known books by Donald Eugene Smith (1963) and Rajni Kothari (1970) – have been belied, notwithstanding the general acceptability of their view of "Hinduism" as a broadly tolerant religion. Acute observers of the sociocultural and political scenes contend that signs of a weak[p. 749/750]ening secularism are in evidence, particularly among the Hindus. Religious books, a recent newspaper report said, continue to outsell all the others in India and, one can be sure, in all the other South Asian countries. Religious pilgrimages attract larger and even larger congregations counted in millions. Buildings of religious worship or prayer dot the urban landscape. New Delhi has many new Hindu temples and Sikh *gurudwaras*, and its most recent modern structure is the Bahai temple facing the old Kalkaji (Hindu) temple, thrown open to worshipers of all faiths late last year. God-men and gurus sit in seminars and roam the streets, and American "Hare Krishnas" take the initiative in organizing an annual *ratha yātrā* (chariot festival).

While society seethes with these and other expressions of a vibrant religiosity, the feeble character of the Indian policy of state secularism is exposed. At best, Indian secularism has been an inadequately defined "attitude" (it cannot be called a philosophy of life except when one is discussing the thought of someone like Mahatma Gandhi or Maulana Azad) of "goodwill towards all religions," *sarvadharma sadbhāva;* in a narrower formulation it has been a negative or defensive policy of religious neutrality (*dharma nirpekshtā*) on the part of the state. In either formulation, Indian secularism achieves the opposite of its stated intentions; it trivializes religious difference as well as the notion of the unity of religions. And it really fails to provide guidance for viable political action, for it is not a rooted, full-blooded, and well-thought-out weltanschauung, it is only a strategem. It has been so self-confessedly for fundamentalist organizations such as the Muslim Jamāʾat-i-Islāmī (see Mushir-ul-Haq 1972: 11–12). I would like to suggest that it was also so for Jawaharlal Nehru, but let me not anticipate: I will have more to say about Nehru's secularism in a short while. Just now, let me dwell a little longer on the infirmity of secularism.

Now, what exactly does the failure of secularism mean? For one thing, it underscores the failure of the society and the state to bring under control the divisive forces which resulted in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Though forty years have passed and the Midnight's Children are at the threshold of middle age, tempers continue to rage, and occasionally (perhaps too frequently) blood even flows in some places, as a result of the mutual hostility between the followers of different religions.

What produces this hostility? Surely not religious faith itself, for even religious traditions which take an uncompromising view of "nonbelievers" (that is, the followers of other religions) speak with multiple tongues and pregnant ambiguity. The Qurʾan, for example, proclaims that there should be no coercion in the matter of faith (2:256). Even an agnostic such as Nehru acknowledged this before the burden of running a secular state fell on his aging shoulders. As long ago as 1936 he said, "The communal problem is not a religious problem, it has nothing to do with reli-

gion" (1972–82, 7:82). It was not religious difference as such but its exploitation by calculating politicians for the achievement of secular ends which had produced the communal divide.

It is perhaps one of the tragedies of the twentieth century that a man who had at the beginning of his political career wanted above all to bridge religious differences should have in the end contributed to widening them. As is well-known, the young Muhammad Ali Jinnah was a nonpracticing Muslim in private life and a secularist in public, but later on he (like many others, Hindus and Sikhs as well as Muslims) played with the fire of communal frenzy. Inevitably, perhaps, he became a victim of his own political success, of, as Ayesha Jalal puts it, "an unthinking mob, fired by blood lust, fear and greed" (1985:216). I should think he too realized this, for, without any loss of time, four days before the formal inauguration of Pakistan, he [p. 750/751] called upon his people to "bury the hatchet" and make common citizenship, not communal identity, the basis of the new state (see Sharif ul Mujahid 1981:247). And within a month he reiterated: "You may belong to any religion, or caste, or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the state" (Jinnah 1947 – 48:8). How close to Nehru he was, and, though he pulled himself far apart for the achievement of his political goals, he obviously remained a secularist.

Tolerance is indeed a value enshrined in all the great religions of mankind, but let me not underplay the historical roots of communal antagonism in South Asia. I am not wholly convinced when our Marxist colleagues argue that communalism is a result of the distortions in the economic base of our societies produced by the colonial mode of production and that the "communal question was a petty bourgeois question par excellence" (Bipan Chandra 1984:40). The importance of these distortions may not be minimized, but these analysts should know that South Asia's major religious traditions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism – are totalizing in character, claiming all of a follower's life, so that religion is constitutive of society. In the given pluralist Situation, both tolerance and intolerance are expressions of exclusivism. When I say that South Asia's religious traditions are "totalizing," I am not trying to argue that they do not recognize the distinction between the terms "religious" and "secular." We know that in their distinctive ways all four traditions make this distinction. I wish I had the time to elaborate on this theme, but then there is perhaps no need to do so here. What needs to be stressed, however, is that these religions have the same view of the relationship between the categories of the "religious" and the "secular."

My studies convince me that in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism this relationship is hierarchical (in the sense in which Louis Dumont uses this term). Thus, though Buddhism may well be considered as the one South Asian religious tradition which, by denying supernatural beings any significant role in human life, has the most secularist potential, yet this would be an oversimplified view of it. What is important is not only what Emile Durkheim so clearly perceived, namely the central importance

of the category of the "sacred" in Buddhism, but also (and more significantly in the present context) the fact, so well documented for us by Stanley Tambiah (1976) that the *bhikkhu,* or the world renouncer, is superior to the *chakkavatti,* or the world conqueror, and that neither exists by himself. Similarly, in every Sikh *gurudwaras* the sacred sword is placed for veneration at a lower level than the holy book, the *Granth Sähab,* which is the repository of the Word (*shabad*), despite the fact that, for the Sikhs, the sword too symbolizes the divinity or, more accurately, the inseparability of the spiritual and the religious functions.

I trust you will allow me to speak at a little greater length about Hinduism and Islam. I would have liked not to go all the way back to the *Rig Veda* of three thousand years ago, were it not for the fact that it presents explicitly, employing a fascinating simile, the hierarchical relationship between spiritual authority and temporal power. It would seem that originally the two functions were differentiated, but they were later deliberately brought together, for the regnum (*kshatra*) could not subsist on its own without the sacerdotium (*brahma*) which provided its principle of legitimacy. Says the king to the priest: "Turn thou unto me so that we may unite . . . I assign to you the precedence; quickened by thee I shall perform deeds" (see Coomaraswamy 1978:8). The very word used for the priest, *purohita,* points to precedence. What is [p. 751/752] more, the priest and the king are united, as husband is to wife, and they must speak with one voice. This is what Dumont would call hierarchical dyarchy or complementarity. Even if one were to look upon the king and the *purohita* as dissociated (rather than united) and thus contend that kingship had become secularized (see Dumont 1980:293), the hierarchical relation between the two functions survives and is even emphasized. The discrete realms of interest and power (*artha*) are opposed to and yet encompassed by *dharma.*

[. . .]

I might add here parenthetically that in traditional Brahmanical political thought, cultural pluralism within the state was accepted and the king was the protector of everybody's *dharma:* being *that* was *his dharma.* Only in very exceptional circumstances, apprehending disorder, might the king have used his authority to abrogate certain customs or usages (see Lingat 1973:226). Hence the idea of a state religion was not entertained.

I will say no more about the ancient period but only observe that some of these traditional ideas have reverberated in the practice of Hindu kings and their subjects all the way down the corridors of time into the twentieth century (see Mayer 1982). Even today, these ideas are relevant in the context of the only surviving Hindu monarchy of the world, Nepal, where the king is considered an incarnation of God and yet has to be consecrated by the Brahman royal priest.

In our own times it was, of course, Mahatma Gandhi who restated the traditional point of view in the changed context of the twentieth century, emphasizing the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. "For me," he said, "every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion" (see Iyer 1986:391). And, more specifically, there is the well-known early state-

ment that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (Gandhi 1940:383). For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life; politics were the arena of public interest; without the former the latter would become debased. While it was the obligation of the state to ensure that every religion was free to develop according to its own genius, no religion which depended upon state support deserved to survive. In other words, the inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context, and generally, was for Gandhi fundamentally a distinct issue from the separation of the state from the church in Christendom. When he did advocate that "religion and state should be separate," he clarified that this was to limit the role of the state to "secular welfare" and to allow it no admittance into the religious life of the people (see Iyer 1986:395). Clearly the hierarchical relationship is irreversible.

Let me now turn briefly to Islam. Traditionally Islam postulates a single chain of command in the political domain: God-Prophet-caliph-king. God Almighty is the ever-active sovereign of His universe, which is governed by His will. In his own life Muhammad symbolized the unity of faith (*din*) and the material world (*dawla*). His successors (*khalifa*) were the guardians on whose authority the kings ruled. They (the kings) were but the shadow of God on earth, holding power as a trust and answerable [p. 752/753] to their Maker on the Day of Judgment like everybody else. In India, Ziya-ud-Din Barni, an outstanding medieval (mid-fourteenth-century) theologian and political commentator, wrote of religion and temporal government, of prophets and kings, as twin brothers, but without leaving the reader in any doubt about whom he placed first (see de Bary 1970:459–60).

In the twentieth century, Muhammad Iqbal occupies a very special place as an interpreter of Islam in South Asia. Rejecting the secularist program of Turkish Nationalists, he wrote: "In Islam the spiritual and the temporal are not two distinct domains, and the nature of an act, however secular in its import, is determined by the attitude of mind with which the agent does it. . . . In Islam it is the same reality which appears as Church looked at from one point of view and State from another" (1980: 154). Iqbal further explains: "The ultimate Reality, according to the Quran, is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity. The spirit finds its opportunities in the natural, the material, the secular. All that is secular is therefore sacred in the roots of its being. . . . There is no such thing as a profane world. . . . All is holy ground" (ibid.: 155). In short, to use the idiom adopted by me, the secular is encompassed by the sacred.

An autonomous ideology of secularism is ruled out. This is how Fazlur Rahman (a most distinguished South Asian scholar writing on such subjects today) puts it: "Secularism destroys the sanctity and universality (transcendence) of all moral values" (1982:15). If secularism is to be eschewed, so is neo-revivalism to be avoided for its "intellectual bankruptcy" (ibid.: 13 7). Rahman argues that a modern life need not be detached from religious faith and should indeed be informed by it, or else Muslims may well lose their very humanity.

This excursus into South Asia's major religious traditions was important for me to make the point that the search for secular elements in the cultural traditions of this region is a futile exercise, for it is not these but an ideology of secularism that is absent and is resisted. What is important, therefore, is the relationship between the categories, and this is unmistakably hierarchical, the religious encompassing the secular. Louis Dumont recently reminded us that the doctrine of the subordination of the power of the kings to the authority of the priests, enunciated by Pope Gelasius around the end of the fifth century, perhaps represents "simply the logical formula for the relation between the two functions" (1983: 15). Indeed, the world's great religious traditions do seem to speak on this vital issue with one voice. Or they did until the Reformation made a major departure in this regard within the Christian tradition.

Scholars from Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch to Peter Berger and Louis Dumont have in their different ways pointed to the essential linkages among Protestantism, individualism, and secularization. You all know well Max Weber's poignant Statement that "the fate of our times is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'[. . .]" [. . .] This is not the occasion to go into the details of the well-grounded idea that secularization is a gift of Christianity to mankind, but it is important for my present concern to note that the privatization of religion, through the assumption by the individual of the responsibility for his or her own salvation without the intervention of the Church, is very much a late Christian idea. The general secularization of life [p. 753/754] in the West after the Reformation is significantly, though only partly, an unintended consequence of this religious idea. Luther was indeed a man of his times, a tragic medieval figure, who ushered in a modern age that he would hardly approve of. But let us not stray too far. How does all this bear upon my present theme, namely the prospects of secularism in India? I put it to you for your consideration that the idea of secularism, a gift of Christianity, has been built into Western social theorists' paradigms of modernization, and since these paradigms are believed to have universal applicability, the elements, which converged historically – that is in a unique manner – to constitute modern life in Europe in the sixteenth and the following three centuries, have come to be presented as the requirements of modernization elsewhere, and this must be questioned. Paradoxically, the uniqueness of the history of modern Europe lies, we are asked to believe, in its generalizability.

To put what I have just said in other words, secularism as an ideology has emerged from the dialectic of modern science and Protestantism, not from a simple repudiation of religion and the rise of rationalism. Even the Enlightenment – its English and German versions in particular – was not against religion as such but against revealed religion or a transcendental justification for religion. Voltaire's "dying" declaration was of faith in God and detestation of "superstition." Models of modernization, however, prescribe the transfer of secularism to non-Western societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts that these might have to offer. Such transfers are themselves phenomena of the modern secularized world: in traditional or tradition-haunted societies they can only mean conversion and the loss of one's culture,

and, if you like, the loss of one's soul. Even in already-modern or modernizing societies, unless cultural transfers are made meaningful for the people, they appear as stray behavioristic traits and attitudinal postures. This means that what is called for is translation; mere transfer will not do.

But translations are not easily achieved. As Bankim Chandra Chatterji (that towering late nineteenth-century Indian intellectual) put it, "You can translate a word by a word, but behind the word is an idea, the thing which the word denotes, and this idea you cannot translate, if it does not exist among the people in whose language you are translating" (see Chatterjee 1986:61). It is imperative, then, that a people must themselves render their historical experience meaningful: others may not do this for them. Borrowed ideas, unless internalized, do not have the power to bestow on us the gift and grace of living.

In this regard, I should like to point out that once a cultural definition of a phenomenon or of a relationship (say, between religion and politics, or society and the state) has crystallized, it follows that subsequent formulations of it, whether endogenous or exogenous, can only be *re*-definitions. Traditions posit memory. Given the fact of the unequal social distribution of knowledge and the unequal impress of social change, it is not at all surprising that some elements of tradition should survive better and longer among the ordinary people, who may not think about it but live it, and others among the intellectuals.

In short, the transferability of the idea of secularism to the countries of South Asia is beset with many difficulties and should not be taken for granted. Secularism must be put in its place: which is not a question of rejecting it but of finding the proper means for its expression. In multi-religious societies, such as those of South Asia, it should be realized that secularism may not be restricted to rationalism, that it is compatible with faith, and that rationalism (as understood in the West) is not the sole motive force of a modern state. What the institutional implications of such a position are is an important question and needs to be worked out. [p. 754/755]

I am afraid I have already spoken enough to invite the charge of being some kind of a cultural determinist, which I am not. I am aware of the part that creative individuals and dominant minorities play in changing and shaping the course of history. As a student of cultural anthropology I know that even in the simplest of settings cultures, ways of life, are not merely reproduced but are also resisted and changed, more in some places and times and less in others, more successfully by some individual or groups than by others.

[. . . p. 755/756. . .]

[Nehru] wrote that once the national state came into being it would be economic problems that would acquire salience; there might be "class conflicts" but not "religious conflicts, except insofar as religion itself expressed some vested interest" (1961:406). It is not, therefore, at all surprising that until the very end Nehru was puzzled and pained by Muslim separatism and was deeply distrustful of politicians who exploited

religion for political purposes; and yet he was contemptuous of those who took the religious question seriously. Not for him Iqbal's insistence that the cultural question was as important as the economic (see Malik 1963:253). The irony of it is that Iqbal too considered himself a socialist!

In the end, that is in 1947, Nehru knew that the battle at hand, though not perhaps the war, had been lost, that the peoples of the subcontinent were not yet advanced enough to share his view of secular politics and the secular state. A retreat was inescapable, but it was not a defeat. Sorrowfully he wrote in 1961, just three years before his death: "We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for 'secular.' Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. . . . It is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities" (see Gopal 1980:330).

Having thus described Indian secularism, he proceeded in line with his own earlier thinking on the subject: "Our constitution lays down that we are a secular state, but it must be admitted that this is not wholly reflected in our mass living and thinking. In a country like England, the state is . . . allied to one particular religion. . . . Nevertheless, the state and the people there function in a largely secular way. Society, therefore, in England is more advanced in this respect than in India, even though our constitution may be, in this matter more advanced" (ibid.:330–31). It is obvious that Nehru had not given up his trust of the secularization process, that his view of religion remained unchanged.

What is noteworthy, therefore, is Nehru's refusal (or failure) to use the coercive powers of the state in hastening this process. In this regard he invites comparison with Lenin and Ataturk, and, if you allow dictatorship, suffers by it. I do not have the time to discuss in any detail this instructively fascinating comparison or pose the question as to the conditions under which a part (state) may dictate to the whole (society), but let me say a few words about it, very briefly.

Take Lenin's position. Continuing the Feuerbach-Marx line he asserted that the religious question must not be advanced to "the first place where it does not belong at all" (see Dube and Basilov 1983: 173). To match this by action, he played an active and direct part in the formulation of the 1918 decree on "the separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church." While every citizen was in principle free to profess any religion, or none at all, he could not actively propagate it; what is more, the educational function of the Communist party ensured that "senseless ideas" arising from a false consciousness would be countered.

Similarly, Ataturk proceeded by one deliberate step after another, beginning with the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, of the religious orders in 1925, of Shariʾa courts in 1926, and of Islam as the state religion in 1928. The process of secularization was continued thereafter, and the changes effected were enforced strictly, with Kemal himself often setting the example in even minor points of detail (see Lewis 1968:239–93).

Contrast the internal coherence and sense of urgency of these two experiments with the uncertainties of the 1949 Indian Constitution, which sought to establish a

secular state (article 15) in a society which it allowed and even encouraged to be [p. 756/757] communally divided (articles 25–30). Under the rubric of "freedom of religion," it allowed citizens not only the profession and practice of their respective religions but also their propagation. Besides, it allowed the establishment of educational institutions along communal lines. A direct reference to secularism had to wait until 1976, when it was introduced into the preamble of the Constitution by the Fortyfourth Amendment.

It must be admitted here that the pluralistic situation which Nehru and the other framers of the Constitution faced was immensely more complex than anything that Lenin, and far less Ataturk, faced; yet the fact remains that Nehru did not use his undoubted hold over the people as a leader of the freedom movement and his vast authority as the head of government to bring communal tendencies under strict control. It is often said that he was too much of a liberal and a cultured aristocrat to think of strong-arm methods; I think he was also too optimistic about the decline of the hold of religion on the minds of people. He did not seem to take into consideration the fact that the ideology of secularism enhances the power of the state by making it a protector of all religious communities and an arbiter in their conflicts.

No wonder, then, that secularism as an alien cultural ideology, which lacks the strong support of the state, has failed to make the desired headway in India. What have done so are, apparently and by general agreement, Hindu revivalism and Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism. This brings me to the last of the observations I want to make, and I will also do this briefly.

Contrary to what may be presumed, it is not religious zealots alone who contribute to fundamentalism or fanaticism, which are a misunderstanding of religion, reducing it to mere political bickering, but also the secularists who deny the very legitimacy of religion in human life and society and provoke a reaction. This latter realization has been slow in coming to Indian intellectuals, but there are some signs of change in this regard. It is thus that old, familiar questions begin to be reformulated. The principal question of this address could be considered to be not whether Indian society will eventually become secularized as Nehru believed it would but rather in what sense it should become so and by what means. The limitations of secular humanism (so-called) and the falsity of the hope of secularists – namely, that all will be well with us if only scientific temper becomes generalized-need to be recognized. Secularized man can confront fundamentalism and revivalism no more than he may empathize with religion.

Maybe religion is not a fake as Marx asserted; maybe there is something eternal about it as Durkheim maintained. Perhaps men of religion such as Mahatma Gandhi would be our best teachers on the proper relation between religion and politics values and interests – underlining not only the possibilities of interreligious understanding, which is not the same as an emaciated notion of mutual tolerance or respect, but also opening out avenues of a spiritually justified limitation of the role of religious institutions and symbols in certain areas of contemporary life. The creeping process of secularization, however, slowly erodes the ground on which such men might stand. As

Ashis Nandy puts it, "There is now a peculiar double-bind in Indian politics: the ills of religion have found political expression but the strengths of it have not been available for checking corruption and violence in public life" (1985: 17). My question is, Is everything lost irretrievably? [p. 757/758]

I must conclude; but I really have no conclusions to offer, no solutions to suggest. Let me hasten to say, however, that I am not advocating the establishment of a Hindu state in India – not at all. It simply will not work. Should you think that I have been skeptical about the claims that are made for secularism, scientific temper, etc., and that I have suggested a contextualized rethinking of these fuzzy ideas, you would be quite right. You would also be right in concluding that I have suggested that the only way secularism in South Asia, understood as interreligious understanding, may succeed would be for us to take both religion and secularism seriously and not reject the former as superstition and reduce the latter to a mask for communalism or mere expediency. Secularism would have to imply that those who profess no religion have a place in society equal to that of others, not higher or lower.

Should you think further that the skepticism to which I have given expression has been easy to come by, cultivate, and accept, you would not be, I am afraid, quite right. Secularism has been the fond hope of many people of my generation in South Asia. But, then, that is my personal problem, and therefore let me say no more about it. I will end simply by recalling the following words of the young Karl Marx, spoken, of course, in a very different context: "Ideas which have conquered our minds . . . to which reason has welded our conscience, are chains from which we cannot break away without breaking our hearts; they are demons which man can vanquish only by submitting to them" (see Lowith 1982:23).

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28 Peter van der Veer: *The Secular Production of Religion* (1995)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Peter van der Veer (b. 1953) is a Dutch anthropologist, who studied in Groningen and Utrecht, and received his doctoral degree in 1986.[I] He has held positions at Utrecht University, the University of Pennsylvania, and VU Amsterdam. In Amsterdam, he was appointed as Professor of Comparative Religion, and became the first director of the university's Research Centre for Religion and Society, in 1992. He has also served as director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam, in Leiden. Van der Veer has held several visiting positions in the US, Europe, and Asia, and is an elected fellow of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2001, he received the Hendrik Muller Prize for an outstanding contribution to the humanities or social sciences. Peter van der Veer became director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany, in 2008, heading the Department for the Study of Religious Diversity. His research interests centre around the relationship between religion and politics, with a regional focus on Asia, and especially on colonial and post-colonial India. Among his authored and edited publications are *Religious Nationalism*, *Conversion to Modernities*, *Imperial Encounters*, *The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*, and *The Handbook of Religion and the Asian City*.[II]

I For biographical information on Peter van der Veer, see Peter van der Veer, "Interview with Peter van der Veer," interview by David Matthews, *Times Higher Education*, August 23, 2018, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.mmg.mpg.de/157325/THE_Interview_Peter_vanderVeer_2018-08-23.pdf; Irfan Ahmad, "The Oeuvre of Peter van der Veer," in *The Nation Form in the Global Age: Global Diversities*, ed. Irfan Ahmad, and Jie Kang, 45–71 (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 45–71, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85580-2_2; Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, "Prof. Dr. Peter van der Veer," accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.mpg.de/441085/study-of-religious-and-ethnic-diversity-van-der-veer; Emeritus Group Religious Diversity, "Peter van der Veer," accessed 26 June, 2024, http://www.vanderveer.mpg.de/.

II Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in South Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities. The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion, Nation, and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013); Peter van der Veer, ed., *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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Peter van der Veer's short text on *The Secular Production of Religion* is an early key work from a successful postcolonial strand of critique of secularisation theories, prominently put forward by anthropologists. Similar to Khan (see text no. 25 in this section), van der Veer attributes pre-colonial arrangements of religious tolerance in India to the necessities for maintaining power in a plural setting, establishing a shifting balance of power that was eventually disturbed by the British colonial administration. Through the enforcement of measures that were meant to establish a secular state, the colonisers unintentionally hardened religious boundaries, and eventually created the opposite effect. Van der Veer emphasises how the (post)colonial nation-state's transformative power vis-à-vis existing religious difference (similar to Asad text no. 56 and Mahmood text no. 64) led to the "production of religion" (see Dreßler on religionisation, text no. 17), and how these encounters led to different trajectories of secularities, which cannot be explained by a general secularisation theory that universalises European experiences on a shaky empirical basis. His considerations thus relate to the Indian debate on secularism (see Madan, text no. 27, Bhargava text no. 37, and Kaviraj text no. 46), and, in a way, preempt key motifs of the broader postcolonial discussion.

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Introduction

The theory of secularization is one of the most deadly master narratives in the social sciences. The boredom that takes hold of almost any audience when one speaks about contemporary religion is a striking effect of that narrative. Indeed, we already know everything that there is to be known about religion, namely that it declines. The success of industrialization, science and technology has made religion in the modern world obsolete. In sociological theories of modernity the transition from the pre-modern, rural community to the modern, industrial and urbanized society is marked by the decline of religion as an expression of the moral unity of society. Of course, there are differences of opinion and some debate does occur in this field. Most important among them is probably the debate between those who, like Bryan Wilson (1982), think that secularization is a modern process in which religion loses the central place in social life it previously occupied and those who, like David Martin (1978), think that the signifi-

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cance of religion varies immensely in different societies and that the overall assumption that religion was very important in the pre-modern period is indeed nothing but an assumption and probably a false one. Of these two schools of thought David Martin's is clearly preferable. Martin's ideas open up a field of inquiry instead of assuming that we know already everything there is to know.

We have to recognize, however, that all these theories of secularization only deal with Christianity in the West, that is Western Europe and the United States of America. Secularization theory then is a particular argument about the changing place of Christianity in modern Western society and not about religion as such. In the European discussion of secularization it is decline of church attendance and of numbers of churches which are good indicators of change. In the last decades of the nineteenth century there is such a decline in England which is aptly called 'the Victorian crisis of faith'. In the Netherlands, however, we do not have it in that period, but only almost a century later. In the United States we still do not see too much of it and there is no reason to expect that we will ever see it. The American [p. 5/6] churches have always been very creative in recruiting church members, as is witnessed over the last decades by televangelism. For Christianity church membership and church attendance are good indicators and from them we can only conclude that the historical picture is rather different from one Western society to another, so that a generalized secularization story will not do. This is not only true for the facts and figures of church attendance and membership, but also for the causal explanations of industrialization and rationalization, offered by secularization theory. For example, there is more evidence for religious expansion during the Industrial Revolution in England than for secularization. Similarly, there is currently a consensus among historians that the impact of scientific discovery, such as the one of Darwin, on the decline of religion has, previously, been much exaggerated.

If the secularization theory does not account for the history of Western Christianity, it is even less applicable to the history of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and most other religions. In the latter cases the question about church attendance and membership cannot even be raised, since there are no churches. The organization of religion, the place of religion in society, the patterns of recruitment are so different that not only secularization theory itself, but also the empirical and theoretical problems which are derived from it in the context of Western Christianity, become meaningless. This has not prevented social scientists like Ernest Gellner (1983) to universalize this ill-founded story about the West to include the rest. Since all societies modernize and secularization is an intrinsic part of modernization, all societies secularize, the rhetoric, dressed up as argument, goes.

In this paper I want to argue that our rejection of the theory of the secularization of society should not prevent us from looking at the more rewarding question of the secularization of the state or, in other words, the separation of state and church. To my mind state formation is the most important process affecting the location of religion in society. This is definitely not to say that the state is the determining factor which can explain everything, but rather that we have to examine the historical process in which

the relation between state and society gets defined to understand the shifting place of religious institutions and their hold on their constituencies. I will first examine the rise of the nation-state and its role in determining the place of religion in Europe, and especially in Britain. Secondly, I will discuss the role of the colonial state in British India in this regard. To anticipate my argument I will try to show that the secularity of the British state produced opposite effects at home and in the colony.

The Secular Nation-State

The Protestant Reformation split Western Christianity into Catholics and Protestants. Subsequently sovereigns had to deal with minorities in their realm who professed another faith than that of the ruler. This spawned a number of political [p. 6/7] problems in France, England, parts of Germany and the Netherlands which were ultimately solved in a variety of ways which I cannot discuss here. A major issue was the extent to which the state could allow difference of religious opinion. Such difference was invariably cast in terms of political loyalty. Toleration of difference and freedom of opinion was therefore not only an intellectual problem, but primarily a political one. Neutrality of the state in religious matters was clearly not a direct result of the Reformation. In Britain, for example, Henry V created the protestant Anglican Church as a state church in immediate opposition to Rome. Not only Catholic-Protestant conflicts emerged from that decision, but also within Protestantism conflicts between the state church and dissenting groups. In the Netherlands the Calvinist Church became the official public church and Catholics a minority, tolerated but not much more than that.

However long the intellectual discussion of religious toleration may have been in the Netherlands (Erasmus) and England (Locke), it was only in mid-nineteenth century that Catholics in these Protestant states were 'emancipated' from earlier discrimination. In England the enfranchisement of Catholics led to considerable political unrest and the Protestant fear of Rome continued to be a salient factor in politics till the late 19th century. The problematic inclusion of Catholics in what was thought to be an essentially Protestant nation led Cardinal Newman to argue that Catholicism was upholding medieval English spirituality and by that token was supremely national (Viswanathan 1995). What we find in the nineteenth century is the gradual encompassment of religious difference in the unity of nationalism, the religion of the nation. As Durkheim saw quite clearly, the divinization of the king shifted to the divinization of the people. Besides the depoliticized religion of the churches a secular religion of nationalism emerged. Church officials had to show that their church was not less national than that of others, so that political loyalty remained an issue even in the so-called secular nation-state.

This is what happened to the nation, but what happened to the state? Secularization of the state was not the result of the Reformation, but of the American and French revolutions. Both these revolutions carried, among many other things, a protest against

the direct connection between state and church. The problem of religious difference of opinion between ruler and ruled was solved by changing the polity through the creation of the nation-state, in which church and state became separated and nationalism the common religion of all citizens. Differences of religious opinion were not anymore the business of the state unless there was a clear conflict with the laws of the land. Liberal theories of the state clearly continued to recognize the need to restrict religious freedom in order to protect the social order. The separation of church and state implied a depoliticization of religion and a new definition of the body politic as the nation. This goes to say that a sharp analytical distinction between state and society misses the nature of that hyphenated phenomenon, the nation-state. The role of the state, though separated from the church, continues to be crucial in defining the place of religion in modern society. [p. 7/8]

The legacy of the American and French revolutions has not led to a complete separation of church and state in Britain. The Queen is still head of the state church and the bishops, appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, are present in the House of Lords. Not only is the state to a significant degree Christian, but also British politics, at least till World War II, cannot be understood without taking religion and church-state relations into account.

For these reasons it is simply unwarranted to see Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the period of High Colonialism, as a secular society. The state is not secular and the nation is not secular. Nevertheless, there is a gradual decline of church membership and attendance in society and a concomitant gradual diminishing of the role of religion in politics from the turn of the century. As I have already argued above, these developments cannot be explained by secularization theory. Instead we need to look at a process at the turn of the century in which the state expands its activities of welfare and education precisely in those areas which were previously dominated by religious organization. It is this expanded activity of the state which gradually alters the social significance of religious organization in the twentieth century. The gradual intrusion of an activist state in all spheres of social life fundamentally transforms an earlier dependence on religious institutions into one on state institutions. This is never a unilinear, clear-cut process, but still we can see a gradual transformation which leads after the second World War to the post-industrial welfare state.

The Colonial State

State formation in Europe cannot easily be compared to that in other parts of the world. Instead of the European transition of the absolutist state to the nation-state one finds in Asia huge, hardly integrated, imperial state systems which are gradually replaced by colonial states (van der Veer 1995). Moreover, the religions of Asia, such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, are so different from Christianity that the issue of the secu-

larity of the state cannot be simply raised in terms of the separation of state and church. That issue has a number of different implications in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Let us, for instance, look briefly at the eighteenth-century realm of the Nawabs of Awadh in what is now Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India. This was a large kingdom comparable in size to France or England. The Nawabs were Shi'a Muslims who had been important officials in Delhi, the capital of the Mughal empire, before they became more or less independent rulers. Their control over the [p. 8/9] kingdom was considerable, but still limited, since they constantly had to deal with the possible loyalty or disloyalty of powerholders, such as the Hindu raja of Benares. The population of the kingdom was in majority Hindu, but there was also a sizeable Sunni Muslim minority and a small Shi'a Muslim population. An important element in the Nawabi administration was the role of the Hindu caste of Kayasths who supplied the ministers and main officials. A certain tolerance of religious difference was essential to such a kingdom. This does not mean that religious difference did not matter politically, but simply that toleration was necessary for this kind of kingdom to exist. The expansion of the British from Bengal into this kingdom at the end of the eighteenth century seriously weakened the power and authority of the Nawabs. It was only in 1856 that the British dissolved the kingdom and made Awadh (Oudh) a province of British India, but long before that they already effectively controlled most of its administration. It was the decline of the Nawab's power that enabled religious leaders of various communities to upset the delicate balance that had characterized the kingdom. Some serious religious conflicts occurred in the holy city of Ayodhya just before the British took over power entirely.

The meaning of this story is that toleration of religious difference in this precolonial kingdom very much depended on political will and power. Centrifugal tendencies of a religious nature or otherwise could be repressed by an administration which could not simply be identified with one group or another. This is not to say, however, that the kingdom of Awadh was secular. On the contrary, it was a state, symbolically legitimized by Shi'a rituals and discourses, in which Shi'a religious specialists were state officials. This kind of state, however, depended on the cooperation of elites whose cultural differences were clearly recognized, but not the main subject of politics. All this was changed by the British.

India may have been full of religion already, but the British brought again another religion into play. However much they emphasized their religious neutrality, they were perceived as Christians. Each of their administrative innovations was thus not only seen as modern, but also as Christian. The British did much to disavow any connection to the missionary project and to Christianity as such, so that one can speak of a definite secularity of the British state in India which was much stronger than in Britain itself. There was a very sharp separation of Church and State which the British thought essential to their ability to govern India. Externality and neutrality were the major tropes of a state which tried to project itself as playing the role of a transcendent arbiter in a country divided along religious lines. The fact remains, however, that the Indians did not make that clear a distinction between British state and Christian church. Indeed, as I have

argued above, such a distinction did not make much sense to them anyway. A distinct feeling that the modernizing project of the colonial state was Western and thus Christian in nature remained important. Although the legitimizing rituals and discourses of the colonial state were those of development, progress and evolution and meant to be secular, they could easily be understood as essentially Christian. The response both the state and the missionary [p. 9/10] societies gained was also decidedly religious. Hindu and Islamic forms of modernism led to the creation of Hindu and Muslim schools, universities and hospitals. Far from having a secularizing influence on Indian society the modernizing project of the colonial state, in fact, gave religion a strong new impetus.

In the following account I will, briefly, indicate how the colonial state, despite its professed secularity, in many ways stimulated the expansion of indigenous religion. While the state projected itself as a neutral outsider it directly interfered with every aspect of Indian society, but most notably with gender and caste. To start with gender the British involvement with this area set off a whole chain of reformist reaction in Hinduism which led to a considerable expansion of religious activity. I am referrring here to the colonial interference with the practice of SATI (widow-immolation) in India which the British abolished in 1829. It is an instructive case, since it shows that, although the colonial state only interfered with practices which offended liberal sensibility too much, the unintended effects of such interference were much larger.

[. . . p. 10/11. . .]

As a consequence nationalism became decidedly Hindu in nature with an emphasis on the domestic sphere, symbolized by the modest, Hindu woman. The abolition of SATI by the colonial government thus set a far-reaching series of Hindu responses in motion which led to the formation of modern conceptions of public and private through which nation and religion got defined.

Another set of unintended consequences resulted from the colonial project of enumerating and describing the Indian population. The power of the secular, colonial state to define people's identities, their customs and general characteristics, their languages and their religions to an important extent created and/or reified the phenomena it had set out to describe. At one level this documentation project was necessary for the state to be able to govern a vast, unknown population. At another level, however, it constituted, by its very logic, new senses of identity and category. For the census operations, starting in the 1870s, this has been powerfully argued by Bernard Cohn (1987). In particular the phenomenon of caste received a new salience as the major census category. The census tried to rank castes hierarchically and used the Brahmanical system of Brahman (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (commoner), Shudra (slave) to do this on an All-India basis. The documentation and certification of difference in hierarchical terms obviously created considerable efforts on the part of the classified to enhance their ranking. Caste associations emerged to petition the census commissioners to change their ranking. Caste groups in different parts of the country which had had nothing to do with eachother [sic] 'discovered' a common cause. Since the caste rankings were ultimately compiled on an All-India basis jockeying for better status also got organised on that basis.

Through their efforts the census collectors created a nation of castes. This was further enforced by connecting spurious caste characteristics to job and educational opportunities. For example, the British thought that some castes were 'martial', others 'intellectual' or 'effeminate' and the recruitment for certain services came to be limited to castes which had the required characteristics. In this manner casteism worked as a kind of racism and, indeed, there was a direct connection between arguments about 'caste' in the colonial ethnography of India and 'race' in the Victorian science of human evolution (Bayly 1994). [. . . p. 11/12. . .]

Very important was also the colonial effort to improve the situation of disadvantaged tribes and untouchable castes by putting them on a list ('schedule') for preferential treatment. For these so-called 'scheduled' tribes and castes places were reserved in education and state employment as well as parliamentary seats in elections. Here a secular colonial government directly interfered with caste society with the most noble of purposes, as in the case of SATI, but with the disastrous consequence that caste reservations have become one of the two most significant political facts in post-colonial India. [. . .]

Caste society is directly underpinned by Hindu religious ideas and there can be no doubt that the secular colonial state (as well as its successor) did much to strengthen the political salience of caste. Similarly its project of enumeration, documentation and certification strengthened and altered the political significance of religious community. For example, Richard Fox (1985) has argued strongly that Sikh identity has been the product of British colonial measures such as the specific recruitment of Sikhs as soldiers in the army. In that way a loosely integrated culture, in which 'Sikhs' had a variety of multiple, overlapping identities, was replaced by a more strongly integrated culture based on a 'Sikh' religious identity which had clear economical and political advantages. I find Fox's argument somewhat overdrawn (see van der Veer 1994:55–56), but it is correct to the extent that colonial policies, to an important extent, have assisted the formation and growth of Sikh religious nationalism. The same is true for Hindu and Muslim nationalisms in India. As Arjun Appadurai (1993) has recently argued, separate Hindu and Muslim identities were constructed at the macro-level not just into 'imagined communities', but more directly into 'enumerated communities'. To be a Hindu or a Muslim in different parts of India meant a number of quite different things before the census-operations started to divide and enumerate them. The colonial politics of political representation directly depends on counting and thereby created a political arena, in which 'communities' competed for jobs and services. More in general, this reminds us that enumeration, the division of populations in majorities and minorities, plays a crucial role in modern democratic [p. 12/13] politics and, indeed, often a genocidal one, as could be witnessed in the Partition of India in 1946.

Conclusion

The notion of the secularity of the state, shown by the separation of state and church, is obviously a most complex one both in colonizing Britain and colonized India, since it shows the contradictory workings of modern power in the world system. In Britain the state has never been separated from the church, but at the same time it has been gradually able to marginalize and depoliticize religious institutions. The colonial state in India, on the contrary, has been in a number of ways promoting a Christian secularism of liberation and progress without giving support to a Christian missionary effort. It created a separation of state and church in colonial Christianity, but in doing so it failed to depoliticize the indigenous religions. Its modernizing policies transformed and strengthened the force of indigenous religious identities to the extent that they are now the most important political fact in the Indian subcontinent. Under colonial circumstances the secular state created its opposite, a society in which religion had more rather than less political consequences.

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29 Abdolkarim Soroush: *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam* (2000)

Introduced by Sana Chavoshian

Introduction

Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945, Tehran, Iran) is an Iranian Islamic thinker, philosopher, political reformer, and public intellectual. He studied pharmacy and analytical chemistry in Tehran and London, before completing a PhD in the history and philosophy of science. Shortly after the 1979 revolution, Soroush returned to Iran, where he worked as a professor, and was one of the seven members of the Cultural Revolution Committee intended to purge Iranian academia of Western and non-Islamic threads. He proved to be a loner in both contexts. As a professor of philosophy at Tehran University, his rationalist approach, inspired by thinkers such as Karl Popper, did not match the predominant discourse in the faculty – resulting in long-standing confrontations with the prominent traditionalist thinkers there, who were influenced by Martin Heidegger's philosophy. As a force of the Cultural Revolution, he held a positivist and liberal position, defending science against ideological Islamisation. Despite his controversial roles and growing fame, Soroush remained in the shrinking circle of post-revolutionary intellectuals who were close to Ayatollah Khomeini all through the 1980s. It was only in 1989, after Khomeini's death, that he became viewed as a dissident figure in eyes of the Islamic regime, following the publication of his seminal work, *The Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Shari'a*. The work was published in a series of articles, first in the monthly *Keyhan-e Farhangi* magazine, and later in its newly founded replacement journal, *Kiyan*. In *Contraction and Expansion*, Soroush follows a systematic distinction between religion and religious knowledge: while the first has a transcendental and supra-temporal nature, the second is historical, and is subject to the development and growth of human knowledge. Religious knowledge, Soroush argues, is contingent and collective, just as all fields of knowledge are. His assumption about the collective nature of religious knowledge promoted a radical religious pluralism beyond the walls of Islamic seminaries and Islamic jurists' authorities. He framed an epistemological venue for discussing the limits and truthfulness of religious claims, seeing religious interpretations as plural and diverse; this was in direct confrontation with the Islamic government's ideological claims to being the sole bearer of *the* (religious) truth.

As a result of his work, Soroush's situation became increasingly difficult, with violence sometimes breaking out during his public lectures. He was openly attacked by Islamists. Consequently, he took temporary fellowships in Harvard, Princeton, and at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, and later moved to the US.

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As we did not obtain the rights to reprint the text that we had chosen in full in an open access publication, we are only able to include an extended quote from the text. It is part of a lecture that Soroush delivered at Imam Sadiq Mosque in Tehran, in 1994, the year before *Contraction and Expansion* was published as a book. He develops his argument along the same lines as in the book, "regard[ing] religious knowledge as ephemeral to lay the foundation of a *religious* democratic state."[I] To do so, he defines secularism with reference to (a) a scientific approach to governance, (b) a transformation of the language of religion from obligations to rights, and (c) a reliance on nonreligious reason. As a result of the paradigm shift in understanding religious knowledge in modern times, man is no longer bound to religiously legitimised social hierarchies, and is, instead, an individual with inalienable rights. From there, he comes to the conclusion that postrevolutionary Iran's prevalent principles of "the guardianship of the jurisconsult" (*velayat-e faqih*) and "the Islamic government" (*hokoumat-e Islami*) conflict with the mentality of modern humanity, as well as with most modern political philosophies that base the idea of the state on the principles of the rights of human beings as individuals. The argumentation he develops is similar to that developed by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*, where Taylor argues that religion has become merely an option: "In my judgment, this is one of the main reasons behind the failure of the modern world to comprehend the principles of 'the guardianship of the jurisconsult' [*velayat-e faqih*] and 'the Islamic government' [*hokoumat-e Islami*] that prevail in postrevolutionary Iran. The government founded on the guardianship of the jurisconsult as based on duties as it is, conflicts with the mentality of modern humanity as well as with most of the modern political philosophies that base the idea of the state on the principles of the rights of human beings. In the latter system the people, who are endowed with rights, exert them by electing their leaders to a government that guarantees to protect the public good. In this sense government serves and manages more than it rules. By contrast the government based on the guardianship of the jurisconsult is based on duties. Because the religious law (*fiq'h*) views human beings as duty-bound, everything starts with obligations: people are obliged to vote, obey the leader, and form a government because they have already accepted a series of religious principles and injunctions.

We can observe the modern transformation of duties into rights in the sphere of religion as well. In the modern world people have the right (not the duty) to have a religion; they are free to be religious or nonreligious. By contrast, idea of duties prescribes an obligation to be religious and deems both the government and the people as guardians of faith. The difference between these two ideas is clear. The guiding principle of the former view is *performing* (as in performing prayers), while the latter case is based on the prospect of *realizing* (as in realizing profits.) With the assumption of duties the

I Abdolkarim Soroush, "Qabz va Bast-e Theorik-e Shari'at" [Contraction and Expansion] (Tehran: Serat Cultural Institution, 1995), 106.

He approaches religiosity here as the realm of believers who carry a hue of their values in their political decisions, i.e. a Muslim democratic state rather than an Islamic one.

society is seen as a temple whose purpose is to please its creator. The viewpoint of rights envisions society as a marketplace where the aim is satisfying the members. The former pursues the satisfaction of the creator, the latter that of the people. [. . .] One of the most important problems of all religious governments lies in whether they recognise the rights of people on a basis that is independent from the religious law. The issue of the choice between guardianship [*velayat*] and representation [*vekalat*] belongs to this general area. To regard the ruler as the guardian is consistent with the view of a duty-bound society, while considering the leader as a representative implies a society based on rights. All of our problems stem from attempts to combine these two attitudes."[II]

Soroush, then, draws on a conception of "religious democracy" – not as a new social form of organisation with religious principles, but as a secular mode of ruling that accounts for the religious ethics of the population. Later, he further explained his notion of a secular state through a distinction between "philosophical secularism" and "political secularism" – the first term is based on the Western Christian history of colonialism, whereas the second, functional term defines the sources of legitimacy of the state's neutrality.[III] During a lecture in Paris in 2007, Soroush once again revised his position, referring to "militant secularism" that is "less tolerant" and "has lost its ability to approach different religious traditions equally." In his new reading, the entanglement of secularism and neo-liberalism obfuscated the fruitful coexistence between secularism and religion, as vividly experienced in the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the banning of the Hijab in France's schools.

In recent years, Soroush has written a theological work about the experience of revelation by Prophet Mohammad, titled "Prophetic Dreams." His interventions in Iran's 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprisings have been discussed polemically on social media.

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II Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 62–63.

III Abdolkarim Soroush, *Tradition and Secularism* [in Persian] (Tehran: Serat Cultural Institution, 2001).

30 Wang Gungwu: *Secular China* (2003)

Introduced by Hubert Seiwert

Introduction

Wang Gungwu, born in Indonesia in 1930, is one of Asia's most eminent historians. He was Chairman of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore and was conferred the title of University Professor, the highest honour bestowed by this university. He is also an Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University. Wang received numerous awards for his outstanding academic achievements. He is a Commander of the British Empire; Fellow and former President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities; Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Science; Member of Academia Sinica; Honorary Member of the Chinese Academy of Social Science.[I]

Wang has written numerous books and articles covering a wide range of topics, from the history of China, migration, nationalism, and global encounters to international relations. One of his recent books is *China Reconnects: Joining a Deep-rooted Past to a New World Order* (2019).[II] In the article partly reprinted here, he also connects historically deep-rooted structures of Chinese society with modern developments. Despite fundamental differences in the worldview of the traditional Confucian elites and today's communist leadership, he sees a continuity in the secular orientation of thought and action. Wang emphasises that the Chinese have been primarily concerned with the worldly and the temporal from ancient times. It is significant that ancient texts already contain terms that could be used to translate the modern word 'secular'. Despite the importance of religion in the population's everyday life, the secular character of public affairs was the norm. The comparison between China and Europe shows that the different forms of secularity and secularism in modern times are influenced by cultural traditions that go far back into the history of both civilisations.

I For Wang Gungwu's life and work, see Gregor Benton and Hong Liu, eds., *Diasporic Chinese Ventures*: *The Life and Work of Wang Gungwu,* Chinese Worlds (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Asad-Ul Iqbal Latif and Wang Gungwu, *Wang Gungwu*: *Junzi – Scholar-Gentleman in Conversation with Asad-ul Iqbal Latif* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010); Zheng Yongnian and K. K. Phua, *Wang Gungwu*: *Educator and Scholar* (Singapore: World Scientific Pub, 2013).
II Wang Gungwu, *China Reconnects: Joining a Deep-rooted Past to a New World Order* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2019).

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[. . .][1]
I started thinking about secularism in our part of the world about two years ago and first spoke about it at a conference on Japan. There had been, for some time, much talk about failed states and failed economies. Japan was a shining example of how quickly a country could be modernised. So was Korea, following Japan's success; and also Taiwan and the other little dragons. And then there was China reinventing and transforming itself at an amazing pace. All this had led many scholars to talk about what these countries had in common and there was also much talk about Confucianism. What caught my attention was the worldliness that all these areas shared and why these countries were never described as secular, even when it was the secular part of the western success model that appealed most readily to all of them.

My thoughts on this subject came to a head when, after the 11 September tragedy, Bernard Lewis and many others highlighted the rejection of the secular as one of the main reasons why fundamentalist Islam turned inwards and became hostile towards modernity.[2] At the Japan conference held a few weeks after the tragedy, I began to ask about the future of secular values. This was accompanied by my curiosity about why the word secular was not used about China even though China has been strongly this-wordly, and could even be described as extremist in its attitudes towards religion and the spiritual life since the early twentieth century. [. . . p. 307/308]

All of you are familiar with the origins of the word [secular] as derived from European languages and cultures. It had many shifts in meaning and emphases throughout European history, but it has always been associated with the Christian church, and normally evaluated in terms of relationships with that church. Beginning with a 'secular'

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1 [note * in the original] Paper presented at the Second Giri Memorial Lecture, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, February 21, 2003.

2 [note 1 in the original] Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152–57. Another example was Michael Howard, "Stumbling into Battle," *Harper's*, January 2002), p. 17.

as opposed to a 'religious' clergy, it had evolved to mean the civil, lay and temporal and then, to heighten the contrast even more, the word was used to stress opposition to the church and underline the non-religious and non-sacred. Ultimately, it became conceivable to 'secularise' a person or an institution, and turn someone or something away from religious or spiritual purposes to material and worldly ones. Not surprisingly, these incremental changes in Western European countries, while they modernised themselves after the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, ultimately led to an ideology of secularism.[3]

During the mid-nineteenth century, this ideology began to take shape. The emphasis was placed on taking issues of morality away from its dependence on religious doctrine and redefining a system of values that would be concerned with the wellbeing of people in this life alone. It can be said that Europe and the Christian west have been steadily secularising along these lines for the past 500 years. The United States followed that tradition, and has a constitution that clearly separates church and state on many issues. However, because of its different history where religious freedom is concerned, there remains considerable opposition at the grass roots-level to an ideology of secularism. Nevertheless, throughout the west, there is a general assumption that modernity demands that the most careful attention be paid to affairs of this world and not the next. [. . . p. 308/309. . .]

As mentioned earlier, the adjective secular is rarely used for China in western writings. This is largely because the connotations of separation of church and state obviously did not apply to China. Given that specific usage, the lack of a church may render the word unusable when we speak of socio-political phenomena in China. In his *Economic Ethics of the World Religions,* Max Weber noted that the Chinese lacked a special kind of religious ethic, and both his translator, Hans H. Gerth, and CK Yang who introduced the religion of China did not use 'secular' to describe that lack. I found it interesting that the few references to secularism in China have come from recent Catholic writings. They point to the way that the present government in Beijing seems to have moved to a position whereby the state is persecuting Christians (and, more specifically, Catholics who look to Rome and are deemed unpatriotic). These writings suggest that what is happening may be compared to the way the Beijing authorities have pulled out all the stops in pursuing the followers of the Falungong.[4]

3 [note 3 in the original] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularisation of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Alan D. Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularisation of Modern Society* (London: Longman, 1980).

4 [note 5 in the original] I do not suggest that China is secular in the sense that there had been any kind of church-state relationship, only that there is a secular China that has been dominant for most of the past two thousand years. There are modern references to the secular nature of teachings by philosophers like Confucius, for example, Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). Understandably, secular has not been used to describe the mixed and complex nature of China as a whole; C.K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Func-*

What I want to emphasise is that the Chinese have been primarily concerned with the worldly and the temporal from ancient times. This means that, unlike the west which had to deal with a powerful church for centuries, the Chinese had begun with a secular outlook that ensured that no church could be established to challenge political authority. In short, we may say that in Europe the secular evolved from a religious core or, as some might argue, the secular departed from a religious norm, whereas in China, what was worldly was the norm. This worldliness was taken so much for granted as the foundation of Chinese [p. 309/310] life that the Chinese have not found it necessary to emphasise the words needed to convey the idea of being secular. Indeed, when the European concept of secular was introduced to China, there was some difficulty finding the right word to capture its specific meaning. Religious affairs were never so influential in China that an indigenous concept was needed to determine how to deny or minimise the power of religion. Over the past century, the only idea of European secularism that attracted the attention of Chinese leaders and intellectuals was that of 'secular education'. The Chinese were struck by the strenuous efforts made by many western states to keep religion out of their public schools. In this context, the Chinese chose the word *shisu* to translate secular as being the closest rendering of the idea of church-state separation, but that did not alter the fact that the Chinese had no idea what an official church meant.

The Chinese word for secular consists of two characters: the first is *shi* 世, meaning a lifetime or generation, or an age or era and, inspired by Buddhist thought, is the time warp of what constitutes the word for 'world' (in Chinese, *shijie* 世界, the world). The other character is *su* 俗, and this refers to common customs, the popular and vulgar matters that most people live with, or think that life is all about. Together, *shisu* 世俗, the word underlines everything in life that is this-worldly. But *shisu* is not a modern word. It dates back to the beginnings of Chinese written history centuries before the unification by Qin Shihuang in the third century BC. When the word was first used, it already represented the normal established expectations of the common people, those ways and customs that were transmitted from generation to generation. There was a strong sense of continuity, but at a lower social level. The task of transmission here was not the higher task of transmitting the *Dao* or the way (*chuandao*) or of the classics or sutras (*chuanjing*). This kind of separation between the higher and the lower continui-

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tions of Religion and Same of their Historical Factors (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961); Marcel Granet, *The Religion of the Chinese People* [1922]. Translated by Maurice Freedman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism.* Translated by Hans H. Gerth [1951], Introduction by C.K. Yang (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), pp. xiii–xliii. In recent writings, 'secular' has been used for Tibet where the 'church' is seen to be in conflict with the 'secular state'. Similarly, articles by Christians on religion in China do now mention secular China. Two recent essays not published in religious magazines are worth noting: Jason Kindopp, "China's War on 'Cults'", *Current History,* 2002, pp. 259–66, and Franz Schurmann, *Predictions #75,* 2000, on the challenge of Falungong to 'secular forces' in China (www.pacificnews.org.html).

ties did not have a European equivalent. Indeed, modern social science (in this case, the anthropologists) had to devise the idea of the Great Tradition in contrast to that of the Little Tradition in order to suggest that this separation was not at all like that between church and state. In that context, the idea of the secular may seem to imply that the Little Tradition of the common people is worthy of official support. [. . . p. 310/311. . .]

It is significant that the Chinese found an ancient word to translate the modern idea of the secular, albeit not precisely, because there had been no history of church-state separation. The word *shi* meaning a generation or an age, was close to the original meaning of *saeculum,* 'an age', and had been similarly extended to apply to 'this world'. And the word *su* captures what was lay, nonreligious and non-sacred. Of particular importance to our understanding of the long history of a secular China is the fact that the ideograph *shi,* of this world, was one of the most commonly used words in the Chinese language. I could go on at length to illustrate this by listing the numerous ways this expression of the worldly combines with other characters to convey some of the more materialistic features of Chinese society and culture. However, let me briefly outline what this signifies.

The key is found in the fact that the word represents the continuity of lifetimes and generations. This is at the heart of the Chinese family system that Confucius and his disciples so strongly supported as the foundation of human order and harmony on earth and under heaven. Heaven and earth go on forever, and the third leg of the trinity, man, had to do his part to match that continuity, and this was to be done on this earth. Here, the spirit and ghosts of ancestors could link the present with the past, and what man did on earth in his lifetime, could contribute to shaping the future of his descendants. In this worldly lifetime on earth, man could engage in sacral actions through elaborate rituals, and some of the practices might have provided spiritually satisfying experiences to those who engaged in them. Many anthropologists today would say that they were comparable to religious acts, if not their exact equivalents. And this has given rise to the idea of secular religions, and we have evidence that this is prevalent in modern China.[5] [p. 311/312]

Let me return to the idea of a China that has been secular throughout most of its history. Insofar as the philosophers and generations of officials have emphasised the centrality of worldly matters in all public affairs and the rationality of all their duties, there may not be much room for dispute, but it was, of course, not that simple. During the ancient Shang dynasty (15–11 [centuries] BC), there had been considerable stress on religious ritual pertaining to the royal ancestors, and elaborate methods of divination were devised to guide public actions. The successor rulers of the Zhou dynasty (11–3 [centuries] BC), in their concern for dynastic maintenance and renewal, turned to

5 [note 7 in the original] The best example for China is the 'worship' of the god-like Mao Zedong at the height of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution; see Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic.* 3rd edition (New York: The Free Press), pp. 291–350.

more rational uses of the royal rites of heaven-worship, and this tendency was further strengthened during the centuries of division that lasted some 500 years down to 3 [century] BC. When the hundreds of little polities fought one another until only seven major states remained during the period of the Warring States, the secularisation of public affairs became the new norm. The emergence of several groups of activist teachers and thinkers who offered their services to the seven contending ruling houses, led to a greater emphasis on practical matters like economic surpluses, efficient armies, and tough administration as the basis for political success. In all the major writings preserved from this period that form the backbone of Chinese thought, there has been a uniform acceptance that it was successful life on this earth, however defined, that really mattered. And this applied to ruler, functionary and commoner alike.

The most successful of the thinkers were Confucius and his disciples, the Legalists and for a while, Mo Zi and his more plebeian followers. It was probably no accident that the Legalists provided the advice that brought about the unification of China. They were the most ruthless, logical, practical and secular of them all. [. . . p. 312/313. . .]

This strong emphasis on worldly success sidelined the reservations put forth by major thinkers like Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi and their later followers, as well as other alternative visions presented by those who also rejected the new Confucian orthodoxy. The predominance of such this-worldly values eventually led to an arid discourse based on moral exhortations that offered no spiritual solace to most people, whether high or low. There were constructive critics of official Confucianism from 1 [century] BC through the latter Han dynasty (AD 25–220). One could point to the much respected writings by people like Yang Xiong, Wang Chong and Wang Fu, but none of them could provide imaginative alternatives for those people who wanted a more spiritual life.[6] I believe that this lack of a spiritual alternative cleared the way for the powerful impact of Buddhism when it was first brought to the Han capital of Changan by Indian monks during AD 1 and 2 [centuries].

The success of Buddhism was indeed a dramatic story that has been well studied and I do not need to dwell on the events that led to the marginalising and enfeeblement

6 [note 9 in the original] The *Fa Yan* (Model Saying) of Yang Xiong (53 BC–AD 18) was a major philosophical text in the canon, noted in Michael Nylan and Nathan Sivin, 'The First Neo-Confucianism: An lntroduction to Yang Hsiung's "Canon of Supreme Mystery" (T'ai Hsuan ching, 4 BC)', in Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader (Eds), *Chinese Ideas about Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987), pp. 41–99. The *Lun Heng* (Doctrines Evaluated) of Wang Chong (27–ca. 97) is better known. lt has a full English translation in two volumes by Alfred Forke, published in 1907–11 and reprinted by (New York: Paragon Gallery, 1962). The *Qianfulun* (Discourses of a Recluse) of Wang Fu (ca. 76–ca. 157) has also been translated; Margaret J. Pearson, *Wang Fu and the Comments of a Recluse* (Tempe, AR: Centre for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1989). For an example of a more orthodox Confucian of the same period, see Ch'en Ch'i-yun, *Hsun Yueh AD 148–209): The Life and Reflections of an Early Medieval Confucian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); also the chapters by Loewe and Ch'en in *The Cambridge History of China. Volume I: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC–AD 220.* Edited by Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 661–725 and pp. 767–807.

of official Confucianism for nearly 300 years. The point I wish to make is that Han Confucianism had become so secular, so confident in its monopoly of public life, so negligent of the spiritual vacuum that it had helped to create among the common people, that thousands and eventually millions turned to the Buddhist faith not long after its introduction into China. [. . . p. 313/314 . . .]

Within a century after the end of the Confucian monopoly of public affairs, there were two rival organised religions that served the bulk of the population.

These two religions, however, did not succeed in removing the deep-seated secularity that dominated the public domain. Although the emperors of several dynasties during the period of division in both north and south China were staunch Buddhists and employed priests and devoted believers close to the throne, the functions of the state were still largely carried out along the lines established during the Han dynasty. After all, these functions had evolved over a period of several hundred years and had proven to have been valuable instruments of imperial power and vital to every dynasty that was ambitious to end divisions and reunify the empire. We could almost speak of the centrality of a secular political culture that had permeated public concerns to such an extent that no religion or religion-based systems could replace that culture. Thus, despite imperial patronage, Buddhist ideals of government did not last and, whenever the emperors faced serious threats to their rule, they turned for help to worldly Confucians who were committed to public service. And again and again, the Confucians showed their resilience, their capacity to ride the religious storms and offer secular havens for most ruling houses to survive longer, if not achieve the unification that guaranteed a more lasting peace for all.

When I was last with Giri Deshingkar at Sariska, I wrote about the importance of the famous *Record of the Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang,* the *Luoyang qielanji,* by Yang Xuanzhi (d. 555?), completed in the year 530.[7] For me, that work marked the epitome of the Buddhist conquest of China. Today, I shall mention two other works of the same period of division before the reunification by the Sui emperor in 589 to illustrate the resilience of the secular culture of earlier times. The first is *A New Account of Tales of the World,* the *Shishuo xinyu,* sponsored by Li Yiqing (403–44), completed 100 years earlier than the *Monasteries of Luoyang,* in about 430.[8] The second is the *Family Instructions for the Yan* [p. 314/315] *Clan,* the *Yanshi jiaxun,* by Yan Zhitui (531–91), completed

7 [note 10 in the original] *A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang.* Translation by Wang Yi-t'ung (published by Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). This has also been translated by W.F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsuan-chih and the Lost Capital, 493–535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

8 [note 11 in the original] *Shih-shuo hsin-yu: A New Account of Tales of the World.* Translation by Richard B. Mather (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976). A new edition, *New Account of Tales of the World,* has been published in Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 2002.

160 years later.[9] Both works have become classics worthy to be listed with all the great works of ancient China that stand for the Chinese tradition of secularity. [… p. 315/316…]

In short, these two works reflected a deep-rooted Confucian secularism that had become lean and tough while at the same time surprisingly adaptable. That enabled Confucians to survive and make compromises with other elites when they found alternative values and ideas that they could use for the service of more worldly causes. This ability was to prove decisive again when Confucian thought regained prominence during the latter half of the Tang dynasty. Two decades after the court turned against the Buddhist monasteries in the ninth century, the Tang empire collapsed, followed by over sixty years of fragmentation. During these years, the desire for a return to a centralised state based on the secular ideals of Confucianism grew stronger. Indeed, the Song emperors after 960, as they began to reunify what they could of the Tang empire, set out deliberately to restore Confucian principles of governance. [… p. 316/317]

I am obviously oversimplifying here because this lecture is not a history of Confucian thought. What needs to be underlined, however, is the fact that, despite drastic political upheavals at the end of the Han, and then, at the end of the Tang dynasties, there was a strong return to secular Confucian values. What followed during the Song dynasty were even more trials and tribulations for this neo-Confucianism. The dynasty was militarily weak in spite of educating the most literate administration in Chinese history, and neo-Confucianism did not have a magic wand to wave away the series of tribal-led invaders that tormented the dynasty until the Mongols finally conquered all of China in 1279. When Khubilai Khan established the Yuan dynasty and brought the ways of the steppelands into the Chinese political system, there was little room for Confucian principles. The bulk of the literati educated for public service were unemployed and the Mongols openly turned to Buddhist and Taoist advisors, and even some Muslim administrators from Central Asia, in order to strengthen their control over the Chinese populace. How the Confucians survived this major onslaught on their public profession is a remarkable story, but perhaps the most remarkable feature of that survival was how their commitment to secular principles remained intact till the opportunity came for them to prove themselves useful again.[10]

An equally dramatic change came about when the Mongols were thrown out in 1368. A former Buddhist monk, possibly supported by rebels with a Manichaean reli-

9 [note 12 in the original] Yen Chih-t'ui (Yan Zhitui), *Family Instructions for the Yen Clan: Yen-shih Chia-hsun*, an annotated translation by Teng Ssu-yu. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968. For a broad survey of the decline of Confucian philosophy during the fourth to sixth centuries, see Paul Demieville's essay, chapter 16 (and Timothy Barrett's Postscript) in *The Cambridge History of China. Volume I: The Ch'in and Han Empires*. pp. 826–78.

10 [note 17 in the original] Jennifer W. Jay, *A Change of Dynasties: Loyalism in Thirteenth Century China* (Bellingham, W A: Western Washington University Centre for East Asian Studies, 1991), pp. 243–64; also John D. Langlois Jr. (Ed.), *China under Mongol Rufe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), essay by Langlois, 'Political Thought in China under the Mongols', pp. 137–85.

gious background, came to the throne, and he immediately brought all the Confucians he could trust to help him restore Chinese secularist rule. However, this was not because he was fond of Confucian ideals. What impressed him was the dedicated way these Confucians were trained to serve the dynastic house and their willingness to use the examination system to produce more people of the same mould.

Throughout the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), there was a tension between Confucian scholars and various groups of court favourites. The Ming emperors invariably placed the interests of the ruling house above all else, and any of the Confucian scholars who did not conform were treated very harshly indeed. But the secular values that had served the Confucians so well over the centuries continued to protect their role at court.

When the dynasty was overthrown, once again by invaders from the northern borders, this time the Manchus who established the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the new rulers brought their own amalgam of Shamanism mixed with Buddhism. But they too recognised the value of the Confucians. Although literati families all over the empire had vigorously resisted Manchu rule for many years, there were Confucians who were prepared to offer their secular skills to the new regime. Indeed, the Manchus wooed them by reviving the examination system. [p. 317/318] They insisted on the secular orthodoxy that most Confucians were ready to support, and recruited them to administer the civilian parts of government under close Manchu surveillance. The successful officials were also encouraged to turn to scholarship and give learned support to the orthodox Confucianism that the dynasty favoured.[11]

It is with this background in mind that some scholars have wondered whether a secular China could offer an alternative modernity to that established by Europe. Therefore, would the real questions be: How quickly and thoroughly could China update its secular achievements? In what ways could China's secularism mesh in, or converge with, the modern secularism set forth in the European model?

China's defeats by the west in the nineteenth century clearly proved that the Chinese were technologically behind, their legal and administrative systems had obvious weaknesses and their imperial power structure, no match for a coalition of modern nation-states. But, in terms of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment project and the secularist breakthrough that flowered in Europe in the nineteenth century, the great gap in China that a new generation of Chinese intellectuals identified, was its lack of science and a

11 [note 18 in the original] Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 187–222, captures the tensions between a Manchu emperor and the bureaucratic system he inherited. Other works show how Han officials dedicated themselves to scholarship: R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasures: Scholars and the State in the Later Ch'ienlung Era* (Cambridge; MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1987); Kaiwing Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Benjamin A. Elman, *Classicism, Politics, and Kinship: The Ch'ang-chou School of New Text Confucianism in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990).

scientific spirit. This discovery led the young revolutionaries of the twentieth century not only to destroy the despotic power structure that a Manchu-supported Confucian orthodoxy had reinforced, but also to reject everything that did not meet the standards of the new scientific truths that they brought in from the west.

In the excitement, they were convinced that a scientific materialism could replace everything in their traditions, and that everything that was not scientific was superstition. The speed at which some turned to godless communism has attracted much comment. The point to emphasise here is that this scientific thrust was supported by China's own worldly materialist traditions. The new thrust simply went much further towards its logical conclusion and acquired fundamentalist characteristics that the earlier secularism had avoided. Once it was decided that the past was all superstition and despotism, it was easy to reach the conviction that science and democracy would solve all China's problems, as Chen Duxiu, the first secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party, was to pronounce on behalf of the rebellious young some ninety years ago.[12] [p. 318/319]

What the new leaders of China did this past century was to build on its traditional secularism and turn modern science into a fundamentalist secular creed. As a result, the Chinese state became extremist in its total rejection of religion and in its contempt for any spiritual quest that sought solace in organised faith. In its most extreme form, this secular faith encouraged the destruction of churches, temples, monasteries and mosques during the frenzied years of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Since 1978, though, there has been a restraint. The worst forms of anti-religious acts have been condemned, and official recognition of the four 'established' religions (or five if Catholicism is separated from Protestant Christianity) has been restored. On the surface, there has been a return to something comparable to the superior but tolerant attitude that Confucian mandarins had about popular religions in pre-modern China. But a strong residue of secular fundamentalism remains. Unlike the earlier secularism, where the elites empathised, if not fully shared, the religious and spiritual premises that governed all lives in China, today's 60 million members of the Chinese Communist Party are expected to scorn anything that does not have a scientific pedigree.[13] It is not clear how this will evolve in the decades to come. If the fundamentalists prevail, religion will continue to be suspect and only state-approved doctrines and practices will be allowed. Any departure from what may be seen as no more than 'secularised

12 [note 19 in the original] Chen Duxiu's famous statement made in 1919, quoted in Wang Gungwu, 'May Fourth and the GPCR: The Cultural Revolution Remedy', in *The Chineseness of China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 241.

13 [note 20 in the original] Jiang Zemin's Preface to a popular science series, 'Raise High the Scientific Quality of the Whole Nation' (23 December 1999) and the hundreds of essay on similar themes collected in the *Zhongguo jingshen wenming jianshe nianjian 2001* (China Cultural and Ethical Progress Yearbook). (Beijing: Xuexi Publishers, 2002), 1116 pages. These essays reflect the extraordinary efforts made to transmit a secular spirit among the young in China.

state religions' would be put down as acts of rebellion or threats to social order. But, if traditions of governance rooted in Confucian secularism survive and are restored as guides to ruling practices, there are other possibilities. One scenario suggests that a CCP mandarinate will emerge that would tolerate religious believers and even admit some into the Party and allow them to emerge among the ruling elites of the land. Under those circumstances, fundamentalist secularism would gradually be modified to the point when a modern secular state genuinely tolerant of religious pluralism is accepted as the norm. [. . . p. 319–321. . .]

It was not the same as European secularism, nor that of India, but what directed the evolution of China was certainly secular.

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31 Ian Reader: *Ideology, Academic Inventions and Mystical Anthropology* (2004)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Ian Reader (b. 1949), a renowned expert of religion in Japan, is a professor emeritus of Japanese and Religious Studies, at Lancaster University. He completed his Bachelor's degree in History at the University of Reading. After that, Reader spent several years travelling in Asia, Africa and North and Central America, before completing an MA on religion in Africa, at Bristol University, and a PhD on the Sōtō Zen Buddhist organisation in Japan, at Leeds University. He then taught for five years at Japanese universities. Before he became professor at Lancaster University, he worked at the Scottish Centre for Japanese Studies at the University of Stirling in Scotland, and at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies in Copenhagen, Denmark. He was also a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii. In 2007, he left Lancaster temporarily to establish a Japanese Studies degree program at the University of Manchester, before returning to Lancaster in 2012. He retired in autumn 2015. Reader's research interests are varied, and include religion in the modern world, with a special focus on Japan, religious decline, and secularisation. Regarding the latter topic, Reader has strongly refuted sociologists of religion such as Rodney Stark and José Casanova, who took Japan as an example of the vigour of religion in the modern world, and of the untenability of secularisation theory.[I] He has published several books on pilgrimage and religion, including *Pilgrimage in the Marketplace* and *A Very Short Introduction to Pilgrimage*.

The text excerpted here is a direct response to Timothy Fitzgerald's criticism of Ian Reader and other experts on religion in Japan (see text no. 10 in section 1). He argues that Fitzgerald fails to provide historical evidence for his claim that the distinction between the religious and the non-religious was only imported from the West in the Meiji period, and that this claim is thus useless for understanding Japanese culture. Rather, a source-based study of Japanese religious history suggests that analogous distinctions were, indeed, quite common in pre-modern Japanese culture. Subsequently, Ian Reader has elaborated upon this argument.[II]

I Ian Reader, "Secularisation, R.I.P.? Nonsense! The Rush Hour Away from the Gods and the Decline of Religion in Contemporary Japan," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1, no. 1 (2012): 7–36.
II Cf. Ian Reader, "Problematic Conceptions and Critical Developments: The Construction and Relevance of 'Religion' and Religious Studies in Japan," Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions 3 (2016): 198–217.

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[. . .] Central to Fitzgerald's work is the claim is [sic] that the category 'religion' is a particular Western colonial construction that has been exported to and arbitrarily imposed – along with its partner in crime, the 'secular' – on other cultures such as Japan. In the case of Japan his argument is that Japan prior to Meiji made no distinctions between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious' – terms he uses synonymously with 'religion' and the 'secular'. 'Religion' and its concomitants, the 'secular' or the 'non-religious' are terms that developed out of specific Western contexts and are categories that do not work in the Japanese context, because they come with a particular culturally weighted baggage and infer a 'special, set-apart' category or realm that has no place or no basis in Japanese cultural terms. Since there is no division between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious' these notions should be abandoned in favour of another (Western-derived!) term, 'ritual'.

Fitzgerald unfortunately produces no empirical evidence to substantiate his claim that 'religion' as a category that stands apart in some way from the 'non-religious' or the 'secular' did not exist in pre-Meiji Japan. Rather, he assumes that pre-Meiji Japan made no differentiation between the two, asserts this point as if it were a given, and then moves on to state that the category was therefore imposed in the Meiji era as a result of Western influences. The argument is thus tautologous and rests on an unfounded assumption. And, like all such arguments, it falls flat if – as is the case here – the assumption on which it was based is incorrect. [. . .]

Fitzgerald provides no substance to his claim that certain distinctions and concepts (e.g. 'religion' and the notion of 'religion' as a 'set-apart' sphere of existence) were imported at Meiji and must therefore be a Western, colonial imposition. The problem here is that Fitzgerald appears to be only minimally aware of Japanese history and religion[1] when making such comments. He fails to note, for example, that distinctions between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious' have been a recurrent element in Japanese history since at least the eighth century onwards. The Ritsuryō Codes of the eighth century, for example, sought to develop a synthesis of politics, religion, culture and

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1 [note 1 in the original] I note that, in this response I am going to use the word 'religion' not only because I remain unconvinced by Fitzgerald's arguments about its lack of applicability, but also because it appears to me to be a useful term to relate to both to pre-modern institutions such as temples and Buddhism, and to the modern uses of *shūkyō*.

state: the need to legally institute a synthesis itself indicates that people at the time were aware that these elements occupied different spheres of interest and hence needed some legislative process to link them together for the sake of government. The Ritsuryō laws seeking synthesis also recognised that these diverse elements had particular interests which needed to be safeguarded and to have their integrity preserved. Hence certain types of institutions (Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines) were given particular rights because of their nature, related to the worship of particular types of being and their association with other realms, and were marked out legally and in tax terms as different from institutions (e.g. feudal estates) that had mundane orientations. Equally, those who served such institutions were seen as a special category of people because of their ordinations as monks, nuns and shrine priests, and were subject to different regulations to people in ordinary society.[2] The granting of special tax concessions and status to institutions such as temples and shrines that enshrined what Fitzgerald calls 'mystical powers' which pertain not only to this but also to other realms, thus occurred even before the Heian era in Japan. While we are very much aware of the post-war laws that have granted special status in tax and other terms to bodies legally constituted as 'religious organisations' (*shūkyō hōjin*), we should not assume that the construction of such special status is either a post-war innovation or a product of post-Meiji westernisation and the introduction of new 'set-apart' categories. The notion that such forms of institution should be differentiated from society and treated as a special category has been around for a very long time in Japan. One notes, too, that the Ritsuryō government also had a Department for Kami Affairs (*Jingikan*) which indicates that, in the eyes of those who ran this system, matters relating to these entities could be distinguished from other aspects of the realm and placed in a special category to be administered by its own particular arm of government.

Equally, after the Heian Court in the early ninth century permitted the Tendai sect to establish its own ordination platform, Buddhist orders were able to establish a form of self-governing authority that marked them out from the rest of society. Indeed, the degree of autonomous power – including the ability to maintain armies of monks – that Buddhist institutions wielded was a notable feature of Japanese history until Oda Nobunaga's destruction of Mount Hiei in the sixteenth century. Such legal differentiations, and the concept that certain types of order, institution and person, occupied special categories related to their adherence to particular realms of influence, are very much in evidence, too, in the continuing links and struggles from the Heian until the early modern era between the concepts of *ōbō* [王法] (also written as *ōhō*), Imperial law (i.e. law as generated by the state and predicated upon state authority, needs and privileges) and *buppō* [仏法] the Buddhist Law (law predicated upon the religious orientations and claims of Buddhism, and linked to the claims of privilege, special treatment and priority made by those who claimed to represent the law of Buddhism in this temporal

2 [note 2 in the original] See Teeuwen and Scheid 2002 p. 199, and also Kitagawa 1987 pp. 87–90.

sphere, i.e. the monks and their institutions). These two were interrelated, and the ways in which one or other had the upper hand in the relationship shifted from era to era. They were central, too, to Japanese conceptualisations of the state and religion in pre-Meiji times. The two operated in tandem, with worldly authority supporting and giving patronage to Buddhist temples, while spiritual authority *buppō* represented by that crucial component of the Buddhist world view, the *sangha*, the Buddhist community of practitioners and institutions, gave moral and ritual support to worldly authorities.

Yet if they existed in a mutually beneficial and interdependent relationship, they were conceptualised as different entities. There were spheres for the Emperor and state – and spheres for Buddhist institutions and their specially defined community which, because they functioned under the *buppō* and provided moral support for the state, were given privileges denied other institutions. And because of this special status, too, Buddhist priests were a class apart – indicated by their taking of the tonsure, special vows and forms of dress that marked them out as different from, and related to another world to, members of ordinary society. As late as the Tokugawa era this difference was evident in the ways in which they were subject to extremely severe punishments (not applicable to ordinary people) if they violated the moral codes of the Buddhist law. (Here one might note, too, since Fitzgerald seems so keen on close semantic analysis of words, that a 'religious' is someone who is bound by monastic vows, while a 'secular' is a member of the laity, someone not bound by monastic vows – a differentiation that is certainly found in Western cultures but that is also in evidence in societies such as Japan, which also historically differentiated in law and status between those bound or not by monastic vows.)

The *ōbō-buppō* dyad, in other words, indicates a reality of pre-Meiji Japan: that Japanese thought worlds conceived of and were well aware of a differentiation between types of institution and areas of activity and thought. As such, too, one could argue that formal attempts to separate 'religion' from the political in the Meiji era were driven as much, or more, by the clear wish of the authorities to reduce or remove the influence of the religious sphere in public life, as they were by any wish to 'construct' a special set-apart sphere called 'religion' to accord with western sensitivities. [. . .]

It might be argued by some that these differentiations could be explained via other vocabularies (e.g. sacred-profane or *sei-zoku* [聖俗]) and that we do not need 'religion', the 'secular' and the 'non-religious' to identify them. Yet this would be something akin to semantic juggling, not about the existence or otherwise of differentiated categories, but about the terms that might be used to apply to them. It would still create the same types of category structures and set some things apart from others, and undermine the basic assumption that no such differences existed pre-Meiji. It fails to counter the basic point that in pre-Meiji Japan – as after – certain types of institution, place, people and beings were distinct from (even if they related to) the mundane world.

Even when he relies on the term *shūkyō* [宗教] to substantiate his arguments, Fitzgerald errs, appearing to think that the term did not exist prior to Meiji, an assumption found in this article and expressed more overtly elsewhere, where he claims that

the term was invented in the 19th century, 'specifically coined in the 1860s under foreign pressure' (Fitzgerald 2003 p. 222). This is wholly wrong and indicative of the problems in Fitzgerald's scholarship. I admit it is an assumption I might have helped create in my statement (in Reader 1991a, p. 14) that *shūkyō* was a 'derived word that came into prominence' at Meiji, and if so I apologise for causing confusion. This statement is not quite correct, since it glosses over a long history. The term *shūkyō* certainly is derived, but from Chinese Buddhist terminology, first appearing in Chinese Buddhist texts, where it is used as a reference term for Buddhism. In such contexts it came to Japan, where it appears, as far as I am aware, for the first time in Japanese documents during the Tempyō era (729–749), to indicate institutions that were accorded special privileges because of their status in such terms. It crops up – admittedly in specialised contexts, and in the writings of sectarian traditions, rather than in popular discourse – throughout the next eleven centuries. In the Zen tradition, for example, *shūkyō* was used to indicate Buddhist traditions whose authority was based in textual transmission rather than (as Zen liked to see itself) in direct personal transmission from an enlightened master. In seventeenth century Tendai tracts, the term is used to identify specific schools and traditions within the Pure Land sects, which are termed *shūkyō*.

These are but a few examples of the uses of the word pre-Meiji. All of them point to a particular meaning that ties together the notions of an organisation or institutional identity (*shū* – sect/school) and a set of teachings (*kyō*) specific to it.[3] Such a meaning is not far from (one might argue, it is rather close to) nineteenth century notions of 'religion' as something framed by doctrine and organisation. I suppose one could propose an alternative word than 'religion' for translating or representing *shūkyō* in such pre-Meiji writings, although I am not sure quite what that word might be: maybe Fitzgerald could give us his opinion of how this term might best be translated or interpreted in these pre-Meiji sources?

There are various other examples of how the word *shūkyō* was used in pre-Meiji times to indicate specific, separate, and doctrinally constructed traditions and ways of teaching. Perhaps most strikingly, the term is used by the eighteenth-century thinker Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746) who used the term *shūkyō* to refer to specific, distinctive traditions in his 1745 tract *Shutsujo* (Emerging From Meditation) (translated and edited by Michael Pye (1990). Michael Pye has argued that Tominaga developed a

3 [note 4 in the original] For information on these points and on various uses and textual occurrences of *shūkyō*, including those mentioned above, one can consult numerous standard dictionaries such as the *Kokugo Daijiten* (1976 Vol 10, p. 238), the *Jidai betsu kokugo daijiten* (Muromachi jidai edition) 1994, p. 466, the *Kadokawa kogo daijiten* Vol 3, p. 265, and Nakamura Hajime's (ed.) *Bukkyō daijiten* (1989/2000), pp. 391–392. Any search of standard historical and other dictionaries would provide similar examples of this term. Given the ready availability of such information, I find it extraordinary that Fitzgerald can make such erroneous claims and appear so confused over the uses and historical nature of this term. It almost leads one to question his competence as a scholar of things Japanese, even as he appears to claim the mantle by engaging in linguistic arguments about Japanese terms.

critique of 'religion' and that his use of *shūkyō* was 'modern' in context (by which he means that it equates very much to Western concepts). In arguing that the term *shūkyō* 'meant none other than 'religion' as early as the first half of the eighteenth century', Pye states that 'religion had already been the object of sustained historical and systematic reflection' well before Western influences entered in the Meiji era and that, by the eighteenth century:

> two things are indisputable about the term *shūkyō* ..... it is a clear equivalent for 'religion' as in the phrase 'the study of religion', and it was not invented by westerners. (Pye 1994 p. 122).

[. . .] Thus, a basic cornerstone of Fitzgerald's argument (that the notion that one could separate out or differentiate between the 'religious' and the 'non-religious' was a Meiji invention imported from the west) is flawed. It is far more accurate to state that the intellectual tools and concepts relating to 'religion' as brought by Westerners in the nineteenth century lent themselves to the adoption of the term *shūkyō* in wider public discourse because *shūkyō* had a history that was associated with the types of concept that were implied by the Western term 'religion'. Indeed, it was because of these meanings that the word was able to be assimilated into discourse with Western missionaries and to be used as a standard translation of the (nineteenth century) term 'religion'. [. . .]

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32 José Casanova: *Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective* (2006)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

José Casanova (b. 1951, Saragossa, Spain) is a Spanish-American sociologist of religion, and professor emeritus at Georgetown University, Washington, where he previously taught in the Department of Sociology and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. He was also the head of the programme on *Globalization, Religion and the Secular* at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs in Washington, DC.

Casanova holds a BA in philosophy from the Seminario Metropolitano, Saragossa, an MA in theology from the University of Innsbruck, and an MA and a PhD in sociology from the New School for Social Research in New York. From 1987 to 2007 he taught sociology at the New School for Social Research. Since 2008 he has been professor of sociology of religion at Georgetown University.

His publications mainly focus on religion, secularisation, and globalisation. His best-known book is *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1994). It is also a contribution to the theory of secularisation, inasmuch as he questions the generalisability of the assumption of the privatisation of religion in the course of modernisation. He nevertheless claimed that differentiation is a generalisable feature of secularisation. On this point, he later entered into an exchange with Talal Asad (see text no. 56 in section 3), in which he relativised some of his previous positions, but nevertheless maintained objections to Asad's position.

In 2012, Casanova was awarded the Theology Prize from the Salzburger Hochschulwochen. In that field, his work on the Jesuits is especially significant. Accordingly, his bibliography features works like *Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges* (Georgetown University Press, 2016, with Thomas Banchoff). In 2017, he was the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the North at the U.S. Library of Congress' John W. Kluge Center. There he worked on a book manuscript on *Early Modern Globalization through a Jesuit Prism*.

In the selected text, Casanova deals with the relation between globalisation and secularisation, aiming to provide a "less Euro-centric comparative analysis of patterns of differentiation and secularization in other civilizations and world religions," and highlighting the multiplicity of secularisations and modernities.

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[. . . p. 10] [C]an the theory of secularization as a particular theory of European historical developments be dissociated from general theories of global modernization? Can there be a non-Western, non-secular modernity or are the self-definitions of modernity inevitably tautological insofar as secular differentiation is precisely what defines a society as "modern"?

I fully agree with Talal Asad that the secular "should not be thought of as the space in which real human life gradually emancipates itself from the controlling power of 'religion' and thus achieves the latter's relocation."[1] In the historical processes of European secularization, the religious and the secular are inextricably bound together and mutually condition each other. Asad has shown how "the historical process of secularization effects a remarkable ideological inversion. . .. For at one time 'the secular' was a part of a theological discourse [*saeculum*]," while later "the religious" is constituted by secular political and scientific discourses, so that "religion" itself as a historical category and as a universal globalized concept emerges as a construction of Western secular modernity.[2]

But Asad's own genealogy of the secular is too indebted to the self-genealogies of secularism he has so aptly exposed, and fails to recognize the extent to which the formation of the secular is itself inextricably linked with the internal transformations of European Christianity, from the so-called Papal Revolution to the Protestant Reformation, and from the ascetic and pietistic sects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the emergence of evangelical, denominational Protestantism in nineteenth-century America. Should one define these transformations as a process of internal secularization of Western Christianity, or as the cunning of secular reason, or both? A proper rethinking of secularization will require a critical examination of the diverse patterns of differentiation and fusion of the religious and the secular and their mutual constitution across all world religions. [p. 10/11]

The contextualization of categories should begin with the recognition of the particular Christian historicity of Western European developments, as well as of the multiple and diverse historical patterns of secularization and differentiation within

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1 [note 10 in the original] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christiantiy, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 191.

2 [note 11 in the original] Asad 192; see also Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

European and Western societies. Such a recognition in turn should allow a less Euro-centric comparative analysis of patterns of differentiation and secularization in other civilizations and world religions, and more importantly the further recognition that with the world-historical process of globalization initiated by the European colonial expansion, all these processes everywhere are dynamically interrelated and mutually constituted.

Multiple Differentiations, Secularizations, and Modernities

There are multiple and diverse secularizations in the West and multiple and diverse Western modernities, and they are still mostly associated with fundamental historical differences between Catholic, Protestant, and Byzantine Christianity, and between Lutheran and Calvinist Protestantism. As David Martin showed, in the Latin-Catholic cultural area, and to some extent throughout Continental Europe, there was a collision between religion and the differentiated secular spheres – that is, between Catholic Christianity and modern science, modern capitalism, and the modern state.[3] As a result of this protracted clash, the Enlightenment critique of religion found here ample resonance; the secularist genealogy of modernity was constructed as a triumphant emancipation of reason, freedom, and worldly pursuits from the constraints of religion; and practically every "progressive" European social movement from the time of the French Revolution to the present was informed by secularism. The secularist self-narratives, which have informed functionalist theories of differentiation and secularization, have envisioned this process as the emancipation and expansion of the secular spheres at the expense of a much diminished and confined, though also newly differentiated, religious sphere. The boundaries are well kept; only they are relocated, drastically pushing religion into the margins and into the private sphere.

In the Anglo-Protestant cultural area, by contrast, and particularly in the United States, there was "collusion" between religion and the secular differentiated spheres. There is little historical evidence of any tension between American Protestantism and capitalism and very little manifest tension between science and religion in the U.S. prior to the Darwinian crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. The American Enlightenment had hardly any anti-religious component. Even "the separation of church and state" that was constitutionally codified in the dual clause of the First Amendment, had as much the purpose of protecting "the free exercise" of religion from state interference as that of protecting the federal state from any religious entanglement. It is rare, at least

3 [note 12 in the original] David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

until very recently, to find any "progressive" social movement in America appealing to [p. 11/12] "secularist" values; appeals to the Gospel and to "Christian" values are certainly much more common throughout the history of American social movements, as well as in the discourse of American presidents.

The purpose of this comparison is not to reiterate the well-known fact that American society is more religious" and therefore less "secular" than European societies. While the first may be true, the second proposition does not follow. On the contrary, the United States has always been the paradigmatic form of a modern secular, differentiated society. Yet the triumph of "the secular" came aided by religion rather than at its expense, and the boundaries themselves became so diffused that, at least by European ecclesiastical standards, it is not clear where the secular ends and religion begins. As Tocqueville observed, "not only do the Americans practice their religion out of self-interest, but they often even place in this world the interest which they have in practicing it."[4] Yet it would be ludicrous to argue that the United States is a less functionally differentiated society, and therefore less modern, and therefore less secular, than France or Sweden. On the contrary, one could argue that there is less functional differentiation of state, economy, science, etc., in *étâtiste* France than in the United States, but this does not make France either less modern or less secular than the United States.

When American sociologists of religion retort from their provincial perspective that secularization is a European myth, they are right if only in the sense that the United States was born as a modern secular state, never knew the established church of the European caesaro-papist absolutist state, and did not need to go through a European process of secular differentiation in order to become a modern secular society. If the European concept of secularization is not a particularly relevant category for the "Christian" United States, much less may it be directly applicable to other axial civilizations with very different modes of structuration of the religious and the secular. As an analytical conceptualization of a historical process, secularization is a category that makes sense within the context of the particular internal and external dynamics of the transformation of Western European Christianity from the Middle Ages to the present. But the category becomes problematic once it is generalized as a universal process of societal development and once it is transferred to other world religions and other civilizational areas with very different dynamics of structuration of the relations and tensions between religion and world, or between cosmological transcendence and worldly immanence.

The category of secularization could hardly be applicable, for instance, to such "religions" as Confucianism or Taoism, insofar as they are not characterized by high tension with "the world," insofar as their model of transcendence can hardly be called "religious," and insofar as they have no ecclesiastical organization. In a sense, those

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4 [note 13 in the original] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 284.

religions that have always been "worldly" and "lay" do not need to undergo a process of secular[p. 12/13]ization. To secularize – that is, "to make worldly" or "to transfer from ecclesiastical to civil use" – is a process that does not make much sense in such a civilizational context. In this respect, China and the Confucian civilizational area have been "secular" *avant la lettre*. It is the postulated intrinsic correlation between modernization and secularization that is highly problematic. There can be modern societies like the U.S., which are secular while deeply religious, and there can be pre-modern societies like China, which from our Euro-centric religious perspective look deeply secular and irreligious.[5]

It just happened that the particular, specifically Christian, Western European dynamic of secularization became globalized with the expansion of European colonialism, and with the ensuing global expansion of capitalism, of the European system of states, of modern science, and of modern ideologies of secularism. Thus, the relevant questions become how Confucianism, Taoism, and other world religions respond to the global expansion of "Western secular modernity," and how all the religious traditions are reinterpreted as a response to this global challenge.

The concept of multiple modernities, first developed by S. N. Eisenstadt, is a more adequate conceptualization and pragmatic vision of modern global trends than either secular cosmopolitanism or the clash of civilizations. In a certain sense, it shares elements from both. Like cosmopolitanism, the concept of multiple modernities maintains that there are some common elements or traits shared by all "modern" societies that help to distinguish them from their "traditional" or pre-modern forms. But these modern traits or principles attain multiple forms and diverse institutionalizations. Moreover, many of these institutionalizations are continuous or congruent with the traditional historical civilizations. Thus, there is both a civilization of modernity and the continuous transformation of the pre-modern historical civilizations under modern conditions, which help to shape the multiple modernities.

Most of the modern traits may have emerged first in the West, but even there one finds multiple modernities. Naturally, this multiplicity becomes even more pronounced as non-Western societies and civilizations acquire and institutionalize those modern traits. Modern traits, moreover, are not developed necessarily in contradistinction to or even at the expense of tradition, but rather through the transformation and the pragmatic adjustment of tradition. In this respect, the multiple modernities position shares

5 [note 14 in the original] Indeed, in the same way as the U.S. appears as an "outlier" or deviant case among advanced post-industrial societies, similarly China appears as an outlier among agrarian societies. Actually, China evinces the lowest level of religious beliefs and religious participation of any country in the world, challenging the assumed correlation between insecurity/survival values and religious beliefs and participation. On the Norris/Inglehart scale, agrarian China – at least its Confucian elites – would have appeared for centuries as a highly secular-rational society. See Figures 10.1 and 10.2 in Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 224–6.

with the clash of civilizations position the emphasis on the relevance of cultural traditions and world religions for the formation of multiple modernities. [p. 13/14]

Secular cosmopolitanism is still based on a rigid dichotomous contraposition of sacred tradition and secular modernity, assuming that the more of one, the less of the other. The clash of civilizations perspective, by contrast, emphasizes the essential continuity between tradition and modernity. Western modernity is assumed to be continuous with the Western tradition. As other civilizations modernize, becoming ever more like the West, they will also maintain an essential continuity with their respective traditions – thus, the inevitable clash of civilizations as all modern societies basically continue their diverse and mostly incommensurable traditions.

The multiple modernities position rejects both the notion of a modern radical break with traditions as well as the notion of an essential modern continuity with tradition. All traditions and civilizations are radically transformed in the processes of modernization, but they also have the possibility of shaping in particular ways the institutionalization of modern traits. Traditions are forced to respond and adjust to modern conditions, but in the process of reformulating their traditions for modern contexts, they also help to shape the particular forms of modernity. [. . . p. 14–17]

There is a sense in which both European secular developments and American religious developments are rather unique and exceptional. In this respect, one could certainly talk, as Europeans have done for decades, of "American exceptionalism," or one could talk, as it has become fashionable today, of "European exceptionalism." But both characterizations are highly problematic, if it is implied, as it was in the past, that America was the exception to the European rule of secularization, or if it is implied, as it often is today, that secular Europe is the exception to some global trend of religious revival.[6] When it comes to religion, there is no global rule. All world religions are being transformed radically today, as they were throughout the era of European colonial expansion, by processes of modernization and globalization. But they are being transformed in diverse and manifold ways.

All world religions are forced to respond to the global expansion of modernity as well as to their mutual and reciprocal challenges, as they all undergo multiple processes of *aggiornamento* and come to compete with one another in the emerging global system of religions. Under conditions of globalization, world religions do not only draw upon their own traditions but also increasingly upon one another. Inter-civilizational encounters, cultural imitations and borrowings, diasporic diffusions, hybridity, creolization, and transcultural hyphenations are all part and parcel of the global present. [. . . p. 17–21]

If today I had to revise anything from my earlier work, it would be my attempt to restrict, on what I thought were justifiable normative grounds, public religion to the

6 [note 15 in the original] Grace Davie, "Europe: The Exception that Proves the Rule?" *The Desecularization of the World*, ed. Peter Berger (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999).

public sphere of civil society. This remains my own personal normative and political preference, but I am not certain that the secular separation of religion from political society or even from the state are universalizable maxims, in the sense that they are either necessary or sufficient conditions for democratic politics. As the example of so many modern secular authoritarian and totalitarian states show, from the Soviet Union to secular Turkey, strict no establishment is by no means a sufficient condition for democracy. On the other hand, several countries with at least nominal establishment, such as England or Lutheran Scandinavian countries, have a relatively commendable record of democratic freedoms and of protection of the rights of minorities, including religious ones. It would seem, therefore, that strict separation is also not a necessary condition for democracy. Indeed one could advance the proposition that of the two clauses of the First Amendment, "free exercise" is the one that stands out as a normative democratic principle in itself, while the no-establishment principle is defensible only insofar as it might be a necessary means to free exercise and to equal rights. In other words, secularist principles per se may be defensible on some other ground, but not as intrinsically liberal democratic ones.

The rules for protection from the tyranny of religious majorities should be the same democratic rules used to defend from the tyranny of any democratic majority. The protection of the rights of any minority, religious or secular, and equal universal access should be central normative principles of any liberal democratic system. In principle one should not need any additional particular secularist principle or legislation. But as a matter of fact, historically and pragmatically, it may be necessary to disestablish "churches" – that is, ecclesiastical institutions that claim either monopolistic rights over a territory or particular privileges, or it may be necessary to use constitutional and at times extraordinary means to disempower entrenched tyrannical majorities. [p. 21/22] Finally, on empirical grounds there are good reasons why we should expect religion and morality to remain and even to become ever more contentious public issues in democratic politics. Given such trends as increasing globalization, transnational migrations, increasing multiculturalism, the biogenetic revolution, and the persistence of blatant gender discrimination, the number of contentious public religious issues is likely to grow rather than diminish. The result is a continuous expansion of the *res publica* while the citizen's republic becomes ever more diverse and fragmented. The penetration of all spheres of life, including the most private, by public policy; the expansion of scientific-technological frontiers giving humanity Demiurgic powers of self-creation and self-destruction; the compression of the whole world into one single common home for all of humanity; and the moral pluralism that seems inherent to multiculturalism – all these transcendent issues will continue to engage religion and provoke religious responses.

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33 Miklós Tomka: *Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments?* (2006)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Miklós Tomka (b. 1941 Budapest; d. 2010) was a Hungarian sociologist of religion and professor of sociology at the Catholic University of Pázmány Péter. His parents came from the educated middle class, which caused problems in his own education during the Communist regime. In an interview,[I] he mentioned his experience of deportation, house searches, ongoing discrimination and harassment.

Tomka attended a Catholic grammar school. After this, he worked as an unskilled worker, and then as an accountant in agricultural production cooperatives. After obtaining a diploma, he became a research assistant, first at the Research Institute for Cooperatives (1964–1968), and then at the Institute for Media Research (1968–1990). He studied economics, and later Catholic theology and sociology of religion. He completed his doctorate at the Faculty of Philosophy of Eötvös Lóránt University, and his post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification at the Evangelical University of Budapest.

After the fall of Communism, he co-founded the Hungarian Pastoral Institute, as well as being the director of the Sociology of Religion Research Centre, and the head of the Philosophy of Religion Section at the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He later became a professor at the Institute of Sociology at the Catholic University of Pázmány Péter. In December 1995, Tomka co-founded the International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association (ISORECEA); he was president of the association from 2001 to 2006. In his research, Tomka investigated religious development under communism and in post-communist societies. He was also interested in religious and ethnic minorities.

Tomka's publications include *Religion in the Reform Countries of Eastern (Central) Europe* (Ostfildern 1999) and *Religion in the Social Context of Eastern (Central) Europe*

I Miklós Tomka. "Soziologie in Ungarn: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen gesellschaftlichen Herausforderungen und hausgemachter Probleme," *Soziologie Heute* 2, no. 6 (2009): 12–15.

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(Ostfildern 2000, both with Paul Zulehner), *Church, State and Society in Eastern Europe* (Washington 2005), and *Expanding Religion. Religious Revival in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe* (2011).

Tomka was very well connected internationally. In 2001 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Vienna.

In the selected text, Tomka asks whether the conceptualisation and criteria of religiosity, as well as the conventional survey methods of sociology of religion – as developed in the West – are appropriate for research in Eastern and East-Central Europe. He argues that these tend to neglect the differences in the cultures that developed in the different parts of Europe. Whereas "religion as a cultural system in the West moved in the direction of rationality [and] differentiation," Eastern Orthodoxy instead "moved in the direction of the arts and the intuition of wholeness." Pre-modern social conditions and popular piety survived, which, in his view, limits the relevance of methods based on institutionalised religion. This argumentation is interesting, as it highlights features that are also pointed out in the comparison between Western Christianity and Islam, and scholarly approaches to the two of them.

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Miklós Tomka. "Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments?" *Social Compass* 53, no. 2 (2006): 252–63.

Sociology of religion has revived in Eastern and East-Central Europe. Religion itself has been discovered anew as a spectacular agent of social life. Developments in the former Soviet-dominated area fascinate scholars interested in religious change and challenge sociological concepts, such as secularization theory, because Eastern and East-Central Europe[1]

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1 [note 1 in the original] This part of the study compares the Western and the not-fully-Western halves of Europe. The collapse of the Communist system and its consequences for religion justify the Communist versus non-Communist comparison. The main argument of the present article, however, focuses on a narrower geographical area, Eastern Europe, the definition of which follows.

produce situations different from those in the Western world. Let us take only a few well-known examples:

1. A uniform tendency towards the declining influence of religion in society, culture and politics seems to characterize Western Europe. In contrast, religion is a hotly debated issue in the public life of previously sovietized Europe. Western European scholars and ordinary people experience and postulate a general decline of religion in modernity. Eastern and Central Europeans observe a spread and expansion of religious phenomena both at an individual and at the societal level [. . .]. Public opinion in the East (including East-Central Europe) and the West has different views on the changes and prospects of contemporary religion.
2. Another specificity of post-Communist Europe lies in generational differences. In Western Europe the younger the age group, the lower the percentage of religious people. Substantial groups, especially among young people, in Western Europe report a loss of faith. The tendency is somewhat different in Eastern and East Central Europe. Young people who have discovered God are more numerous in this area than those who have lost their faith in God [. . .].
3. Western countries face the weakening of the churches' role and influence. In the post-Communist part of Europe, churches are broadly supported new public actors with a crucial and challenging role in society. Processes of individualization, however, generate a growing independence from institutions and a declining trust in them in post-Communist countries as well. Yet in the Eastern half of the continent, including East-Central Europe, churches still seem to enjoy more credit and prestige than the average of other public institutions [. . .]. In this respect as well, Eastern and East-Central Europe deviates from Western countries.

Despite a growing amount of data and related literature, interpretations of religious change in Eastern and East-Central Europe come to strikingly divergent conclusions. The fact of a visible religious life previously hidden in underground activities and the growing weight of the churches can be interpreted as a religious recovery and expansion, although data for a reliable time comparison are not available. Regular religious practice according to church regulations, however, is as low in most post-Communist countries as it is in Western Europe. Another obscuring fact is the lack of correlation between religiosity and other fields of human behaviour in several countries of Eastern and East-Central Europe. Some scholars interpret these facts as proof of the emptiness of the debated religious revival. Nonetheless, both kinds of conclusion seem still to be caught in rather specific and narrow frameworks. The present article asks whether the conceptualization and criteria of religiosity, as well as the conventional survey methods of sociology [p. 252/253] of religion as developed in the West, are appropriate to Eastern and East-Central Europe. [. . . p. 253/254]

Conceptualizing "East" and "West"

History took a different course in the two halves of Europe. Eastern Europe stood either under Tatar (the Golden Horde) or, in the Balkans, under Turkish rule during most of the period of their national development; or experienced Russian autocracy and imperialism for several centuries (see Cussans et al., 1994, for geographical locations). Historically, the sociopolitical structure of Eastern (though not Central) Europe exhibited large feudal empires and strong central power without an elaborate system of social cooperation or societal regulation growing from below, thereby guaranteeing sub-autonomies and organizing life in accordance with local needs. [p. 254/255] Even if important cities did arise, agriculture and rural life still dominated. Legal structures and an independent bureaucratic order remained underdeveloped and did not acquire decisive influence on the state or society. The aristocracy, towns, cities, guilds, and civic networks gained no permanent autonomy from the power and despotism of the ruler. Distinctive features of this model are tyrannical power, the weakness of autonomous social organization, lack of protection for individuals and small communities against arbitrary rule and, finally, the absence of societal participation and commitment. The tradition of authoritarian rule and non-existent or, at best, weak civil society culminated in Communist totalitarianism.

The respective histories shaped religious developments as well. Constructive for the socio-religious history of Western Christianity were the conflicts between the papacy and the empire, which resulted in the differentiation of religion and politics and of Church and state; the growing independence and secularization of the sciences and arts after the Renaissance; the development of religious pluralism, especially since the Reformation; the birth of civil society and the age of Enlightenment, going hand in hand with an increasing criticism of religion and with the rise of secular spheres of life. These developments largely bypassed Eastern (though not Central) Europe. Western civilization utilized the tension and dynamism between the sacred and the profane, both conceptualized and institutionalized increasingly as independent [p. 255/256] entities. Eastern Christianity preserved its claim to integrate and harmonize the totality of other-worldly and this-worldly realities. Eastern Orthodoxy and its Church did not develop an effective critical stance against secular powers, did not interfere autonomously in public and political affairs, and did not acquire independence from the state and the emperor. The religious system of Eastern Orthodoxy adapted to this socio-political context and became one of its strongest pillars both pragmatically and symbolically.

Despite urbanization, industrialization and the development of mass education, the convergence of socio-economic backwardness, a socially disengaged religion, and the behavioural remnants of Soviet subservience has resulted in the rough preservation of the traditional socio-cultural pattern, which is functional both in societal and individual respects. It is this difference, with a set of corresponding criteria, which has to be taken into consideration when studying religion in Eastern Europe, notwithstand-

ing the fact that differentiation, modernity, and secularization have encroached into this part of the world as well.

Society, Culture, and Religion under Traditional and Post-Traditional Conditions

The supposition of basic differences between traditional and post-traditional societies means that the actual evaluation of their inner strength and growth has to be based on criteria derived from the respective social configuration. This is no new insight. However, Western-based sociology of religion, as developed in reference to the logic and practice of Western Christianity and international comparative studies surveying religiosity by Western standards, often still seems to overlook the relevance of these differing frames of reference. The result is not a correct analysis of the religious conditions in Eastern Europe (and other non-Western cultures) but a report on the existence or non-existence, increase or decrease of Western-type religiosity in this area, which may or may not be present, but surely is not the only and presumably not even the dominant form of religiosity in the respective countries. [. . .]

Under traditional conditions, society and nation are roughly synonymous terms designating the unified character of a distinct social subject with a special vocation in fulfilling history. The society/nation cultivates its togetherness and identity in reference to a common history (destiny), to common values, and to its cosmic vocation. History, as the fulfilment of God's original intentions, is a holy task. The social bodies in its service are, accordingly, holy entities: God's chosen nation, Holy Russia, for example. The right and the obligation to realize the only, namely God's, holy order guarantee, [p. 256/257] in this perspective, moral superiority and exclude the right to alternative social and political visions. The individual is subservient to this task. The best a person can do is to serve the communities to which he belongs, the family, neighbourhood, Church, and nation. Mobilization for common tasks uses moral and religious arguments and informal social control. Social integration and patriotism are for the individual inseparable parts of his moral and religious commitment. Moreover, the conviction that this position is for the common good lends moral legitimacy to the opposition to all kinds of individualism, which would negate the tie between social/national belonging and personal responsibilities.

In post-traditional conditions, the term nation refers quite neutrally to socio-cultural origins and to historic differences from other nations rather than to specific goals and vocations. In contrast to the symbolic meaning of the nation, society is a structured pool of humans not necessarily sharing common values and possibly without a unified common social identity. A teleological understanding of history is not accepted; any effort to "fulfil history" or to define a specific "just world order", and especially the attempt to grasp a key role in it is understood (especially by outside observers) as a

relapse into traditional, pre-modern positions and as cultural imperialism. The individual shapes his destiny independent of the social, ethnic, and national framework in which she or he was born or lives. Mobilization for common tasks uses an enforced conformity to laws and formal prescriptions, the fulfilment of which is more of a pragmatic than a moral matter.

In undifferentiated traditional social settings religious views and teachings are more or less simple cognitive systems, expressing popular reasoning and feelings, systems which react to threats to the social body with a hardening of position, with xenophobia, fundamentalism, and similar responses. In the differentiated social organization, religious views and teachings are organized into a complex rational system partly independent of and partly controlling popular reasoning and feelings, attempting to preserve their independence (and opposing nationalism, xenophobia, and fundamentalism) even if the social body is threatened.

In a traditional society, religion is the cosmic location of the concrete corpus of society, of the symbolic body of the nation and of individuals. It is a general, atmospheric medium, an overarching and integrating yet undifferentiated part of the cultural universe. It is taken for granted. It has an unshakeable plausibility. It represents phenomenologically, socially, and even historically a timeless and holistic view, stressing its own unique, absolute, and exclusively true character, and leaving no accepted space for either logical or social defection. If significant deviations nevertheless occur, they can only be interpreted as insanity and possession by the Devil, and in any case as dangerous opposition to society.

In a post-traditional society, religion is a possible cultural orientation of individuals and groups, a specific dimension of life and culture among other distinct and autonomous parts of the socio-cultural universe. Religions are continuously challenged by competing interpretations and apostasies (Berger, 1980). They are never totally final within a fractured and incalculably changing world. They compete and coexist with each other and with [p. 257/258] non-religious ideologies. Therefore, they require constant individual and social confirmation and cultivation. The search for individual and social identity includes a steady deviation from, and a continuous correction of, previous socio-religious patterns.

Under the conditions of the traditional social system, *to be religious* means to be part of a given cultural universe. Being part is not necessarily a reflected, but rather a subconscious, impersonal, undifferentiated participation. Religion is indistinctly embedded in general socio-cultural identity, related rather to existential and emotional than to intellectual qualities and is actualized in all aspects of life; in special individual and social, official and unofficial symbolic expressions. Individual religiosity does not require manifest substantiations. Special confirmations of religiosity, whether personal or social, are out of place.

Within the post-traditional social system, to be religious indicates a more or less reflected, conscious, personal choice. Religiosity marks institutional membership or at least cultural belonging, requires the appropriation of intellectual and behavioural

expectations, and, aside from participation in official rites and practices as established by the Church, is expressed in social and cultural commitment. Religiosity seeks substantiation and confirmation in cognitive positions, verbalized statements, symbolic expressions including rituals, and in visible consequences in everyday behaviour.

The religious institution and its organizational forms are, in undifferentiated social settings, merely supplementary and secondary forces in the phenomenological order and in the management of religion, since religion is a general given condition which gets its strength from popular practice. *The religious institution and its organizational forms* in differentiated, post-traditional society receive their real relevance as carriers or even rulers and representatives of religion, defining “official” and “orthodox” positions, and opposing individual and popular deviations from the official standards.

All in all, basic patterns and concepts of society and culture differ in traditional and post-traditional society. These differences have to be taken into account when speaking about and surveying the two kinds, respectively Western and Eastern European societies. [. . . p. 258/259]

Conceptual and Practical Differences Between Western and Eastern Christianity

Six characteristics seem to be especially important in the differentiation of Eastern and Western Christianity:

1. *The institutionalization, objectivation/reification and formalization of religion* produced a meticulously elaborated and socially acknowledged standard for religiosity in the West under the control of the Church. This standard (a cultural institution in itself) became autonomous from its historical original and individually diverse, genuine religious experience. As a result, two main modes of individual religiosity arose: the tradition- and Church-oriented position and a pick-and-choose religiosity distanced from the control of the Church. In the religion of the East, informal institutionalization and local standards dominate. The controlling power of the Church is weaker and based neither on the Church’s organizational or intellectual strength nor on powerful formal prescriptions and clear regulations, but on its role in the management of the symbolic universe via liturgy and sacraments. [. . .]
2. *The cultural systems of Western and of Eastern Christianity* are elaborated in different fashions, respectively out of different materials. Belief, understood as the acceptance of well defined and rationally ordered entities, [p. 259/260] statements or concepts, belief that is also possible without belonging and practising, is a key issue in Western Christianity. Although it is accompanied by other components such as religious practice, knowledge, experience and morality (James, [1902] 1958; Glock and Stark, 1965), as well as artistic and aesthetic performance (Greeley, 1995), the religious qualification of all of them depends on the acceptance of a set

of beliefs. Orthodox Church teaching emphasizes the unity of content and form, of belief and icon, of faith and liturgy (Meyendorff, 1960). [. . .]

Religion as a cultural system in the West moved in the direction of rationality, of clear systematization, of differentiation and of the segregation of relatively independent parts and expressions. Eastern Orthodoxy moved rather in the direction of arts and the intuition of wholeness. [. . .] In any case, a weaker rationalization and formalization in Eastern Christianity obstruct the overestimation of formal criteria in the evaluation of religiosity.

3. *The subject of religion* is different in the two cultures. Religion and religiosity in the West certainly have their cultural objectivations and community relations. In the final analysis, however, they refer to a personal orientation. In Eastern Orthodoxy religiosity is less a distinct individual choice than it is a matter of being part of a social and symbolic universe. [. . . p. 260/261]

   The conscious and rational character of Western religiosity emerged in tandem with the ideal of the autonomous individual. The combination resulted in church concepts such as "general priesthood", "adult Christians", "lay participation in church life", emphasizing the direct relation between the individual and God. A practical consequence is the proclaimed responsibility and participation of lay people in the church and in public affairs.

   The theological tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy accepts the unconditioned freedom and responsibility of the individual who encounters his or her God. However, the declared autonomy of the individual is not related to his profane or even social existence.
4. *The argumentation and transmission of religion and its social control* are different in the two cultures. Western religion is taught in schools and in theological institutions. It is fixed in an analytical manner in dogmatics and in catecheses. Eastern Orthodoxy, too, starts with basic statements of Christian faith, but instead of being fixed on and oriented by distinct objects and a structured system of faith, it has a holistic, a synthetic, maybe a mythical (Losev, 1994), and at most a partially differentiated view of the religious and the profane realms. [. . .]
5. The differing religious involvement of the person determines differences in the *style of participation*. The Eastern Orthodox accent on the mystical nature of the Christian religion and especially of the liturgy, along with the relatively limited freedom of individuals in shaping it, determines the character of religious participation too. [. . . p. 261/262]
6. Finally, the separation of *Church and state* in Western history declared the autonomy of both, encouraging the strengthening of their own organization and power, enabling a critical stance towards each other, and thereby producing a unique dynamism of the societal and the political system of Western civilization.

The Eastern Orthodox historic pattern relies on the unity of religion and polity (Neusner, 2003). The theory of the "symphonia" as the practice of the Church rejects the separa-

tion of Church and state and results in the emergence of national and religious movements as well as in a close unity of the political and the religious institution. Obviously, this has far reaching consequences for the construction of Orthodox identity, for the social and political system, for the relation to religious pluralism, and for the capacity to preserve the traditional order in Church and society. [. . .]

Eastern European Challenges for Research on Religion

Eastern Europe offers specific conditions for the sociology of religion. The system of Eastern Orthodox culture has its own constitutive principles. The survival of pre-modern social conditions and of popular piety limits the relevance of methods based on institutionalized religion. And, finally, communism redefined religious terms and concepts via state-imposed indoctrination, diminished the role of the Church through restraint, and increased the weight of non-institutionalized expressions of religion. These conditions invalidate a big part of the conceptual structure on which conventional religious research is based. The main problem in Eastern Europe is how to grasp religion without the yardstick of an official interpreting agent. [. . . p. 262/263]

Eastern European religion eludes the criteria of the western sociology of religion, as new religious phenomena do. This is the point where the present considerations have significance beyond Eastern Europe and any other individual culture. In general, popular piety and new religious phenomena are religious configurations that go beyond the institutionalized logics and categories of one specific religious tradition. An enlarged Europe, a global world needs religious research which can look beyond the conceptual horizon of Western Christianity.

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34 Jean Baubérot: *Cultural Transfer and National Identity in French Laicity* (2008)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Jean Baubérot's contributions are particularly important to French and Spanish discourses on secularisation, secularism and secularity. However, Baubérot has also made important contributions to the debate in English, including the 2008 essay *Cultural Transfer and National Identity in French Laicity*. Unfortunately, the publisher has not granted us the right to reprint excerpts from this text. We must therefore limit ourselves to a brief summary of the main points and the reproduction of a few quotations.

Jean Baubérot (b. 1941 in Châteauponsac, France), is a French historian and sociologist, specializing in the sociology of religion and secularism. He held chairs in History and Sociology of Protestantism and – from 1991 – in History and Sociology of Secularism at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, where he is still honorary president. He was the founder, and later director, of the group of sociology of religion and secularism (EPHE-CNRS).

Baubérot was also engaged in different forms of policy-making. He was a member of the Stasi Commission, which was established by Jacques Chirac in 2003 to reflect upon the application of the principle of secularism in the French republic. The commission's report led to the development of the French law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools, which primarily addressed the Muslim headscarf. Baubérot was the only member of the Commission to, for that reason, abstain from signing the report.

Baubérot has extensively published on Protestantism, laicité (in France and in a comparative perspective), and religious diversity. He co-authored the *International Declaration on Secularism in the 21st century*, which was signed by 248 academics from 30 countries. He has been involved in publications on secularism with scholars from different parts of the world, such as Rajeev Bhargava from India (see text no. 37), or Roberto Blancarte from Mexico.

In *Cultural Transfer and National Identity in French Laicity*, he traces the history of French laïcité, and underlines the global entanglements between developments in countries such as France, Mexico, and China. He refers to the Parliamentary Commission, which oversaw the 1905 law for the separation of Church and State in France and to its designated reporter, Aristide Briand. He writes: They "took pains to examine

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foreign legislation, envisaging that French laicity[1] would become a component of an international movement towards laicization.[2] The countries considered were put into three categories.

In the first were those countries still in a phase that was '*quasi-theocratic, in which the State is, if not subordinate to the Church, at least conjoined with it (and which) recognizes the predominance of one expression of religion over all others*'. Examples were given notably of Spain and Portugal for the union of Catholic Church and State, of Russia and Greece for the union of the State with the Orthodox Churches, and of Sweden and Norway for State union with the Lutheran Churches.

The second category was made up of countries already arrived at a state of '*semi-laicity*': '*they proclaim*', declared Briand, '*the principles of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship, but nevertheless consider certain particular religions as public institutions which they recognize, protect and subsidize*'. France, at the time of Briand's report, fell into this category because it had a Concordat with the Catholic Church and a regime of 'recognized religions' which, beside Catholicism, also included two Protestant denominations (Lutheran and Reformed) and Judaism.

Finally, there was the category of countries in which genuine separation had taken place and which had reached the status of 'laicity': '*The State then is truly neutral and secular; the equality and independence of religions is recognized,*' declared Briand. He named Ireland, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Cuba and Brazil in this regard. The United States presented itself as a country where there was genuine laicity, but where sympathetic relationships between the political and religious establishments might permit the future emergence (from the standpoint of 1905) of certain clerical manifestations. Mexico appeared as a country possessing a sharply accentuated secular status but which did not prevent there being a strong Catholic church (this in the period before the 1917 Mexican Constitution, which was strongly anti-clerical).[3] Briand's view was that the separation in France should take account of these different models, and even of those where, he pointed out, though there did not necessarily exist a complete separation, at least the Catholic Church existed peacefully separated from the State (in the United Kingdom and Switzerland). Mexico interested him greatly; indeed, as early as 1881, Mexico was being considered, according to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs note, as an example for France to follow (Weckmann, 1961)."

1 [note 3 in the original] Taking a viewpoint which, given the socio-political context of the time, perceived matters from within the parameters of the separation of Church and State.

2 [note 4 in the original] When the French National Assembly republished the Briand Report on the occasion of the centenary of the law of separation, it (curiously, some say, significantly say others) removed the particular chapter devoted to laicization outside of France!

3 [note 5 in the original] Among other historical errors, the Report of February 2007 of the Haut Conseil à l'Integration (Higher Council for Integration) concerning a 'Charter of Laicity' (and which proposes a very specifically French version of this latter) declared that the separation of Church and State took place in Mexico following the French separation law of 1905. The truth is that Mexico established this separation as early as 1861!

Baubérot concludes that “laicity has nothing of a ‘French exception’ about it and France has always been aware of foreign examples.” (Baubérot, 21).

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35 Jörg Stolz: *Secularization Theories in the Twenty-first Century* (2020)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Jörg Stolz (b. 1967, Zurich) is a Professor of Sociology of Religion at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. He studied sociology, economy and philosophy at the universities of Zurich and Bielefeld. After he obtained his PhD from Zurich university, he did a post-doc between Paris and Mannheim. In 2002 he became professor at the University of Lausanne. Between 2016 and 2018 Stolz was President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion.

His main research is on secularization, especially on religious decline and on religious-secular competition, but also on evangelicalism in Switzerland. He published with several other researchers, like David Voas or Detlef Pollack, applying secularization theory as well as the concept of a "secular transition."

The text that we present here, is an excerpt from a presidential address that he delivered at a conference of the ISSR (International Society for the Sociology of Religion). He thereby summarizes basic assumptions of classical secularization theories, describes how they developed over time, and argues that newer research is able to answer some of the open questions of previous research.

What is especially relevant in our context, are the modernization theoretical assumptions that go along with it, the fundamental incompatibility claimed between religion and modernity, and especially the idea of a *secular transition*, taken from David Voas, that is assumed to develop worldwide in the same way over the course of 200 years, even if at different times: "all countries are thought to take exactly the same trajectory, at the same speed, and in the same functional form. The only thing that differentiates them is the point in time when the country embarks on the transition."

While in the text below, evidence for this argument is given only with regard to European countries, in a lecture that Stolz gave at the conference of the International Sociological Association in Melbourne in 2023, he extended this model to the whole world, then, however, having to grapple with many 'deviant' regions, like the post-Communist countries, the countries in the Islamicate world, many African countries, Israel, and others more.

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[. . .] My central question is, 'What progress have we made in secularization theory, and what evidence is there of such progress since the turn of the millennium? What do we know now that we didn't know 20 years ago?' Note that I use a conventional definition of religion and treat secularization only with respect to individual religiosity. [. . .]

I cannot deal with the history of the secularization debate here. Nevertheless, what I present as 'progress' appears as such only against the backdrop of this history. Suffice to say that I identify a neoclassical phase of the secularization debate (from roughly 1960 to 1985), when authors generally accepted the secularization thesis, drew much on the classics like Weber and Durkheim, and created a large body of different and often overlapping secularization theories. Important authors were Peter Berger (1990 [1967]), David Martin (1978), and Bryan Wilson (1966).

I also identify a 'contentious phase' (from roughly 1985 to 2000), when scholars in the rational-choice and economics-of-religion tradition like Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, and Laurence Iannaccone (Finke and Stark, 1992; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark, 1999), as well as scholars that were in the individualization tradition like Grace Davie (1990) and Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1999), challenged the secularization paradigm represented, for example, by Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce (1995) and Frank Lechner (1996).[1]

I believe that this contentious phase has been overcome since roughly the turn of the millennium and that various new developments have changed our thinking about secularization. It is these developments that I'll sketch in this article.

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1 [note 4 in the original] Overviews of the first phase can be found in Tschannen (1991) and Dobbelaere (1981, 2002). Recent overviews are Pollack and Pickel (2007), Pollack and Rosta (2017), and De Graaf (2013). A recent attack on the secularization paradigm, one that is somewhat reminiscent of the contentious phase, is Edwards (2019: 10), who claims that the 'presuppositions that informed secularization theory have been effectively refuted'. She ignores most of the material presented in this article, however.

Insecurity[. . .]

Let us turn to our first new area: insecurity. The idea that insecurity and deprivation could lead to religiosity is certainly not new. It seems evident that religions are concerned [p. 283/284] with giving hope and promises of a better life to those who feel in some way deprived. Max Weber (1978 [1920]: 399) argued that religion had a 'compensation' function for the deprived, and a 'legitimation' function for the advantaged, and Glock et al. (1967) and Niebuhr (1957) did much to defend deprivation theory in the neoclassical phase of secularization research. For whatever reason, insecurity and deprivation theory went out of fashion in what I have called the contentious phase of secularization research.[2]

It was therefore a remarkable event when in 2004 Norris and Inglehart published *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide*, which put the idea that insecurity and deprivation are the main causes of religiosity back on the agenda. [. . . p. 284/285. . .]

To sum up, there is ample evidence that individuals in countries with high existential insecurity are more religious than individuals in countries with low existential insecurity. There is much less certainty, however, as to whether (and, if so, how) the decrease in existential insecurity over time has led causally to secularization in various countries. Since the evidence is still mixed, we clearly need more research in this area. [p. 285/286]

Education

Authors of classical and neoclassical secularization theory already argued that science and education would eventually lead to the demise of religion.[3] According to Wilson (1978), for example, science is 'largely incompatible with a belief that there are supernatural powers' (p. 412). Insofar as education conveys scientific thinking (and not religious ideology), it therefore undermines religiosity.

This idea was not very prominent in the contentious phase of the secularization debate. The relatively few claims that were made often followed the fault lines of the competing paradigms – proponents of secularization thought that education tended to depress religion (Wilson, 1982: 174), while rational-choice scholars downplayed the effect of education or even claimed that there was a positive correlation between the two (Iannaccone, 1998: 1470). Findings still tend to be inconsistent today.[4] Clearly, what

2 [note 6 in the original] See, however, Hunt (2002a, 2002b).

3 [note 9 in the original] See, for example, Weber (1946), Wilson (1978), and Jones (1986).

4 [note 10 in the original] Findings have been rather inconsistent in the last 20 years. The more educated seem to be less religious in some studies, some contexts, some countries (McCleary and Barro, 2006;

we face in this area is a problem of endogeneity. There seem to exist various, and partly conflicting, mechanisms that confound the relationship between education and religiosity.[5]

Here, significant progress has been made in at least two areas. First, we now have a clearer view of the big picture. It is clear on a worldwide scale that countries with a high aggregate of educational achievement are much less religious than countries with a low aggregate, the former having lower percentages of prayer, attendance at religious service, importance of religion, but higher percentages of 'nones' (Norris and Inglehart, 2012 [2004]: 70; Pew, 2016: 70). Just as with the insecurity measures, however, education is confounded with all kinds of other measures of modernization, and while there are large education-religiosity differences between countries, the effects inside countries are minor and contradictory. [. . . p. 286/287. . .]

Also, there is a clear problem of causal direction, since religiosity may also increase or suppress educational aspirations. [. . .]

Socialization

In the contentious phase of secularization research, scholars were not unaware of the importance of religious socialization as a predictor of adult religiosity. Nevertheless, socialization only played a secondary role in the theorizing of the main paradigms. In the orthodox secularization model, Bruce (1990, 2002: 99) argued that, once a religion had been weakened by modernization, it was doomed to disappear because diffuse ideologies are very difficult to transmit to the following generations. In the rational-choice approach, Iannaccone (1990) used the concept of religious human capital to account for correlations between the religiosity of parents and children.

Research in the last 20 years or so has highlighted the importance of parental socialization and confirmed that it is the single most important predictor of adult [p. 287/288. . .] religiosity (Bréchon, 2018; Crockett and Voas, 2006; Stolz, 2009; Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme, 2017; Voas and Storm, 2012).

Three important insights have been added. One, it has become clear that it is not just parental socialization that is important; the national religious context also plays an extremely important role in socialization. As Kelley and De Graaf (1997) and Pollack and

Sawkins et al., 1997); in others, there are positive or no effects (Kortt et al., 2012; Sander, 2002). Sometimes, conflicting evidence has been found in the same dataset [. . .].

5 [note 11 in the original] Thus, education may lead to more critical thinking and therefore to more resistance to religious beliefs, to a lower propensity to giving affirmation to items of high generality (as in scales of religious belief), and to a higher likelihood of choosing less strict religious groups when it comes to belief and practice. However, there are other mechanisms that may actually lead the educated to show more religious practice and possibly also more belief. [. . .].

Rosta (2017) have shown, individuals are much more likely to become religious themselves in highly religious countries than in predominantly secular countries, regardless of the religiosity of parents.

Two, declining religious socialization in families is due not just to decreasing parental effort, but also to children's increasing resistance. This is because modern educational styles give children more freedom to have their say and to choose what they would like to do (Klingenberg and Sjö, 2019). [. . .]

Finally, various researchers have shown that declining religiosity among the populations of Western countries mainly occurs through the replacement of cohorts.[6] Since at least 1900, every generation has been a little less religious than the previous one. [. . . p. 288/289]

While these advances in research are significant, they also create new problems. First, we do not know why it is that people tend to adopt their level of religiosity only in childhood and adolescence. [. . .] Nor do we know at what age secularization has its strongest effect exactly – is it children, teenagers, or young adults who are most affected?

Second, we ignore the specific causes that lead every later cohort to be less religious than the previous one. [. . .] In a way, the finding that the decline of religion is predominantly a cohort effect only shifts the problem one step further, since we now have to investigate what has a secularizing effect on parents, children, and teenagers.

Secular transition

One of the most important developments in secularization research in the last 20 years is Voas' notion of secular transition (2008, 2009).

According to Voas, Western – and perhaps all – countries undergo a 'secular transition' much like the demographic transition in the course of modernization. In a nutshell, the ideal-typical model claims the following. Assume three types of people: religious, 'fuzzy' (i.e. moderately religious), and secular. Almost everybody starts out highly religious. Because of modernization, some individuals lack religious socialization. While many children of religious parents will also be religious, some will turn out only moderately religious (or 'fuzzy'). When these 'fuzzy' people socialize their children, most of the latter will turn out fuzzy, but some will also turn out secular. Over several generations (assuming that the religious socialization of children remains difficult) this will have the effect that fuzzy fidelity will rise and then

6 [note 12 in the original] For some of the most important publications that show this, see Crockett and Voas (2006), Wolf (2008), Hout and Fischer (2014), Pew (2018), Thiessen and Wilkins-Laflamme (2017), and Molteni and Biolcati-Rinaldi (2018).

fall over time, until a majority of the population are secular. The overall process takes about 200 years.

Note that Voas' model makes very strong assumptions: all countries are thought to take exactly the same trajectory, at the same speed, and in the same functional form. The only thing that differentiates them is the point in time when the country embarks on the transition.

Using European Social Survey (ESS) data from 2002, Voas showed that 22 Western countries fit the model. [. . . p. 289–291]

Voas' simple but ingenious idea was to imagine that what we see [. . .] in all these six pictures[I] is basically the same transition, only at different points in time. We would thus just shift these pictures around and obtain one overall model on a theoretical time axis [. . .], in which we can clearly see how the percentage of 'religious' declines, the percentage of 'fuzzy' rises and falls, and the percentage of 'secular' rises over a period of 200 years.

This means that Greece finds itself at the beginning of the secular transition, while the Czech Republic is close to the end of the process. Both countries do the very same thing, the small but important difference being that Greece is some 150 years behind.

Note that not all countries behave exactly as the model expects, with the French, for example, stepping out of line somewhat. [. . .]

You may wonder: Can this model be true? Isn't this all too simple and beautiful? Well, the most important independent test was published recently by Brauer (2018) in the JSSR, and it gives the model resounding approval [. . .]. Brauer demonstrates that the United States conforms almost exactly to the model's predictions. In fact, the United States is somewhere in the middle of the process, behind Austria, but in front of Finland.

However, not all tests are positive. In a replication that focuses on the German case, Stolz et al. (2020) show that, while West Germany fits the model very well, East Germany does not, the latter witnessing a strongly accelerated and qualitatively different secular transition. What this means is that the secular transition can be strongly influenced by external shocks.

Quite obviously, the Voas model needs more testing to see whether it holds up when confronted not only with cross-sectional but also with longitudinal, data, and to gauge the extent to which it can be generalized to other countries outside Europe and the United States. But, even should such tests prove positive for the model, there are additional problems to be solved.

First, recall that, according to the model, the only variable that differentiates countries is the point in time when a country embarks on the transition. This begs the question: why and when does a country do so? What are the triggers? No satisfactory answer has been given so far.

I MWS: This refers to graphs that we do not present here.

Second, if we acknowledge that there are exceptions to the model such as East Germany, then just what are the boundary conditions of the model? In other words, under what socio-historical conditions will countries behave according to the model – and when will they deviate?

Third, literature on the 'religious crisis of the 1960s' poses a particular question of the model. Prominent authors have argued that the 1960s were a time of very strong secularization in Western countries (Brown, 2001; McLeod, 2007; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). The Voas model, however, claims that religious decline is a continuous, long-term process. Is one side of the argument right, or might the two sides be combined by showing, say, that a long-term process, as proposed by Voas, includes a short-term (period or cohort) effect in the 1960s? [p. 291–293]

Fourth, if we acknowledge that alternative spirituality is an important part of the current religious field (Cipriani, 2017; Giordan, 2007; Knoblauch, 2008; Woodhead, 2007), then to what extent can this phenomenon be integrated into the model of secular transition? Is it to be seen as just a different kind of 'fuzzy fidelity' that emerges in the course of the secular transition, only to be replaced, eventually, by secularity (De Graaf and Te Grotenhuis, 2008)?

Secular competition

A fifth development may be subsumed under the title secular competition. The idea that secular alternatives might compete with religion in various domains can be traced back at least to the authors of the Enlightenment. Neoclassical authors like Wilson (1966) and Parsons (1984) described how functional differentiation leads to the emergence of secular alternatives to religion, and how religion then loses more and more societal functions. The importance of secular competition was somewhat forgotten in what I have called the contentious phase of secularization research, probably because the rational-choice theorists were so strongly focused on intra-religious competition.

It is only since the beginning of the new millennium that the idea of secular competition has been theorized and a significant number of studies have investigated the idea as an approach in its own right. The approach claims that religious groups compete not so much with each other as with non-religious competitors, the latter putting the religious domain under pressure by force of innovation (Abbott, 1988; Bourdieu, 1987; Stolz, 2009a, 2009b; Stolz and Tanner, 2017). The key idea here is that religions create goods that are both transcendent (e.g. the promise of eternal life) and immanent (e.g. social capital). While they have by definition a monopoly on the former, religions have to compete with secular providers when it comes to the latter. Thus, religions provide social capital, but so do secular clubs; religions provide social welfare, but so does the welfare state; religious specialists provide counselling and support, but this domain has also been invaded by psychotherapists and life coaches. [. . . p. 293/294]

Yet, important problems remain here, too. First, there seem to be many secular competitors, and it remains unclear whether some are more important than others. [. . .] Second, many studies on secular competitors suffer from problems of possible omitted-variable bias (a form of endogeneity). [. . .] The third problem is possible reverse causality: it is not always easy to distinguish between a situation where new secular competition crowds out the religious alternative and a situation where the decline of the religious alternative creates the condition for the development of a secular alternative.

The fourth problem is the relationship that secular competition has with the socialization/secular-transition approach. If secular competition really is so important, then why do people not become less religious over the course of their lives? One answer might be that the importance of secular competition in democratic societies is mediated through socialization (Stolz et al., 2016: 161ff.).

Pluralism

In the phase of neoclassical secularization, and especially as a result of the work of Peter Berger (1990 [1967]), pluralism was already thought to be one of the most important factors leading to secularization, since it undermined the plausibility of religion and eroded norms prescribing religion. I am using the term 'pluralism' here to denote [p. 294/295] religious diversity and not in any other possible senses, such as the ideology promoting such diversity (Beckford, 2014).

However, it was in the contentious phase of research on secularization that the question of the effect of pluralism on religious vitality took centre stage and dominated for more than a decade. In a bold move, rational-choice theorists attacked neoclassical secularization theorists, claiming that the latter had it all wrong. Religious pluralism, they said, did not depress religious vitality, but actually strengthened it, since pluralism led to more competition between groups, to better products, and to a higher probability that believers would find a religion that met their preferences (Finke and Iannaccone, 1993; Finke and Stark, 1988; Iannaccone, 1991; Stark and Finke, 2000). [. . .]

Interestingly, though, significant progress has been made in this issue since the millennium, with scholars having found a way to circumvent the problem of non-substantive correlations when using the pluralism index. [. . .]

New problems arise again, however. For, we would now like to know what the mechanisms are that pluralism actually works through. [. . .] Pluralistic social [p. 295/296. . .] environments, then, are not just perceived in the abstract; rather, they 'impinge' upon individuals through significant others and may thereby depress religiosity. [. . .]

Regulation

Perhaps the most important claim made by the rational-choice paradigm during the contentious phase of secularization theory was that competition between religions leads to more and qualitatively better religious supply and to a higher level of religiosity on average. As already noted, the studies in this paradigm first of all used pluralism (or: diversity) as a proxy for competition and measured pluralism with the Herfindahl index.

When it became clear that doing so was problematical (see discussion on pluralism above), several scholars began using state regulation as an alternative measure of religious competition.

Theoretically, government regulation may both suppress and encourage individual religiosity (Chaves and Cann, 1992; Fox and Tabory, 2008; Iannaccone, 1991; Portier, 2016). It may suppress religiosity by (1) restricting the religions on offer, thereby leading some individuals to refrain from 'entering the market' because they cannot find a religion to their liking; (2) creating a situation in which religious monopolists provide religious goods that are less interesting; and (3) hindering or even banning certain religious groups and practices. On the other hand, it may also encourage individual religiosity by (1) prescribing religious belief and practice; (2) incentivizing religious belief and practice by [p. 296/297] granting certain additional social benefits to those who conform to the norms; and (3) providing a homogeneous belief structure that makes belief easier. [. . .]

Clearly, more research is needed, but two results seem to be unequivocal. First, government regulation is overall not the most important driver of secularization, at least not through the mechanism of stifled competition that sees the establishment of some religions and not others. In addition, reducing government regulation does not seem to lead to religious revival, which clearly disproves the claim made by rational-choice/economics-of-religion theory that dominated discussion during the contentious phase of secularization research.

Second, government policies may have very important secularizing effects on religiosity when states crack down on religions in various ways, which can be seen in the fact that post-communist countries are significantly less religious than countries not subjected to 'communist treatment' (Fox and Tabory, 2008; Froese and Pfaff, 2005; Meulemann, 2004; Pollack, 2003). [. . . p. 297/298. . .]

Conclusion

In retrospect, research on secularization has yielded an astonishing number of new insights in the last 20 years [. . .].

While discussion in the 1960s and 1970s was still primarily theoretical in orientation, revolving as it did around defining and applying various abstract concepts such as differentiation, rationalization, and societalization, research on secularization already began testing theories in the contentious phase, and has done so increasingly in the last 20 years (De Graaf, 2013; Meulemann, 2017). [. . . p. 298/299. . .]

Religion seems to be strongly social: not so much a tangible product (like a car); more a language spoken with others. It is a symbolic language that helps people interpret and deal with human problems, and that only works when it is used among a group of people. This explains why there are strong correlations between many variables such as income, education, security, and so on and religiosity at the country, but not the individual, level.

Whole societies, groups, and cohorts are more or less religious depending on whether the religious language is spoken among members or not. This also explains the pervasive unidirectionality of the secularization process. Once a host of secular alternatives and interpretational frameworks are in place, it is very difficult to return to an all-encompassing religious language that (almost) everyone uses.

Modernization is a process that leads to more existential security, more education, more pluralism, and more secular competition. This has the effect that parents, schools, and society overall teach the religious language to every new generation with decreasing intensity. It remains true that religious parents socialize their children more religiously than secular parents, but the course of modernization means that parents and schools throughout society have fewer incentives to teach religion, and find it increasingly more difficult to do so. In addition, children find it less and less attractive to be socialized religiously: they resist what to many of them is unimportant, untrue, and (perhaps most importantly) uncool. [. . . p. 299/300. . .]

This leads to emergent effects that can be described in one of two ways. Either as a successive replacement of more religious cohorts by more secular ones. Or as a fall in the percentage of religious people, a rise and then fall in the percentage of 'fuzzy' people, and a rise in the percentage of secular people. In the secular transition, this is a process that typically influences men earlier than women, since men tend to be exposed to modernizing influences earlier than women. The process also affects urban areas earlier than rural areas, since it is in urban areas that modernization begins. Alternative spirituality may be a form of intermediate religiosity that also adopts ever more secular forms.

Finally, the secular transition is not a sociological law; therefore, policy matters. States can have a strong influence on secularization, either by accelerating or by decelerating it, and sometimes even by reversing it temporarily. If they follow the Western path of modernization, however, their policy decisions on religion seem to matter little; secularization simply takes its course. This synthesis is not that different from the neo-

classical version of secularization theory – but its mechanisms are better spelt out and many of its elements have been tested empirically.

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36 Kristen Ghodsee: *Symphonic Secularism* (2009)

Introduced by Wolfgang Höpken

Introduction

Kristen Ghodsee (b. 1970) is chair of Russian and East European Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. She received her Bachelor's degree at UC San Diego, and her PhD at UC Berkeley. She has held scholarships and guest professorships at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS), Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, the University of Helsinki, Bowdoin College in Maine, and Sciences Po in Paris.

In her research, Ghodsee deals with the legacies of twentieth-century communism, and with the consequences of the 1989 revolutions. Among her publications are *The Left Side of History: World War II and the Unfulfilled Promise of Communism in Eastern Europe*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2015; *Red Hangover: Legacies of Twentieth-Century Communism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017; and *Taking Stock of Shock: Social Consequences of the 1989 Revolutions*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2021 (with Mitchell Orenstein).

In *Symphonic Secularism*, Ghodsee contributes to the controversial debate over the development of religion and secularity in Eastern Europe since the end of socialism. In this debate, scholars can be roughly divided into those who continue to support some kind of 'secularisation theory,' and those who criticise the theory.

Scholars who continue to support some kind of 'secularisation theory' anticipate that post-socialist societies will follow the 'Western' trend of secularisation, at least in the medium term. The former socialist societies display a current tendency towards an increased and relatively stable religiosity among their populations, and an enhanced institutional, public, and political status of churches. These scholars see this trend as a kind of residual and transitory phenomenon, induced by the aftermath of an aggressive policy of atheism during the communist period, as well as by the ideological vacuum produced by the breakdown of socialism and the social by-products of a difficult and contradictory political and economic transition towards democracy and a market economy. Most of all, they see it as being rooted in the close link between religion and national identity.

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For critics of secularisation theory, the current development in Eastern Europe is just the opposite: It provides evidence of the theoretical and empirical limits of the concept, demonstrating that even in modernity, religion is hardly losing ground or relevance. From this perspective, post-socialist societies are not simply a "robust exception to the secularisation trend in Western Europe."[I] Rather, they fit into a global trend of religion's increasing relevance and revitalisation, from which Western Europe might, at best, be seen as an exception.

While both of the above paradigms integrate East Europe into their grand narratives of a broader, global development, some scholars are sceptical as to whether the development in (Orthodox) Eastern Europe can or should be described in categories and generalising theories from 'Western' religious studies at all. Instead, they see the post-socialist development from the perspective of regional path-dependent specifics (see Tomka, text no. 33), which are not entirely separate from their global and transnational environment, but are also not wholly determined by it. Kristen Ghodsee's text presented here, is part of the latter approach. Against the background of postcolonial debates on secularity, Ghodsee tries to extend the criticism of Western concepts of secularism, such as that found in Talal Asad's writings (see text no. 56), beyond the colonial context, and into the realm of European history. She argues that here, too, we can find "alternative definitions of secularism," which, just as in the case of Islamic societies, do not fit into the conventional, 'Western' understanding.

Starting from current conflicts between the state and religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and certain Islamic groups in contemporary Bulgaria, Ghodsee reconstructs a particular understanding of secularism from Bulgarian history, wherein religion is not seen as an individual spiritual commitment, but as a "core constituent element of ethnicity and national identity." Based in a broader theoretical tradition of the Byzantine principle of 'symphonia,' a particular concept of the relation between state and religion has been shaped and accommodated through different periods of Bulgarian history, stretching from medieval times, through the centuries of Ottoman rule, up to the communist system, and thus also influencing today's practice. Unlike a 'Western' understanding of religious pluralism and freedom, this construction dedicates a privileged position to Orthodoxy as a constitutionally enshrined 'traditional' Bulgarian religion, but at the same time has always been based on tolerance for those religions which, like Islam, are seen as having shared the territory and the history with ethnic Bulgarians. At the same time, as seen in today's conflicts with various religious actors, religious denominations might be viewed by the state as a 'danger' when they are not perceived as 'traditional.'

I Geoffrey Evans and Ksenia Northmore-Ball, "The Limits of Secularization? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religon* 51, no. 4 (2012): 795.

Ghodsee's category of "symphonic secularism" attempts to grasp an alternative trajectory and configuration of secularism within Europe, going 'beyond the West.' This concept has influenced the general debate about religion and secularism in Orthodox post-socialist Europe, and has inspired others to explore similar avenues, speaking of a "hybrid mode of secularism"[II] or of "elastic post-secularism."[III] Ghodsee has thus contributed to what Vasilios Makrides and Sebastian Rimestad have called a "fresh and more positive look at orthodox Christianity,"[IV] liberating Orthodox societies from the stereotype of 'unfinished secularisation' as part of a still 'unfinished modernisation.'

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This article uses the example of Bulgaria to explore alternative definitions of secularism and religious rights in a part of the world that has largely been ignored by recent post-colonial debates about secularism and secularization (see for instance, Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008, Taylor 2007, Keddie 1997).

My first goal is to extend the valuable critical interventions of Talal Asad and others to an examination of Eastern Orthodoxy and its particular construction of the appropriate relationship between state and church. I want to try to pull apart some core assumptions about how concepts like "tolerance," "pluralism" "modernity," and "religion" are defined in scholarly debates and normatively deployed as measurements of democracy. The second is to ethnographically investigate the way that contemporary men and women in Bulgaria collectively understand the concept of religion neither as a private personal relationship between an individual and her God nor as a spiritual commitment requiring daily public displays of piety. Rather, religion is a core constitutive

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II Daniel Jianu, "The Greek Orthodox Church and Symphonic Secularism: Church-State Relations Seen through the Prism of Blasphemy," in *Coping with Change: Orthodox Christian Dynamics between Tradition, Innovation, and Realpolitik*, ed. Sebastian Rimestad and Vasilios N. Makridis (Frankfurt/M, 2020), 109.
III Ana Krasteva, "Religion, Politics and Nationalism in Postcommunist Bulgaria: Elastic (Post-) Secularism," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 21 (2015): 422–54.
IV Sebastian Rimestad and Vasilios Makrides, "Orthodox Christianity today: Charting Changes, Understanding Developments. An Introduction," in *Coping with Change: Orthodox Christian Dynamics between Tradition, Innovation, and Realpolitik*, ed. Sebastian Rimestad and Vasilios Makrides (Frankfurt/M, 2020), 9.

element of ethnic and national identity, one that is historically rooted in the distant past and which does not necessarily require belief in any form of divinity. This conception of religion is not unique to Bulgaria (see for instance, van der Veer 1994), but I will use the Bulgarian case to explore how this conception of religion fits within larger debates about secularism, pluralism and tolerance as normatively defined by the West.

This particular conception of religion shows itself most clearly in Bulgaria through what I will call, "symphonic secularism," or an Orthodox ideal of state-church relations. *Symphoneia* (symphony) refers to the Eastern Orthodox doctrine that asserts that the spiritual authority of the Church should not take precedence over the temporal authority of the state, but rather that they should work together for the common good. Compared to the Roman Catholic assertion of Papal supremacy (or ultramontanism[1]), *symphoneia* is often imagined to be an arrangement where the Church is working in unity with the state, and it is historically the Tsar who has the final authority to appoint or dismiss religious leaders or to convene ecumenical councils to alter or amend religious dogma.[2]

This history of symphoneia is well known to modern Bulgarians; the way that they imagine the legacies of symphoneia in their present society gives Bulgarian secularism fascinating characteristics. [. . .] I recognize that Western histories of secularism are diverse and that [p. 228/229] individual states have rearranged the relationship between state and church in different ways. But the accepted ideology of secularization relies on an ideal configuration of these two institutions (as separate and distinct) and critiques of secularism and religious rights have reified this configuration.

These conceptualizations of secularism, however, are themselves deeply rooted in a discursive field forged by either the embrace or rejection of the epistemological legacies of the Enlightenment. Genealogies of secularism often begin with the Protestant Reformation and often ignore any non-Western historical antecedents (for instance Asad 1993, Taylor 2007). But there may be important alternative configurations of these concepts that are difficult to comprehend from the Enlightenment worldview, especially if there are societies today that popularly imagine an ideal form of state and church relations that were forged in an earlier historical period, in this case, as far back as 1054 C.E. and the Great Schism that rendered Christendom into its Eastern and Western halves.

Understanding different conceptions of secularism and religion is crucial today because international organizations and Western governments are increasingly deploying religious freedoms as a normative measure of democracy. Many Orthodox nations such as Russia, Greece, Romania or Moldova have been criticized for violating religious freedoms. This paper will focus on Bulgaria, one of the two newest members

1 [note 1 in the original] Ultramontanism refers to one who is "beyond the mountains." For most of Europe, the Pope was beyond the Alps in Italy.

2 [note 2 in the original] When choosing a new Patriarch (the highest spiritual authority in the Orthodox Church), for instance, the leadership of Bulgarian Church traditionally submitted a list of three names to the Tsar, and it was the Tsar that appointed the Patriarch for life (see, for instance: Butsev 2009).

of the European Union [. . . p. 229/230] The article attempts to untangle the meaning of secularism, pluralism, religious freedom and tolerance from the point of view of my informants, with a particular focus on the way that individuals deploy popular understandings of Bulgarian history to justify their personal comprehension of how far the state can go in regulating religiosity in every day life.

Asad's Critique

The intellectual launching pad for this critical inquiry is the seminal work of Talal Asad (2003, 1993) and his 2006 call for a more historicized examination of the meaning of religion and secularism in different states [. . .]. Asad has critiqued secularism as an Enlightenment-based political project that assumes a very limited view of religion. According to this critique, secularization projects, whether externally imposed or willingly imported, inevitably privilege a Western European ideal of religion because they seek to subsume conceptions of religion that place an emphasis on embodied practices and rituals in the public sphere (such as Islam). Indeed, Asad roots the creation of the contemporary (hegemonic) concept of religion in post-Reformation Western Europe and emerging distinctions between the public and private sphere. [. . .]

Asad roots the production of this new understanding of religion to Christianity and the struggles in Western Europe to replace faith and superstitions with science and reason in the public domain. Other philosophers (Taylor 2007, Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008) and theologians (Ratzinger and Habermas 2007) have also argued that modern conceptions of secularism grew out of the Protestant Reformation and that the secular imperative of keeping faith in the private sphere is a smoke screen for establishing the hegemony of a distinctly Eurocentric conception of religion (Mahmood 2006, Scott and Hirshkind [sic] 2006). Expanding on this idea, Partha Chaterjee (2006) argues: "In all countries and in every historical period, secularization has been a coercive process in which the legal powers of the state, the disciplinary powers of the family and school, and the persuasive powers of government and media have been used to produce the secular citizen who agrees to keep religion in the private domain" (60).

This critique of secularism has become the template for recent explorations of liberalism and secularization processes in the post-colonial context,[3] particularly those that wish to explore the inner logics of Islam. Asad's critical analysis of secularization in the Muslim world demonstrates how the demands of Western conceptions of church-state relations can amount to a form of ideological cultural (i.e. Christian) imperialism. But this is a critique that is based on a very selective genealogy of Christianity, a

3 [note 5 in the original] In Mahmood's (2006) rich study of the women"s mosque movement in Egypt, she demonstrates how Western preoccupations with liberalism, self-hood, and agency mask the ways in which embodied religious practices can result in self-actualization for women.

genealogy that excludes the Eastern Orthodox Church and conflates Christianity with Western Christianity. On one hand, it is an understandable exclusion given that Asad's critical focus is the movement of secularist discourses from Western [p. 230/231] Europe into its former colonies. On the other hand, it excludes an entire history of Christianity that might have produced a very different conception of religion than the hegemonic Western one, one that might have been more tolerant and inclusive of Islam.

Exploring this alternative genealogy of Christianity might reveal different collective understandings of the appropriate roles for the state and church. Indeed, Orthodox believers may not believe that "secularism" was imported from or imposed by the West, although scholars like Chaterjee (quoted above) argue that it has been universally coercive in its application. Instead, in the Bulgarian case, the local version of secularism grew out of the nation's own unique historical trajectory. This history is distinct from the Protestant and Catholic histories of the West. It is a history that for most modern Bulgarians begins in the ninth century when a medieval Bulgarian king, Boris I, Christianized the Slavs and when the Bulgarian kingdom embraced Orthodoxy and sided with the Byzantine Empire during the Great Schism of 1054.

Thus, if Asad and other post-colonial scholars can be read as supporting a theoretical position that defends individual religious rights and individual desires for embodied religious practices against a Western secularist imperialism that reduces religion to belief, this article pushes Asad's critique beyond the Muslim world to include Orthodox countries such as Bulgaria and other societies which might embrace a different notion of religion and secularism. Although there are obvious theological differences, Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy have traditionally been othered by the West – orientalized and essentialized as fundamentally non-modern. From the earliest days of the Enlightenment, Orthodox symphoneia was derided as a pejoratively Byzantine form of government (Wood 1967). In his 1689 "A Letter Concerning Toleration," John Locke condemned state interference in Church dogma, comparing Henry VIII and his self- serving heirs in England to the Orthodox, "caesaro-papist" Emperors in the East. More recently, Samuel Huntington (1996) relegated the Eastern Orthodox world to the status of a completely separate civilization from the West because the East did not benefit from, "the separation and the recurrent clashes between Church and State" (70). In its 2009 decision, even the European Court of Human Rights (2009) explicitly stated that "democratic societies" (4) should not have governments that interfere with religious communities, even if those religious communities have always been intertwined with state authority. [. . . p. 231–233. . .]

Religion and Ethnicity in Bulgaria

On the surface, modern Bulgaria is remarkably similar to Western Europe in terms of a general decline in religious belief, despite its lack of state-church separation. For

instance, in 2006, Bulgaria ranked 17th out of the 50 most atheist countries in the world, joining the overwhelmingly European top 20 (Zuckerman 2006). The study found that 34–40 % of the Bulgarian population was atheistic, agnostic, or non-religious. Another study in 1998 asked a national representative sample of Bulgarians: "Would you like your child/grandchild to be religious?" Only 13.7 percent of respondents wanted their children to regularly attend "church/mosque/synagogue." However, 52.4 % of Bulgarian Christians and 52 % of Turks living in Bulgaria said that they wanted their children to be religious "just as a cultural identity." Another nationally representative survey conducted in 1999 (Kanev 2002) found that 96 % of ethnic Bulgarians said that they were Christians and 98 % of the Turkish minority declared themselves Muslim. In analyzing these results, the Bulgarian scholar Petar Kanev concluded that religion in Bulgaria is "rather peculiar," and argued that being "religious" and believing in God had little to do with each other (Ibid: 84). Kanev points out that religion is primarily about ethnic and national identity, a legacy of the state's long association with the BOC and the fact that "Bulgarian and Orthodoxy were synonym concepts" (Ibid: 84).

My ethnographic fieldwork in the country confirmed this "peculiar" conception of religion. [. . . p. 233/234. . .] [The] distinction between "Bulgarians" and "Bulgarian citizens" was a very common way to distinguish between ethnic Bulgarians (i.e. Christians) and Turks, Roma and Bulgarian Muslims. In an oft-repeated national television advertisement for the 2005 parliamentary elections, the ethnic Turkish party (The Movement for Rights and Freedoms) overtly used this language by promising security and a better life for all "Bulgarian citizens" rather than all "Bulgarians." In response, the campaign slogan for the nationalist party, Attack, was "Let's Bring Bulgaria back to the Bulgarians!" (i.e. the Orthodox Christian, Bulgarian-speaking majority).

One of the ramifications of this equation of religion with cultural or ethno-national identity is that the question of apostasy or religious conversion is a very sensitive one. Many Bulgarians (and "Bulgarian citizens") believe that to change religious affiliation is to change ethnic and cultural identification. [. . .] Proselytism, then, is seen not only as a spiritual concern of the clerics but as an attack on national identity" (Kostov 2000). [p. 234/235. . .]

This deep resistance to conversion is not only a product of an allegiance to a modern ethnic community or nation state, but it is also linked to a particular collective imagining of Bulgarian history. It is the deployment of these historical narratives, particularly narratives rooted in the Middle Ages that underpin Bulgarians' ability to have a strong religious identity that can be devoid of spirituality. And these historical narratives are so pervasive, that even for those who do truly believe in the teachings of the Bible or the Qur'an, faith is understood not in terms of individual rights and free choices, but rather as a personally embodied legacy of spiritual communities that have roots in the eighth or ninth century C.E. [. . .]

Again, I admit that other cultures may have strong links between religious and national identity, but Orthodoxy is particularly interesting because these links are embedded in Church dogma. [. . .]

Popular Imaginings of State and Church in Bulgarian History

In speaking with Bulgarians about religious allegiances and cultural identities, conversations inevitably veered toward popular understandings of history. Over and over again, I found that many modern day Bulgarians viewed themselves as the living descendants of medieval populations that once inhabited the lands now occupied by the modern Bulgarian state. [. . .] [M]ost of the newly devout Bulgarian Muslims following what they called the "true" Islam invoked historical reasons to justify their re-emerging piety. The most common argument that I heard was that today's adherents to "Saudi" forms of Islam are, in fact, the direct descendants of Arab Muslims who settled in the Balkan Peninsula in the eighth century C.E. The claim to be affiliated with a faith that was represented in Bulgaria over a thousand years earlier was a discursive strategy to legitimize their religiosity in a cultural context that views religion as constitutive of ethnic or [p. 235/236] national identity, and therefore only recognizes those religions which can be demonstrably linked to some group of ancient inhabitants in Bulgaria. [. . .]

This tendency to use medieval history to explain current Bulgarian attitudes could be found not only among Muslim religious leaders and lay people, but also within the scholarly community. In a 2009 interview with Dr. Zhivko Georgiev, the director of Gallup International in Bulgaria and a respected political analyst, I asked him why his country had such a high rate of atheism and agnosticism. I expected that Georgiev, as a professional sociologist, would tell me about various demographic trends in Bulgarian religiosity. Instead, he opined that Bulgarians' relative lack of faith was a legacy of Bogomilism, an anti-clerical religious movement which began in the mid-tenth century, about 75 years after King Boris I of Bulgaria had forcibly Christianized the Slavs in 863. Georgiev speculated that Bulgarians have always been independent thinkers, and that their skeptical attitude toward religious authority began in the tenth century and continues to the present day. Here again was an example of an argument that linked the behaviors and beliefs of modern Bulgarians directly to those of Bulgarians living in the Middle Ages. [p. 236/237]

[. . .] In order to understand why the abstract Western conception of religious rights and liberal notions of religious pluralism might have so little critical purchase in the Bulgarian context, it is instructive to look at the way contemporary Bulgarians are taught about the centuries-long marriage between the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC).[4] One obvious place to find these narratives was in popular Bulgarian history books. [. . .]

4 [note 8 in the original] I recognize that the "facts" of Bulgarian history and the history of the important role of the BOC are hotly contested. Indeed, much of what is accepted as history was consciously constructed during the Bulgarian Revival period in the late 19th century as the country was trying to extricate itself from a declining Ottoman Empire and stake a claim to its own independence, or by Bulgar-

According to these historians, the first Bulgarian state was formally recognized in a treaty with the Byzantines in 681 C.E (Ibid.). In order to bring cohesion and legitimacy to the rapidly expanding Bulgarian state in a world dominated by Christianity, Boris I officially adopted the religion in the late ninth century in a calculated diplomatic move to consolidate his power by getting recognition from the Patriarch in Constantinople and the Pope in Rome (Gyuzuzelev 2006; Koev and Bakalov 2006). [. . .]

From the outset, Bulgaria's embrace of the Christian faith is presented as being far more about politics than spiritual considerations. At the time of Boris's strategic conversion, Christendom was governed by five autocephalous patriarchates based in Constantinople, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem. The rise of Islam had compromised the power and influence of the Patriarchs in Asia, and there were increasing tensions between the two European ecclesiastical authorities. Modern Bulgarians are taught that Boris I successfully played the developing rivalry between Constantinople and Rome to his advantage, and in 870 C.E., the Eastern Patriarch granted Boris I an autonomous archbishop subject to Constantinople's authority (Popov 2004).

Bulgarians today are taught the idea that a unique Bulgarian identity was forged in opposition to the Greek dominance of the Orthodox Church through the creation of the Slavic alphabet. Boris sponsored the formation of a new Bulgarian clergy schooled in this new alphabet and liturgy. In 893, he expelled all of the Greek clergy, and the Bulgarian vernacular replaced [p. 237/238] Greek as the official Church (and therefore State) language (Zhidovetz 2004). In 927, the Byzantines gave the Bulgarian Church full autocephalous status, making it the first autocephalous patriarchate after the original Pentarchy, and the first Slavic Church – a full 300 years before the Serbian autocephaly and 600 years before the Russian autocephaly (Ganev, Bakalov and Todev 2006). Boris I supposedly understood that his authority and legitimacy were intimately bound up with having an independent Church and a clergy firmly under his control. [. . .]

Thus, in both popular and scholarly rendering of Bulgarian history, the adoption of the Christian faith had almost everything to do with political consolidation and the creation of a new Bulgarian ethnic identity out of the mixed populations of Bulgars, Slavs and Thracians that inhabited the lands under Boris's control. The concept of religion being produced here is one in which faith is understood as a political tool of the state and a constitutive element of ethnic identity, rather than a matter of private spiritual salvation.

This specific understanding of religion as the tool of statecraft is presently taught as one of the defining conflicts between Byzantium and Rome, ultimately leading to the Great Schism of 1054. As mentioned earlier, Byzantium embraced a political and

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ian historians during the communist era, which were deliberately trying to construct closer historical ties with the Slavic Orthodox Russians (Neuburger 1997). Despite this caveat, what is important for the purposes of this article is what most contemporary Bulgarians *believe* to be the history of their state and church, even if the production of this history was and continues to be informed by specific nationalist ideologies. (See: Skendi 1975, 1976; Pundeff 1961; Gavev, Bakalov and Todev 2006).

ecumenical philosophy called symphoneia, which later came to be known pejoratively as caesaro-papism (which literally means "king-priest," Geanakopolis 1965). In Western Christendom, Rome espoused the doctrine of ultramontanism whereby the spiritual authority of the Pope took precedent over that of all temporal kings. [. . .]

The historiography of the Ottoman period in Bulgaria is the most contested and inconsistent in the popular history books, and tends to be very critical of the Turks and their Islamic Empire on the Balkans. Although some Blgarians did convert to Islam (this is the [p. 238/239] popularly accepted origin theory for the Pomaks), the majority retained their Christian faith (Inalcik 1954, Deringil 2000). It was during this 500-year period that the BOC supposedly became the most important repository of Bulgarian learning, language and literature. Many Bulgarians today believe that Orthodox monks preserved the Bulgarian culture and provided political leadership to the Bulgarian Christians. When the Ecumenical Patriarch tried to Hellenize the Bulgarians by reintroducing a Greek liturgy, the Bulgarian clergy played an even more important role as linguistic dissidents, continuing to perform services in the Slavic language. [. . .]

Literature and history written by Bulgarian nationalists between 1878 and 1945 reified the idea that being a Bulgarian required allegiance to the BOC. When the Bulgarian communists came to power in 1946, they too valorized the BOC, and despite their commitment to state atheism they continued to produce historical narratives that celebrated Bulgarian Orthodoxy as the savior of the Bulgarian nation-state. Priests and monks became national heroes rather than spiritual leaders. Churches and monasteries became cultural monuments to Bulgaria's history rather than houses of worship. What Bulgarians learned about their country's spiritual history had very little to do with faith and everything to do with national preservation. After the fall of communism in 1989, Bulgarian nationalist parties continued to explicitly link "Bulgarian-ness" with Orthodox Christianity. Finally, the 2002 Law of Religious Denomination, passed by a democratically elected center-right government, reemphasized the special status of the BOC. Article 10, paragraph 1 of the law states:

> Eastern Orthodox is the traditional denomination in the Republic of Bulgaria. It has played a historic role in Bulgaria's statehood and has current meaning in its political life. Its spokesperson and representative is the autocephalous Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which, under the name Patriarchy, is the successor of Bulgaria's Exarchate. . . It is led by the Holy Synod and is represented by the Bulgarian Patriarch who is a Metropolitan of Sofia. [p. 239/240]

Symphony and Religious Pluralism

From its very inception, Bulgarians are taught that the BOC has been in a symphonic relationship with the Bulgarian kingdom/state, and that secular leaders have always had authority over the organization and promotion of both temporal and spiritual affairs. But this historical importance of Orthodoxy does not necessarily preclude reli-

gious pluralism. Rather, it is widely accepted that throughout most of Bulgarian history (and particularly during the Ottoman period) there were Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Greeks, and Armenians sharing the territory that is now Bulgaria with the Bulgarian Orthodox Christians.

These medieval religious communities are imagined to be an essential component of Bulgarian society. [. . .]

In conversations with more educated Bulgarians, they would point to the long history of religious violence in Western Europe and compare this with the relative sectarian peace in their own county. [. . .]

Indeed, even though the Bulgarian state has had a symphonic relationship with the BOC, historians have argued that there was relative religious pluralism and tolerance before, during and after the Ottoman Empire in the lands now occupied by the modern Bulgarian state. There was only mild religious persecution under the Byzantine and Bulgarian Empires (Alexander 1977). Eastern Orthodoxy in Bulgaria was and remains a non-proselytizing religion that does not actively seek converts outside of the country. Furthermore, setting aside the "blood tax," the Ottomans were also relatively tolerant, building their empire on a foundation of religious pluralism despite the fact that Muslims enjoyed greater privileges than the other millets (Gawrych 1983, Karpat 1972). Even during the communist era, despite their strident campaigns against religion, there was a large mosque, a synagogue and an Orthodox church within a 500-meter radius of the main administrative buildings of the Politburo and the Central Committee in the heart of Sofia. [. . . p. 240/241. . .]

This relative tolerance for established religious minorities could be explained by (rather than in spite of) the unique symphonic relationship between State and Church. For some temporal leaders, the superiority of one religious dogma over another may not be a very compelling reason to go to war or to create the conditions of internal strife and rebellion within your territories. Wars are costly and risky if you lose, and religious persecution creates divisiveness and the possibility of sectarian violence.[5] Some level of religious tolerance and pluralism, even if there is an official religion of the Empire (Orthodox Christianity in Byzantium and in Bulgaria and Islam for the Ottomans) might better serve the interests of elites who profit from trade and taxation. On the other hand, leaders vying for the favor of God and the Pope in Rome might be more willing to commit their resources, for instance, to liberating the Holy Land from the infidels.

5 [note 12 in the original] There are always, of course, notable exceptions, Tudjman in Croatia and Milosevoc in Yugoslavia being the most obvious in the Balkans.

Symphonic Secularism

This interpenetration of religion as being linked with imperial/national identity and kingdom/state sovereignty means that Orthodox societies and Bulgarian society in particular might have arrived at a kind of secularism by a very different path than either the Western countries or their former colonial subjects, and therefore may have a different relationship to religious pluralism and tolerance than is expected of "modern democratic states." Symphonic secularism in Bulgaria includes a constitutionally enshrined traditional church as well as government regulation of religious activities in the country. This encompasses the government's power to dissolve churches considered a threat to public order and national security, or who violate or compromise the rights of others, as defined and adjudicated upon by the state. "Religion" in this context is not merely individual belief in the private sphere (a la John Locke) but a public declaration of affiliation with historically, culturally, and linguistically constituted groups.[6] This religion is embodied within the material infrastructure of established denominations, including the houses of worship, the clergies, the holy sites, the holy texts translated into the local vernacular, the powerfully evocative iconographies of spiritual leaders, saints, prophets and God even when these material embodiments are no longer conduits to divine knowledge. More importantly, religion either explicitly or implicitly includes a dogma that subsumes the spiritual authority of the BOC (or any other spiritual leadership) beneath the rule of temporal leaders. [p. 241/242]

This symphonic tendency can also be found among Bulgaria's religious minorities. For instance, the majority of Bulgaria's Turkish Muslim community view Islam as a cultural identity rather than a spiritual commitment, as best exemplified by the openly declared atheism of Ahmed Dougan, the political leader of Bulgaria's Turkish political party (Palchev 2002). Even the Jewish community does not seem to have a problem with the symphonic relationship between the Bulgarian state and the BOC. When the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution in 2004 openly criticizing the 2002 Law on Religious Denominations, it did not fail to note that Bulgaria's Jews did not oppose the law (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe 2004).

In this context, religion is understood as a tool through which Tsars, Sultans, politburos or prime ministers have consolidated their power over ethnically or linguistically diverse populations, by promoting national identity through a church (or a mosque or synagogue) that instills loyalty to the state as part of its ecumenical dogma while also granting autonomy to other religiously defined communities. But religion is more than just a public institution that facilitates the production of the nation, because it also legitimizes the ultimate authority of the temporal leader over the community by producing subjects that believe that religious power and authority have been and should always

6 [note 13 in the original] Thanks to Joan Scott for pointing out that the Church of England works in a similar way.

be secondary to that of the state. A certain kind of religious pluralism may therefore be possible for religions that also act as containers for the preservation of the history and culture of the living descendents of ancient peoples, and whose theologies can accept the primacy of temporal imperatives over spiritual ones. Public manifestations of religion may be acceptable for most of the older denominations; Jews, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians are able to live together in peace as long as their practice of religion (whether in the public or private sphere) does not challenge the primacy of the monarch/government by placing religious laws or customs above the interests of the kingdom/empire/nation-state. This is admittedly a very limited form of religious freedom by Western standards, but it is far from the supposedly undemocratic intolerance presumed inherent in symphonic societies by the U.S. or the European Court of Human Rights.

The old religions are also accepted because they are seen as the repositories for the culture of these communities, and although Bulgarians have always feared the irredentist ambitions of Turkey (especially after the partition of Cyprus in 1974), even Islam is embraced as an integral part of society. Despite latent Islamophobia and a deep-seated hatred toward the Ottoman past, the post-1989 era did not see violent ethno-religious confrontations such as those in neighboring Yugoslavia, nor was there a renewed persecution of the Turkish minority. Similarly, many of Bulgaria's Muslims accept that they will always be "Bulgarian citizens" rather than "Bulgarians" because they embrace the same concept of religion as the Orthodox Christian majority. The majority of Bulgaria's Muslims (whether Turkish, Pomak or Romani) have traditionally shared the symphonic conception of religion, similar as it is to the Ottoman instrumentalization of Islam under the millet system. It is only members of new Muslim groups, such as the young Muslims returning from Jordan, who believe that spiritual matters should be separate from and take precedence over temporal affairs, and are therefore willing to deploy the (ironically) Western [p. 242/243] liberal language of religious "rights."

Orthodox societies like Bulgaria may be less tolerant of relatively new religions such as the Jehovah's Witnesses that have appeared in the country since 1989. They are not seen as being rooted in a particular culture, and therefore lack the essential quality of a religion to be the vessel that preserves the past for the living descendents of ancient peoples. [. . .]

The Bulgarian government was criticized for not allowing non-traditional Muslim groups to officially register as a religious denomination. In the case of the Ahmadis, however, it was the Chief Mufti of all Bulgarian Muslims himself who advised the Bulgarian court not to allow the registration of the "Ahmadiyya Muslim Community" (US Department of State 2007). The U.S. report noted that, "The Muftiship seemingly would not consent to any outside group registering as Muslims. The Directorate's expert statement held that registration of the Ahmadis would "lead to the rise and institutionalization of a very serious dissent in the Muslim community," and to the spread of an interpretation of Islam that is not traditional in the country." Although the Ahmadis planned to file a complaint against Bulgaria at the ECHR in Strasbourg, it is important to note

that the government was acting on the advice of the official leadership of Bulgaria's Muslim community.

What unites these disparate groups beyond their "nontraditional-ness" is the fact that many claim a global community of believers and support a doctrine wherein their religion is not rooted in any one nation or culture. Their concept of religion supersedes culture and attempts to unite a world-wide community of the faithful under one supranational religious authority (such as is Olivier Roy's (2004) concept of de-ethnicized "Globalized Islam"). In these cases, [p. 243/244] obedience to religious authorities (such as the Watchtower Society in New York) or to religious texts (such as the Qur'an) is supposed to trump devotion to the nation-state. This can be viewed as the assertion of a form of ultramontanism that many Bulgarians believe to be at odds with their own millennium-old symphonic tradition [. . .] Bulgarians will be suspicious of groups of believers who are not tied to a cultural identity and whose faith trumps devotion to the state. Such groups of believers, viewed from the perspective of local history and culture, will not fall under the Bulgarian concept of *religion*, and will thus not be worthy of the full freedom of religion that is applicable to "genuine" religions. Again, from the Western point of view this will always be seen as a form of religious intolerance, but it is important to point out that this is because the dominant conception of religion in Western discourses is one which privileges private faith practiced in the private sphere. Just as Asad (1993, 2003, 2006) has convincingly shown that modern secularization projects devalue the Islamic conception of religion that necessitates the public practice of faith, I want to ask what other conceptions of religion are being devalued and delegitimized by the Western conception of faith embedded in international religious rights discourses. This reification of religion as a private relationship with divine forces that should be kept private allows bodies such as the ECHR to both uphold headscarf bans in Turkey and Switzerland while simultaneously criticizing Orthodox countries for interfering to much in the internal working of domestic religious communities. [. . . p. 244/245]

Conclusion

[. . . p. 245/246]

My purpose is neither to challenge nor defend Bulgaria's historically-bound understanding of religion, but only to point out that universalist discourses of "religious rights" and "religious freedoms" are themselves the product of specific Western definitions of religion, and that it is not only the Muslim world that has been judged and found lacking for its resistance to normative prescriptions that link modern democracy with the privatization of faith.

Of course, this case study is limited to but one Orthodox country, and it is essential to expand this analysis beyond Bulgaria to include other symphonic countries such as Russia, Greece, Romania, Serbia and possibly even Turkey. Obviously this task is beyond

the scope of one article, and it has merely been my goal to engage the critical scholarship on secularism with evidence from the country that I know best from my previous research. Clearly, this is a field in which much more research remains to be done.

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37 Rajeev Bhargava: *The Secular Ideal Before Secularism* (2010)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Rajeev Bhargava (b. 1954) is an Indian political theorist. Until his retirement in 2019, he was the director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS); until 2005, he was Professor of Political Theory at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He received his BA in economics from the University of Delhi, and his MA and PhD in Political Science from Oxford University. He has held academic positions at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Over the years, he has held fellowships in many countries worldwide. In 2009, Bhargava received the UGC national award for his contribution to political science. In 2011, he received the Malcolm Adiseshiah award for his contribution to the social sciences.

Bhargava has played a leading role in the debate on secularism in India, where he has argued for the existence of a specifically Indian type of secularism, distinct from the varieties that exist in the West. He claims that this type of secularism can be related to indigenous traditions in Indian history.

In the debate on secularism, Bhargava took a very different stance to scholars such as Ashis Nandy or T. N. Madan (see text no. 27), who consider secularism a Western institution inadequate for the situation in India, or even S. N. Balagangadhara (see text no. 13), who argues that secularism still carries a Christian heritage, including its distinction between good and bad religion. In his edited volume *Secularism and its critics* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), Bhargava collects important positions on the subject. *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy* (New Delhi: OUP, 2010) is a collection of essays dealing with philosophical and historical questions surrounding secularism in India and beyond, including the minority question. In 2023, Bhargava published the book *Between Hope and Despair: 100 Ethical Reflections on Contemporary India* (New Delhi, Bloomsbury, 2023), based on a newspaper column that he had regularly contributed to *The Hindu* for several years.

In the selected text, Bhargava argues against the position that secularism is alien to Indian culture and civilization, and he creates links between modern Indian secularism and the Indian pre-modern past, in which, he argues, "conceptual spaces were opened up that could contribute, under certain conditions, to the growth of modern

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secularism." He also raises important methodological questions with regard to the analysis of pre-modern configurations, inspired by present-day questions and concepts.

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Till a decade ago, there was a virtual consensus in India, a view shared by both its opponents and defenders, that secularism was alien to Indian culture and civilization. This view was to be found in the writings of T. N. Madan who claimed that secularism was a gift of Christianity, a product of the dialectic between Protestantism and the Enlightenment.[1] Another example is K. M. Panikkar, who claimed that a modern, democratic, egalitarian, and secular Indian state was built on modern European traditions, not the foundations of ancient Indian thought.[2] For Madan this alienness was the principal cause of the troubles of secularism in India. In his view, the distance between secularism and an Indian cultural ethos was so great that it had little hope of taking root and bringing peace between warring religious communities. Contrary to this view, Panikkar drew the opposite conclusion that the alienness of secularism from ancient traditions and Hindu thought meant not the redundancy of secularism but rather the estrangement of ancient traditions and Hindu thought from contemporary social reality. [. . .]

Both these views shared at least one other assumption, namely, that there exists a tight fit between concepts and their background. Madan interpreted this in largely culturalist terms and also assumed at least some general long-term continuity. Once he had made culture primary, continuous, and existing in the *longue durée,* he had to find modern secularism, as he understood it, both alien and unworkable in India. For Panikkar, the background was socioeconomic and marked with discontinuities. It followed that a radical change in it would necessitate an equally radical change in the repertoire of our conceptual vocabulary. Secularism was a functional requirement of [p. 159/160] newly emergent conditions and the whole issue of its compatibility or not with ancient

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1 [note 1 in the original] See T. N. Madan, ed., *Religion in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); and T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

2 [note 2 in the original] Panikkar quoted in Donald Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 57.

Indian culture was a non issue. It was tied very closely to the newly emergent conditions and made necessary by them.

There was a consensus that secularism was alien to or radically new in the Indian cultural context. This proposal needs a qualification. There are some who believed that in Mughal India, particularly in Akbar's time and because of his initiative, there was a conscious attempt to formulate the conception of a secular state in India with the implication that this attempt would not have been possible without at least some elements of something akin to a secular state in the Indian tradition.[3] This view has been vigorously challenged in India, particularly for its inexcusable anachronism. It reads too much of the present into the past. Obviously at issue here is not the term "secular." Even if such a claim is ridiculously anachronistic, it is not so because of the extrapolation of a currently used term to an entity or a process in the past. The crux of the matter is the availability of a conceptual resource. The claim made by people like Humayun Kabir is that a full-fledged attempt, regardless of its success then or in the future, was made by Akbar to formulate a conception of what we now call the secular state.[4] A few years ago I would have ridiculed this claim. However, now I am cautiously critical because I see that scholars such as Kabir were trying to articulate something important even though they were making some obvious mistakes in doing so.

I hope to explore the link between the modern conception of Indian secularism and its background conditions. I reject the culturalist view but not the idea that culture forms an important part of this background condition. I do not take the view that there is something continuous in every strand of, what we now come to understand as, Indian culture. But nor do I take the entirely opposite view that there is an absolute rupture between the cultures of two distinct periods of the history of this region. I reject the idea of a very tight or close connection between concepts and their background conditions. This undermines the idea of the open-endedness of concepts, to the possibility of their novel and plural interpretations and does not take cognizance of the idea of conceptual space. In my view at certain crucial junctures in Indian history, certain conceptual spaces were opened up that could contribute, under certain conditions, to the growth of modern secularism.

I have used the word conceptual space in the plural form. I mean here that some spaces must be opened up simultaneously or over regular intervals of time that enable multiple historical agents over a period to imagine new concepts, provided they have the motivation to do so. A conceptual space may be opened up and may remain wholly unutilized for long periods of time, sometimes so long that it may even recede out of our background, totally forgotten. A reasonably articulated concept [p. 160/161] draws

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3 [note 3 in the original] See Irfan Habib, ed., *Akbar and His India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State, 1526–1750 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Iqtidar Alam Khan, ed., Akbar and His Age (Delhi: ICHR, 1999).*

4 [note 4 in the original] See Humayun Kabir, *Minorities in a Democracy* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1968).

elements from these multiple conceptual spaces, provided they have the motive to do so. This usually happens over long periods of time. This conceptual work is never fully finished and frequently never fully related to one another. So, over different periods of time, one may find different concepts generated that belong retrospectively to one family or which could resemble one another. Seen teleologically, they may even be seen as present at different stages of articulacy, some more clearly formed and some only half formed, but there could be crucial junctures in the history of a society when all these elements drawn from different periods of history, and therefore from different conceptual spaces, are forged together to form a broad conception. Such a conception may even crystallize around a single word. Often the same word is used as the foci of the crystallization of many related conceptions. One can trace their different trajectories and offer a narrative of the different sources of a concept and a term associated with it (or many concepts and a term associated with it or one concept with many terms associated with it). So, what I wish to eventually write is a nonteleological conceptual history of what we today call secularism.[5] [. . .] I hope to show that the Panikkar-Madan view is mistaken and that distinct conceptual spaces are available in multiple Indian traditions where elements were formed, opposed, and reinvented out of which modern Indian secularism developed.[6]

What Is Modern Indian Secularism?

[. . . p. 161/162. . .] A number of features characterize MICS [Modern Indian constitutional secularism] that distinguish it from say the dominant American or French model. Like the idealized American and French models, MICS rejects both theocracy – a state where a priestly order directly administers the state by reference to what it believes are divine laws and established religions – and states that endorse institutional and personnel differentiation between religious and political institutions but which continue to have formal and legal links with one or multiple religions. Similar to them, MICS is value-based and rejects amoral secular states – states that separate religion from themselves not for any value but to maximize power, wealth, or both (Machiavellian states). The key difference is that MICS interprets separation of state and religion to mean not mutual exclusion, one-sided exclusion, strict neutrality or opportunistic distance, but rather what I call "principled distance" – a sophisticated policy in which

5 [note 5 in the original] This is my first very tentative attempt, an outline of a sketch of work that I wish to do in the next ten 5 years or so.

6 [note 7 in the original] The only recent work that makes a similar attempt is Romila Thapar's "Is Secularism Alien to Indian Civilization?" in *The Future of Secularism,* e.d., T.N. Srinivasan (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 83–108. Readers will observe both my dependence on this essay and the subtle methodological and substantive difference with it. Overall, I am very sympathetic to this enterprise and hope to carry it forward in this and other essays.

states may connect or disconnect with religion depending entirely upon whether the values to which they are committed are promoted or undermined by one or the other way of relating to religion. Second, MICS developed in response not only to the threat of the domination by the religious of the nonreligious and various forms of intrareligious domination, but also to the domination of the religious by the nonreligious and to interreligious domination. One implication of this is that MICS is a multivalue doctrine that does not easily allow one value to be overridden by others but always seeks to balance and reconcile values, such as individual-oriented and community-oriented values. This makes it far more amenable to contextual and comparative forms of ethical reasoning. Finally, MICS favors neither active disrespect nor passive respect toward religions but instead an attitude of critical respect. Its objective is neither to accept religion as it is nor to eventually annihilate it. All these features once again are to be contrasted to the normative ideals embedded in other models of secularism that developed largely in single religion societies, prioritized one or the other value, and were insensitive to communitarian orientations and so on. [p. 162/163]

The idealized American or the French model – what I call mainstream Western conceptions – could not have developed without certain cultural background conditions. These included significant events such as intrareligious warfare or interconfessional conflict that led to the development of the idea of toleration, the invention of the idea of individual rights, and the presence of a religious tradition that allowed for strict institutional separation between church and state. The question that I wish to ask is, given that MICS is different from mainstream Western conceptions of secularism, and given the assumption that part of the distinctiveness of MICS flows from a difference in background social and cultural conditions, what might these conditions be? The conceptual world of MICS is different from the conceptual world embedded in the background conditions that made it possible. If so, what might this other conceptual world be that made it possible for us to develop MICS? For some, this question is not worth asking because modern secularism is a universal doctrine and marks a rupture with all nonmodern or ancient cultural traditions. My chapter assumes that this view is at least partly incorrect. The relationship between modern Indian secularism and its past is not marked by a total break. If that were so, I would not even be asking the principal question of this chapter – that is, what are the background conditions for the development of MICS? This question presupposes some relationship between the conceptual world of MICS and a different conceptual world that nonetheless made it possible, a world that has receded into the background, but without which MICS would not exist or not have the form in which it does exist.

For the purposes of this chapter, I will not be looking at the trajectory of MICS since the advent of colonial modernity. Here I wish to ask what conceptual resources might be present in the ancient, the "medieval," and the early modern world without which MICS would not have taken the form it did. So, my question is what were the forms of political secularity before secularism? Can we speak of a secular ideal before Modern Secularism?

Ancient India

In the period between 1500 and 500 BCE, when the Vedic corpus was composed, preserved, and transmitted by and for a section of the Brahmanas, the form of political power vested in the raja was tied up not only with the ultimate goals of existence but also with the promotion of Vedic dharma.[7] However, the functions of the priest were sharply distinguished from those of the king. Vedic Brahmanism was "the religion of rituals" and required ritual specialists, the Brahmin. Only *he* embodied spiritual authority to perform sacred rites and sacrifices. However, [p. 163/164] this authority did not give him access to direct political/governmental authority. He was the king's guru, but he could rarely become king himself. However, the king could himself claim divinity. For *Manu Smriti* (dharma text composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE), the king was divinity in human form. This is how the many kings of Ramayana and Mahabharata are still viewed and remembered.[8]

Though the ritual priests never directly ruled the political order, it is mistaken to conclude that this period witnessed the establishment of Vedic dharma. This is so because institutional separation of the religious and political institutional characteristics of states with established religion was virtually nonexistent. In the absence of a tight unity of purpose of all organization with the Brahmanical order, an institutional separation was impossible because no clearly demarcated institutions emerged in this context. The entire polity can be viewed as partly theocratic and in part as having an established "religion."[9] [. . .]

Could the state tolerate different interpretations of dharma, different creeds, and sects? Did it provide assistance and endowment to all in an impartial manner? Historical evidence is mixed here. On the one hand there is evidence from King Ashoka's edicts where he appears to articulate a policy that amounts to something more than toleration and somewhat less than equal respect for all religions. [. . .] Alongside this lies another set of evidence that emphasizes fierce debate and competition among different faiths [. . . p. 164/165]

For our purpose, the key point to note is the presence of a great multiplicity of worldviews and the difficulty of one totally dominating or annihilating the other.[10] This gave rise to a conceptual space that enabled the development of traditions of religious

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7 [note 8 in the original] Upinder Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2008), 184.

8 [note 9 in the original] Here, we need to keep in mind that divinity in ancient India was "cheaply available." So that if indeed the king was God on earth, he was only one God among many. Second, these "divine kings" themselves kept apart these functions and gave Brahmins (Rishis, Munis, and Acharyas) a very special place. See A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (London: Picador, 2004 [1954]).

9 [note 10 in the original] In other words, it is neither theocratic nor a power that establishes religion. Since, I do not have a proper term for it, I continue to use these terms.

10 [note 14 in the original] Though this was not impossible, as Romila Thapar reminded me in a private conversation, the Ajivikas and Carvakas died out gradually.

freedom. As Max Weber puts it, "religious and philosophical thinkers in India were able to enjoy nearly absolute freedom for long periods. Freedom of thought in ancient India has no parallel in the West before the recent age."[11]

From the second century BCE onward, Buddhism exercised considerable influence on popular religious movements.[12] Crucially, by reinterpreting dharma as a social ethic, Buddhism disconnected the ends of the state from the ends of Vedic Brahmanism. In a recent essay, Romila Thapar has made this point quite eloquently.[13] For the Buddha, a belief in deity was far less important than human relations and right conduct toward the family and wider community. For him, dharma was the larger ethic propelled by ahimsa. Furthermore, since the function of the state is to prevent the disintegration of the society and caste structure induces fragmentation, it was the duty of the king to oppose it. This made Buddhism one of the earliest originators of the idea of social equality and a catalyst in the opening of a conceptual space that would be used very widely by the lower castes and the outcastes in later periods.[14] Further, Buddhism and Jainism were among the first big faiths to acknowledge the freedom of choice for women to become renouncers.[15] Although limited, this opened up another conceptual space later occupied by groups.

I have spoken of two traditions in ancient and early medieval India: one that supports something akin to establishment of multiple sects and faiths, and another that opens up a conceptual space for the disconnection of state from "religious" ends, beyond this worldly well-being of the family and the community.

There is however a third tradition exemplified best by the Arthashastra (the science of statecraft written in fourth century BCE) that opens up a conceptual space for something akin to amoral states that profess no faith in any cosmology. The writers of the Arthashastra were solely concerned with principles of statecraft and in which the Brahmin too became a political animal. The Arthashastra is replete with instances of opportunistic distance from, and one-sided exclusion of religion. Though political rulers could interfere in the affairs of religion, no faith-based order could interfere in state craft. Temples could be patronized or regulated as and when it suited the interests of the state. Religious endowment became another area of interest-based state administration. Endowments by now had a double purpose – as gifts from the ruler they were grateful thanks for legitimating what the Brahmana gave, sometimes in literally fabricating the right kind of genealogy. [p. 165/166]

11 [note 15 in the original] Smith, 61–62.

12 [note 16 in the original] Jasjit Singh Grewal, ed., *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

13 [note 17 in the original] See Thapar's "Is Secularism Alien to Indian Civilization?"

14 [note 18 in the original] For a discussion of Buddhist notions of human equality, see Gananath Obeyesekere, *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 182–185.

15 [note 19 in the original] Ibid., 97.

The Bhakti Movements

A major contribution in the development of new conceptual spaces was the Bhakti movements that arose in the sixth and seventh centuries in southern India [. . .], spread to western India in the thirteenth century, and reached the northern and eastern parts of the country between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries.[16]

[. . .] This new devotional religion, within the existing social framework, introduced alternative space for the ideas of brotherhood, equality, and individual Bhakti saints.[17] Second, Vedic Brahmanism was "transformed into a new sort of syntheses" as politicocultural traditions were contested within spaces that were opened up as Muslim power and pre-Muslim practices confronted one another.[18] Normative and textual Islam arrived in India and found itself in a dialogue with changing sociopolitical institutions, individuals, and ideas leading to a new narrative.[19]

"Bhakti" – a generic term – meaning a sentiment of loving devotion or attachment, had distinct and sometimes contradictory features highlighting both the intrareligious and interreligious eclecticism of the period.[20] [. . .] It is true that the critical edge of dissenting forms of bhakti was blunted with their assimilation into mainstream upper-caste worship. But [p. 166/167] "even if it did not substantially break the boundaries of high traditions, it redefined these in content, modality and address. [. . .] Thus, one can safely say that much of bhakti was ultimately aimed at the liberation from rebirth and the miseries of this worldly existence, and some of its strands opened up a conceptual space for a novel and radical normative imagery that would influence the later development of secular ideals.

One particular Bhakti movement, the Virasaivite movement, led by the Karnataka saint Basavanna and popularized by the *vachana* writers in the twelfth century, was the most radical.[21] Although a Brahmin, Basavanna revolted against Brahmanical ortho-

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16 [note 20 in the original] Major Bhakti Saints by region include the following: Vaishnava mysticism (South India): Ramanuja (d. 1137), Madhva (1197–1276), Nimbarka (thirteenth century), and Vallabhacharya (1479–1531); West India: Jnanesvara (1271–1296), Namdev (1270–1350), Eknath (1533–1599), Tukaram (1598 1650), and Ramdas (1608–1681); East India: Jayadeva (twelfth century), Chaitanya (1485–1533), Chandidas (fourteenth century), and Vidyapati (fourteenth/fifteenth century); North India: Ramananda (1400–1470), Kabir (1440–1518), Tulsidas (1532–1623), and Surdas (1483–1563).

17 [note 21 in the original] J. T .F Jordens "Medieval Hindu Devotionalism". In *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A L. Basham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 266.

18 [note 22 in the original] Singh, 509.

19 [note 23 in the original] See Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India c. 1200–1800* (Dheli: Hurst & Company, 2004).

20 [note 24 in the original] Krishna Sharma, "Towards a New Perspective," in *Religious Movement in South Asia 600–1800*, ed. David Lorenzen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 291–327.

21 [note 28 in the original] Ekantada Ramayya and the Aradhyas shaped the creed before Basavanna the Prime Minister of King Bijjala of the Kalachuri Kingdom of Kalyana in present day Bidar, Karnataka took over.

doxy, ritualism, and discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, and gender. His movement gave special place to women and became the predominant factor in overturning Brahmanical superiority, and to some extent, patriarchal values. [. . .]

Likewise, another exponent of bhakti, Mira Bai (1498–1550), gave voice to the subordinated classes (in particular, the weaving communities in the sixteenth century) of Saurashtra and Rajasthan (western India) against feudal privilege and caste norms, stood for a cultural resistance to socially imposed marital relationship, and gave refuge to those bereft of caste.[22] Both Basavanna and Mira undermined the idea of closely bounded communities and rendered religious boundaries flexible. [p. 167/168]

The Sufis

Although the radicalism of bhakti can be traced back to late Buddhist siddhas and the Nath school of "jogis,"[23] the coming of Islam also had a profound impact on the development of what Romila Thapar calls the guru-pir tradition.[24] [. . .]

Similar to Bhakti, Sufism asserted the freedom of the individual to experiment with Islamic religious truth, even if it entailed a questioning of the Sharia. The rejection of the caste by radical bhakti paralleled the Islamic propagation of social and religious equality. Both popular Islam and Hinduism showed remarkable proclivity toward individual religious idiosyncrasy, rejection of social institutions and their power. [. . .]

The religious needs of the lower levels of society were fulfilled by the so-called guru-pir tradition that emphasized individual choice and dissent, social equality and welfare; sustained the fluidity of elite religious boundaries; taught "toleration" and a form of limited but sincere universal social ethic, and emerged as a popular "religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration."[25] Modern Indian secularism is believed to draw its conceptual resources from this tradition.[26] [. . . p. 168/169. . .]

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22 [note 32 in the original] See Parita Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mirabai* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994); and Kumkum Sangari, "Mira Bai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti," *Economic & Political Weekly* 25, no. 27 (July 7, 1990): 1464–1475, 1537–1552.

23 [note 33 in the original] W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 159.

24 [note 34 in the original] Thapar, 92.

25 [note 40 in the original] R. S. Sharma, ed., *Indian Society: Historical Probings* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974), 189; also see D. N. Jha, ed., *Feudal Social Formation in Early India* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1987), 388.

26 [note 41 in the original] Key Sufi thinkers: Attar, Rumi and Jami, Ibn al-Arabi (1165–1240) and Abdul Karim al-Jili (1365–1428); influential Sufi orders: Chishtiya (thirteenth–eighteenth centuries), Suhrawardiya (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), Firdausiya (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), Kubrawiya (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries), Qadiriya (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries), Shattariya (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries), and Naqshbandiya (fifteenth seventeenth centuries).

Courtly Islam

The “guru-pir” tradition countered the Islam of elites and the courts. Do we draw the implication that the latter sought to establish the monopoly of Islam and encouraged hostility toward other religions? This does not appear to be entirely true. It is true that when the Sultanate was established in the thirteenth century, the Sultans were expected to follow the Shariat. [. . .] Politics and military considerations dictated that in societies with older pre-Islamic traditions, the Shariat be followed only by a tiny religious elite. It could be imposed only with very heavy, almost unbearable, political costs. It was best then to follow the Quranic injunction that in matters of faith there should be no compulsion and that Muslims should live together in peace with non-Muslims.

The history of religion in Medieval India was marked by the partial Islamization of the subcontinent as well as the indigenization of Islam in India. Although the old systems of religious beliefs and practice continued to flourish, new indigenous movements arose considering the presence of Islam. From the eighth century onward, Islam’s interaction with the local religio-cultural traditions had prepared the ground for religious syncretism and cultural synthesis. Between 1200 and 1800, the Medieval State was crucial in bringing together major communities not merely by administrative intervention but by a conscious constitution of ideology. Political Islam adjusted itself to India and along with forms of governance, it also developed a new vocabulary.[27] Though religious identities tended to get exclusive and standardized under political compulsions, [p. 169/170] mutual borrowings continued unabated. A wide and varied spectrum of religious phenomena, thus, marked the medieval period of Indian History – revealing both continuity and change.[28]

When I say that the requirements of politics prevented rulers from imposing Sharia on the entire population of their kingdom, I do not mean to suggest that policies of political expediency had widespread legitimacy. Both orthodox religious and legal opinion were critical of such policies. Sometimes rulers succumbed to pressure from religious orthodoxy. At other times, rulers tried to bypass it and abstain, and other times bent backward to comply with it. [. . .]

For Ali Hamdani (fourteenth century), the subjects of the rulers must be divided into Muslims and Kafirs. Both enjoy divine compassion but must be treated differently by Muslim rulers. Though Muslim rulers should protect the life and property of Kafirs, this should be done only if they do not build public places of worship. Even their private religious buildings must remain open to Muslim travellers. There should be no public demonstration of their rituals and customs. They should not mourn the dead in public nor carry their dead bodies through Muslim graveyards. They should be segregated.

27 [note 46 in the original] Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, ix.

28 [note 47 in the original] Grewal, 1; and Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism, Culture, and Politics: Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 235.

Kafirs should look different from Muslims in their dress and if a Muslim visits a place where a non-Muslim occupies a seat, the latter must vacate it for the Muslim. During the period of Delhi sultanate, heretical Shia sects were persecuted as well by orthodox Sunnis highlighting both intra- as well as interreligious tension. [. . .] Hindus were to be reminded of their inferior status in an Islamic state.

Hitherto I have contrasted the Sufi or the "Guru-pir" tradition with elite-driven religious orthodoxy among Muslims. I have claimed that while popular Islam built conceptual resources that provide the cultural preconditions for the development of modern secularism in India, the views of elite-driven religious orthodoxy militated against the growth of [p. 170/171] these conceptual resources. Though there is much truth in what is mentioned earlier, it ignores the conceptual innovations within elite Muslim discourse and in the culture of Mughal courts. It overlooks the manner in which Sharia was reinterpreted and how justice rather than religious law was made an important value undergirding the state. Moreover, it neglects the phenomenal contribution of Akbar in developing a new kind of state that has few parallels in Indian or European history. Let me briefly turn to each of these.

First, in a context where the religious views of rulers failed to coincide with the religion of the subject, dissenters within Sunni Islam continued to invoke the Sharia but altered its meaning to legitimize an ideal city as one that is composed of diverse religious and social practices and an ideal ruler to be one who ensured not the well-being of Muslims alone but of the entire people consisting of diverse religious groups. For these dissenters, Sharia was not to be interpreted in narrow juridical terms but in broader philosophical terms.[29] It became a more flexible concept of practical political philosophy rather than a rigid concept of law. [. . .]

Second, dissenters within Sunni Islam developed a conception of a state based on justice that if not entirely independent of Sharia was at least not incompatible with it. This view is also found in the Nasirian tradition, in *Akhlaq-i-Nasiri*. [. . .]

In the Akhlaq literature, justice in the ideal state is social harmony and balance of the conflicting claims of diverse interest/religious groups. Divergence from justice causes clashes and destruction. In a treatise of the seventeenth century compiled in the Deccan, it is argued that the objective of the state, the Sultanate is to fulfill worldly human needs but since human beings follow diverse religions, conflict might ensue. The role of the perfect God-sent person, Namus or Sharia is to avoid such conditions of conflict.[30]

Justice further requires that no one should get either less or more than he deserves as a member of his class. Excess and shortfall both dislocate the nature of the union and social relations of companionship. Throughout, this emphasis on the desirability of justice is argued from the point of view of a secular ethic. Justice is for all and is against

29 [note 49 in the original] See Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*.

30 [note 50 in the original] This introduced a degree of ambiguity in Sharia; a point mentioned earlier.

discrimination against one. A primary advice to a king is to consider his subjects as "sons and friends" irrespective of their faith. So justice serves a real public interest. A non-Muslim but just ruler will serve society better than an unjust Muslim Sultan.[31] [. . .]

Akbar

Though formally unlettered, Akbar had diverse spiritual interests. His tutor introduced him to Rumi (d. 1273) and Hafiz of Shiraz (d. 1317), and under ideological influences traceable to Ibn al-Arabi and Abd al-Karim al-Jili, Akbar showed his lack of dogma as soon as he began ruling independently in 1560. This liberal outlook can also be understood as a part of a process to which the predecessors of Mughals (the Afghans, in particular) had made significant contributions.[32] In August 1562, he remitted the tax on Hindu pilgrimage centers. In March 1564, Akbar abolished *jizya*. Why did he do this? On one view "these were steps dictated principally by the exigencies of state ... rather than ... religious tolerance."[33] This is supported by evidence from 1564 to 1575 during which Akbar made efforts to strengthen his state broadly within the framework of Sunni orthodoxy. [. . . p. 172/173. . .]

An eclectic man, Akbar's *Sulh-I-Kul* [philosophy of absolute/universal peace] was to be his basis for the fraternity of faiths. [. . .] Akbar's liberal religious outlook is also considered to be the motive force of his Rajput policy. His close relationship with the Rajputs was, initially, essentially political, based on an elite commonality of interests. Subsequently, it symbolized a broad liberal social tolerance.[34] This alliance strengthened cultural rapprochement and opened space for the Sufi concept of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (monism as a reality/unity of being) as well as the Nirguna Bhakti emphasis on religious unity and social equality.

Akbar's contact with Shaykh Taj-al-din Ajodhani in 1578 moved him to a realm of his own.[35] He forbade forcible conversions to Islam, removed restrictions on the building of temples, and appointed Hindus in high places. He organized religious discourses, initially only for the Ulama, open to the Hindus, Jains, Parsis, and Christians after 1578. In February – March 1575, he gave orders for the erection of *Ibadatkhana* (House of Worship) for religious discussions. Between 1579 and 1605, Akbar hosted three Jesuit

31 [note 51 in the original] Alam, *Languages of Political Islam*, 59.

32 [note 53 in the original] See Aquil, 232.

33 [note 54 in the original] See Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility under Akbar and the Development of His Religious Policy, 1560–80," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, no. 1/2 (April 1968): 29–36.

34 [note 57 in the original] See Satish Chandra's "Mughal Relations with the Rajput State of Rajasthan: The Foundations" in *Essays on Medieval Indian History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003),357–406; and also Satish Chandra "Akbar's Rajput Policy and Its Evolution: Some Considerations," in *Akbar and His Age*, ed. Iqtidar Alam Khan (New Delhi: ICHR, 1999), 61–69.

35 [note 58 in the original] Ahmad, 167–181.

missions but his profound faith in *Wahdat al-Wujud* remained deeply rooted. In his search for the transcendent truth, Jainism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, as well as Iranian dualism made a contribution. In making *Sulh-I-Kul* as state policy, Ibn al-Arabi's acceptance of idol worship, in so far as the object of man's worship is God himself, and the theory of perfect man contributed significantly.

Since the Sultanate was the *de facto* Caliph in India, every Muslim ruler was dependent on the religious guidance of Ulama. The Sadar-us-Sadur was the chief theologian of the state – responsible for the interpretation and application of the Shariat. In 1579, Akbar reduced the powers of this office (for both Shaikh Abdun Nabi and Makhdumul Mulk). He claimed a just ruler was not bound by any particular interpretation of Sharia and if any disagreement arouse on a point of law, he had absolute authority to prescribe a legally binding interpretation in conformity with the injunctions of the Quran. [p. 173/174]

Between 1579 and 1582, Akbar passed through the most critical years of his spiritual experiences that led to profound changes. Matrimonial alliances across religions were pursued and the Mahabharata and the Upanishad were translated into Persian. *Jizya* was abolished again in 1580. Various Hindu festivals were celebrated in Akbar's court. Following Hindu Yogis, Akbar abstained from eating meat and had the center of his head shaved. He named his own household servants chelas (disciples of Yogis were known as Chelas). He appointed a Brahman to translate *Khirad Afza* and showed interest in the worship of fire and the sun. He had always permitted his Hindu wives to worship their idols within the palace and now he showed some interest in the idea of reincarnation. He also venerated Virgin Mary and gave permission to construct churches.

This was in sharp contrast to other parts of the world where religious bigotry and intolerance were virtues. One can hardly forget that the "Age of Akbar" coincided with the period of bloody religious wars in France and elsewhere in Europe of which the St. Bartholomew's massacre (1572) was only one small episode. Closer to home, the Ottoman emperor claimed that the enforcement of Sharia was an important part of state policy. Of course, Akbar's policies of laying down rules of governance without reference to Sharia were resented by orthodox Muslims [. . .] But by any yardstick, *Sulh-I-Kul* compares favorably with other such contemporaneous attempts, such as Erasmus's pamphlet "The Lamentations of Peace, Banished from everywhere and ruined," which accepted war against non-Christians while crying for peace among them.[36] [. . .]

This tradition of equal respect and impartiality developed in Akbar's time toward all religions was continued in large measure even by the British. In medieval India, a broad theme of "religious eclecticism" can be detected that embraced Akbar's imperial and aristocratic innovations as well as numerous popular monotheism(s) and mysti-

36 [note 60 in the original] See chapter two, "Meeting of the Oceans," in Eugenia Vanina, *Ideas and Society: India between the Sixteenth and Eighteent Centuries* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 84–85.

cism(s).[37] It is not farfetched to conclude that while the Europeans learnt the idea of toleration of other sects from their own experience, the conceptual space for the idea of impartiality toward all faiths was created in the subcontinent and [p. 174/175] learnt by Europe, if at all, from colonial encounters and the legacy they inherited from the polities of their colonial subjects.

Problems in This Account

I have presented a preliminary sketch of how multiple traditions of popular "Hinduism," Buddhism, Jainism, and popular and Courtly Islam opened up conceptual spaces that enabled later generations to forge a distinctive conception of modern Indian secularism. Elements of resources for principled distance between state and religion can be found in deep religious diversity that goes back at least to the fifth century BCE and was reinforced by developments in the Sultanate and the Mughal periods. Ideas of minimal material well-being and decent, this-worldly social relations were developed by Buddhism. The persistent account of the denial of religious freedom is paralleled by an even more powerful account of religious toleration and religious freedom throughout Indian history. Likewise, the idea of human equality is available in some form in Buddhism, Bhakti, and Sufi movements, popular Islam, and occasionally in Akbar's eclectic religiosity.

Yet, the account provided here is not only sketchy but also ridden with internal problems. For a start, it might appear too triumphalist.[38] I have laid more emphasis on conditions conducive to the development of secular ideals than on those that undermine them. Second, any chronological account carries with it the danger of a teleological bias. Although, I do not wish it to be teleologically significant, I am not confident that I have escaped an indefensible progressivism. Third, I recognize that on occasions my account resembles anything that captures the social reform movements in the nineteenth and the twentieth century. If so, I am guilty of anachronism. [. . .] Even if we were to make the not altogether implausible claim that something interesting was stirring in parts of southern India in the twelfth century that was what we call modern and well before the advent of Western modernity, we still do not get a sense of the background conditions and the social, cultural, and political imaginary of that period. We do not really get a sense of how past actors understood and articulated their actions and intentions. There

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37 [note 62 in the original] K. M. Shrimali, "Religions in Complex Societies: Myth of the 'Dark Age'" in *Religion in Indian History*, ed. Irfan Habib (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2007), 29.

38 [note 63 in the original] For example, see Vanina, 82; and chapter 8, "Historical Background to the Rise of the Bhakti Movement in Northern India", in Satish Chandra's *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1996), 110–131.

is too much anachronism and too little sensitivity to the radical differences between the world then and the world now. [p. 175/176]

One great difficulty has to do with the meaning of crucial terms and their translation. When something is translated as equality, what exactly are we to mean by that? How do we understand the claim that religious reformers such as Kabir sought to end the caste system? How do we understand notions of individual choice and responsibility? In short, we have the following issue before us: we certainly need to oppose ridiculous ideas such as that notions of individuality, freedom, and equality were invented in the modern West and nowhere else. But equally we have to guard against the worst kind of ethnocentrism and anachronism. We cannot read into the past of India, modern Western notions of freedom, equality and the individual. A whole new language and vocabulary has to be retrieved, the entire buried treasure has to be brought back to the surface so that we can reconsider not only non-Western past and present, but also rewrite the story of Western past and present. For instance, the idioms of power that existed in Mughal times emerged from a complex reflective process involving politics and religion. They were neither always ideal nor always liberal. They could not have been so given the diverse and evolving polity paradigm within which they operated. "Yet a comparative reflection with other polities and societies of that period shows that the idioms in which political ideas and ideals were expressed had much that was original about them."[39]

The greatest difficulty in my account is that I operate with concepts that have developed within Western Christendom and modernity. Do terms such as "theocracy," "establishment," and "secular" capture the structure and process of religion and politics in non-Western societies? A deeper, conceptually sensitive historical reading of sources might throw up altogether different concepts, or a new categorical framework that questions fundamentally the terms with which I have operated throughout this chapter. Such questions must await further study.

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39 [note 64 in the original] Alam, *Languages of Political Islam,* 195.

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38 David Biale: *Not in the Heavens. The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (2011)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

David Biale (b. 1949 Los Angeles) is an American historian specializing in Jewish history. Biale received a BA in history in 1971, and an MA in modern European history in 1972, both from the University of California, Berkeley. He obtained a PhD in Jewish history from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1977. Biale held professorships at State University of New York at Binghamton, and at the Graduate Theological Union at UC Berkeley, before becoming the Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History, and, since 2012, Distinguished Professor of Jewish History at the University of California, Davis.

Biale's research deals with Jewish history, and especially with modern Jewish history. Among his publications are *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* (Princeton University Press 2010), and *Gershom Scholem: Master of the Kabbalah* (Yale University Press 2018). In 2002, he edited *Cultures of the Jews*, with a focus on everyday matters, on the interaction of Jews with their social and political environments, and on neglected groups within the Jewish community.

In the selected text, Biale traces the tradition of Jewish secular thought back to its pre-modern predecessors, arguing that these "not only anticipated their modern successors but at times even furnished arguments that might be appropriated, adapted, and transformed to fit a secular agenda." This argument resembles the one made by Rajeev Bhargava (text no. 37), when he writes of the emergence of conceptual spaces in pre-modern history that prepare the ground for later secular developments. Even if it would be anachronistic to use the term 'secular' in describing these pre-modern thoughts, the social context of modernity, as Biale argues, "cast them in a new light, making it possible to view them as genuine precursors."

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Introduction: Origins

In "The Non-Jewish Jew," the Polish social revolutionary Isaac Deutscher, who began his education as a yeshiva student, argued that those who rejected their ancestral religion and their people in favor of secular universalism had historical precursors. In a paradoxical formulation that captured something of his own identity, Deutscher wrote: "The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition."[1] This "Jewry" is Judaism – not only the religion but all of the traditions built up over nearly three millennia. Yet, in transcending Judaism, the heretic finds himself or herself in a different Jewish tradition, a tradition no less Jewish for being antitraditional. Secular universalism for these heretics paradoxically became a kind of Jewish identity.

Many of these ideas originated in the European Enlightenment, but they also often had a Jewish provenance or at least were believed by secular Jews to have such a provenance. Deutscher, for example, started his famous essay on an autobiographical note, remembering how, as a child in the yeshiva, he had read the story of the heretic Elisha ben Abuya (or Aher – the Other – as he is known). Elisha's favorite student, Rabbi Meir, became one of the towering legal authorities of his generation, yet he never renounced his wayward teacher. By raising the question of the relationship of the Orthodox Rabbi Meir and the heretic Elisha, Deutscher implied that even the heretic remains somehow connected to that which he rejects, for the source of his heresy may lie within that tradition. For Deutscher, Elisha was the prototype of his modern heroes: Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud. They were all heretics, yet their heresy might be understood as a rejection that grew out of the Jewish tradition itself.

Like Deutscher, I want to argue that Jewish secularism was a revolt grounded in the tradition it rejected. The relationship between the premodern and the modern, in which the first is associated with religion and the second with the secular, remains one of the most fraught for students of religion. According to a common master narrative of the Enlightenment, also sometimes called "the secularization theory," modernity rep-

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1 [note 1 in the original] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew," in *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Boston, 1968), 26.

resented [p. 1/2] a total rupture with the past as innovation was privileged over tradition, science over superstition, rationalism over faith. In what Mark Lilla has called "the Great Separation," religion was divorced from the state, with the secular sovereign taking the role of God.[2] Religion may continue to exist in modernity, but it has become one choice among many and is no longer hegemonic.[3] All of us are free to choose and if such choice is an inherent meaning of secularism, then even those choosing to be religious are, in a sense, secular.[4]

In recent years, this dichotomous break has come under new scrutiny, especially given the persistence of religion in the modern world.[5] The contemporary resurgence of religion is clearly a complex response to secularism, just as secularism was – and still is – a response to religion. These two mortal enemies are very much defined by and through the other. And not only does it appear that religion and secularism in modernity are deeply implicated in each other, but it may well be that their contemporary entanglement owes something to the way the secular emerged out of the religious, not so much its polar negation as its dialectical product.

One example of this process can be found in the history of the very word "secular."[6] The term comes from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning "century" or "age." Christian theology held that between the First and Second Comings, the world was in a "middle age." Following Augustine's *City of God*, the church saw itself existing apart from this age, wandering on the earth but not a part of it. That which belonged to this age belonged to the earth. Thus, to be a part of the *saeculum* meant to belong to the unredeemed world. The term conflated time and space: a "temporal" power was a power pertaining to this world (the Hebrew word *olam* carries a similar double meaning: "world" and "eternity"). But "secular" also distinguished those clergy who were "of this world," as opposed to those who took "religious" (i.e., monastic) vows. *Seculatio* referred to the process of leaving the monastery. In this sense, "secular" in the medieval vocabulary could not be divorced from the context of religion.

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2 [note 2 in the original] Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics and the Modern West* (New York, 2007). For a good discussion of the secularization theory as well as a critique, see José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), 11–39.

3 [note 3 in the original] For a recent work that operates with this paradigm, see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

4 [note 4 in the original] See Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, NY, 1979).

5 [note 5 in the original] See, among other recent works, Peter Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (New York, 1999); David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Burlington, VT, 2005); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA, 2003); David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, eds., *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors* (Stanford, CA, 2006); and Vincent P. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation and Modernity* (Chicago, 2006).

6 [note 6 in the original] See Casanova, *Public Religions*, 12–14.

By the seventeenth century, the word began to lose its linkage with a religious context and came to stand in sharp opposition to it. As the seventeenth-century Cambridge Neoplatonist Henry More wrote: "The Sun and the Moon have either a Spiritual signification or a Secular."[7] As a product of modern scientific thinking, this world became detached from the divine, the natural from the supernatural. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century [p. 2/3] political theorists also began to use the word "secular" to imagine a state free of religion (however, the word "secularism" was a nineteenth-century invention). And, finally, with the Reformation, the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution, "secularization" took on the meaning of church property appropriated by the temporal power. Thus, the word "secular" originating in a medieval religious milieu, came to signify a world opposed both metaphysically and politically to religion.

A number of scholars have accordingly argued for a dialectical path that secularism followed out of religion. Amos Funkenstein used the term "secular theology" to describe this relationship.[8] According to his argument, the seventeenth-century proponents of rationalism and the scientific revolution adopted the medieval scholastic divine attributes – God's omniscience, omnipotence, and providence – and invested them with earthly meaning. The desacralization of the world was thus accomplished with the tools of theology. Similarly, Karl Löwith proposed that the secular idea of progress owes much to the secularization of Christian apocalypticism.[9] And Carl Schmitt argued that modern "political theology" secularized the power of a transcendent God in the power of the state.[10] If these scholars found the origins of modernity primarily in medieval Catholicism, Peter L. Berger, building on Max Weber, suggested that the roots of the secular lay rather in Protestantism, which had shrunk the medieval realm of the sacred and created a heaven empty of angels.[11] Berger also observed that this Protestant move, in turn, had its roots in Old Testament monotheism, since the ancient Israelites had already banned the gods from the world: monotheism thus became the first step toward secularization.

This last argument – albeit without specific reference to Berger – found a thoroughgoing exponent in Marcel Gauchet in his challenging book, *The Disenchantment of*

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7 [note 7 in the original] Quoted in *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Secular," 3.a.

8 [note 8 in the original] Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination* (Princeton, NJ, 1986). Hans Blumenberg formulated this relationship somewhat differently by arguing not so much for a dialectical progression as for modern ideas occupying the places vacated by medieval theology. See *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

9 [note 9 in the original] Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, 1949).

10 [note 10 in the original] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology, trans. George Schwab* (Cambridge, MA, 1985). For a more recent treatment of political theology, albeit unaccountably without any mention of Schmitt, see Lilla, *Stillborn God*.

11 [note 11 in the original] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY, 1967).

the World.[12] In a magisterial account of human history, Gauchet argued that the secular began with what Karl Jaspers called the "axial age," when Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism banished the idols. Thus, the emergence of the "major" or "universal" religions was the first stage in the eventual disintegration of religion: the greater and more transcendent the god, the freer are humans. Monotheism dissolves the unity of the world into oppositions: God versus the world, the one versus the many, the sensible versus the intelligible. In this way, the modern dichotomy of "secular" versus "religion" is itself a product of religion. For Gauchet, monotheism by itself did not destabilize religion since Judaism [p. 3/4] and Islam assumed God's continued presence in the world. Only Christianity, in its doctrine of incarnation, postulated God's radical otherness, which required the mediation of God's son. Only Christianity created a religion of interiority and abdicated the world to its secular rulers. The monotheistic religions – and Christianity in particular – thus produced their own secular subversions.

All of these sweeping arguments suffer from a notable defect: they assume that secularization was a homogeneous process rooted in Christianity. But even within Europe itself, different local conditions created different types of secularization. Puritan England gave rise to a different form of the secular than did Lutheran Germany. Catholic Poland scarcely secularized at all until a late date, while Catholic France cut off the heads of its clergy when it underwent its revolution. Moreover, this focus on Christianity – and particularly on its western European expressions – fails to acknowledge that secularism has many and varied manifestations outside of Europe. In far-flung places like China, India, and Turkey, modern secular movements reflect, in one form or another, the religious contexts – Confucianism, Hinduism, and Islam – out of which they sprang. To attend to secularisms in the plural is to pay attention to the specific traditions that they reject but that inevitably shape their character.[13]

[. . .] I will argue that Jewish secularism is a tradition that has its own unique characteristics grounded in part in its premodern sources. While the Christian origins of the word "secular" are connected to the dichotomous way Christian theologians saw the "City of God" and the "City of Man," Judaism never made such a sharp distinction: the profane world is not irredeemably polluted. While traditional Jewish sources repeatedly hold that this world is not the same as the next (or the one above), nevertheless, a strong *worldliness* informs much of the biblical, rabbinic, and medieval philosophical traditions. Even the Kabbalah, the most theosophical genre of Jewish literature, held that forces within this world mirror those above and vice versa; the two worlds can never be separated.

12 [note 12 in the original] Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: Une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris, 1985); English version, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, trans. Oscar Burge (Princeton, NJ, 1997).

13 [note 13 in the original] See, among other recent works, Casanova, *Public Religions*; Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Delhi, 1998); and Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds., *Secularisms* (Durham, NC, 2008).

The origins of the Hebrew word for "secular" suggest this cultural specificity. One of the biblical roots for "polluted" or "defiled" is *hol*, which came to mean "secular" in modern Hebrew.[14] But *hol* in the Bible can also mean something intermediary between the sacred and the polluted, namely, the profane. So, for example, when David demands bread from the priest Ahimelech, he is told: "I have no profane bread (*lehem hol*), only consecrated bread [p. 4/5] (*lehem kodesh*)."[15] In the later rabbinic division of the week, the days other than the Sabbath or festival days are referred to as *hol*. The profane is merely that which is everyday, neither holy nor defiled.

The Bible also makes a strict distinction between priests and nonpriests. It refers to the latter as a *zar*, or stranger (i.e., one who is a stranger in the domain of a temple). Onkelos, who translated the Bible into Aramaic, rendered this term as hiloni, the word that Joseph Klausner, the twentieth-century historian of Hebrew literature, adopted to refer to secular Jews, a usage that soon entered the vernacular of modern Hebrew.[16] In the midrash on Leviticus, a high priest tells a *hiloni* that he can only walk with the priest if he consents not to enter graveyards, which are forbidden to priests.[17] This "secular" Jew thus occupies an intermediary status between the priest and someone who is ritually defiled. The secular here is part of a continuum that presupposes the holy, not its negation.

Another word that demonstrates the continuum between past and present is *apikoros*, one of the key rabbinic terms for a heretic. The word *apikoros* is evidently derived from "Epicurean," but it probably did not carry the later meaning of "hedonist." Instead, the philosophical followers of Epicurus believed in the existence of the gods but denied that they interfered in or interacted at all with our world. The world was made up of atoms, which collided with each other in random fashion. If the rabbinic *apikoros* had such a philosophical outlook, he not only would have denied revelation but would have professed something like an ancient version of materialism. Since an early rabbinical text says that one should study in order to "know what to answer the apikoros," we can assume that the rabbis of late antiquity faced a real challenge from such heretics.[18] In the talmudic discussion of the Mishnah, the rabbis generally understand the *apikoros* as one who insults the rabbis: "what use are the rabbis to us, they study for their own benefit"

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14 [note 14 in the original] For example, Leviticus 21:4 referring to the ritual pollution acquired from contact with a corpse or 21:9 to the pollution acquired by the daughter of a priest through illicit sex. The root *hll* also means "wounded" or "fallen" (as in battle), which corresponds to the law that a damaged or wounded animal cannot be consecrated.

15 [note 15 in the original] 1 Samuel 21:5.

16 [note 16 in the original] See Azzan Yadin and Ghil`ad Zuckerman, "*Blorít* – Pagans' Mohawk or Sabras' Forelock? Ideologically Manipulative Secularization of Hebrew Terms in Socialist Zionist Israeli," in Tope Omoniyi, ed., *The Sociology of Language and Religion: Change, Conflict and Accommodation* (London, 2010), chap. 6. *Hiloni* was not the only word that denoted a secular person: *hofshi* (free or freethinking) had a similar connotation, but by the late twentieth century, the former had largely replaced the latter.

17 [note 17 in the original] Leviticus Rabba 25.5. The word derives from the Aramaic for a stranger.

18 [note 18 in the original] M. Avot 2.14.

and "what use are the rabbis since they never permitted us the raven nor forbade us the dove" (the point here is that the Torah already contains all the knowledge necessary for its interpretation).[19] The *apikoros* is therefore the one who rejects the rabbis as superfluous authorities, foreshadowing the attack by modern secularists on latter-day rabbis.

While we should not automatically equate the *apikoros* as defined here with modern secularists, the similarities are nevertheless striking and have to do in part with the similarities between some forms of Greek philosophy and modern sensibilities. As Berger has suggested, the heretic of premodern [p. 5/6] times becomes the secularist of the modern era: insofar as we autonomously "choose" (one of the original meanings of the Greek *haireisis*) our orientation to religion, we are all heretics."[20]

As Berger and Gauchet both insist, the Hebrew Bible represented a decisive moment in the prehistory of secularism. But is the appeal to the Hebrew Bible a sufficient explanation for the particular character of Jewish secularism? After all, the strict monotheism that Judaism shares with Islam did not predispose the latter to a secular revolution. It was specifically where the Jews had contact with European modernization – either in Europe itself or in areas under the influence of European colonialism – that Jewish secularism developed. The historical tradition may have provided the kindling, but the European Enlightenment lit the match. The argument that I will make does not preclude these external influences but is aimed at revealing how secular Jewish thinkers built their philosophies on the religious tradition they sought to replace.

That the earlier tradition fueled and shaped the particular form of Jewish secularism does not, however, mean that the two are identical. To say that they are, as Gauchet seems to at times, effaces what is new and revolutionary about modernity. But I want to argue that aspects of premodern thought not only anticipated their modern successors but at times even furnished arguments that might be appropriated, adapted, and transformed to fit a secular agenda. Even if these ideas in their original contexts were not intended for such a purpose, the social context of modernity cast them in a new light, making it possible to view them as genuine precursors. To use a different metaphor, these premodern ideas were like genes that required the social and political environment of modernity before they could be expressed. They were less the proximate causes of Jewish secularism than they were providers of the dominant *mentalité* – the language and particular flavor – of that secularism when modern forces caused it to emerge.

While the processes of modernization and secularization were typically experienced as ruptures, rather than as continuities with the past, no revolution takes place in a vacuum. The new is always incubated in the old. It is also in the nature of rebels to search for precursors, to legitimize their innovations in traditions of their own. Whether identified by actors themselves or by later observers, the nexus between religion and secularism forms a crucial element in any story of modernization. [p. 6/7]

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19 [note 19 in the original] B. Sanhedrin 99b–100a.

20 [note 20 in the original] Berger, *Heretical Imperative.*

Let us consider one of the most famous stories in the Talmud, in which the second-century sage Rabbi Eliezer finds himself in a minority of one in opposition to the other rabbis.[21] He invokes various miracles on his side, but the majority is unimpressed. Finally, he insists that if the law is according to his opinion: "let the heavens prove it." Immediately, a *bat kol*, a heavenly voice, affirms that his reading of the law is the right one. Against this seemingly iron-clad defense, Rabbi Joshua, the leader of the majority, stands on his feet and declares, quoting Deuteronomy 30:12: "It (the Torah) is not in the heavens." The Talmud asks: "what does 'it is not in the heavens' mean?" A later authority, Rabbi Yermiya explains: "Since the Torah was given at Sinai, we no longer listen to a heavenly voice." The Torah is now on earth and, so, it is the majority – a majority of rabbis, that is – who will decide its meaning. The text finds the principle of majority rule in another biblical quotation: "according to the majority you shall incline" (Exodus 23:2). It is thus the Torah itself, the divine revelation, that both affirms a secular principle ("it is not in the heavens") and teaches majority rule.

This story is sometimes cited as evidence of a rabbinic declaration of independence from God. And it is indeed that, but it is also more complicated. The rabbis enact their independence not only in the story itself but also in the quotations they bring from the Torah to support their case. The verse in Exodus utterly contradicts the rabbis' use of it. In its original context it says: "You shall not side with the many to do wrong, nor shall you pervert your testimony by following after the many." The verse clearly means that a witness should adhere to what he believes right rather than following after the majority opinion. But the rabbis turn this negative statement into a positive one: one *should* incline after the majority. It is almost as if to declare their independence from heaven, they needed to radically subvert heaven's own revelation.

Through the lens of this pregnant story, we can witness the tensions in rabbinic thought between divine revelation and human autonomy. But this is hardly secularism *avant la lettre*. Subvert the Torah the rabbis do, but they are far from discarding it altogether. They clearly believed that some communication from heaven is possible: hence, the *bat kol*.[22] In addition, they argued that their own law – the oral law – was revealed at Sinai together with the written law. Their legislative innovations were not mere human inventions but were grounded in revelation. It was probably this last idea that [p. 7/8] undergirds the Rabbi Eliezer story, since if rabbinic interpretation – majority rule – had its origins in Sinai, then a belated heavenly voice must surely count for less. Moreover, no one in this story – or in others – doubts either the existence or the authority of God. Immediately after Rabbi Joshua's statement, God is said to laugh: "My sons have defeated me, my sons have defeated me." God acquiesces in his own defeat. So, the majority, too, invokes a divine voice, but this time on its own side.

21 [note 21 in the original] B. Baba Metzia 59b.

22 [note 22 in the original] For the partial substitution of the bat kol for the prophet, see b. Yoma 9b.

In addition, as Jeffrey Rubenstein has rightly pointed out, the larger story in which this passage is embedded belies the seeming secularism of the text.[23] Following their victory, the rabbis ban Rabbi Eliezer and burn everything that he declared pure. Yet the Talmud clearly takes the side of Rabbi Eliezer since various miraculous catastrophes occur after he is banned. The point seems to be that the victorious majority must not shame the minority. Otherwise, divine punishment will be visited on those who do so. If the rabbis claim sovereign authority for themselves, their own text undermines that claim.

However, we should not be too hasty in minimizing the radical import of our text. The story reveals a sense that the destruction of the Temple created a new world in which human autonomy loomed large, an idea that we might usually associate with modernity. The rabbis asserted that, without the Temple, prophecy had ceased, left only to children and fools.[24] The end of prophecy guaranteed their interpretive monopoly, at least if they could suppress other voices. And then there is the very legal dialectic itself: the law was not given definitively but is instead open to contradictory interpretations, each of which, to quote another famous story, is "the words of the living God."[25] In all of these expressions, the Torah has now become the property of its human interpreters.

The relationship between this text and modern Jewish secularism is therefore not direct, in the sense that it neither leads to nor causes the revolt by later secularists against the tradition. One might argue that it is a symptom of a certain mentality, a willingness to stake out an independence from scripture, even in the thick of a traditional culture. It is this mentality that may have predisposed certain Jews, once they became infected with modernity, to break from the religion. And the text is also available to those moderns who would use it to give their philosophies a historical pedigree, much as Isaac Deutscher's invocation of Elisha ben Abuya is an example of such a search for a secular forebear among religious heretics. [p. 8/9]

The religious tradition may have prepared the ground for modern secularism in other ways. For example, Gershom Scholem famously argued that the antinomian seventeenth-century messianic movement led by Shabbtai Zvi sowed the seeds of the Jewish Enlightenment by shattering rabbinic authority. Here, the relationship between the premodern and the modern might be called dialectical since one of the most mystical movements in Jewish history becomes the ground for its opposite, modern rationalism. Another example of this type, to be examined later, is Moses Maimonides' "negative theology," in which God becomes so transcendent that a later thinker – Spinoza – could turn him into his opposite, the equivalent of the world.

Since the creators of Jewish secularism were intellectuals, some of them products of yeshiva education, it was only natural that they would find their inspiration in books,

23 [note 23 in the original] Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories* (Baltimore, 1999), 34–63.

24 [note 24 in the original] B. Baba Batra 12b. On our text and the end of prophecy, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "'We Pay No Heed to Heavenly Voices': The End of Prophecy and the Formation of the Canon," in *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004), 192–207.

25 [note 25 in the original] B. Eruvin 13b.

starting with books from within the religious tradition. Later, the books of earlier secularists, notably Baruch Spinoza, fulfilled a similar role. Jewish secularism as an intellectual tradition is therefore the product of the writers of books basing themselves on other books even as they rejected the books on which they were raised. Intertextuality is the key to this literature.

What we find here is the Jewish analogue to another of Funkenstein's definitions of secular theology: nontheologians practicing theology. In the Jewish case, these literati, starting with Spinoza, were often not rabbis; indeed, they were self-conscious rebels against the rabbis. This literary chain reaction had a peculiar character. The creators of Jewish secularism were primarily Ashkenazi (i.e., northern and eastern European Jews). Theirs was a revolt of sons against traditionalist fathers. But the tradition in which they found inspiration was often that of the Sephardic (Spanish) Jews, especially the philosophical tradition mediated through Islam.[26] One might argue that in revolting against their fathers, they turned instead to their "uncles."[27] The most prominent of these uncles was Moses Maimonides, the towering figure whose thought will figure prominently in the chapters to follow.

This uncle-nephew relationship continued with the adoption of Spinoza, the Sephardic son of Marranos, as their radical progenitor. Isaac Deutscher related that one reason he came to question religion was that his father gave him Spinoza to read. Deutscher's father had himself earlier written a book on Spinoza and had thus already embarked on the road away from religion before his son.[28] The younger Deutscher's path to secularism through Spinoza was not unique [. . . p. 9/10. . .]. Spinoza stood on the cusp of modernity, indeed, arguably as the first secular philosopher. While he would no doubt have resisted the title "secular Jew," since he evidently relinquished all ties to the Jewish people, he was embraced by generations of Jewish secularists as their model and precursor.

Because Spinoza was not only the first modern philosopher but equally the last medieval one, he points back to the premodern Jewish tradition before he points forward to his modern inheritors. It was often by adopting Spinoza as one's spiritual father that later Jewish secular thinkers indirectly came into dialogue with the medieval tradition, even if they never explicitly mentioned it. [. . .]

I have used the term "secularism" repeatedly without having defined it, and a preliminary definition would seem to be in order. Since, as I have already suggested, there are many varieties of secularism depending on their cultural context, we may be justifiably hesitant before giving a global or essential definition of Jewish secularism. Such a definition will instead have to emerge phenomenologically from the sources. But, fol-

26 [note 26 in the original] See David Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996). Sorkin shows how the Andalusian traditions of exegesis were the ones particularly influential for Mendelssohn, but the point can be generalized.

27 [note 27 in the original] Naomi Seidman suggested this metaphor drawn from literary theory.

28 [note 28 in the original] These anecdotes are from the autobiographical introduction written by Deutscher's wife Tamara in Deutscher, *Non-Jewish Jew*, 17 and 19.

lowing Talal Asad, we can distinguish two separate, if related, meanings of the word.[29] In his vocabulary, "secular" refers to a metaphysical position: the rejection of the supernatural in favor of a materialist view of the world. The word "secularism," on the other hand, refers to the political doctrine of separation of church and state.[30] For the secularist, following Immanuel Kant, law should derive not from an external divine source but from autonomous human decisions. To remove religion from the state means to leave humans in full command of their political fate. While materialism thus defines the metaphysical philosophy of the secular, humanism defines the political theory of secularism.

These categories are not entirely adequate by themselves, and adoption of one does not necessarily entail adoption of the other. Consider, for example, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, who certainly believed in the existence of the deity and in its role in the world but who nevertheless outlined a secularist theory of the separation of religion from the state. Moreover, there are many Jews today – as well as in the past – who claim to believe in the existence of God but also define themselves as secular, by which they mean that they do not [p. 10/11] identify with any of the religious movements of Judaism and do not follow the revealed law. To translate a modern Christian term, they are the "unsynagogued." These Jews are religious in terms of abstract belief but secular in terms of practice. On the other hand, there are those who *do* belong to synagogues and practice Jewish law but are secular in their beliefs. One can reject God's existence but still live according to his law.

For many of the thinkers we will consider, the metaphysical and the political went hand in hand. Zionist thinkers will necessarily play a major role in this book since the movement originated as a profoundly secular revolution against the perceived religion of exile. But Zionism as both a political and cultural movement was itself the product of a moment in history – before and after the turning of the twentieth century – that produced many ideological challenges to traditional life. Fed by mass emigration, urbanization, and economic upheaval, social revolution and nationalism in both their Jewish and non-Jewish forms captured the Jewish street. Bundism, territorialism, communism, and liberalism joined Zionism as political answers to the crisis of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Jewish life. All sought salvation in some form of politics, and all did so in conscious opposition to traditional religion.[31] The power of such politics was such that even the Orthodox felt compelled to form their own political movements, if only to defend themselves against the antireligious alternatives.

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29 [note 29 in the original] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA, 2003), introduction.

30 [note 30 in the original] For a parsing of the different types of secular political theories, see Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Bhargava, *Secularism and Its Critics*, 31–53.

31 [note 31 in the original] See Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics* (Cambridge, UK, 1981); Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Moderen Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community of Tsarist Russia* (Oxford, 1989) and Ezra Mendelssohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1993).

In addition to the metaphysical and political "formations of the secular," two others seem critical: history and culture. Secular Jews often describe their relationship to their identities in terms of history. They may identify with the Hebrew Bible not as a work of religion but, instead, as a prescription for social justice or as a document of culture. They may find in the narrative of Jewish history a collective past that informs who they are today, even if their beliefs and practices have no connection with Judaism as a religion. This attention to history is not, however, merely academic or antiquarian. Rather, it is a form of what Maurice Halbwachs called "collective memory."[32] Although Jews have always defined themselves according to mythic memories – the Exodus from Egypt, the destruction of the Temples – modern Jews have created their own secular versions of collective Jewish memory, often grounded in nontheological readings of the Bible as well as in later history.[33]

Moreover, for many modern Jewish intellectuals, this past was prologue to a secular Jewish culture in the present. The fin de síècle was as much a [p. 11/12] moment of cultural revolution as it was political. Secular writers sometimes claimed that the historical culture of the fold, as opposed to that of the rabbis, could inspire a nonreligious renaissance of Jewish culture in the modern period. Others translated the non-Jewish cultures of their surroundings into a Jewish idiom. To do so, some argued for a secularization of Hebrew, the ancient language of the Jews that had long been associated with the religion of Judaism. Others found salvation in the Jewish dialects of Yiddish and Ladino. And, finally, there were those who created a new Jewish culture in European languages, whether Russian, German, English, or French. Divorced from religion, language became the handmaid of history for constructing a secular culture.

Judaism as a religion is a modern invention no less than Jewish secularism. In an effort to define this religious formation, many modern Jewish thinkers have searched for an "essence" or "essences" of Judaism, a reduction of its many beliefs and practices to an eternal core. Already in the Middle Ages, philosophers tried to articulate "principles of belief," ranging from thirteen to one. The Zohar, the chief work of the medieval Jewish mysticism, proposed a tripartite definition, proclaiming that "Israel and the Torah are one," that God and Israel are identical, and that the Torah is nothing but God's name.[34] In this fashion, a kind of Jewish version of the trinity emerged. The trope took on new life in the modern period. Updating the Zohar's argument, a range of

32 [note 32 in the original] Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris, 1997).

33 [note 33 in the original] I therefore disagree with Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's argument in *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982) that collective memory is primarily a characteristic of premodern times and that modern identity is characterized instead by critical history. Memory is a characteristic of modern, secular Jewish culture as well.

34 [note 34 in the original] For the identity of Israel and the Torah, see Zohar 3:73a. For the identity of God and Israel, see ibid. 3:93b. For the very prevalent view on the Torah as God's name, see Zohar 2:60a, 87a, 90b, 124a, 161b; 3:13b, 19a, 21a, 35b–36a, 73a, 89b, 98b, 159a, 265b, 298b. See further Isaiah Tishby in *Kiryat Sefer* 50 (1975): 480–92, 668–74; and Bracha Sack, *Kiryat Sefer* 57 (1982): 179–84. I thank Daniel Matt for providing me with these references.

thinkers suggested that Judaism rests on three concepts: God, Torah, and Israel. Thus, for example, the American Jewish theologian Mordecai Kaplan, in his *Judaism as a Civilization*, refers to the "well-known Trilogy, God, Israel and Torah."[35] Or more recently, the Reform rabbi Leo Trepp writes: "The Covenant unfolds through the interaction of God, Israel and Torah. They are one and inseparable: God has an ongoing direct relationship with Israel, structured by Torah."[36]

Jewish secularists typically reject the idea that Judaism has an essence. The past is no more harmonious or homogeneous than the present, and indeed, the secularist insistence on the pluralism of the past can serve as an argument for pluralism in the present. Nevertheless, I will argue that these three originally medieval categories provided the questions to which secular thinkers responded with new answers. To quote Hans Blumenberg, "the [modern] philosophy of history is an attempt to answer a medieval question with the means available to a post-medieval age."[37] This way, even if a modern thinker did not explicitly invoke the past, it was often that [p. 12/13] historical tradition that provided the very structure for the Jewish "post-medieval age." [. . .]

Jewish secularism may be seen as the attempt to fashion a countertradition,[38] an alternative to Judaism as a religion that has its own intellectual lineage. While it may sometimes seem as if the stop of secularization is a narrative of the world we have lost, secularism is not only a negative; it is [p. 13/14] also an effort to fashion a new identity out of the shards of the past. This lineage consists of a chain of ideas that arose in rejection of the religious tradition yet were still tied to that which they overturned.

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35 [note 35 in the original] Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (New York, 1934), 328.
36 [note 36 in the original] Leo Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience* (Springfield, NJ, 2000), 537.
37 [note 37 in the original] Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 48–49. See further David Ingram, "Blumenberg and the Philosophical Grounds of Historiography," *History and Theory* 29 (1990): 1–16.
38 [note 38 in the original] For the idea of countertradition, see my *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, MA, 1979).

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39 Shimazono Susumu: *Japanese Secularisation and New Spirituality: Perspectives of the Sociology of Religion and Comparative Culture and Civilisation* (2011)

Translated and introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Shimazono Susumu (b. 1948) is undoubtedly one of Japan's best-known scholars of religion. Since many of his articles have also been published in English, his fame extends far beyond Japan. He is a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo, and holds various other honorary positions. In 1972, Shimazono graduated from the Department of Religious Studies and History of Religions, Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo, and, in 1977, he left the doctoral course at the same university, to become a researcher at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Tsukuba (as an assistant at the Faculty of Education). He retired in 2013. Shimazono's main research areas are new religions and the transformation of religion in modern- and present-day Japan, and especially the emergence of a 'new spirituality.'

The concept of a 'new spirituality' is also prominent in the latter part of the article that we present below in an English translation. Shimazono contends that the concept of secularisation based on a Western model is difficult to apply to Japan. However, he argues that one should not completely abandon the concept, but rather adapt it to the specific circumstances of Japanese history. With this caveat in mind, Shimazono explores four different theories of Japan's secularisation, each arguing for a different decisive turning point in the process. The first sees it as having occurred during the phase between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the second, the Meiji Restoration from 1867 onwards, the third, the period of the occupation of Japan after 1945, and the fourth denies that a secularisation of Japan has ever been completed. Shimazono sees valid points in all approaches.

Like Isomae (see text no. 45), Shimazono sees serious problems in applying secularisation theory to Japan. The concept of secularisation, he argues, originated in the West, and presupposes a concept of religion, which is likewise Western in its origins. In his view, Western concepts of religion are quite inappropriate for describing socio-cultural formations in East Asia. However, Shimazono does not advocate abandoning the concept of religion any more than he advocates abandoning the concept of secularisation-

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sation. One merely has to recognise that religion or secularisation (or *laïcité*, for that matter) are to be conceptualised in correspondence with different historical and cultural contexts. He suggests instead presupposing a multiplicity of forms of religion, and thus of secularisation.

Shimazono's article can therefore be understood as a plea for a provincialisation of the West, and for a globalisation of the discourse on both religion and secularisation. In order to globalise concepts and theories originally shaped by Western experiences, one has to stop taking Western concepts and theories as universal models.

Finally, in line with Thomas Luckmann (see text no. 53 in section 3), Shimazono takes a critical stance towards sociological theories of functional differentiation connected with the concept of secularisation. Rather than a secularisation in the sense of the formation of an autonomous religious sphere, he claims, the phenomenon of a 'new spirituality' hints at a change in the forms in which religious functions are fulfilled in modern society. 'New spirituality' evades functional differentiation because it is "connected to various functional spheres of society and is a transformed form of these spheres."

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Translation by Christoph Kleine

1 Four Views on the Secularisation of Japan and Their Relevance

The concept of 'secularisation' (*sezokuka* 世俗化) is multifaceted, but here it refers to the argument that the social influence of religion is declining, as modernisation progresses (Dobbelaere 1981–1992, Higashibaba 2010). One way of looking at it is from the perspective of the social system; another way of looking at it is from the perspective of individual consciousness. Some focus on modern scientific knowledge and education, others on the development of economic activity and changes in lifestyles. In any case, the concept of 'secularisation', which was modelled on Western society, does not work

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well when applied to Japan. However, it is not necessary to abandon the concept of secularisation altogether.

I would like to begin by examining the problems that arise when trying to apply the concept of 'secularisation' to Japanese reality from a historical perspective. When was the decisive turning point in the secularisation of Japan? There are four schools of thought, each of which has its own validity (the number of references is too large to list here). [p. 23/24]

The first view holds that the most important turning point was the period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the shogunate[I] established its power by suppressing that of the Buddhists and Christians. Oda Nobunaga [1534–1582] united the country by suppressing the forces of the warring feudal lords and the Ikkō uprisings, and in the process disarmed powerful religious forces such as Honganji and Hieizan Enryakuji, reducing them to a position of subservience to the warlord's regime. In turn, Toyotomi Hideyoshi [1537–1598] and the Tokugawa shoguns suppressed Christianity, favouring Buddhism in some respects, while nonetheless establishing a strong system of control over Buddhist communities. Later, the samurai, the ruling class, became administrative bureaucrats and gradually began to study Confucianism as their spiritual *backbone*[II]. The process of secularisation can be seen in the receding influence of Buddhism, and the increasing use of Confucianism and Shintō as the spiritual basis of government.

In the second view, the decisive turning point in the secularisation of Japan was precisely the period following the Meiji Restoration in 1867, when the nation-state was formed on the model of various Western countries. Initially, the new government aimed to transform Shintō into a national doctrine, but, following the resistance of Buddhist powers and the demands of Western countries for the acceptance of the Christian mission, as well as the establishment of a system of freedom of belief, it began to incorporate 'freedom of belief' (*shinkyō jiyū* 信教自由) and 'separation of government and religion' (*seikyō bunri* 政教分離) into the national system in its own way. However, a system was gradually put in place that placed the sacred status of the emperor, who was descended from [the sun goddess] Amaterasu Ōmikami, at the centre of national unity. In other words, a State Shintō (*kokka shintō* 国家神道) system was formed, and the freedom to practise various religions was not supposed to restrict loyalty to State Shintō. To what extent this can be called a 'secular' system is a matter of judgement.

The third view holds that secularisation was decisively advanced when, in 1945, the occupying forces issued the *Shintō Directive* (*shintō shirei* 神道指令) as the first step in their democratisation policy, dismantling State Shintō. This was followed in 1946 by the emperor's *Humanity Declaration* (*ningen sengen* 人間宣言), and the promulga-

I CK: I.e. the government of the *shogun* 将軍 ('generalissimo'), or hereditary military dictator, ruling Japan roughly from 1192 to 1867. Shimazono specifically refers to the shogunate of the Tokugawa clan here, which ruled Japan with a heavy hand from 1603 to 1867.

II CK: Italics are used in this translation to indicate that the source text contained the English word in question in Japanese transcription.

tion of the *Constitution of Japan*, which legally established freedom of belief. Under the pre-war regime, the emperor's court rituals (*kōshitsu shintō* 皇室神道 [Imperial Household Shintō]) and Shrine Shintō (*jinja shintō* 神社神道) connected to them were revered as sacred (*shinsei* 神聖), and the whole nation was made to participate in them. In addition, the sacred image of the emperor and the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (*Kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) [of 1890] were worshipped in schools, and the sacred doctrine of the 'national essence' (*kokutai* 国体) was taught, such that even though the constitution provided for freedom of belief, this was limited. State Shintō, consisting of Imperial Household Shintō, Shrine Shintō, and the doctrine of the national essence, had strongly influenced the lives of the people. After 1946, Japan was finally transformed into a secular state (*sezoku kokka* 世俗国家).

The fourth view is that, even after all this, the secularisation of Japan is far from complete. The occupying forces are said to have ordered the abolition of State Shintō (*kokka shintō no haishi* 国家神道の廃止), but, in fact, they only separated Shrine Shintō from the state. Because little was done about the court rituals (*kyūtei saishi* 宮廷祭祀), Imperial Household Shintō has been preserved to a large extent. Since the emperor plays a major role as the official 'symbol of the people' (*kokumin no chōchō* 国民の象徴), Imperial Household Shintō continues to exert a substantial influence over the lives of the people. There has been a great deal of political activity giving greater significance to Imperial Household Shintō, and raising the status of the emperor – who is believed to be an offspring of the Japanese gods and their descendants – in the lives of the people. Attempts have often been made to reinstate the official role of Ise Shrine, Yasukuni Shrine, and court rituals; some of these have successfully materialised, as evidenced by the Gengō Bill[III] and the establishment of National Foundation Day (*kenkoku kinen hi* 建国記念日). In this sense, State Shintō has not yet been completely dismantled, and can be seen as potentially continuing to function as a factor of national unity (*kokka tōgō* 国家統合) (Shimazono 2006).

In my view, all of the above arguments are valid. In other words, Japan has undergone three important changes in its political system that correspond to 'secularisation'. [p. 24/25] These three are (1) the de-Buddhification and de-transcendentalisation[IV] of the ruling class in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; (2) the acceptance of the plurality and autonomy of community-based religions as well as the introduction of scien-

III CK: *Gengō hō'an* 元号法案, a bill that legalised the use of traditional era names, instead of the Western calendar, in Japan in 1979. A corresponding bill had already been issued in 1946, but was rejected by the Headquarters of the Allied Occupation Forces. According to the *gengō hō'an*, the year 1979, for example, was now referred to as the year Shōwa 54, i.e., the 54th year of the reign of the Emperor Hirohito (1901–1989), whose era name was Shōwa.

IV CK: I.e. *datsu raise shugi ka* 脱来世主義化, a phrase that is extremely difficult to translate. In essence, it refers to a transformation in people's mindsets to the effect that they became less concerned with the next life (*raise*) or the 'hereafter', and concerned themselves more with inner-worldly affairs and well-being in this present life.

tific rationalism after the Meiji Restoration; and (3) the drastic decrease in the sanctity of the state after 1945.

So, can these [three transformations] be referred to in academic terms that have a clear conceptual content to a similar degree to *laïcité* (de-religionisation; *datsu shūkyō ka* 脱宗教化) (Baubérot 2000/2009, Date 2010)? *Laïcité* is a French term with a similar meaning to secularisation: "a principle of religious coexistence and the respective system, which forbids the establishment of a state religion and guarantees equality between religions and freedom of religion (freedom of individual parents [to determine their children's religion?] and freedom of collective worship) through a state independent of all established religions" (see Miura Nobutaka, Baubérot, p. 9). If we understand *laïcité* by this definition, it seems difficult to apply it to Japan. The reason is that in Japan, the contrast between religion and non-religion, or religion and politics, does not seem easy to make.

Of the three turning points, the first and second were, in a sense, the turning points for the rise of a new religiosity. The first transformation marked the beginning of a period in which Confucianism and Shintō gained influence in the public sphere, and in which the samurai, the wealthy townspeople, and peasants became increasingly sympathetic to Confucianism and Shintō. How, then, should the religious nature of Buddhism be contrasted with that of Confucianism and Shintō? There is certainly a process of transformation, a reduction in the status of matters pertaining to the afterlife (*raise* 来世) and transcendence (*chō'etsu* 超越), and a shift towards a way of thinking and acting that emphasises this life (*genze* 現世).

After the second transformation, State Shintō was formed, with many people involved in it, but this was also accompanied by a vigorous absorption of enlightened modern knowledge, and the introduction of a modern social system based on rational knowledge. With regard to the latter aspect, there was indeed a rapid secularisation of national life. Christianity and Buddhism had a certain influence among the elite, but scientific rationalism was certainly more influential.

Since the third transformation, the people's degree of spiritual freedom has surely increased. Even though State Shintō still exists, legal and political systems have been put in place to the extent that the people do not have to participate in it to any great extent. At present, it is almost guaranteed that people will be able to live a life according to the beliefs of Christianity or any new religion, and that the rituals and teachings of State Shintō are not imposed upon them. Nevertheless, there is often controversy over the Yasukuni Shrine issue, the emperor's replacement rituals,[V] or the writing of textbooks. Many people feel that their spiritual freedom is threatened by the strengthening of State Shintō.

V CK: At the time of the replacement of the Shōwa Tennō Hirohito (r. 1926–1989) by his successor, the Heisei Emperor Akihito (r. 1989–2019), in 1989, the first under the present constitution, there were major conflicts about the extent to which the event should be a state event or a private event of the imperial family, and about the extent to which it was permissible to include Shintō rites in public celebrations.

Suppose, for example, that Yasukuni Shrine were to be restored to its official status as a national memorial site. Suppose that the emperor's worship [of the spirits of the deceased enshrined] there came to be regarded as a matter of course. In that case, the rituals to honour the war dead would take on a much more State Shintō character. And what would happen if the rituals performed by the emperor in his palace were to regain even more official status, and to be recognised as having important implications for the lives of the people – if the Shintō ritual of the replacement of the emperor were to become a major national event, for example? It would be a great restriction on the religious and spiritual freedom of the inhabitants of Japan.

However, such changes do not necessarily require *radical* changes in the legal and political systems to occur. In other words, religious and spiritual freedom in modern Japan depends on very subtle institutional operations and policy-making. [p. 25/26]

2 Beyond the Limits of the Western Concept of 'Religion'

As we have seen, the term *laïcité*, as it is usually used in French-speaking countries (also translated as 'de-religiousness',[VI] Baubérot 2009), does not seem to apply properly to the formation of religious freedom and the modern relationship between government and religion in Japan.

Why? It may be because the basic concepts in the theories on *laïcité* are based on the Western Christian *model*, and any attempt to apply them to other civilisations would be an unreasonable application. In the Western Christian world, where political institutions (state) and religious institutions (church) have been clearly differentiated, *laïcité* theory has been effective in describing the situation that arose in the process of modernisation. In other civilisations, however, political and religious institutions are often not so clearly differentiated in the first place. If this is the case, it is not surprising that what is referred to by the word *laïcité* is considerably different from what it means in the Western case.

East Asia has long had a system in which the state, represented by the emperor, functions as the centre of a sacred order. The Chinese emperor was seen as a figure who performs rituals that integrate the empire, a holy figure at the centre of civilisation who should control all religions. From the Song dynasty [960–1279] in China, the Yi dynasty [1392–1920] in Korea, and the Edo period [1603–1967] in Japan, the bureaucrats acting on behalf of the emperor were also regarded as promulgators of a Confucian system of divine order. This has a transcendent dimension, but it is not a 'religion' in the same

VI CK: *Datsu-shūkyō-sei* 脱宗教性 is a term that Mirura Nobutaka uses in his 2009 translation of Baubérot's *Histoire de la laïcité en France* (2000) to render the French '*laïcité*'. The full title of Miura's Japanese translation is "*Furansu ni okeru datsu-shūkyō-sei no rekishi* フランスにおける脱宗教性の歴史". It is almost impossible to translate *datsu-shūkyō-sei* literally into English. It refers to a state characterised (*sei*) by the removal (*datsu*) of religion (*shūkyō*).

sense that Christianity and church organisations, having an autonomous sphere distinct from the political system, were called 'religions'. I think it is permissible to call Confucianism a 'religion', but in that case it must be made clear that the meaning of the word 'religion' is somewhat different from that of 'religion' in the Western sense. Thus, we have to be fully aware of the differences between the cultural frameworks of various civilisations, and adjust our concepts accordingly (Shimazono and Tsuruoka 2004, Shimazono 2004b, 2005).

The same may be said of Islamic civilisation, Jewish culture, Eastern Christian civilisation, Hindu civilisation, and indigenous cultures. When discussing religious pluralism, religious freedom, and spiritual freedom in other civilisations and cultures that exhibit different forms of religions, how the basic concepts are constructed becomes an important issue (Asad 1993/2004, 2003/2006).

The concept of *laïcité* has a clear meaning when applied in combination with the specific Western concept of 'religion', but, when it is applied to other civilisations and cultures, we must be prepared for the fact that there may be many cases where it cannot be used appropriately. When Islam is discussed as a 'religion', [the concept of 'religion' in this context] must necessarily have a different meaning from that of the Christian concept of 'religion', and it is necessary to be aware of this, and to reconsider the ways we use it accordingly. The present age is an era that calls for a 'dialogue between civilisations' concerning such major concepts.

Is it possible, then, to contribute to such a 'dialogue between civilisations' by using the concept of *laïcité*? Of course, it is possible. We first need to clarify the nature of the concept of *laïcité* as it is used in France and in some other contexts, and to identify where discrepancies arise when it is applied to other civilisations and cultures. [p. 26/27] In addition, we need to examine how phenomena corresponding to *laïcité* have arisen in each civilisation and culture, and what concepts have been used to capture *laïcité*, in order to prepare the ground for discussing it in common terms.

The first question to be addressed is whether, when 'religions' are perceived in the plural, each can be regarded as having equal status. For example, in East Asia, we have to ask whether Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shintō can be regarded as 'religions' in the same sense. The question also arises as to whether it is a natural norm to treat *major* 'religions' and *sects* or *cults* equally. There is also the question of whether there can be equality between 'religions' which are linked to the basic premises of the system of governance, and 'religions' with congregations as bearers, which are not.

Another important matter is the question of whether we can regard 'religion' only in terms of the inner beliefs of the individual, and the 'belonging' of such individuals to particular religious organisations, and, additionally, whether we can maintain the assumption that it is natural for religions to have their own autonomous spheres and organisations, distinct from the state and politics. Individuals are often involved in religion, without this necessarily taking the form of 'belonging' to an autonomous religious organisation.

For example, in the case of Japanese State Shintō, many people who do not have a sense of belonging to a 'religion' participate in its ritual world (Shimazono 2010a). The relationship between state rituals and the people is not primarily a matter of religious affiliation. Various matters of political significance involve the people in religion in ways that cannot be described with the attribute 'religious'. Is the concept of *laïcité* then useful in discussing these issues?

A thorough assessment of the differences in the issues outlined above should lead to a number of case studies, and comparative research on how religious pluralism and religious and spiritual freedom can be secured in different cultural and political settings. At this stage, it is not easy to say whether the word *laïcité* can still function as a valid term.

3 Secularisation and the Rise of a New Spirituality

I will therefore take the contemporary religious situation as the material for my case study. Acknowledging its polysemy, I will rely on the concept of secularisation to look at the correspondence between the contemporary religious situation and the concept of secularisation.

In advanced countries such as those in Europe, as well as the United States and Japan, there has, from the early 1960s – and elsewhere from the 1970s – been a rapid rise in movements purporting to pursue a new spirituality distinct from traditional religion. These movements, called '*New Age*' in the United States and Britain, '*esoteric*' in some European countries, and 'spiritual world' (*seishin sekai* 精神世界) in Japan, are not a group of movements that have developed separately in each region, but rather a group of movements that have developed primarily in advanced countries and large cities around the world, interacting with each other. I refer to them collectively as new spirituality movements (*shin reisei undō* 新霊性運動) movements or the new spirituality culture (*shinreisei bunka* 新霊性文化) (*new spirituality movements and/or culture*). It has now become such a well-known phenomenon that even the mere mention of '*new spirituality*' [p. 27/28] is understood to refer to this phenomenon (Shimazono 2008, Shimazono 2002, 2004a).

The new spirituality movements or cultures are many and varied, but they all have in common the practice and study of transformation in the *spiritual dimension* (*reitekina jigen* 霊的な次元), through the transformation of one's own body and mind. The 'spiritual dimension' can be seen as an awareness of the limitations of modern scientific knowledge and modern rationalism, and the pursuit of a different type of knowledge and practice, a different mode of consciousness and body techniques. And the sympathisers are often aware that what they are studying and practising is different from 'religion'. They believe that 'religion' is becoming a thing of the past, and that they pursue a '*spirituality*' that is distinct from it.

Initially, the new spirituality movement or culture (new spirituality) was more like a movement of future-oriented young people who were disappointed with the old 'science' and 'religion', and who joined the movement looking ahead to a new age under a new *paradigm*. One manifestation of this is the expansion of the self-help movement, which has a strong spiritual component. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), which does not seek to follow Christianity, but aims to help people realise their own limitations and recover through meetings in which they pray to the 'Greater Self' or 'God', began as a self-reform movement for alcoholics in the United States in the 1930s. Since the 1980s, the same system of self-reconciliation has spread among people with a variety of problems, and to other parts of the world.

On the other hand, the *hospice* movement (known as *vihāras* in Buddhist circles), the grief work movement, and the death preparation and life education movements, which began in the 1960s, have also played a major role in broadening the scope of the new spirituality movement or culture. Since the founding of St Christopher's Hospice in England by Cicely Saunders in 1967, there has been a worldwide movement to care for the dying, to care for the grief of bereavement [to care for people who are grieving], and to educate the dying to respect life. While there has been a great deal of commitment from traditional religions such as Christianity and Buddhism, the aim has been to foster spiritual care and attitudes beyond the standpoint of any particular religion. In Japan, the *hospice* and *vihāra* movements have played a very significant role in establishing the term 'spirituality'.

This new spirituality has come to appear in a wide variety of forms, in various aspects of society. What are the implications of this situation for the discussion of secularisation, and for the understanding of religion and religiosity?

Originally, the term 'spirituality' was used as something inseparable from religion. It was a term used to refer to matters of deep personal *commitment* and experience within a religion. In modern usage, however, religion and spirituality do not coincide, as in "I am spiritual but not religious", and the term has come to be used in a way that places hope in spirituality as something that does not contain the *negative* elements of religion. In this case, religions are understood to contain beliefs that are incompatible with the modern intellect, as well as church organisations and doctrinal systems, and individuals are understood to be subject to the rigid framework of religion as a system. For modern people, who value freedom and individuality, religion in this sense is a system of group dominance [p. 28/29], and is perceived as intrusive and oppressive.

However, if the word religion is used in a broader sense, spirituality, which is considered to be personal and different from religion in a narrower sense, may be regarded as part of this framework (Shimazono 2010b). More than a few scholars of religion and sociologists of religion have taken such a position. The idea that religion is limited to those with a solid organisation or *system* is not necessarily a widely accepted one. If we consider, for example, 'folk religions' (*minzoku shūkyō* 民俗宗教), they may involve a group, but they do not necessarily involve a rigid organisation or *system*. *Hinduism* and Shintō may contain elements of organisation and *system*, but this is not all there is.

Rather, it is the non-institutional aspects that are characteristic of *Hinduism* and Shintō. If we use the word religion in this broad sense, it is quite possible to regard the new spirituality as a new form of religion or religiosity.

But if we use the word religion in such a broad sense, how can we delineate this broad meaning of religion? In Western sociology of religion, there is a tradition of trying to deal with this question by distinguishing forms of religion that are differentiated from and purified of other functions and forms that are undifferentiated and fused with other functions. Thomas Luckmann, for example, distinguished between an independent institutional form of religion, such as the Christian church, and a form whereby the function of religion is still embedded in various aspects of society, and considered that the present age is one in which the former form is in decline and a new individualised 'invisible religion' (*mienai shūkyō* 見えない宗教) is on the rise (Luckmann 1967/1976). Moreover, Robert Bellah believed that with increasing social differentiation, religion becomes purer in its original function, something he believed Protestantism had achieved first in the modern West (Bellah 1964/1973).

In the view of these sociologists of religion, religion is understood to have its own functional sphere, distinct from that of the economy, society, and culture. As history developed, religion became differentiated and autonomous. The foundations of this view were laid by Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, who understood religion as a symbolic system with its own function, which is to bring about social integration and ultimate meaning. This tendency for the function of religion to become autonomous is typically found in the Christian church. The church is an organised sphere of religious identity, independent of the political and legal *systems*. The notion of a unique *system* of 'religion' was formed on the *model* of the Christian church, and the degree of religious evolution or secularisation is measured by the differentiation of such 'religions' (Shimazono 2004).

The view of religion as a distinct functional sphere, embodied in the inwardness of the individual, has also influenced our understanding of new spirituality. Luckmann characterised 'invisible religions' as being concerned exclusively with the private sphere of the individual. Again, Bellah saw in the spirituality of the educated classes in contemporary America, who resonated with Zen and mystical thought, a purer and more differentiated form of religion to come after Protestantism. Is the new spirituality emerging as a more individualised form of religion, in which the sacred has an autonomous symbolic system and is carried by religious organisations? [p. 29/30]

In fact, in many cases it is better to see the new spirituality as a phenomenon that is connected to various functional spheres of society, and is a transformed form of these spheres. The spirituality that is emerging in relation to medicine is an important example. Modern medicine, which developed as a *system* of *care* based on scientific knowledge, has now been forced to include a spiritual dimension which it did not previously include. Spirituality in healing practices such as alternative medicine is one example, and *spiritual care* in *hospice* medicine is another. Volunteering often has a spiritual dimension, and this is another good example of how social *care* activities

undertaken by state and local governments, and by commercial and non-commercial organisations, can include spirituality.

When we imagine the kind of *spiritual care* that takes place in any hospital, we are forced to think about the spiritual dimension of medical services. The activities of artists, too, often have a *spiritual* dimension, but they can also be related to economically productive activities. Many nurses and artists are thus professionally drawn to a new *spirituality*. Another interesting example is the inability of state rituals to exclude religious elements, and the way in which state rituals become a political issue, stimulating the *spirituality* of the people.

In this light, the contemporary rise of a new *spirituality* calls into question the view that religions have their own functional sphere, that they become more autonomous in line with individualisation, and that, therefore, the increasing functional differentiation of society reveals a purer form of religion. The idea that religion has its own functional sphere is compatible with the way religion is seen in Western Christian societies, where politics and law constitute spheres separate from religion. The theory of secularisation, on the one hand, and the idea of the purification of religion, on the other, have been formed along this line of thought. In modern times, however, there is an increasing tendency to relativise the concept of religion conforming to Christianity. In the sociology of religion in the West, which has always regarded the Christian tradition as self-evident, this situation has not yet received sufficient theoretical attention.

There are sacred (*sei-naru* 聖なる) dimensions in the various functional spheres of society, especially in the spheres of politics, law, economy, and *care*, and remarkable manifestations of sacredness (*seisei* 聖性) occur when integration (*tōgō* 統合) and transcendence (*chō'etsu* 超越) are sought in each of these spheres. Even if we cannot immediately call them religions, we can call them manifestations of religiosity, because they are constitutive elements of religion. The new *spirituality* that has come to prominence in the developed countries and big cities of our time may be regarded in this sense as a new form of religiosity.

4 Secularisation, Religious Revival and New Spirituality

The above ideas seek to understand the rise of a new spirituality as a reaffirmation of religiosity in various spheres of society (Shimazono 2004, Itō 2004), but how does this view relate to traditional secularisation theory? In the secularisation theory of Brian Wilson and others, religion is confined to the private sphere and loses many of its social functions, as society becomes more differentiated (Wilson 1966). For example, the family, which was the most significant manifestation of the function of *care*, stood out as a place where religiosity could be preserved. [p. 30/31] As religion differentiated itself from other functions, it became confined, so to speak, to the private sphere of the family. As it becomes more individualised and private, even the community of the

family ceases to be a place of religious integration. This privatisation was seen as a manifestation of the decline in religion, or secularisation.

But is it legitimate to assume that religion is a system in its own right, or that it has a functional sphere that is distinct from other functional spheres? In modern Western societies, where the state and the Christian church stood side by side in mutual independence, and where the church exerted its influence over the spheres of the state, religion seemed to have its own functional sphere in the face of the powerful modernisation of the state, which separated church and state, and was governed by secular politics and law. However, as Thomas Luckmann astutely pointed out, religion does not always have such an institutionally specific manifestation (Luckmann 1967/1976). Nevertheless, Luckmann saw the functional sphere of religion in modern societies as private and personal. After all, he too thought that functional differentiation in the Durkheimian sense deepened rationalisation and that religion had to be confined to the private sphere.

But it is not easy to show that secularisation is underway in the United States of America, in Islamicate countries, or in India today. Rather, since the late 1970s, there has been what could be seen as a religious revival in many parts of the world, which seems to have intensified in the twenty-first century. Some argue that this is an exaggerated phenomenon found only in developing countries, and that, eventually, many populations will surely follow secular rationality, as they have in Europe. However, even in advanced countries such as those of Europe, and the United States and Japan, with their capitalist economies and their high degree of rationalisation of state functions, traditional religions continue to maintain their influence, and a new *spirituality* is on the rise; this fact calls into question the validity of the secularisation argument (Berger 1999).

Even in advanced countries, where the state and the secular intelligentsia that support it vigorously promote modernisation and rationalisation to gain advantage amid the spread of the *global* liberal economy, there is now a new *spirituality* on the rise, and a revival of religiosity. Even in regions such as Europe and Japan, where secularisation theory is often seen as the most appropriate, there is a new form of religiosity emerging in many spheres of society as secular rationalism becomes increasingly unable to cope. Both the rise of religious revivalism in the developing world and the United States of America, and the rise of new *spiritualities* in Europe, the United States of America, and Japan can be seen as signalling the limits of the dominance of secular rationality, and the secular *ideologies* and cultural *systems* that have accompanied it in the development of the modern state.

So, does the new *spirituality* have the potential to transform the contemporary global capitalist economic order, and the politics and societies of advanced nations? The reality is that it is far from having that kind of power. But that is not to say that it will remain completely powerless to influence society in the distant future.

In Japan, on the one hand, there are elements of the new spirituality that are linked to Shintō nationalism (Shimazono 1996/2007). This is a current that criticises monothe-

ism and Western civilisation, and encourages a return to an ancient [p. 31/32] *spirituality*, characterised by a closeness to nature. Some of the ideas of the new spirituality are in tune with the revival of the Hindu tradition in India. Even though the new *spiritualities* are often subjectively thought of as being opposed to traditional religions, they share much in common with traditional religions, and may be better seen as complementary. On the other hand, new *spiritualities* may be aligned with environmentalism, peace movements, or indigenous movements (Shimazono 2007). Considering the global distribution of religions and *ideologies*, it is safe to say that the political and ideological aspects of the new *spiritualities* I have mentioned above have already become too widespread and influential to ignore.

Of course, the new *spirituality* should not be overestimated. The most powerful force that has the potential to overthrow the *hegemony* of political and economic powers such as the West and Japan, and the automatism of capitalist development centred on the developed world, is not the forces of the new *spirituality*, but the forces of Islam. But it cannot be denied that the forces of the new *spirituality*, along with the various political forces within Christianity, could exert a certain influence against the dominance of modern capitalism and the hegemony of the political and economic powers. If the Western-centred *globalisation* that developed alongside colonialism has been ideologically sustained by the alliance between Christianity and secularism (*sezoku shugi* 世俗主義), then the religious and ideological forces of the contemporary world are likely to be pluralistically opposed to each other, and to be engaged in a struggle to expand their spheres of influence. The new *spirituality* can be seen as a weak, newly emerging force entering this new 'war of the gods' (*kamigami no arasoi* 神々の争い).

The study of religion and the sociology of religion need to redefine 'religion' in a way that adequately captures this situation. To this end, it is increasingly necessary to revitalize the study of religion, from the perspective of comparative culture and civilisation.

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40 Charles Taylor: *Western Secularity* (2011)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Charles Taylor (b. 1931), Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Philosophy at McGill University, has received academic distinction and public recognition of the highest order for his wide-ranging philosophical work. He has won both the Kyoto Prize and the Templeton Prize, and is a member of the Royal Society of Canada, a fellow of the British Academy, and has been made both a Companion of the Order of Canada, and a Grand Officer of the National Order of Quebec. Taylor has himself been politically active, standing for election in the 1960s and, in 2007, heading the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, which advised the premier of Quebec on matters of cultural difference. Taylor's own position in this regard has been depicted as one of communitarianism. While Taylor's philosophical œuvre defies any attempt at singling out individual works or pinpointing his views, we focus here on his main contribution to questions of secularity.

Taylor's eminent work in this regard, which received broad attention across academic disciplines, is *A Secular Age*, published in 2007. Here, Taylor proposes a novel conception of secularity that is truly distinctive for Western or Latin Christian societies: rather than social differentiation or the decline of religion, he sees the distinctive and decisive process consisting of the fact that belief (or unbelief) became optional. *A Secular Age* tells the story of this transformation, from religion allegedly being a social given around 1500, to its becoming optional around 2000. This story reflects Taylor's own convictions, in that it is a Catholic narrative, suggesting "the immanent frame" of secular modernity to have grown out of Christian theological considerations. In a sense, it thereby tries to recall the transcendent underpinnings of our present. The fact that Taylor explicitly limits his story to the West or to Latin Christendom can be criticised for sidelining transregional entanglements, which also impacted processes 'within' the West. More importantly, and seemingly reflecting his communitarian and multicultural views, Taylor assumes that secularity evolves and takes shape differently in different cultures and societies. While he thus, well in view of the challenges involved in using the very term 'secular', suggests a cultural multiplicity of secularity, he decidedly focusses on the Western version of this.

Unfortunately, due to copyrights issues, we cannot present here an excerpt from Taylor's contribution to an edited volume on *Rethinking Secularism,* which reflects basic theoretical considerations, and pinpoints main elements of the complex story told in *A Secular Age*.

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Taylor himself summarizes his position as follows:

"What do we mean when we speak of Western modernity as 'secular'? There are all sorts of ways of describing it: the separation of religion from public life, the decline of religious belief and practice. But while one cannot avoid touching on these, my main interest here lies in another facet of our age: belief in God, or in the transcendent in any form, is contested; it is an option among many; it is therefore fragile; for some people in some milieus, it is very difficult, even 'weird.' Five hundred years ago in Western civilization, this wasn't so. Unbelief was off the map, close to inconceivable, for most people. But that description also applies to the whole of human history outside the modern West.

What had to happen for this kind of secular climate to come about? First, there had to develop a culture that marks a clear division between the 'natural' and the 'supernatural,' and second, it had to come to seem possible to live entirely within the natural. The first condition was something striven for, but the second came about at first quite inadvertently. [. . .]

In other words, the crucial change here could be described as the possibility of living within a purely immanent order; that is, the possibility of really conceiving of, or imagining, ourselves within such an order, one that could be accounted for on its own terms, which thus leaves belief in the transcendent as a kind of 'optional extra' – something it had never been before in any human society. This presupposed the clear separation of natural and supernatural as a necessary condition, but it needed more than that. There had to develop a social order, sustained by a social imaginary that had a purely immanent character, which we see arising, for instance, in the modern forms of public sphere, market economy, and citizen state."[I]

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I Charles Taylor, "Western Secularity," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50–51.

41 Andrey Shishkov: *Desecularization in Post-Soviet Russia* (2012)

Introduced by Sebastian Rimestad

Introduction

Andrey Shishkov (b. 1983) originally studied physics at the Moscow Pedagogical State University, during which time he experimented with Russian Buddhism. By 2008, he had turned to the Russian Orthodox Church and enrolled in the Moscow Orthodox Theological Academy, where his theological abilities were instantly recognised. Between 2010 and 2020, Shishkov worked at the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission, the body responsible for theological expertise within the Russian Orthodox Church. Between 2013 and 2021, he was a research fellow and lecturer at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Institute for Postgraduate Studies and at the Higher School of Economics, both in Moscow. His research interests are issues of primacy in the Christian church, ecclesiology (church structure),[I] and political theology. He has been involved in numerous international research projects based in the US and Europe. Since 2021, he has been a member of the "Orthodoxy as Solidarity" research project, headed by Irina Paert at the University of Tartu, Estonia.

The text reproduced below is an English translation of a contribution Shishkov published in the Russian-language journal *State, Religion, Church in Russia and Abroad* in 2012.[II] This open access journal, for which Shishkov was among the guest editors, aims to provide quality academic content in Russian on issues pertaining to church-state relations. Most articles are written by Russian scholars, but many issues also feature translated contributions by Western scholars. The article reproduced below is part of a special issue on "Religion in the Post-Secular Context", which was inspired by the Russian debate triggered by Aleksandr Kyrlezhev's 2004 article (see text no. 67). This special issue also includes articles by Peter Berger and Brian Turner. The English translation reproduced below was published in a collective volume a year after the Russian original.

I See Aleksandr Kyrlezhev and Andrey Shishkov, "The Eastern Orthodox Church before and after the Council of Crete 2016: Actors, Procedures, and Prospects of Consolidation," in *The Pan-Orthodox Council of 2016: A New Era for the Orthodox Church?*, ed. Vasilios N. Makrides, and Sebastian Rimestad (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 107–24.

II The journal website is http://religion.ranepa.ru/, accessed 1 May, 2024.

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Andrey Shishkov. "Desecularization in Post-Soviet Russia." In *Ethics and the Challenge of Secularism: Russian and Western Perspectives*, edited by David Bradshaw, 89–96. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2013.

It has been more than ten years since the academic vocabulary of sociologists and political philosophers incorporated some notions that, while genetically linked with secularization, designate completely different and often even opposite processes. These are the notions of 'desecularization', the 'post-secular', and even 'asecularization'. All these notions are linked with the phenomenon of the rebirth or return of religion observable throughout the world. Here I will speak about the process of desecularization as it applies to the Russian post-Soviet reality. Before considering specific processes, however, we should clarify which working definition of desecularization will be used. I will start from the thesis on desecularization proposed by Peter Berger (2008) and will build on the conceptualization of this notion proposed by Vyacheslav Karpov (2010).

Peter Berger defines desecularization as primarily a counter-process against secularization. Vyacheslav Karpov goes farther than Berger and introduces the necessary clarifications. According to Karpov, *Desecularization is a process of counter-secularization, through which religion reasserts its societal influence in reaction to previous and/or co-occurring secularizing processes* (Karpov 2010). Unfolding his definition, Karpov enumerates the tendencies which, if combined, are believed to form the process of desecularization. He singles out the following tendencies:

– a rapprochement between formerly secularized institutions and religious norms, both formal and informal;
– a resurgence of religious beliefs and practices;
– a return of religion to the public sphere ("de-privatization");
– a revival of religious content in a variety of culture's subsystems, including the arts, philosophy, and literature, and in a decline of the standing of science relative to a resurgent role of religion in world-construction and world-maintenance;
– religion-related changes in society's substratum, including religiously inspired demographic changes, redefinition of territories and their populations along religious lines, reappearance of faith-related material structures, growing shares of religion-related goods in the overall economic market, and so on (Karpov 2010). [p. 89/90]

In addition, Karpov points to the non-integration of various components of desecularization, building on Kazanova's [sic] view of secularization, and to the possibility of secularization and desecularization processes going on simultaneously. He also intro-

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duces the notion of Multiple, Overlapping, and Clashing desecularizations, pointing to the complexity arising in the global context when countersecularization processes overlap.

All these components make it possible to form a notion of desecularization. Below, on the basis of Karpov's conceptualization, I will make an attempt to describe basic aspects of the desecularization process in post-Soviet Russia and to supplement the tendencies he identified.

1

The starting point for describing desecularization processes is normally provided by the secular situation that preceded their emergence. And a description of the desecularization in post-Soviet Russia should begin with an account of the specific Soviet secularization.

Traditionally, in discussions on secularization, two types are indicated, namely, European (classical) and American. These types of secularization have been studied and described adequately by others. There is another type to be added however, which has been characteristic of countries with Communist regimes. Let us call it 'Soviet secularization' for convenience, since it appeared first precisely in the U.S.S.R. It cannot be said that singling out this type of secularization is something essentially new; for instance, Peter Berger mentions it in his famous article on desecularization (2008). However, this type as compared to the two others is the least studied both factually and theoretically. In my description of the Soviet type of secularization and desecularization processes, I will develop the basic points set forth in the study made jointly by Alexander Kyrlezhev and me (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011).

Among the central characteristics of Soviet secularization is the 'hyper-privatization' of religion. In the Soviet case, the basic vector of secularization was directed to the efforts to oust religion not only from the public sphere but also from people's private life, since any inconsistency of private life – individual, family or group, with the truths of Soviet ideology was seen as an antisocial fact threatening the state. Individual religiosity in the situation of Soviet society proved to be a serious obstacle for one's professional career and any form of one's active participation in public life and work. [p. 90/91]

As a result, religion ousted from a person's life went even deeper into his secret private life. There are examples of those who, being believers, led a double life of ordinary Soviet citizens while being, for instance, secret priests or monks. Their disclosure led immediately to repression. It is in this sense that it is possible to speak of hyperprivatization. It is one of the distinctions of Soviet secularization from that in Europe, in which private forms of religious expression could exist without obstruction.

The Soviet-type secularization was effected through the actual oppression of religion and religiosity. The oppression had the following forms:

- Institutional (destruction and reduction of religious organizations, religious buildings, etc.).
- Administrative (control of the activities of religious organizations, suppression and limitation of intra-institutional religious activity, repressive fiscal policy in relation to religious organizations, obstacles for believers in terms of professional careers, etc.).
- Criminal (prosecution for illegal religious activity: organized religious education, including education for children, distribution of religious literature, etc.).
- Psychiatric (forced "treatment" of believers, especially "religious dissidents")
- Psychological (public pressure on the faithful – at school, at work, in the army, the media, etc.) (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011).

In addition, religion was excluded from cultural and educational spheres through the reinterpretation of its role in history and desacralization of art (all religious content of works of art is interpreted as a "thematic") and through the suppression or criticism of the religious-philosophical and theological tradition (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011).

However, religious organizations continued to exist in the Soviet Union, though on a limited scale defined by the authorities, and religious practices continued among those who can be described as 'legitimate believers'. This group was mostly made up of people with the following characteristics: poorly educated, low social status, elderly people (pensioners); women as an overwhelming majority; and finally, professional ministers of the Church in a broad sense – not only clergy but also all those who worked in religious organizations (the latter were dumped into the social ghetto). As an exclusion, which generally only confirms the rule, there were regions of people's mass religiosity, namely, western Ukraine, western Byelorussia, some parts of Moldavia (regions which provided the continuing production of clergy in the [p. 91/92] Russian Orthodox Church), as well as North Caucasus and Central Asia with its Islam. But even in these regions it was impossible for openly religious people to take an active part in the country's public life and to take advantage of means of social advancement.

Secularization of the religious consciousness of such legitimate bearers of religiosity was another very important characteristic of Soviet secularization. Together with Kyrlezhev we define the essence of this process as *distillation of religious consciousness* (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011). 'Distillation' means that the religious meanings, values, and motivations of legitimate believers was gradually separated from the rest of the socio-cultural whole.

2

The collapse of the Soviet Communist regime removed the restrictions on religious life and activity imposed by the Soviet secularization. Religion has begun to play an increasingly significant role in Russian society. As the influence of religion has grown (desecu-

larization) in Russia there have emerged two countersecularization processes, namely, a) restoration of the private sphere and shift to the European secular paradigm, and b) inclusion in the global counter-secularization processes (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011).

The first process implies the privatization of religion, but in contrast to the European situation, for which a similar result was reached in the course of secularization, in post-Soviet Russia the same result was achieved through desecularization, since the transition from hyperprivatization to the privatization of religion is an explicit countersecularization process. Expansion of the influence of religion has happened by dint of the fact that believers got the opportunity to practice religion in their private lives openly. This corresponds quite well with the above mentioned definition of desecularization.

The second process is linked with the return of religion to the public sphere. In the period from 1990–2000, religious institutions, especially the Russian Orthodox Church as the dominant religious community in Russia, have restored and increased their presence in the public sphere. An especially strong upsurge of the Church's public activity has been observed in recent years under Patriarch Kirill. Church spokesmen (and those of other confessions) have made public statements on significant issues in the social and political life of the country, including in official documents. Church officials have made proposals on bills under preparation (for instance, the bill 'On Bio-Medical Cell Technologies'). This situation is fully consonant with the definition of desecularization and the tendencies describing this process. [p. 92/93]

It has turned out that the return of religion in Russia is going on *simultaneously* in private and public spheres. The intertwining of private religiosity and the public presence of religion is visible in attempts to resolve a number of concrete problems in the following institutions:

– School (how to ensure the right to receive knowledge of religion within general education, without violating the principle of the secular nature of public education?);
– Army (how to ensure the right to faith in the army without reproducing the pre-Soviet practice?);
– Prison (the same problem);
– Church and museums (how to ensure the return of religious valuables and artefacts to the Church while ensuring the preservation and accessibility of museum collections?);
– Property (whether and how to realize the restitution of church property in the absence of the general restitution of property?) (Kyrlezhev and Shishkov 2011).

All these issues continue to be discussed in active public debates in Russian society, and regardless of their outcome they point to the ongoing desecularization processes. At the same time, it often happens that the restoration of individual rights to religious confession in the situation of an underdeveloped private sphere itself immediately becomes a problem of religion's influence on society in the public sphere. For instance, the right to receive knowledge about religion within general school education, which is an indi-

vidual right of a citizen guaranteed by the law on freedom of religion in Europe, in the Russian situation becomes a matter of religion's penetrating into a public institution contrary to the principles of the secular state. A similar situation has developed with regard to the problem of religion's presence in the army. Among the issues discussed most often is whether it is acceptable that the highest leaders of the country should publicly participate in church services, as in televised services attended by state leaders.

3

Now let us address the phenomenon of the 'distillation' of religious consciousness we mentioned above. If 'distillation' is a product of the Soviet type of secularization, then the saturation of this consciousness with 'salts' will represent a process of desecularization. But the irony is that, from the point of view of the 'distilled' religious tradition, which was formed in the Soviet time, this 'saturation' will appear as *secularization* or growing *worldliness,* that is, penetration of secular [p. 93/94] problems into church life. In this case, worldliness is understood as a process of reorientation to the solution of worldly problems at the expense of highly spiritual tasks. From the point of view of conservative religious consciousness, it is a negative process. Religion always returns, if it does, into secular public space. Indeed, where there is no secular space there is no need for religion to return. Restoring its influence in a previously secular society, religion inevitably becomes involved in a secular agenda, which begins to transform it from inside.

A good example is the reaction we see to the policy of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia centered on active mission. During the very first year of his patriarchal office, he set as a priority the task to increase the Church's influence on society. He said that 'the work of the Church should now be assessed not only according to the number of churches and monasteries but also according to the influence it makes on the life of people and society' (Patriarch Kirill's statement on March 11, 2009, in Tula, cited in Filatov 2012). Active mission became a means for achieving this goal. Russian expert in religious studies Sergey Filatov believes that almost all the concrete decisions and actions of the new patriarch have been linked with mission (Filatov 2012). In his study on the first years of Patriarch Kirill's patriarchal office, he shows that in the first year and a half, almost all the important reforms introduced by Kirill were founded on this task (Filatov 2012). Public and political problems have occupied a considerable place in the preaching of the head of the Russian Church. The very first Bishops' Council to take place after the patriarchal elections adopted three official documents concerning relations between the Church and the state and society.

This activity was met with criticism in the conservative wing of the Russian Church. This criticism was based on the accusation that the Church has become worldly and that the spiritual aspect of Orthodox proper was being belittled in favour of 'mission-

ary creativity' and 'social activity'. Critics see in the policy adopted by Patriarch Kirill for active presence in society a threat that secular values would penetrate into Orthodox tradition, which would inevitably lead to spiritual relativism. Conservative Orthodox journalism has often compared the new policy to Vatican II and its consequences, and Orthodox critics have borrowed arguments from the Catholic critics of Vatican II. Representative for this discussion is the resonant article by Orthodox publicist Dmitry Danilov (Danilov 2009).

The sentiments of the conservative part of the Church have been reaffirmed by comments of some analysts. Thus, Filatov writes that the character of mission as launched by Patriarch Kirill is essentially secular and political: 'Regardless of their faith in God, Kirill and those who hold the same views do not preach faith in God but a neo-Slavophil ideology of national revival, essentially secular' (Filatov 2012). Alexey [p. 94/95] Malashenko, speaking about Patriarch Kirill's strategy, points to its two major thrusts – mission and 'the Church's active penetration into sociopolitical life, its growing worldliness' (Malashenko 2009).

It should be noted that in older times, too, there were periods in the life of the Church when the link between its growing influence on social and political life and its growing worldliness or secularization became visible. First of all, this happened in the fourth century when the Church in the Roman Empire underwent a rapid evolution from being persecuted to becoming official. The mass inflow of people into the Church and the active involvement of its hierarchs in socio-political life led to growing worldliness and the development of monasticism as a response to it. Russian theologian Alexander Schmemann writes, 'Monasticism arose as an almost unconscious and instinctive reaction against the secularization of the Church – not only in the sense of a reduction of her moral ideal or pathos of sanctity, but also in the sense of her entrance, so to speak, into the 'service of the world' – of the Empire, civic society, natural values; into the service of everything that (after downfall of paganism) was waiting to receive from Christianity a religious 'sanction' and 'sanctification'' (Schmemann 1986). The similarity with the post-Soviet church situation is complemented by the fact that in the present period there is a shift from the Church being persecuted to the Church being actively involved in the life of society. It is noteworthy that Viacheslav Karpov in his work on desecularization believes the shift from the late Roman 'sensate' secularity to a Christian 'ideational' era (in the term of Pitirim Sorokin) was similar to the desecularization process (Karpov 2010).

Thus we can see that the active restoration of the Church's influence in society is by some viewed as its growing worldliness or secularization. This worldliness happens first of all when religion goes out into other spheres of the socio-cultural whole, such as politics, science, and the arts.

4

In summarizing the case of the Russian Orthodox Church, it can be presumed that religious institutions which are coming out of their ghetto into public space will undergo transformations through getting involved in the secular agenda, which will be seen as growing worldliness (or secularization) contrary to the tradition which was formed under the influence of secularization. This effect is bound to manifest itself especially vividly in the case of fundamentalist communities, similar as they are to the above-described Soviet phenomenon of 'the distillation of religious consciousness'. It is important to bear in mind that this process of growing worldliness will be that of desecularization. This affirmation [p. 95/96] can be added to the list of the tendencies which form the process of desecularization proposed by Karpov. However, this thesis needs further study and verification since it is still not quite clear whether it is applicable to contexts other than the post-Soviet one, in which religion has been subjected to the impact of secularization of a the [sic] type different from the European and American.

Biblical-Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate

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42 Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt: *Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities* (2012)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Both authors of this text are professors of sociology at Leipzig University, and members of the Centre of Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernity."

Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (b. 1957 in Selb, Germany) studied Protestant theology and sociology at Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen and at Philipps University Marburg. She completed her PhD in sociology in Marburg in 1991, and her post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification in sociology at the Free University of Berlin in 1998. From 1999 to 2006, she was Professor of Sociology of Religion at Leipzig University, since 2007 she has held a chair in Cultural Sociology there. Since 2014, she has been co-director (with Christoph Kleine) of the *Multiple Secularities* centre.

Wohlrab-Sahr has been a visiting fellow at the University of California at Berkeley, the European University Institute in Florence, the Centre for Advanced Study at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and at the University of Montréal.

Wohlrab-Sahr's work in the sociology of religion covers topics such as conversion to Islam, Islam in Europe, secularization in East Germany, and, finally, *multiple secularities*. This concept was developed in a smaller research project from 2010–2012, in preparation for the Centre for Advanced Study that was later funded by the German Research Association (DFG). The idea for the *Multiple Secularities* approach emerged after a previous research project on the perception of the secularization process by East German families in the GDR. Not satisfied with mainstream secularization research, and the many 'exceptions' that it has to make in order to maintain the assumption of a general trend of secularization, Wohlrab-Sahr developed the idea of a comparative framework of research on *multiple secularities*.

Marian Burchardt (b. 1975 in Eisenach, Germany) studied sociology at TU Dresden, at Leipzig University, and at the Universitad Autonóma de Barcelona. He did his PhD on "Religion and AIDS in South Africa" at Leipzig University. After completing this, he held

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a position in the Sociology of African Societies at Bayreuth University. He then returned to Leipzig to work with Monika Wohlrab-Sahr on the first *Multiple Secularities* project.

Burchardt later took a position as a postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck-Institute for the Study of Ethnic and Religious Diversity at the University of Goettingen. In 2015, Burchardt received the prestigious Heinz-Maier-Leibnitz Prize for early career researchers of the German Research Council (DFG). Since 2018, he has been a professor of sociology with a focus on transregionalisation processes, at Leipzig University.

Burchardt's research focusses on religious and ethnic diversity, religious-secular conflicts, and religion in the public sphere, as well as on issues of public health and pandemics. Recently, he has engaged with questions framed by global sociology, and has established an international global sociology network.

The selected text was the first article written on the issue of *multiple secularities*. The authors develop the concept 'secularity' as being related to the differentiation between religion and other spheres of action, and distinguish it from secularism and secularization. They view it in relation to societal reference problems, to which secularity presents a specific solution, and see it expressed in guiding ideas. The authors argue for a multiplicity of secularities, caused by their different cultural underpinnings, and the different meanings attached to them. The article was followed by a series of publications, dealing with the developments in specific countries, such as South Africa, India, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The concept was later developed by the research centre "Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities," where it was extended to also include pre-modern societies.

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Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt. "Multiple Secularities: Towards a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities." *Comparative Sociology* 11, no. 6 (2012): 875–909; 876–91, 904–5.

Over the past decades sociological debates have problematized long cherished assumptions of process theories in the social sciences, have necessitated revisions, and have given rise to new approaches. This concerns the classical version of modernization theory, with its assumptions regarding convergence and diffusion, as well as the theory of secularization, which assumed that the worldwide spread of the concepts of the nation state, parliamentary democracy, the rule of law, the liberal market economy, and rational science would give rise to a similar model of social organization in which religion would be largely confined to the private domain. [p. 876/877]

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In addition, it seemed obvious that an increase in the economic standard of living and in existential security would go hand-in-hand with a reduction in religious participation and belief (Inglehart 1997). Although these 'classical' variants of modernization theory have not disappeared from the scene and can still claim a certain degree of plausibility, they have nevertheless lost the dominant status they once enjoyed.

A wide-ranging controversy over classical modernization theory was conducted both among social scientists as well as historians (see Wagner 2001; Knöbl 2007). Within this controversy, the long-dominant position of the convergence theorists is increasingly being superseded by approaches that assume different developmental paths as a permanent feature, among them also authors who had initially proceeded on the basis of strong convergence assumptions (Inglehart and Baker 2000). The new orientation has found prominent expression in the debate over "multiple modernities," in which, on the one hand, a minimal, unifying concept of modernity is maintained, but, on the other, an enduring diversity of developmental paths is assumed (Eisenstadt 2000). [. . .] However, these developments have led only a few authors to reject the concept of modernity altogether.

A parallel development can be observed in the discussion over secularization. Although here attempts were made from early on to identify different paths of secularization, these were initially motivated by the intention of developing a "general theory of secularization" (Martin 1978) and discovering the conditions of *exceptions* to the general model. In the meantime however, an awareness of enduring differences (Martin 2005; Gorski and Altinordu 2008) developed here as well, and was articulated as the need to historicize the secularization debate (Gorski 2000).

In a different strand of the debate, the paradigm of secularization was increasingly interpreted as a modern myth (principally inspired by the [p. 877/878] West) that, like the classical modernization theory, is based on cultural biases and is unsuited to analyses beyond the Western world.[1] It was argued that there are forms of modernity that can dispense not only with democracy and a liberal market economy but also with secularization.

Concerns with the variety of secularization were heightened by Casanova (1994) into a fundamental critique of the theoretical idea that three, rather distinct subtheses – functional differentiation, the decline of subjective religiosity, and the privatization of religion – are necessarily linked. However, although Casanova at first still regarded the aspect of functional differentiation as an indispensable component of secularization, in his more recent work he has increasingly characterized this, too, as a genuinely *Western* development in the light of European history and its confrontation between temporal and sacred authority and has questioned its relevance for other regions and religions (Casanova 2008).

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1 [note 1 in the original] One of the first to speak of secularization as a "myth" of modern societies within the context of European sociology of religion was Thomas Luckmann (1980).

In his book "A Secular Age", Charles Taylor (2007:22) takes the critique further by arguing that secularization theories have mainly been "subtraction stories", based on the idea that secularization unfolds as the liberation from earlier forms of knowledge whereby human nature is ultimately revealed. Similar to Casanova he distinguishes between secularity as the retreat of religion from public space and as the decline of beliefs, but ultimately focuses on secularity as a change in the "conditions of belief" (p. 12) in terms of the emergence of exclusive humanism. Taylor is aware of and supports the idea of multiple modernities, stressing that "secularity, like other features of 'modernity' (. . .) find rather different expression, and develop under the pressure of different demands and aspirations in different civilizations" (p. 21). But he self-consciously limits his analysis to the internal transformations of Christendom whereby belief in God is perceived as one option among others. While Taylor employs a unified idea of "the West", others have limited the geographical validity of secularization theory even further through the concept of "European exceptionalism" (Berger 1999; Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008).

In recent years, empirical analyses have been increasingly shifting toward comparisons between "secularisms" (Cady and Hurd 2010), i.e. the *institutionalized* relationships between politics and religion. [. . . p. 878/879. . .] Overall, however, the literature on secularism does not distinguish institutional separation systematically from the accompanying ideologies. Accordingly, secularism is often viewed primarily from the perspective of the critique of ideology (Modood 2010; Mahmood 2006; Bader 2007).

The critique of classical secularization theory can be heightened into three fundamental objections. These concern (a) its alleged universalism, (b) its underlying process theory, and (c) its modernist normative bias. Overall, however, these critiques themselves are highly normative. While the secularization paradigm is often considered as Eurocentric and antireligious, recent research generally fashions itself as sympathetic toward religion.[2] At times the studies evoke the impression of a 'natural' religiosity among the population and of an ideological secularism founded on an alliance between political and academic elites. As compared to the older debate, recent contributions often engender an inversion of the subject and object of the critique: Whereas secularism used to be regarded as a means of liberation from the constraints of traditional and religious authority, religion now appears as a space of freedom, and secularism as an instrument of regimentation and of exclusion.

The heightened awareness of secularism's articulation with power relations and knowledge regimes, also as regards the production of religious forms of subjectivity and expression that are compatible with liberal modernity, leads to one-sidedness when

2 [note 2 in the original] An exception is the book by Jacoby (2004) in which the history of American secularism is told as the history of a liberation movement and of its coalition with religious dissenters – for example, in the controversies over the American Constitution.

it downplays the autonomy associated with modernity and secularity against moments of domination and then dismisses them in the name of religious freedom.

The critique of secularization theory has certainly increased the sensitivity to cultural differences and unjustified generalizations. However, there is now a danger of an essentialism of historically and culturally 'unique' constellations and undue generalizations about the ideological power of Western secularism. Given this situation, we think that the discussion of [p. 879/880] secularization in sociology could be profitably linked to recent debates in the theory of modernity, in particular to the "multiple modernities" approach and to the perspectives of cultural sociology.

The "multiple modernities" approach insists on the indispensability of the concept of modernity, but without persisting in its one-sided orientation to a seemingly universalistic Western model. Focusing on the intertwinements of universality and difference, it contends that all modern societies have been confronted with the European model. These confrontations and their interpretations, however, reflect specific – in Eisenstadt's terminology 'civilizational' – histories. As a consequence, the results display differences that cannot sufficiently be explained by processes of diffusion and convergence.

This also implies that variations across time and space in how the religious-secular divide is understood and justified cannot be reduced to structural and institutional dimensions. Against the tendency to construe this divide mainly in terms of relationships between church and state we suggest that cultural sociology with its insistence on the ineluctable embeddedness of action in horizons of affect and meaning (Alexander and Smith 2002:136) can offer new insights in the endurance of variations and the persistency with which they are defended. This is not meant to substitute institutional approaches. Rather, we consider institutional regulations to be one expression of a 'culture of secularity'.

We suggest to conceptualizing both dimensions *by asking to which societal reference problems the development of different forms of secularity responds and what solution they offer for these problems.*

2 Multiple Secularities: The Concept

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications: Secularity, Secularism, Secularization

The dominant concepts in the current international debate are *secularization* and *secularism*. Until now, the concept of *secularity* has only seldom featured centrally (Asad 2003; Taylor 2007, Berger et al. 2008). Whereas the concept of *secularization* is used primarily in sociological process models addressing processes of functional differentiation, religious decline, and privatization of religious practice, *secularism* refers to

the arrangements of [p. 880/881] the institutional separation of politics/the state and religion as well as to their ideological legitimizations.

For reasons of analytical clarity, in what follows we propose to reserve the concept of *secularism* for the ideological-philosophical program – hence, for the explicit *ideology* of separation – and related political practices, and the concept of *secularity*, by contrast, for the culturally and symbolically as well as institutionally anchored forms and arrangements of differentiation between religion and other social spheres. Following Asad (2003) we assume that both domains are first identified as religious and secular domains in the course of their differentiation. *Secularization* signifies both the process of differentiation, including diminishing mutual influences between religion and other social domains, as well as the decline in religious participation and belief (Casanova 1994).

Therefore, the concept of *secularity* is more inclusive than that of *secularism* and also encompasses the at times latent, taken-for-granted forms of the distinction between the religious and the non-religious. In addition, we expressly do not confine the analysis to the relation between the state and religion but include other functional domains of society (for instance, those of law, education, science, business etc.), as well as the public sphere. The connection between such religious-secular distinctions and their legitimating guiding ideas differs empirically. One can assume that the corresponding divisions develop a special cultural dynamic where they are not only implicitly practiced but are made explicit and become condensed into *guiding ideas*, as was also the case with the guiding ideas of modernity and progress or with the 'social projections' (Giesecke 2006:156) that went along with the introduction of new technologies, such as letterpress printing.

Exploring secularity in terms of symbolic distinctions implies of course that religion and the non-religious are far from being completely separate without any points of contact, or mutual entanglements. Recent anthropological literature (Mahmood 2006) sometimes mistakenly claims that secularization theory propagated the *complete separation* of religion from other social spheres. This misunderstanding obviously rests on the conflation between secularization theory and the secularist *self-image* prevalent among various social groups in which concepts of separation circulate as political ideologies. In contrast to such self-images, sociological ideal types always assume a variety of combinations of religion, national politics, and [p. 881/882] the claims of religious groups and secular agents carried into the public sphere. Secularity is then considered as a result of social conflicts (Wohlrab-Sahr, Schmidt-Lux and Karstein 2008; Smith 2003) or negotiation processes. Far from refuting the concept of the religious-secular divide, the entanglements of religion and politics must be viewed as sites in which the boundaries between religion and secular spheres are negotiated, challenged, and redrawn. For this reason we agree with Casanova (2006:19) that the concepts of secularization and secularity make sense "as an analytical framework for a comparative research agenda that aims to examine the historical transformations of all world religions under conditions of modern structural differentiation.

It also seems evident from this perspective that the rejection of concepts such as secularization and secularism in large parts of the Islamic world is not necessarily bound up with the *absence* of differentiations between the religious and the secular, hence with the omnipresence of religion (see Schulze 2010). Our assumption is rather that there are no readily accessible *guiding ideas* of secularity with which such distinctions could be legitimized. In addition, Islam is also widely employed in terms of a *cultural* identity especially in the Arab world with its history of belated nation-state formations. This blurring of the boundaries of religion and culture renders a positive articulation of secularity extremely difficult. [. . . p. 882/883. . .]

The analytical distinction between ideologies of separation and practices of differentiation also opens our eyes for pre-modern practices that provide intellectual resources, and thereby pave the way for modern forms of secularity (Bhargava 2010), without themselves already being associated with secular guiding ideas. Pre-modern regimes of toleration are an example of this. [. . . p. 883/884. . .]

2.3 From "Multiple Modernities" to "Multiple Secularities"

While being inspired by the idea of "multiple modernities", our conceptualization remains aloof from its strong "civilizational" underpinning and its projections upon the ancient pasts of these civilizations (cf. Wagner 2005:95). [. . . p. 884/885. . .]

Most of the studies on multiple modernities remain highly abstract and their empirics and connections to present conflicts are rather vague. Against this backdrop, our goal is to enable the interpretation of recent conflicts by taking cultural histories and historic entanglements into account.

However, there are important similarities between our ideal-types of secularity and Eisenstadt's notion of Axial Age Civilizations (Eisenstadt 1996). One of the central features of Eisenstadt's axial age civilizations is the emergence of strong notions of transcendence and the separation of mundane and transcendental spheres (Wittrock 2005:66). It should be emphasized that the meanings of modern secular-religious distinctions fully depend on older differentiations between mundane and transcendent spheres, even if the former are generally more closely associated with the history of medieval Christian Europe. More research is needed on the conditions under which axial age notions of transcendence feed into concepts of secularity in the way suggested in this paper. Overall, we agree with the multiple modernities approach in its insistence on the plurality of cultural paths into modernity and on the effects of a history of mutual entanglements, in which the European modernity plays the role of a (positive or negative) point of reference. Both aspects are of specific importance for the issue of secularity.

To sum up, what distinguishes the approach presented here from the ones mentioned above is that (a) it attempts to develop ideal-types of secularity in a way that supports work on concrete historical cases, while taking into account the distinction

between these two tasks; (b) it seeks to overcome the separation between processes of secularization (religious decline and functional differentiation) and figures of secularity (configurations of cultural meaning); (c) it relates the figures of secularity back to historical processes of and conflicts over secularization; (d) through its focus on the [p. 885/886] cultural meaning of secularity, it avoids a restriction to state policy; and (e) it aims at a comparative interpretation of current religious controversies against the background of the conflicts transmitted by cultural memory. [. . .]

2.5 Multiple Secularities: Problems and Solutions

By "multiple secularities", in what follows, we mean the forms of distinction between the religious and other social domains (which are thereby marked as non-religious), that are institutionalized and in part legitimized [p. 886/887] through guiding ideas. We assume that these secularities exhibit different structures of meaning that document a specific social history of conflict no less than the competing influence of other forms of secularity.

We assume further that the "multiple secularities" that are taking shape in different countries and regions 'respond' to specific societal problems (as their reference problems) and offer solutions to them. Obviously, these problems arise at some point and in some form in many societies, but they come up with different degrees of urgency at different points in time.

At a first approximation, we identify four such reference problems: (1) the problem of individual freedom vis-à-vis dominant social units, be they groups or the state; (2) the problem of religious heterogeneity and the resulting potential or actual conflictuality; (3) the problem of social or national integration and development; and (4) the problem of the independent development of institutional domains.

It is clear that most of these problems are closely associated to the formation of *modern* societies and states and the ideas on which they are founded, whereas at least the second also arises in pre-modern societies. It is no accident that reflection on pre-modern sources of modern secularity generally begin here.

It is clear that understandings and interpretations of such problems and solutions are often contested and, as a consequence, are collectively shared to varying degrees. What is considered a problem, for instance with regard to nation-building and religious diversity, and a viable solution in terms of secularity is therefore subject to processes whereby interpretations of problems and solutions are negotiated and authorized. These processes of authorization in which the dominant social meanings of religion and secularity impinge on one another, are thus invariably embedded in power relations defining the deep strata of historical experience in a given society and its religious and political tradition.

Processes of definition and framing involve a variety of social and political actors and social movements, often with antagonistic agendas. Typically, however, the refer-

ence problems and the guiding ideas epitomizing them can be used as reference points *for a variety of groups*, even if these groups pursue competing goals in other respects. Therefore, the reference problems and solutions mentioned above, together with their associated guiding ideas, may develop a binding social thrust, at least for certain historical periods, and thereby become points of crystallization for collective [p. 887/888] identities. As a consequence, we can see the emergence of more or less entrenched 'cultures of secularity', which are shared across otherwise existing lines of difference.

The four central problems outlined above provide motives for institutionalizing distinctions between the religious and other social spheres. As latent motives and social practices, they can certainly coexist, as overt motifs they may compete with each other. Our assumption is, however, that, given certain preconditions, one of them will become dominant at least for a certain period by being aligned with guiding ideas that set the basic terms for distinguishing religious and secular spaces in a given society, and thereby push the other motives, at least at times, to the background. There is no doubt, however, that these motives are often highly contested.

Accordingly, our claim is not that such a basic tenor of secularity can be identified in every society or that just one of the motives matters. [. . . p. 888/889]

Even if the distinction between four basic types of secularity is an ideal-typical construction that is not 'identical' with reality, we assume that a basic cultural understanding of secularity can be identified in a whole range of societies, at least in certain periods. During "settled periods" (Swidler 1986: 281) this will remain latent but it will become manifest in periods of conflict. Such conflicts may be the expression of "critical junctures" in Kuru's' (2009) sense and trigger shifts in historical orientations.[3] We have used the formula "secularity for the sake of . . ." to designate these basic patterns.

At a first approximation, we distinguish between the following forms: (1) secularity for the sake of individual rights and liberties; (2) secularity for the sake of balancing/pacifying religious diversity; (3) secularity for the sake of societal or national integration and development; and (4) secularity for the sake of the independent development of functional domains of society.

The identification of ideal-types is a process that shifts between the analysis of empirical cases, the attempt to condense them into theoretical relations, the theoretically informed return to empirical cases and so forth.[4] Thus, it follows the pattern of maximal and minimal comparison. [. . . p. 889/890. . .]

These four basic forms of secularity are associated with different guiding ideas: in the first type (1) it is the idea of freedom and individuality, in the second (2) that of toleration, respect and non-interference, whereas the third type involves (3) the ideas

3 [note 5 in the original] Kuru (2009) defined critical junctures as periods or moments in which both agency and structural conditions are available for systematic change.

4 [note 6 in the original] In general, this comes close to the research strategy of the Grounded Theory Methodology. Cf. Strauss (1987).

of progress, enlightenment, and modernity.[5] The fourth type, finally, involves (4) the guiding ideas of rationality, efficiency, and autonomy. [. . . p. 890/891]

We assume that the dominance of one reference problem tends to create tensions vis-à-vis the others not only in theoretical terms but in the real world. For example, prioritizing the balance between religious groups is likely to create tensions with regard to individual liberties, to the pursuit of national interests, as well as to guaranteeing the autonomy of functional domains. [. . . p. 891–904]

Conclusion

The concept of "multiple secularities" rests on the recognition that the notions of the secular, of secularism and secularity are charged with highly divergent meanings that are linked to different political and cultural contexts and histories of social conflict. Even though these histories inevitably [p. 904/905] give rise to different social dynamics they always focus on specific ways of drawing boundaries and distinctions between religion and other spheres of social practice. We have construed these ways in terms of four ideal-types specifying historical reference problems, guiding ideas and historical solutions. Taken together, these aspects form what we have called "cultures of secularity", e.g. the ways in which the relationships between religion and other social spheres are organized in a meaningful way according to models that have become dominant at the expense of others or which conflict with other models. We have illustrated these cultures of secularity through different regional scenarios and indicated how these might change.

On the one hand, this conceptualization thus acknowledges the divergent structures of meaning that crystallize in the notion of the secular in different societies. On the other hand, we argue that these differences do not imply that the transformations of the social location of religion unfold as incomparable processes. In today's world of multiple and entangled modernities it seems, on the contrary, much more likely that similar structural conditions, e.g. regarding the relationships between temporal and religious authority or colonial-postcolonial dynamics, are associated with similar discourses and cultural meanings of secularity. On top, the case studies that we have referred to,[I] indicate that the same motifs of secularity are available in the stock of knowledge of various societies. What becomes dominant however depends on the (communicated) urgency of societal problems as well as on cultural frameworks and structural conditions. The

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5 [note 8 in the original] Of course, the notion of freedom can also become the guiding idea of national development and the symbol of social progress and the preservation of social sovereignty. Examples of this can be found in the French Revolution, though also in the right-wing populist "freedom parties," as, for example, in the Netherlands.

I MWS: The case studies are not presented in this excerpt.

reference to "freedom", for example, can be employed for the sake of individual liberties, as well as for the immunity from state interference granted to groups (secularity for the balancing of religious diversity), for an agenda of national progress as well as for the independence of functional domains.

Research based on the proposed conceptualization would need to identify the social mechanisms and power relations through which particular understandings of secularity become dominant while others become marginalized or remain insignificant. This however, would require a much more detailed analysis of single cases than the one offered here. In addition, it would also need to examine the ways in which particular practices, symbols and beliefs are publicly recognized as religion and are thereby drawn into the dynamics and logics of secularity.

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43 Peter Beyer: *Questioning the Secular/Religious Divide in a Post-Westphalian World* (2013)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Peter Beyer (b. 1949) is a professor emeritus of religious studies at the University of Ottawa, Canada. He received his PhD from the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto, and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Until 1995, he held various positions in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. He then took a position at the University of Ottawa, where he was the chair of the Department of Classics and Religious Studies from 1996 to 2004. Beyer has been president of the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion, the Canadian Society of the Study of Religion, the Association for the Sociology of Religion, and the International Society for the Sociology of Religion.

Beyer's early research focuses on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century religious history of Canada, accompanied by an enduring interest in the sociological theory of religion in contemporary and modern society. Since the mid-1980s, he has researched the relationship between religion and globalization. Since 2001, Beyer has worked on religion and global migration in contemporary Canada, and especially on the religious diversity that has resulted from immigration to the area since 1970.

Since 2010, in the context of the *Religion and Diversity Project* and the *Nonreligion in a Complex Future Project* (directed by Lori Beaman), Beyer has researched patterns of religious identity in the Canadian population over the last decades. He is also engaged in multinational research on the transmission of religion across generations. On top of this, he continues his previous theoretical work, now focusing on the transformations of religion in contemporary global society. He has published several monographs, among them *Religion and Globalization* (Sage, 1994), and *Religions in a Global Society* (Routledge, 2006).

In the selected text, which combines a systems-theoretical approach with the analysis of the global transformation of religion, Beyer argues that the long-dominant Westphalian model, which relies on the differentiation between religion and the state, and at the same time on the dominant religion as the granter of cohesion, is about to lose its influence. The global transformation of religion also transforms its other side, the secular, which, under Westphalian conditions, had come to be identified with the state.

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[. . .]

Observing the Secular/Religious Divide

An increasing number of contemporary observers in the social and human sciences have been positing a changed or changing relationship between the secular and the religious within the world's states and in the globalized society in which they are a feature. The situation begs at least two basic questions: how do we understand the secular and the religious that their changing relationship should be important? And why are we doing this now as opposed to, for instance, 40 years ago? Answering the first of these questions is quite complex and will occupy the bulk of the analysis that follows. Response to the second, I would argue, is much simpler: certain religious, political and cultural developments of the last 30 years have convinced many of us that the world has been changing or that our understanding of the world has to change. These developments include, first, [p. 663/664] the emergence of various quite powerful religio-political movements around the world since about 1979, beginning with the rise of the Christian Right in the United States and the Iranian Revolution and then continuing to the present day with various others in many parts of the world. Second is the virtual disappearance of state-centred and strongly secularist socialism, especially with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the victory of the 'capitalist roaders' in China. Third are the repercussions of the very high level of transnational migration in the post-Second World War period, especially into rich western states from non-western parts of the world. Fourth, various developments in the domain of religion around the world have caught many more observers' attention than might otherwise have been the case, to the point that not a few are speaking about 'religious resurgence' (see e.g. Almond et al., 2000; Antoun and Hegland, 1987; Robertson and Chirico, 1985; Sahliyeh, 1990; Wester-

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lund, 1996; Zeidan, 2003). Under this heading, global Christian Pentecostalism and what one might call global Islamic pietism appear to be attracting the most attention. Finally, the same period has witnessed a change in optics among a great many elite observers, especially in the powerful West: the default unit of analysis or observation is no longer the local, national, regional, and in most instances western society, but rather global society as a whole. In other words, the questioning of the secular/religious relation has the globalization of observation as a central prerequisite. The implication of this last point is worth stressing: changed observation of the world is not just a simple reflection of a changed or changing world. In fact, a very large part of the change may be a transformation in how we understand what has 'been there' for quite some time, even though that change in understanding was likely set in motion by some real changes in the world.

Against this backdrop, the interpretations of what these various developments signify are diverse, but quite a number of them detect or project the makings of a fundamental transformation of society, one that involves either a profound restructuring of what we enact and understand as religion, a 'return' to greater prominence and power of this religion, or both. In response, or as an aspect of these transformations, what is not religion, namely the secular, is also changing and maybe even being severely challenged. In order to look more closely at these interpretations and what they might say about my first question – namely, what do we mean with secular/religious that a changing relation between them is of significance – I want to examine very briefly a selection of six such offerings, with the express purpose of thereafter presenting, not so much an alternative, as what I hope is a useful supplement to them and to many important other perspectives that I am leaving aside.

The six offerings are those of Peter Berger, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, José Casanova, Rajeev Bhargava and Tariq Modood. I choose their work, not because they are necessarily the most important voices, but because they appear to me to represent variants on three rather different, but not necessarily contradictory, approaches to the question. Berger and Habermas I would put in what one can call the 'religious comeback' category, Taylor and Casanova in the 'religious transformation' category, and Bhargava and Modood in the 'alternative scenarios' category. [. . . p. 664–666]

I have presented these different interventions into the debate to highlight their differences, but more importantly to show the strong interlinkage among them. Three points of continuity are particularly important for my purposes. First, there is the degree to which the secular is mostly identified with, if not precisely the state, then certainly the nation, the nation-state or the national society; in any case an imagined unit that uses state boundaries for drawing the salient difference among plural 'seculars'. Second is the idea that we are witnessing not a simple transformation from one clearly characterized situation to another, but rather that the new situation exhibits ambiguity, plurality, struggle and uncertainty as basic features. The frequent use of words prefixed by 'post' points in the same direction: we are in transition, 'after' what we have come to know, but not simply already transformed. Third, is the idea that religion is not what it

used to be; because it is transforming in terms of social form and occupying a new or at least different importance within society.

From Westphalian to Post-Westphalian Condition

In turning now to what I hope is a supplementary or complementary approach to the question of the current situation with regard to secular and religious, I begin with the contingency of the distinction and its two terms. For any of this to make sense, religion, at least, has to be understood and structured as something distinct in terms of which one can then profile its other side, the secular. The differentiation of something called religion (or roughly cognate ideas in other languages) has taken diverse forms and been accomplished to differing degrees throughout history and in societies around the world, and that includes the lack of such a differentiation in certain, perhaps most, societies (cf. Luhmann, 1989). Indeed, the clear conceptual and institutional differentiation of religion from its other side, the secular, appears to be a feature only of modern and now global society, with significant antecedents in European and Mediterranean society of the early Common Era. In western society of the last two millennia, therefore, as in civilizational centres in other parts of the world, the differentiation of religion has occurred in very particular ways. In the western case that included conceiving and structuring religion as a distinct social system *and* as a marker of collective identity (see Boyarin, 2007).

A critical theoretical point of departure for the argument developed here is the observation that, after about the 9th century, European society underwent a gradual but highly consequential transformation which, while very complex, featured the development and eventual socio-structural dominance of a plurality of peculiar societal systems centred on different logics or functions.[1] Unsurprisingly, given the antecedent structures of this society, one of these was for religion and another one was for the state or polity. Other systems developed for law, economy and science; and eventually over the centuries for [p. 666/667] other functions like education, art, health, sport and mass information media. These societal structures arose in relation to one another, meaning that they were interdependent, distinguished themselves with reference to the other systems, while also modelling themselves on each other to a certain extent. This last point is critical, as I argue below. Moreover, their construction was mostly manifest, meaning that the socio-structural developments were constantly accompanied by semantic correlates, by discourses which expressed what was going on. Key aspects of these discourses included that religion, and more ambiguously the state, occupied special foundational functions, at the same time as the other systems declared their relative independence from religion, their own *sui generis* rationales which made

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1 [note 2 in the original] This is a basically Luhmannian observation. See Luhmann, 1997. I have developed the idea with respect to religion in Beyer, 2006.

them not only what they were, but also *not religion*. The long history of differentiated religious and political institutions in this society resulted in these two systems being understood as more foundational of social order than the others – at least until the 18th to 19th centuries, when economy and what one might call economistic foundationalism in 'liberal' and 'socialist' versions joined this group. Religious and political foundationalism is still reflected in the strong association of the secular/religious distinction with the distinction between state and religion. Yet the 'secular' in the sense of the not-religious domain of society included more than the state, and not least these other societal systems which became more and more powerful over the centuries, especially the economic, but also the scientific.

A peculiar feature of the developing European political system was its emergence and eventual stabilization as a set of plural, contiguous and competing states; not as another empire. At first this segmentation contrasted with the unified and single character of the strengthening religious system centred on the (Roman) Christian church. With the Reformation and its aftermath of protracted violence, however, a critical restructuring and reimagining of religion occurred, and with it a solidification of the segmented system of political states. This transformation had three central aspects: first, religion came to be seen and structured not only as systemic and as a distinct (foundational) domain, but as one that occurred as religions, in the plural, to only one of which people belonged, and this as individuals (one might say 'by choice') as well as attributed members of collectivities (this is also the core of Taylor's neo-Durkheimian condition with respect to religion). Second, religion, while still foundational, could no longer be regarded straight-forwardly as the source of societal cohesion and unity; the solution to this dilemma, enunciated essentially in the Peace of Westphalia, was to try to coordinate the foundational religions – now plural or, more precisely in the European context, 'confessional' – with the foundational polities in the form of the states. Each state would be a kind of society unto its own, and thereby the unity and cohesion – viable social order – question could be translated to that level. Politically, this was expressed in the idea of state 'sovereignty', religiously in the idea that each state would regulate religious unity, as in the famous Westphalian formula, *cuius regio, eius religio.* Third, in the one to two centuries after Westphalia the imagining and structure of the political realm moved from, to adapt Bendix's title, 'kings to people', from states as the creatures of rulers to expressions of collectivities or nations (Bendix, 1978). The 'cuius' and the 'eius' of the formula changed, but the relation of 'regio' to 'religio' remained. Thus was generated what can be called the Westphalian model of the nature and relation of state to religion, in those terms of the secular to the religious. [p. 667/668]

The Westphalian model did not undo the differentiation of religion and polity, but rather structured them in a particular way or, more correctly, in particular ways. In the aftermath of Westphalia there was no simple or strict isomorphism between religion and state. The difference between the two manifested itself in a number of ways. These included that religious boundaries were not simply isomorphic with political boundaries, most obviously in the case of the Roman Catholic church, but also in various

Protestant movements ranging from the Anabaptists and Quakers to the Moravians and Methodists. That situation – which obtained from the time of Westphalia already – helped ensure that the 'establishment' of a religious confession in a particular state always also introduced the question of how to 'tolerate' religious 'minorities', of other 'confessions' and of 'dissenting' minorities, including that of the Jews. On the side of the state, one witnesses a progressive 'secularization' of this system as most states after about the late 18th century progressively established formal distance from their dominant confessions. That distancing took several forms, perhaps as many as there were states. Most prominent were the shifting of establishment to a 'denominational' form or the 'laicization' of the state that included the substitution of a kind of political 'Ersatz-religion' in the form of secularist or atheist national ideologies. Here is the historical beginning and source of today's 'varieties of secularism'.

In the context of these developments, however, the structuring and imagining of states and religions did maintain important parallelisms which constituted their mutual modelling. Prime among these were two features. First, the religious system structured and conceived itself as religions and as subdivisions within those religions; the political system structured and conceived itself as nation-states and (sometimes) as subdivisions within those states. Second, people within 'national societies' were expected to 'belong' exclusively ('loyally') to one state as 'citizens' and to one religion as 'believers'. That belonging, although deemed as chosen, should be total, one might say in each case designating a 'disciplined' (well-defined, coherent, consistent, encompassing) 'way of life'.[2] Moreover, until the 20th century, the dominant tendency in both systems was, on the political side, to 'regulate' more and more of citizens' lives and, on the religious side, for churches to expect more and more churchly and orthodox 'practice' of its believers, in religion's case continuing a trend that already began in the later Middle Ages (Délumeau, 1983). This feature of the differentiation of these societal systems is to be emphasized: as religion and state – and other systems – differentiated, they came to have more and more presence in the total society, and thus in the daily lives of almost everyone.

The rise to structural dominance of these function systems did not remain a European affair. It would be more accurate to say that from early in this development, the construction of the systems involved their spread beyond Europe: as the Europeans spread their influence around the globe, these systems were appropriated, further developed and thus transformed in diverse regions around the world. As in the European sphere, this appropriation was uneven and varied, but by the late 20th century it included the incorporation of all the world's land regions into the global political system as formally sovereign and precisely contiguous states, the significant construction of religion as religions, including more variants or 'confessions' of the Christian religion, and, most importantly in the present context, the same sort of approximate coordina-

2 [note 3 in the original] The argument here is similar to that developed by Charles Taylor under the idea of the Age of Mobilization. See Taylor, 2007.

tion of religion and state identity and structure that was developed in the Westphalian model. The reconstruction and [p. 668/669] reimagination that this required, and the degree to which it was produced, varied a great deal from region to region. By and large, however, it is arguable that the model was 'imported' and appropriated in most of the world's countries.

On the basis of this analysis, I want now to suggest that what is happening currently, and what the authors I introduced at the beginning are also discussing, is the greater and now incontrovertible shift to a 'post-Westphalian' condition. Since this is another 'post' word, it implies that we are shifting away from what was dominant, but as yet cannot see clearly what any new dominant circumstance will be. Among the various implications, therefore, is that the Westphalian model has not disappeared and may in fact continue strongly in some countries or regions. Yet, overall, its hold is weakening. It has arguably been weakening for some time, but the current historical, more intensely globalized, context has provided the conditions in which it is much more likely that this weakening will be observed. Where and when the historical 'tipping-point' towards a post-Westphalian condition occurred is difficult to say; but for the reasons outlined at the beginning, it may be that the current era has provided the 'tipping-point' for its more likely observation. It is thus losing its role as the more or less self-evident and thus prevailing socio-structural and discursive pattern and ceding to or being increasingly balanced off by alternative ways of structuring and imagining *both* the religious and the secular. Here, I concentrate primarily on the symptoms and signs of this post-Westphalian condition on the side of the religious system.

Given the way religion structured itself under the Westphalian model, a post-Westphalian condition implies a relative de-linking of religion from how states have been structured, and specifically the lessening of the association between religious and national identity, the decline of religious exclusivism, the relative increase in religious 'bricolage' and the shifting of the 'disciplined' religious life to the status of a personal option that has no expected connection with disciplined citizenship (i.e. one can be a good citizen without being a good religious citizen and vice versa). One particularly important consequence is that the construction of the religious system will follow the lines of a division into religions less, rather than more, meaning that Casanova's 'global denominationalism' will not or no longer be *the* most important structural feature of the religious system, although one can hardly imagine that it will for the foreseeable future not continue to be *an* important one. A post-Westphalian condition relativizes the Westphalian model and does not eliminate it; just as talk of multiple modernities relativizes the idea of modernity without eliminating it. Such relativization nonetheless represents, in these listed developments, the (relative) de-linking of the structural modelling of religion and state. And, to repeat, this transformation will consist in some portion as actual transformations and in some portion as the renewed observation of religion, as noticing what in many respects may have been happening for quite some time already. As with the idea of globalization (and indeed modernization before it), aspects or phases of the process precede the invention of the concept to talk about it.

At least as important as the lessening of the self-evidence and dominance of the Westphalian religion–state modelling is alternative modelling. In terms of the secular/religious distinction, what this amounts to is the increasing – but thereby not necessarily new – adoption by the religious system of other 'secular' partners than the political system as models; all of which very much includes, of course, the continued construction of [p. 669/670] religion *in contrast* with all the 'secular' systems. Such alternative modelling has to some extent been going on for as long as the systems have been mutually differentiating, whether in just western or in global society as a whole. [. . .]

I do not have the space in such a short essay to explain and document these possible transformations beyond simply introducing them. A critical aspect or consequence that they have in common, however, is their implications for what one may call the 'pluralization' of religion, namely its tendency to take on multiple forms. In the increasingly post-Westphalian circumstance, 'religious diversity' goes significantly beyond its modern manifestations. In particular, the difference among 'religions' or even among subdivisions of religions ('confessions', 'denominations', etc.) is more and more but one sort of plurality, not the only important one. Plurality now includes greater variations in degree and kind of inclusivism or exclusivism of 'belonging'; greater variation in the location of religion in society in terms of privatized or in the so-called 'public sphere'; variations in sheer presence in strength without the dominance of one trend or [p. 670/671] another (i.e. 'resurgence' OR 'secularization'); multiplication of centres of authority and authenticity, irrespective of subdivision; and, of course, variation in the sort of modelling that I have just discussed. Religion in consequence becomes a far 'messier' system, one that one could say more and more resembles the system for art, with its fluid world of media, genres, tastes and criteria of authenticity, than it does the seemingly neat Westphalian divisions of sovereign states with their precise boundaries. And a critical observational effect of these transformations is that religion appears to be 'shifting' to the level of the individual as the centre of authenticity and authority, even though individualization of religion is also a process that has been going on since the medieval centuries in Europe (Nelson, 1981; Taylor, 2007); that we are witnessing, for instance, a shift from religion to spirituality, a 'spiritual revolution' or that where religion is 'really' located is as the 'lived religion' of individuals (Chandler, 2008; Hall, 1997; Heelas et al., 2005; Luckmann, 1967; McGuire, 2008; Roof, 1999; Shimazono, 2004; Woodhead, 2010).

Violations in Post-Westphalian Restructuring: The Examples of Canada, Turkey and India

In order to illustrate the shift in the dominance of the Westphalian arrangements to a post-Westphalian condition, I want now to look briefly at three very different countries in different parts of the world, countries that each developed a different relation to the Westphalian model (that is, the three 'variants' are quite different) in the process

and in the aftermath of their formation as modern states; and which correspondingly are showing rather different manifestations of a post-Westphalian condition. The three countries are Turkey, India and Canada, countries which have formed at different times, on very different cultural or 'ethnic' and thus 'national' bases, with a different 'colonial' history, with different dominant religions and thus religions that have formed as modern religions differently, and therefore different relations between religion and secular, specifically between religion and state. Correspondingly, the symptoms of a shift to post-Westphalian conditions are also different.

Turkey

The first question for each country is how and to what extent each country adopted and adapted the Westphalian model. In the case of Turkey, that is comparatively straightforward and obvious: to a significant extent following a French pattern, the founding elites of modern Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s built upon late Ottoman beginnings to try to fashion a nation-state that was, first of all resolutely Turkish, and uniformly so (Yavuz, 2003; Zarcone, 2004). This country had a dominant religion, Islam, which these elites felt that they had to control and regulate to the point of, not just assigning it to the 'private sphere', but making it a department of state in the service of an official secularist (*laiklik*) ideology. Turkey, at least for the first decades of its existence, was to become a Westphalian state along the lines of France, but the Turkish variant proved unstable over the longer term, and the signs of that instability (or failure to solidify, perhaps) began to manifest themselves, if not already in the 1950s, then certainly by the 1970s. Two sorts [p. 671/672] of development on the religious side are particularly indicative and important: the more visible – at least to outside observers – was the rise of an Islamic and Islamist political movement, prominently represented by the political parties under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, which briefly gained governing power in the late 1990s. The less obvious but probably more important was the rise and spread of the same sort of 'pietistic' Islam – in Turkish, somewhat Sufi, variants – that was growing in various other parts of the Muslim world at the same time (Kepel, 1994). It is well represented by the Nurcu movements, including the neo-Nur movement under the leadership of Fetullah Gülen (Yavuz and Esposito, 2003).

Both of these developments would fit rather neatly under either Berger's de-secularization or religious resurgence idea or under a Habermasian post-secularism. In terms of a Taylorian paleo-, neo-, or post-Durkheimianism, however, matters are significantly more ambiguous; as they are using Casanova's idea of a global denominationalism. This is because the relation between religious identity and national identity in this context is not straightforward, one way or the other. In a strong sense, Erbakan's movement was not just Turkish Islamic, but also globally Islamist, as so many other political Islamist movements in other countries are or want to be. In any case, that movement has ceded definitively to the even more ambiguous AKP version under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which,

perhaps for strategic reasons, perhaps not, hovers uneasily between pietistic Muslims running government and some kind of 'establishment' of Islam (Atasoy, 2005; Hale and Özbudun, 2010; Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008; Yavuz, 2006). Something similar can be said for the wider Islamic and partially Sufi pietism that Gülen's movement represents: while very 'Turkish nationalist' from one perspective, it also has a deliberate transnational face – especially, but not limited to, among diaspora Turks in Western Europe and elsewhere – that leans more in the direction of a 'global denominationalism' which cannot be identified in terms of national boundaries (Esposito and Yilmaz, 2010). Moreover, unlike the political Islam represented by the parties of Erbakan and (more ambiguously) Erdoğan, the neo-Nurcus have their institutional bases mostly in not only broadly speaking what one can call 'civil society' organizations, but more specifically in the institutions of the educational, the health, the mass media and the art/culture systems. Their support base is among their members and especially their economic elite members, including a good section of the new and generally quite Islamic 'Anatolian bourgeoisie' that arose in the wake of Turkey's neoliberal shift under Turgut Özal in the 1980s. We have here what one might call a much more highly 'competitive' religious form, much like Finke and Stark (among others) have identified as characterizing the American religious context for quite some time. To some degree then, this highly significant movement and others in Turkey like it, engage in the alternative modelling that I have discussed. They certainly 'do' religion, here Islam, as religion; but they also model that religion in ways similar to economy, education, art, mass media information and health. Accordingly, although the vast majority of its followers are in fact Turkish nationally, that Turkishness is not at the manifest heart of the movement's self- conception, or at least professes not to be.

What is post-Westphalian about this situation is precisely the ambiguity, and that ambiguity has as much to do with what is happening in Turkey itself as it does with the wider and increasingly dense global context in which it is occurring. From one [p. 672/673] perspective, Turkey may be looking more and more like the model Westphalian state, with its typical and, following Taylor, neo-Durkheimian structures and cultural orientations. From another perspective, however, the boundaries of the sovereign Turkish state are less and less determinative, both in practical terms as concerns the range of social action and communication that occurs within it and in terms of how Islam and Turkishness are perceived with reference to that state. The post-Westphalian circumstance, in other words, is not just about 'inner state' developments, but as noted in the above abstract analysis, has everything to do with the intensified globalization of the later 20th and early 21st century.

India

The question of whether India ever has been a Westphalian state is an open one, but several factors point in the direction of the Westphalian model being, if not the actual model, then at least the unavoidable foil in terms of which India had to establish itself

as a modern nation-state. First, the reconstruction by their 'adherents' of South Asian religious traditions as a limited set of 'world religions' – especially Hinduism, but also Sikhism and Jainism – was a process that occurred in exact tandem with the rise of Indian nationalism, the idea that there existed a single people whose national territory was clearly defined and ought to be the expression of and under the control of that people. The question that constantly accompanied this 'national' development was what the role of religion would be; but both the British colonial context – all these, after all, were to some extent 'British' ideas appropriated and transformed by local elites (Dalmia and Von Stietencron, 1995; Frykenberg, 1989; Jones, 1989; Van der Veer, 2001) – and the Indian movements themselves dictated that this question had to be answered, or regulated. An explicitly Hindu nationalism was a significant option and player from relatively early on, at the latest at the time of the rise of the Arya Samaj movement. Yet it was accompanied and rivalled with other options, including most especially the 'secular' option represented by the Congress movement, and the Muslim and Sikh movements that, like the Hindu nationalist option, pushed in a very Westphalian direction towards the eventual creation of three states, a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh one. Congress secularism, however, was never of the Turkish or French variety; its secularism defined itself over and against 'communalism', any definition of the state and nation in terms of a single dominant religious identity (Pandey, 1992). Yet it could be argued that Congress secularism was in fact much closer to a kind of denominational establishment model, one in which it would be assumed that the good citizen had to belong to one of the religions – whether of his or her choice, or not.

Over the past 30 years, of course, India – not to mention the other South Asian states, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka – has been dealing with this question rather constantly, especially in the form of explicitly Sikh and Hindu nationalisms, one of which wanted to establish its own Westphalian state, the other to make India a more clearly Westphalian state (Jaffrelot, 1996; Kapur, 1986). Neither has succeeded and the question of where India is headed in post-Westphalian terms is as difficult as the question of whether it was ever Westphalian in the first place. India, to use Berger's phrase, is certainly 'as furiously religious as ever', but the sort of de-linking of religion and state, [p. 673/674] along with the rise to prominence of alternative modellings of religion, is also largely present, but probably has more to do with the form of the demographically dominant religion, Hinduism, than it does with anything else. Whether India was ever a Westphalian state hangs very much on the question of whether Hinduism actually operates as a world religion. From one perspective, it certainly does, although not one that easily follows the model of any other such religion, most especially the three Abrahamic ones. Yet, from another, its comparative lack of differentiation from what one can loosely call 'Indian culture' points in the other direction. Hinduism in India has always had the character of a default category: it's what one is religiously if one isn't positively something else, like Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Zoroastrian, and, less clearly, Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh. Its relation to the very idea of India has therefore always been strong – a Westphalian feature – and yet it has relatively little of the convergent and

clearly defined boundaries of these other religions, especially features such as clear orthodoxies and centres of authority and authenticity – there are a great many, almost an infinite number of ways of being 'authentically' Hindu – and exclusivist belonging and identification. In that sense, Hinduism, much more strongly than many other religions, always already was post-Westphalian in form and might dissipate entirely if it were not for the fact of India as a nation-state. This peculiarity of India and Hinduism is, I think, at the root of the ability of observers like Rajeev Bhargava to look to this case as always having been an alternative model for the understanding of the secular/religious distinction and therefore of types of secularism. The question, then, of alternative modelling would also be both more and less clear. It is comparatively easy to point to prominent mass media-like developments such as the television series of the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics, or to the economic enterprise characteristics of Hindu temples and pilgrimage locations which have occasional or regular clients rather than incorporated members and which ebb and flow in popularity much like business enterprises (see e.g. Gokulsing and Dissanayake, 2009; Srinivas, 2010). Yet taking these phenomena as intimations of a developing post-Westphalian modelling is rendered difficult by that fact that these sorts of characteristics have in one form or another been evident for a long time and therefore may be more of an indication of the lack of differentiation of Hinduism as a religious system than they are of the transformation of that system. Modelling, after all, is contingent on just such differentiation.

Canada

Canada is much more like India than it is like Turkey, but it has a history very much along the lines of some European states. From the beginning of colonial times in the 17th century until the middle of the 19th century, the Canadian colonies had an established, official religion and church, Roman Catholicism under the French regime until 1760 and the Church of England under the British regime thereafter until 1855. In the context and in the aftermath of official disestablishment, however, there developed a 'shadow' or 'denominational' establishment that culminated in the dominance of the religious landscape by a small set of 'mainline' churches to which well over 90% of the population belonged or with which they identified. There was further a close association between national identities and religious identities, there being a distinct French Canadian and Roman Catholic identity alongside a more or less British Protestant one. [p. 674/675]

This very Westphalian situation obtained for all intents and purposes until about the mid-1960s when a number of post-Westphalian developments occurred simultaneously. These include the comparative 'emptying-out' of the denominational mainline, and this in two ways: a great many left these churches in practice and to a large extent in identity, especially in the Protestant mainline; and most of those who remained no longer saw themselves as incorporated in authoritative religious bodies as before, shift-

ing the locus of authority and authenticity to the individual self or the fluid and voluntary group. Individuals increasingly could, if so inclined, do their religion à la carte, including picking and choosing from among the elements of their own church, as well as adding beliefs and practices from 'other' religions (Beyer, 2000; Bibby, 1987, 1993; Grenville, 2000; Rawlyk, 1996). Thus have denominational and even religious boundaries become comparatively relativized. A further symptom is organizational pluralization and atomization: many more and smaller organizations (including the Protestant mainline), including many more that are independent of any 'denominational' affiliation (Beyer, 2005). Among these many organizations are ones that style themselves very much along the economic lines discussed above as well as a rising presence in the country of mass media religion that does not observe any physical boundaries, let alone national ones (Dawson and Cowan, 2004). Moreover, the steadily increasing number during these same decades of non-Christian immigrants and then the children of those immigrants has had the effect of further pluralizing the Canadian religious field so that 'Christian dominance' while in practical terms still real, becomes more and more attenuated (Beyer, 2005). Westphalian conceptualizations remain strong in Quebec in comparison with the rest of the country (Lemieux, 1990), but even here there is a comparative relativization going on, especially in the large urban region of Montreal. Religion in Canada is losing its 'old familiar' contours rather rapidly, but they still have a presence; the old Westphalian modelling is not entirely gone. Yet it now shares the discursive and structural space with alternative ways of doing religion, including of course, not doing it at all, and this without serious consequences for 'national' identity which is undergoing analogous transformations.

Conclusions

These illustrations from three different countries show a number of things, but among them is the degree to which any of our talk of 'post' or 're' is highly tenuous: there is solid evidence that something important is happening semantically and structurally with religion, and probably the state (although I have ignored that half of the argument here). However that evidence does not yet point in a very clear direction, especially when we take into consideration that the whole world is involved, and not just the so-called West. As I tried to show with my three examples, this West should not be taken as the putative standard in the effort to understand these transformations since the degree to which the non-West did not follow the exact same paths as has the West means that these regions have in a sense a head start on moving in new directions; they were never as determined or determined in the same way by the old dominant models as were the European and colonizer society countries (which here includes Latin America). And the way that they nonetheless particularized those models was in many cases sufficiently different that their path-dependent present and future will

also be different. The most important upshot [p. 675/676] of the analysis I offer here is therefore that post-Westphalianism means more than anything else a pluralization of options, for the relation between the so-called 'secular' and the so-called 'religious' as for anything else. This is the conclusion also of Modood and Bhargava in their contribution to the debate. Yet such pluralization does not exclude the possibility that eventually a new global model in this arena will become dominant. At the moment, however, it is impossible to discern the clear outlines of such a model, let alone give it a name, even if it were to develop. Post-Westphalianism is thus a lot like somewhat cognate ideas like postmodernism and multiculturalism: all we know is that they represent a plurality of options and voices; but we really have no clear idea of what they mean because the new self-evidences at which they hint are not yet present. Minerva's owl, as it were, will only fly at dusk, which is to say when the light of the present day is gone but the new dark (in comparison) has not yet taken hold.

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44 ʿAzmi Bishara: *Religion and Secularity in Historical Context* (2013)

Translated and introduced by Housamedden Darwish

Introduction

ʿAzmi Bishara (born into a Christian family in 1956) is a Palestinian/Arab citizen of Israel and a former member of the Israeli Knesset (1996–2007) who has lived in exile since 2007. He obtained a Master (1984) and a PhD (1986) in philosophy at Humboldt University in Berlin with research on "The Logical and the Historical in the Research Method in Karl Marx's *Capital*." He taught philosophy and cultural studies at Birzeit University from 1986 to 1996. During this period he contributed to the establishment of various research centres, such as the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy (Muwatin) and the Mada al-Carmel Center for Applied Social Research.

Since the 2000s he has become a prominent intellectual figure in the contemporary Arab world and has been a prolific writer, especially since becoming the founder and general director of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Qatar in 2010. His publications are on political thought, social theory and philosophy, as well as some literary works. In addition to his seminal work *Religion and Secularity in Historical Context*, (two parts in three volumes, 2013–2015), his best-known publications include *Civil Society: A Critical Study* (1996); *On the Arab Question: An Introduction to an Arab Democratic Manifesto* (2007); and *Problems of Democratization: A Comparative Theoretical and Applied Study* (2020).[I] He was politically and intellectually involved in the Arab revolutions in 2010/11 and afterwards.

In his writings on secularism, Bishara stresses the historicity of this phenomenon and the absence of a clear and complete theory of secularisation that can be applied to all diverse cultural and historical contexts. He rejects all essentialist claims, for example, that secularism is more compatible with Christianity than with Islam or other religions. In his writings in general, Bishara stresses the priority of democracy and the danger of secularist ideology turning into an identitarian ideology, so that the political conflict would turn into a conflict between religious/Islamist and secular(ist) people rather than a struggle between (supporters of) democracy and (supporters of) despotism.

I ʿAzmi Bishara, *al-Mujtamaʿ al-Madani: Dirasa Naqdiyya* (Ramallah: Muwatin, al-muʾassassa al-Filastiniyya li-Dirasat al-Dimuqratiyya, 1996); ʿAzmi Bishara, *Fi al-Masʾala al-ʿArabiyya: Muqaddima li-Bayan Dimuqrati ʿArabi* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-ʿArabiyya, 2007); ʿAzmi Bishara, *al-ʾIntiqal al-Dimuqrati wa-ʾIshkaliyyatuh: Dirasa Nazariyya wa-Tatbiqiyya Muqarina* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-ʿArabi li-l-Abhath wa-Dirasat al-Siyasat, 2020).

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In the first volume of his momentous book *Religion and Secularism in a Historical Context*, Bishara studies "religion and religiosity" as an introduction to the second and third volumes, which deal with "secularism and secularisation." Bishara believes that the focus in this context should not be on religion (as a religion in itself), but on the "patterns of religiosity," that is, "what happened and what is going on" in the historical contexts of cases representing religion, as various, changing and transforming social phenomena. Bishara stresses that patterns of religiosity are never separated from the patterns of secularisation that overlap with them as a self-contained structure in a society. In the first part of the second volume, which appears under the title "Secularism and Theories of Secularisation," Bishara presents a historical and critical study of the intellectual and cultural process of the emergence of European secularism, and of the dialectics between religion and politics in European history. In this part, Bishara lays down a theoretical basis that paves the way for the second part of the second volume, devoted to discussing secularism and theories of secularisation in their relationship to European and American historical development. He chooses historical cases that turned into paradigms for the relationship of religion and the state in Europe, and then compares them to the American paradigm. Bishara concludes his book by presenting his own alternative theory for understanding secularisation, which constitutes the main section translated here (vol. 1, 405–408; vol. 2. Part II, 409–411, 420–431). His theoretical paradigm is based on the induction of history and the history of ideas, on inferences from generalisations, and on a critical approach to secularisation theories.

In the selected text, Bishara distinguishes between secularism as an intellectual model and secularization as a historical process. The latter, as he claims, manifests itself in the differentiation between different spheres, and is characterised through the separation of the sphere of religion and its withdrawal from other spheres, and from the dominance of the logic of the state, which may be neutral or exert direct control over religion by demarcating the boundaries of the religious sphere.

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Note: Translated with permission of Azmi Bishara and Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.

Translation by Housamedden Darwish

[*al-Din wa-l-ʿAlmaniyya fi Siyaq Tarikhi*, Vol. 1]

On the Impossibility of Understanding Religiosity in Our Time without Understanding Secularism and Secularisation

Political activists, especially in Arab and Islamic countries, usually think of secularisation (*al-ʿalmana*) as a process that can be summed up simply as the separation of religion from the state. An important discussion revolves around the following: Is the intention to separate religion from state? Or the separation of the church or the religious institutions from the state? Another discussion revolves around the historical absence of the necessity for secularisation in the context (*faḍāʾ*) of a religion such as the Islamic religion, in which there is no religious authority, in the sense of that of the clergy in Catholicism? Some researchers rightly discuss the statement (*maqūla*) of separating religion from the state (*faṣl al-dīn ʿan al-dawla*), by focusing on its meaning (*bi-tadqīqihā*); they argue that secularisation is the state becoming neutral (*taḥyīd*) in religious matters (*al-shaʾn al-dīnī*). This is, of course, more accurate than speaking of the separation of religion from the state, unless followed by a clarification of the meaning of this phrase. Others go further, claiming that secularisation is the transformation of decisions in religious matters into private decisions, which is synonymous with rendering the state neutral in such matters. [. . . p. 405/406. . .]

It will become clear that a more accurate understanding requires a distinction between secularism (*al-ʿalmāniyya*) and secularisation (*al-ʿalmana*), which we will set out in detail in the second part of this book, introduced by this chapter. Given that secularisation is a historical development (*ṣayrūra*) that touches on multiple social fields, as well as on human thought, it is a continuous process (*ʿamaliyya*) of differentiation (*al-tamāyuz al-mustamirr*) between sectors that are redefined by this differentiation, such as science and myth, sacred and worldly, religion [p. 406/407] and state, and others. Nevertheless, we will intentionally address the concept of secularisation (*dhalik al-mafhūm li-l-ʿalmana*) that is focused upon in Arab and Western literature, i.e. the secularisation of the state.

In this book we do not deal with secularism as a prescription or formula for immediate application, from producer to consumer, but rather as the product of a historical process of socio-structural differentiation and the change in patterns of consciousness as a historical process, one that all societies go through. We believe the nature of the development of secularisation that societies undergo not only defines the nature of the secularism produced, its position and the extent of its dominance as an ideology, but also the nature of the types of religiosity (*anmāṭ al-tadayyun*).

Secularism, whether as an ideology, a position, a value system, a worldview, or partly this and partly that (*shadharāt min hadhā wa-dhāk*), tends to make (*jaʿl*) its

authority (*marjaʿiyya*) a moral and ethical "normative" authority that is not religious. It also includes the development that leads up to the hegemony of this position in thought, politics, science, and economy, and through which values and ethics as well as social institutions and practices pass. The researcher may of course make the secularisation of any of these spheres a subject of study. However, our research is not on secularisation as a subject in itself, rather only to the extent that this is needed in order to understand the forms of religiosity in our age. Forms of separation between religion and social practice in every sphere, that is, forms of religion's exclusion from it (*anmāṭ iqṣāʾ al-dīn minhā*), also determine the way religion deals with it, or moves away from it or returns to it, in a kind of transformation of religion into ideologies. These ideologies contribute to delimiting (*taḥdīd*) the activities of religious institutions (*sulūk al-muʾassasa al-dīniyya*), just as they contribute, for example, to delimiting the social and political attitudes of religious people.

It is not possible to understand religion, types of religiosity and the definitions of religious phenomena and their limits in the modern era without understanding the development of mutual differentiation and the evolution of consciousness that societies underwent.

This process is only called "secularism" or "secularisation," in a narrow sense of the word, in modernity. In my opinion, however, it is part of a historical development that precedes modernity. We have already clarified that the process of separating the sacred from the profane, which made it possible to define religion purely as an autonomous social sphere (*majāl ijtimāʿī qāʾim bi-dhātihi*), is the beginning of a process of differentiation. It is a long historical development that extends further back than the moment it was first named secularisation, just as the [p. 407/408] origins of most modern states with borders, police, armies and institutions, go back to the nucleus of the central state, especially in the 16th century; and yet the evolution of the state is a long historical process of separation (*al-infiṣāl*) and unity between the elements of society's regulation through coercion and its self-regulation. This also applies to the differentiation of the religious sphere from its others (*min ghayrihi*). It is a historical process of differentiation in the fields of knowledge, in social structures, concerning economic, scientific, and political practice. It takes the form of a sharp turn on the eve of the epoch we call modernity, triggered by scientific and industrial revolutions and great political and social changes.

Just as we discussed above, the beginning of the process lies in the separation (*infiṣāl*) of unified elements in myth and mythology, so that the religious phenomenon begins to take form as an autonomous phenomenon. It also takes off with the separation (*faṣl*) of God from the tribe or the people through the transformation from religion particular to one group of people (*al-diyānāt al-aqwāmiyya*) to universal religions (*al-diyānāt al-shumūliyya*), and from polytheism, either in regards to different spheres or to different peoples, to monotheism. "Transcendence" and "sublimity" in the understanding of the creator (*transcendentalism*) also began with the process of separating God from the mundane world within religion itself. The monotheistic religions go through

an ongoing process of disenchanting the world, beginning with a literal rejection of magic, and ending with denying the exclusive existence of miracles during the phases of prophecy, and the conclusiveness of these prophecies etc. If we look at secularism as the coronation of an unconscious and un-conceptualised historical development that is an internal process of differentiation, then oneness and monotheism are part of this process, since monotheism, in a certain historical context, requires the distinction (*tamyīz*) of God from the world, to the extent of separation. In this book, we have presented an initial monotheism that preceded polytheism [. . .]. This monotheism is idle, however, and it has not done away with polytheism and its functions in the universe. However, the god of the philosophers, whom we addressed when dealing with Plato and Aristotle and others, is a god separated from the relative and unstable world in his absolute and static sphere. This god of the philosophers comes back and appears in the deism or deification of 18th-century philosophers in France and Britain, as a philosophical and intellectual prelude to the emergence of a self-conscious secularism in history. There is a definite relationship between the paths of monotheism/unification and differentiation, and hence the importance of multiple institutions, religious and nonreligious, in bridging what was separated, but also the limits to this, becomes clear.

[al-Din wa-l-ʿAlmaniyya fi Siyaq Tarikhi, Vol. 2]

Conclusion

A Theoretical Model for Understanding the Secularisation of Politics and the State

We have presented the concepts of secularism and secularisation in theory and in history. Through outlining the development (*taṭawwur*) of secular thought from several intellectual and philosophical perspectives, we have avoided reducing it to a straight ascending line from Enlightenment to modernity, or to a materialist intellectual trend that leads the way through the history of ideas to a set of scattered secular ideas. We do not combine one idea from this thinker and another from that in order to prove the existence of a history of secular thought, as some do, by projecting ideas into history without considering their context or by taking them out of their context.

We have endeavoured to differentiate between religion and the other spheres of life within religious thought itself, as well as in science and politics, and the emergence of the class of scientists and politicians. We also distinguished between Catholic humanism from Renaissance thought on the one hand, and Protestantism on the other, and traced the development of political thought associated with the emergence of the modern state and its relationship to the overcoming of the idea of religious affiliation/

belonging/membership (*intimāʾ*). We distinguished between this ongoing differentiation (*al-tamāyuz*) in thought and the spheres of life, on the one hand, and the emergence of secularist ideology as a vision of state, society and religion, and as a normative stance, on the other.

We focused in on numerous pivotal moments (*mafāṣil*) in the gradual withdrawal (*insiḥāb*) of religion from certain spheres of knowledge and the human practice based on them, and distinguished between the withdrawal of religion and the withdrawal of the sacred. The place of the latter is in the human soul, it is what it addresses to elicit the sense of sacredness, and it forms what is projected onto reality, as shown in the first part of this book. [vol. 2, part 2: p. 409/10] It does not withdraw from it. Institutionalised religion remains in the world; whereas the feeling of the sacred is recruited for religious intrusions (*iqtiḥāmāt*), in the form of long and short waves, into the spheres that were secularised. The feeling of the sacred also remains subject to being reorganised in alternative worldly religions (*diyānāt badīla dunyawiyya*) in the secularised social or political sphere. We have also presented the process of differentiation between types (*anmāṭ*) of human behaviour and consciousness and the differentiation of social spheres, and the application of this differentiation in social, political, economic and religious institutions. We emphasised that the withdrawal of religion from the spheres of knowledge and its differentiation do not necessarily mean an absence of religiosity or even its withdrawal from the public sphere. We have distinguished different models of secularisation in Europe and the USA and likewise the feeling of sacred (be it spiritual or worldly) on one hand, and religion as a worshipping practice, which includes the sacred but is not limited (*taqtaṣir*) to it, on the other. We have shown that worldly beliefs, including those mixed with components from traditional religions, do not transform into a religion unless ritual worshipping factors are available.

We have said that criticising secularism as an intellectual model does not mean that secularisation is an illusion or that it does not throw light on important aspects of the historical process. It manifests itself in the differentiation between spheres as part of a general development and is characterised through the separation of the sphere of religion and its withdrawal from other spheres that forms of scientific knowledge and other professions intrude, and from the dominance of the logic of the state, either by making the state neutral in religious matters or through gaining direct control over religion by demarcating the boundaries of the religious sphere and its boundaries [sic].

Historically, secularism emerges as a set of intellectual and moral positions related to the state's relationship with religion in modernity, when the state's role grows and becomes comprehensive/encompassing (*shumūliyya*), including its cultural role and influence on the lives of individuals. The state, in its contemporary reality and in our current understanding, is a totalitarian state (in the wider sense of the word, meaning that it is visible to all, and is able to reach all components of society, not in the narrow conceptual sense of totalitarian regimes that control and direct all aspects of life under one principle or one ideology). Every modern state is a police state, a judiciary state and a state of rule of law, borders, nationality, citizenship, identity, education, official

history, media, monuments, symbols, national holidays, founding fathers. . . and every state demands loyalty from its citizen. [p. 410/411] We use the term "state" (*al-dawla*) to describe ancient political entities, even though they differ [from modern states]. The reality and concept of the term have evolved throughout history. The pre-modern state, with the means in its possession, was not omnipresent through society, cultural life, education and the media, especially in states with vast territories. Nor did it intrude into the daily lives of the individual – it was possible for the individual to be born, grow old, and die in his local community in the countryside without ever meeting "the state" face to face.

We can therefore imagine that when religion, as a dynamic political ideology, controls a contemporary state, this will necessarily be completely different from "the religious state" (*al-dawla al-dīniyya*) we know from history, which was not actually a state in the modern sense. This is not only because the understanding of religion changes as its function and boundaries change, but also because the state itself has changed radically. It has become more present, comprehensive, and more capable of repression and coercion. The modern state brings with it the dangers of totalitarianism and at the same time the tools to confront these dangers, such as citizen rights and institutions that balance and monitor each other.

The importance of making the state neutral in matters of religion and preventing religious coercion therefore increases exponentially as a result of the possibility of its excessive exploitation, and as a result of the availability of tools to control peoples' lives. Such tools were not available and even impossible to imagine in the eras that witnessed the emergence and disappearance (*indithār*) of what might be called religious states. The state even became a strong competitor to the institutions and groups that shaped (*kānat tushakkil*) the personality of the individual and were in charge of their education and upbringing, such as the family, religious community (*ṭāʾifa*), neighbourhood, and local community. Restrictions must therefore be placed on it in order to ensure it does not use its power and influence to impose non-religious closed ideologies. Thus, making the state neutral in matters of religion also applies to totalitarian ideologies that constitute an alternative to religion. Nevertheless, the state cannot be completely cleansed of ideology; it is not a scientific laboratory, it is a state, and ideology exists in its thought and practice by definition. [p. 411–420. . .]

When secularisation occurs within the framework of social conflicts circulating within the political domain, then the tension, when it is conscious, is expressed via political ideologies. Thereby, secularist ideologies are popularised and spread among the masses. We find this, on one hand, at the level of a formation (*ṣawgh*) that intellectuals and the middle classes put forward in numerous attempts to sanctify the political domain anew, which, on the other hand, has its counterpart in the re-politicisation of religiosity. The popular classes, damaged by secularisation and modernisation, often stand together with it for other social and economic reasons. Their protest aligns with the tension that stems from the act of separation and differentiation, just as it finds self-expression related to a connection with the sacred.

Even outside the political conflicts on matters of the state, society discovers new areas that provide it with alternative experiences that satisfy the desire to communicate with holiness/sacredness/the sacred (*al-qadāsa*). These include mass art, the rituals of sport stadiums and the consumptive hysteria of the images and representations that are marketed in the film industry, and stars in other fields.

Secularisation generates numerous tensions when modern society tries to squeeze religion into the private or individual sphere. Religion is a social and historical phenomenon linked to an original entanglement between the public and the private, between the relative and the absolute. Religion is also a system of social control, and becomes a communal identity, with social solidarity (ʿ*aṣabiyya*) and groups of supporters (ʿ*izwa*) in religion and confessional community (*fī al-diyāna wa-l-milla ayḍan*).

Tremendous tensions are caused by completely separating our dealings with the sacred from our dealings with this world, and through the emergence of a separation of the private and the public sphere in interacting with the development of separate entities in the individual and society. Tremendous tensions are also produced when the act of secularisation produces cultures that push the sacred into the private sphere. This tension takes on the form of a conflict around the return of the sacred to the mundane, or the reunification of the separated, or the mediation between the two areas. [p. 420/421]

We here introduce a model containing generalisations resulting from our induction and analysis, and others that are theoretical hypotheses with probabilities, by which developments in other cases can be understood. As is evident, and on the basis of this paradigm, we do not understand secularisation as a separation that puts a barrier between two spheres, but as a dialectic of differentiation within unity. The separation, including the tension arising from it, leads to a search for meaning in the mundane sacred (*al-muqaddas al-dunyawī*), in the absence of the spiritual sacred (*al-muqaddas al-rūḥī*), as well as to tendencies towards a return to politics and society in the area of religion. A culture and a social life that ensures other expressions of the sacred arises from the acceptance of the process of separating religion from the area of the state and politics and establishing institutions that patronise it and build on it. In this theoretical paradigm we will attempt to formulate the impacts of secularisation on both religion on the one side, and on politics and the state on the other. This paradigm takes the degree of religiosity and secularisation in societies into consideration. We think that this paradigm, which is based on the secularisation of patterns of awareness and areas of knowledge and the differentiation between various areas of social activities, brings multiple possibilities that can arise from separation and the inherent tensions and mechanisms in the compensation of the sacred in different societies into view. For instance, next to the gradual secularisation of types (*anmāṭ*) of consciousness and areas of knowledge, of control over the church and the state, it is also possible to imagine tensions arising from the secularisation of the state from above in religious societies without the secularisation of types of consciousness. Likewise, we can imagine what secularisation by coercion means in terms of turning religion into a matter of authenticity and identity,

and a symbolic reservoir that provides strength in the face of oppression. It is also possible to conclude other possibilities that can be examined in reality.

Secularisation is a process of differentiation of the cognitive (*maʿrifiyya*) and social areas in which scientific knowledge patterns prevail in understanding phenomena, through which the logic of the state prevails over religion in modern society. This does not mean that religion and religiosity disappear, nor does it in any way mean the absence of the sacred from human life:

In the field of knowledge, secularisation means the continuous development of an explanation of natural, social and political phenomena (i.e., the state) by its own laws. This happens through the differentiation of sciences from other patterns of knowledge, sweeping scientific thought into one field after another, while [p. 421/422] the religious view of the universe withdraws from each field that is now understood through its own laws. This is not necessarily manifested in the decline of religion or religiosity, but in the change of its function and the transfer of the position of the sacred and the unseen. What retreats is cognitive faith and the patterns of religiosity based on it. This begins with the affirmation of the moral dimension of religion and of faith and gnosis. Critical tendencies towards religion and religious institutions develop from both.

This act of the secularisation of consciousness was not necessarily consciously secular, nor anti-religious; in most cases, it was carried out by believers or clerics of different convictions (*rijāl al-dīn min mashārib mukhtalifa*).

In social reality, secularisation means the differentiation of areas of social action and their logic by interacting with the development of patterns of consciousness. This includes the differentiation of religious institutions from non-religious institutions and the differentiation of professions.

During this process, the cognitive dimension of religiosity declines and the faith dimension may deepen in the social sectors that are being secularised. This may be accompanied by a decline in religiosity as well as religious awakenings. However, the cognitive and social weight of religion continues to decline.

Secular ideology emerges as a negative attitude towards the cognitive activity of religion, as well as towards its activity in the public sphere.

This becomes evident when the logic of the state rises above and subordinates religious institutions and their thought. This is how a "religious secularism" ("*al-ʿalmāniyya al-dīniyya*") emerges that calls for the neutrality of the state in the sphere of religion in order to preserve religious freedom and is against religious coercion that harms those who are religiously different.

Thus, the state becoming neutral in religious matters emerged as a compromise between the negative secularist stance of religion and its cognitive and social activity and the religious stance calling for religious freedom.

Types of religiosity emerge that are the result of differentiations and are influenced by them. If popular religiosity exists and is distinct, to some extent, from doctrinal institutional religiosity, due to its intermingling with the habits, traditions and customs as well as the remnants of the old religions, [p. 422/423] secularism creates new types of

religiosity. The most important of these is the fundamentalist Salafist movement, which rejects separation between areas/spheres as well as distantiation from the origins, and the types of mass religiosity that are the result of the transformation to mass community at the expense of the rural population, which was the basis of popular religiosity. As for the type of mass religiosity, it is, like secularism, newborn of modernity. We did not deal with this exact topic extensively in this book, but present it here as a theoretical hypothesis that can be used to understand the mass, spiritual, consumer and political religiosity that replaces traditional popular religiosity, especially rural religiosity.

These types of religiosity interact with different forms, according to the degrees of the secularisation of religious consciousness and institutions.

From the perspective of religion, secularisation means drawing boundaries around religion as a distinct idea and social phenomenon. This leads to the following potential processes, some of which may intersect in societies, depending on the degree of secularisation of types of consciousness in society or its religiosity:

The religious institution's rejection of separation. This rejection does not last long, but at the end of its winding paths there is a preference for separation over submission to the logic of the state. The religious institution's acceptance of separation is accompanied by a search for new functions for religion in the areas of personal conscience, family and general social morality. The latter may even open the door to a return to public work in areas that begin with charitable work and do not stop at expressing "the religious stance" on important issues in local and international politics. We have seen the return of religion to the public sphere through the acceptance of the principles of democracy and human rights in many politically secularised European states. This is a paradigm that exists in Europe and America. We also find it to a certain degree in Third World countries where religious institutions try to express attitudes through the recognition of its existing separation from the state.

The religious institution plays a role in solidifying national identity, and in the combination between national and religious symbols in some modern states where religion is part of [p. 423/424] national identity and defining the other. Its role usually does not affect ongoing secularisation in other areas.

The return of religion through individual religiosity in searching for a meaning in individual faith. Religions of societies seem more spiritual to the secularised person, as in the influence of the religions of the Far East among Western youth in the 1960s and 1970s and through the pantheistic and salvific/messianic/redemption religions (*al-diyānāt al-ḥulūliyya wa-l-khilāṣiyya*) in modern consumer societies, based on satisfying the need to participate in sentimental religious experience and trying to find a new public religious area that interpenetrates the special religious space and presents itself publicly as a socially recognised collective remedy and consolation against the atomisation, isolation and loneliness of modern society. It is possible to see religion not as a remedy, but as a collective neurosis caused by atomisation and individualisation in mass society. We also find this need in the influx of crowds into religious congregations led by preachers and various kinds of charlatans (including those who mountebank

their audience while running huge corporations and television stations with the logic of businessmen), or in the carnival religious celebrations that address the spiritual needs of contemporary man, such as the need for lost spirituality in their reification relationships, the need to express anxiety, fears and passions in a "legitimate" manner, and the need for emotional communication with a community. Modern tools of presentation and mass psychology and the like are used for this purpose. We provide inferences of this kind for different cases.

The persistence (*baqāʾ*) of religion in politics after its secularisation, for example, and through its use by the state. We have not yet examined this case and refer to it here only theoretically and by comparison, especially after the model of absolute monarchy in Europe. What we intend here may serve to explain phenomena in the Third World, where the modernisation of the state happened at a faster pace than the modernisation of society and before the secularisation of the types of social consciousness.

According to this paradigm, this tension and its bridging mechanisms spread in traditional states and societies that have not gone through a process of gradual and natural secularisation. In these societies, [p. 424/425] this process was characterised by an intense and forced modernisation and by conflict with the outside [world]. Parts of traditional religious values and identity are transformed into elements of local identity that defend themselves, either by adopting a defensive conservative strategy for as long as possible, and then moving on to maintain at least some of its manifestations and symbols (this characterises, for example, traditional Arab monarchical regimes), or by transforming them into an ideology of distinction and defence of identity, as in the discourse of authenticity among the ruling conservative and traditional forces. We can use this paradigm, which was reached with an inductive anticipation of possibilities, if a number of conditions, that the induction was based on, were not met.

The return of religion to the public sphere through its politicisation against the state by groups and parties (and even clerics and preachers), in the sense of it being used within existing political and social conflicts, and also by providing answers to social concerns and issues, including politics and the system of government in the name of religion, as part of the process of transforming religion into ideology. It also appears simultaneously in secularised social groups harmed by modernisation, in the form of religious movements concerned with politics and the public sphere that transform themselves into parties, and in the form of modern organisational and mobilisation tools, transforming religion into something akin to a political ideology. Likewise, in societies that have undergone an intense forced modernisation process that has not been accompanied by a similar change in patterns of consciousness, religious movements that are ideological in nature arise and present religion as a totalitarian ideology for organising society and state. They engage with mass society using the same discourse and tools used by secular totalitarian movements.

Tension (2. A) and the patterns it produces spread in societies where there is a gradual process of secularisation of consciousness, in which the logic of the state took hold (*ḥasama*). Tension (2.B) arises in modern societies with a consumer culture in

which the uniqueness of the individual has left an emotional void and where religion is presented as a form of individual treatment to give meaning and ease isolation, or a way to produce community in a modern and secularised society where the organic community has collapsed. For example, we find communities based on preachers and private churches in the West, kinds of spiritual religiosity influenced by Far Eastern religions, and religious associations and clubs that offer a domestic alternative (*badīlan ahliyyan*). These are all [p. 425/426] forms of condolence for the individual in his social atomisation and alienation from work and social relationships, in their solitude when facing their destiny and the absolute in the modern world.

The same types may spread among the well-off and modernised classes in undeveloped states during phases when secular ideologies are in crisis. We also find some signs of these phenomena among the well-off and secularised classes in undeveloped states when social culture has remained to a large extent traditional. These classes either imitate the elite religious practices of developed states as a progressive form of imitating Western patterns of consumption, in this case spiritual consumption, or they find escape in modernising types of traditional religiosity and developing them, such as Sufism or even the preachers, in forms that are similar to Christian religious television channels or the spiritual sessions common in some upper-middle-class milieus in the West, which depend on mechanisms of *group therapy* to suit the upper and modernised classes in Arab and Islamic states.

As for the public spheres that have been secularised, specifically politics and the state, other interactions and processes take place to revoke the sacred anew:

Sacredness is conferred on the state, starting with absolute monarchy as a representative of sovereignty at the beginning of modernity and ending with the nation, nationalism, patriotism and the state itself as an entity. The evocation of the sacred occurs in numerous areas, the most important of which are the legends of the state, its symbols and values, as well as the areas of literature and art.

The conferring of sacredness on the values of politics, which was subjected to secularisation by linking traditional religion itself to national identity as opposed to other national identities that embrace other religions.

The transformation of traditional religion itself into a sect (*ṭā'ifa*) happens at the level of minority sectarianism (or the majority, when it acts as a sect; thus the discourse demanding of the state the right of the sect or the adherents of a particular religious denomination, for example, over those of the minority [p. 426/427] prevails). Here, modern concepts, such as rights and the state, are linked to affiliation with a community rather than to citizenship. This is mostly an ethno-nationalist community, but it could be a community of affiliation to a religion or denomination. In this case, religion is dealt with using modern ideological tools that are summarised in its nationalisation. Although it is a phenomenon that we believe exists in the spheres of the secularised world and not in the sphere of religion, this last case crosses with (2.B and 2.C) and with the transformation of popular religiosity into mass religiosity as a result of the process

of modernisation. This process intersects with another process: the institutionalisation of religion and religious community within the framework of the state.

Politics and society strive for the sacred and both express this through a sanctification of profane values with varying degrees of intensity, starting with nationalist movements, national holidays, the flag, the anthem, symbols, and different presentations of "civil religion", as it is called in the United States, for example. It is, at the very least, necessary at this level (even in order to establish democracy) through a process of transforming society into an imagined community, and for the preservation of a minimum level of belonging, value coherence and the love of the nation. At the extremes of the scale, we find it in fascism and other secular extremist movements that transform the state into an instrument for making a national, ideological or other doctrine sovereign, as if it were a religion in the service of the state.

If we return to the typical processes in the religious sphere, described in (2), we find that (2.B) and (2.C) are contradictory with (3.C) in societies where religious and denominational affiliation do not constitute an element of defining the nation. The sanctification of political and mundane spheres contradicts the return of religion to the public sphere. However, they are compatible when ideological and religious affiliation overlaps with national or patriotic affiliation. Religious fundamentalism, which strives for a return to the public sphere, coincides with extremist nationalism in states where religion and nationalism correspond. This is the case, for example, with Israel. In such cases we find, for example, that the quasi alternative and national or patriotic religion is compatible and congruent with an emphasis on religious affiliation, without it being identical. Separation is what happened.

In most cases, however, the sacralisation of the state, nationalism and the resultant pseudo-religions [p. 427/428] contradict the waves of religious-political movements that seek to fill the public sphere and the state with religious ideology. Comprehensive "totalitarian" regimes are often the archenemy of traditional religion, which competes with them for the sacred, and for the absolute loyalty of the individual and their submission through fear of the new religion and its sacredness, which is the state or the people. This is what happens when the definition of the dependency boundaries of a certain religion does not match the community on which the state is based and which shares its constituent myths, sacred places and times etc.

Here, we are interested in confirming that differentiation and separation are present in modernity, and that the decline of religious consciousness from different spheres of life and the resulting tensions that seek the restoration of unity, is a part of this process. Thus, the original imagined or actual unity does not exist anymore.

Every reunification after separation, be it in thought or in practice, is not a return to the original state. This is true despite the emergence of such illusion among the social agents of renewed unity, who insist on what they regard as the combination of religion and politics in our era. The religious movements that arise after secularisation, especially in Protestant countries, are not a return to religion inasmuch as they are compensation for the loss of the role of religion as a regulator of public life. A return

to the organisation of public life via religious partisan ideologies therefore takes place, but it is not religion. The mundane movements that have filled the moral void, such as *New Age* and others in Europe, are not a return to religion inasmuch as they confirm the separation from it by means of the renewed search for meaning in a world in which the influence of spiritual religions has declined and in which there was disenchantment in one area/sphere after another.

When the claim is made that, in modernity, individuals and sections of society have freed themselves from religion, the response is that totalitarian ideologies offer a substitute for religion, and this is proof of the argument that humans always need religion. The new temples of consumption, the rituals and worship of stars in sport, art and cinema also offer [a substitute]. But are these really alternatives to religion (*badīlan min al-dīn*), or in fact a new alternative religion (*dīn badīl jadīd*)? Are they, indeed, social activities of a different kind, which reinitiate the establishment of community, accompanied by appearances of enthusiasm ([p. 428/429] sometimes even the loss of senses), fondness, and yes, even "sacralisation"? And even if they are an alternative to religion in the age of post-modernity and late consumer capitalism, are they necessarily an alternative religion? In our view, these are different phenomena that share certain features. They are not religions, but rather states of transient gratification with the sacred and even with meaning, in a consumer society in which the sacralisation of the transcendental has receded. We prefer to be precise in definition, and therefore do not speak of religions, but of "quasi-religion alternatives" (*"ashbāh al-diyānāt al-badīla"*), otherwise everything becomes everything, and it is no longer possible to understand the specificity of various social phenomena. These are statements that deprive words and concepts of their meaning, and deprive us of the need for them in communication.

This question is important because it may lead to the concept of secularisation being completely emptied of its meaning. Is expropriating a church in St. Petersburg after the Bolshevik Revolution and turning it into a museum of the revolution's landmarks and icons the same as controlling the church of Hagia Sophie in Constantinople and turning it into a mosque? In other words, is transforming things and places from one religion to another the same as transforming religion to a secular and ritual practice that looks like a religion? The difference is not in the idea of the need for rituals, cults and dogmas for the reproduction of the community, nor in the degree of dependency on the rituals in its production, but in the historical context and the nature of the society, the degree of its development, the nature of the political forces and the degree of belief in these rituals and practices.

In some religious societies, religion coexists with human sanctification and the worship of stars, rituals, consumption, and mundane values, and these do not become a substitute for religiosity. In India, for example, where religiosity and what we call "religious culture" is widespread, the religious poor manifest "sacralisation" and the "worship" of movie stars without consumer society, without the classification of post-modern, and without offering an alternative to religion. Manifestations of the appreciation of movie stars to the point of "sanctification" and awe for their world, as if it is the

world of the gods, exists and coexists with traditional religiosity in India. In the United States, the rituals of major sports clubs, and the manifestations of drifting behind movie symbols and the consumption of stars in general, coexists with high levels of Christian religiosity in society. [p. 429/430]

We must distinguish between enthusiasm of a religious nature and the fanaticism for a football team or artists and the perception of this fanaticism as an alternative to religion in general. Popular religiosity gives way to the sanctification of mundane social values and structures, which are only rejected by institutional and fundamental religiosity. Popular religiosity can coexist with sanctifying mundane values, such as family (a*l-ahl*) and homeland, and even with some cases of fanaticism as a part of entertainment and amusement in consumer society. The movements that try to purge religion of mundane sanctities are the kinds of fundamentalism that see them as competitors to religion.

This seems to be a tendency related to mass culture in mass society. Any activity practiced by the collective as a collective must fill the souls of the participating individuals with the spirit of the group (which Durkheim considered the essence of religion). If the individual spontaneously participates with a group in its mundane celebrations or rituals, then the harmony of the group must drive them to a kind of group incarnation, and this takes on an emotional character. It is an imaginative virtual spirit that is necessary for the harmony of the whole. This is true in the case of sports and political gatherings, but the virtual world of stars on the screen plays different roles for poor and rich people between India, Egypt and California . . . sometimes in the presence of religious belief and the spread of religiosity, sometimes in its absence.

It is also difficult to understand the specificity of phenomena and the difference between them without making a preliminary distinction between religion and a sense of the sacred (*al-shuʿūr bi-l-muqaddas*) [. . .]. The sense of the sacred remains viable even after the decline of religion and religious consciousness; at a higher level of distinction, religion must be understood as a self-contained phenomenon, and other social measures of sacredness practiced as alternatives to it in secularised societies.

The phenomena expressed in (3.A and 3.B) exist in the nation state, as a national state, and in the politics of identity within the national state. What differs is its degree and severity. In this sense, phenomena, such as [p. 430/431] modern totalitarian movements and ideologies, fascism, national extremism, modern extremist sectarianism and other phenomena are not fundamentally different from the norm (*al-ʿādī*), but are extreme intensifications of what exists in politics in the modern and secularised state. This is the restoration of the sacred, or compensation for the lost religious sacred in mundane politics through patriotism and nationalism. Even modern sectarianism in (3.C), which I do not consider a religious phenomenon, but a secular phenomenon in the identity politics of the modern state, is subordinated to a denomination or religion. It is an intensification of existing elements in the national politics of the modern state by pushing them to their extreme. Sectarianism here is not merely a collective sense of religion or faith and of belonging to it as in (2.A) and (2.B), where religion is returned

to politics, but rather a tendency towards a mundane and political organisation of interests based on religion or denomination as an identity in the conflict of interests and influence within the state. These are issues that have been studied extensively, but not from our perspective. We must return to study them later using this theoretical paradigm.

It is not enough to distinguish between the religious sphere and the mundane sphere in order to understand the dynamic act that results from their differentiation in societies. It is necessary to distinguish between types of religiosity, social groups, types of state and the degree of development of societies. Not much can be understood without this. Without differentiation between the degree of development of societies and the history of states and the degree of secularisation of consciousness in them, the theory of secularisation falls into generalisations. The repeated refutation of these generalisations soon negates the theory's potency. Hence, it is not a theory, but a meta-theory that includes a set of principles related to the differentiation of cognitive spheres and the decline in the importance of spiritual religions in the lives of individuals and societies. It is the decline caused by science and knowledge and the change in the means of production of people's material and moral lives. These are theoretical differentiations that have been extrapolated from European societies, but their application as a comprehensive theory is not possible unless the very theoretical dimension related to religion and its definitions and its distinction from the mere sense of sacred are taken into consideration, as well as the meaning of its decline and retreat in each society, the manner in which the state evolved and the dynamic of its legitimisation, the emergence of different types of religiosity and their interaction with this dynamic in different social groups.

45 Isomae Jun'ichi: *Religion, Secularity, and the Articulation of the "Indigenous" in Modernizing Japan* (2013)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Isomae Jun'ichi 磯前順一 (b. 1961) is a professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (*Kokusai nihon bunka kenkyū sentā* 国際日本文化研究センター) in Kyoto. He received a BA in Japanese historiography at Shizuoka University in 1984. In 1990 he took his MA in religious studies at the University of Tokyo, and his PhD at the same university in 2010.[I]

In 1991, he became an assistant professor at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo, and, in 1997, an assistant professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Letters, at Japan Women's University. In 2007, he took the position of associate professor at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies, before advancing to full professor in 2015, at the same institution.

Isomae is a scholar of religion who is particularly well networked internationally, and therefore also visible globally. He has held various fellowships in his career, including at the SOAS in London, at the University of Tübingen's Institute of Japanese Studies, the Reischauer Institute of Harvard University, the International Research Consortium for Research in the Humanities "Dynamics of the History of Religions" at the Ruhr University Bochum, and at the University Research Priority Program (URPP) "Asia and Europe" at the University of Zürich.

Isomae specialises in the adoption of the concept of religion (*shūkyō*) in Japan, the formation of State Shinto, nationalism, and mythology. Strongly influenced by Talal Asad (text no. 56) and postcolonial thought, he takes a critical stance toward the application of Western categories, concepts, and theories to Japan.

In the article reprinted below, Isomae deals very specifically with the problem of drawing a line between religion and the secular, in particular between religion and the state. He focusses on the status of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which commemorates those who sacrificed themselves for the modern nation, as a case study. Before the end of World War II, the shrine was considered a national memorial, and, just as Shinto was

I "ISOMAE Jun'ichi," *International Research Center for Japanese Studies Faculty Information,* accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.nichibun.ac.jp/ja/research/staff/s007/.

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not legally classified as a religion, the Yasukuni Shrine was not considered a religious institution. This changed with the defeat of Japan in World War II, and its occupation by the Western allies under US leadership. At the behest of the occupying powers, State Shinto was abolished, shrine Shinto was declared a religion, and Shinto shrines were given the status of a religious body. This 'religionisation' also affected Yasukuni Shrine.

Isomae emphasises the pressure that non-Western countries faced to adopt Western models, in order to be recognised as autonomous states, and to defend themselves against colonisation. He sees the introduction of the concept of religion, and the accompanying distinctions, as a central element of a forced process of westernisation. In doing so, he also shows the inner contradictions of Western demands for a separation between religion and politics. Although this separation is widely recognised as a general principle, it is implemented very differently, and indeed only partially, in Western states. Accordingly, Isomae poses the question of whether the system of State Shinto contradicted the principle of a separation of state and religion in Japan. In order to understand the debates about the status of the Yasukuni Shrine and the relationship between state and religion, Isomae claims, one must be aware of how the religious discourse that originated in the West was articulated under the specific circumstances in Japan. He argues that the Western model of a separation of state and religion does not fit all societies, with Islamic societies being a classic example of where this model does not fit.

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[. . .] Recent debates about "religion" and "secularity" have focused increasingly on the principle of separating state and religion. Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and Islam are among the most typical topics in question. Generally speaking, the so-called critical intellectuals in Japan have fundamentally diverging reactions to these topics. In the case of the homage paid by Japanese prime ministers to the war dead at Yasukuni Shrine, the separation of state and religion is almost inevitably put forward as the reason why

Note: © Isomae Jun'ichi, Religion, Secularity, and the Articulation of the "Indigenous" in Modernizing Japan. In: Kami Ways in Nationalist Territory: Shinto Studies in Prewar Japan and the West. Edited by Bernhard Scheid with Kate W. Nakai, pp. 23–50. Sitzungsberichte Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 840, Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 78, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013. All rights reserved.

they should refrain from doing so. On the other hand, Japanese intellectuals question the validity of the same principle in the case of Islam, since the separation of state and religion is seen as a product of Western enlightenment, which applies only to a specific historical and regional context. Here we encounter two opposing attitudes regarding the question how a non-Western society under Western influence should cope with its own social problems: in the first case, Western principles must be applied without fail, while in the second case these principles are regarded as not entirely appropriate for the realities of non-Western societies. [. . . p. 23/24. . .]

As has been eloquently described in recent studies on the relationship of colonialism and religion, non-Western countries, in order to avoid colonization by Western superpowers, have no other option than to promote Westernization if they want to have their autonomy recognized. On the other hand, a country that opens its doors "defenselessly" towards the Western world may still end up in a state of colonization, culturally dominated and politically exploited by the West. If we consider the above-mentioned separation of state and religion under these suppositions, we realize that the problem lies in the fact that non-Western societies are drawn into the Western concept of religion and its related systems. Thus, rather than to ask whether or not the separation of state and religion should be enforced in Japanese society, it is necessary to concretely investigate when and how this principle was introduced into modern Japan and which functions it performed.

In the Japanese post-war society, separation of state and religion has been seen as a universal principle of Western enlightenment introduced to prevent the instrumentalization of religion by nationalist ideologies. Yet in Western societies, separation of state and religion is rather the exception than the rule, and even among those that are generally believed to have achieved its realization, i.e., the United States and France, substantial differences still exist. [. . .] While elite intellectuals of the Meiji period, like Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911) or Inoue Kowashi 井上毅 (1844–1895),[1] did not go as far as [p. 24/25] theorizing about the discrepancies between political systems and social realities, they were well aware of this diversity at the time the first Constitution of Imperial Japan (promulgation in 1889) was drafted. They created labels like "state-religion system" for Great Britain, "supremacy of state over church" for Prussia, "system of publicly acknowledged religion" for France, or "separation of state and religion" for the USA, and finally opted for the Prussian model of "religious tolerance" as stated in Article 28 of the Imperial Constitution, which reads: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教ノ自由)." [. . .] In contrast to the present constitution (adopted in 1957), which clearly provides that "the State and its

1 [note 3 in the original] Shimaji Mokurai, was trained as a Shin Buddhist monk, joined the Iwakura Mission (1871–73) for some time, and served as a religious advisor of the Meiji government. [. . .] Inoue Kowashi was another Meiji government adviser and co-drafter of the Meiji Constitution.

organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity" (Article 20.3), the Imperial Constitution consciously avoided issues pertaining directly to the separation of state and religion. Once the constitution was promulgated, the system it established came to be taken as a given and the possibility of a perspective objectifying it was lost. After Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, which meant the end of this system, religious policies were reorganized under the guidance of the United States. This time, the separation of state and religion according to American law came to be regarded as the universal model.

Starting from the above-mentioned issues, this essay aims at a new look on how the separation of state and religion in modern Japanese history was related to State Shinto, and in which way the dichotomy of the "religious" and the "secular" articulated itself in modernizing Japan. [. . . p. 25–27. . .] Since State Shinto is a terminus ex post, conclusions as to when it came into existence, or whether or not it indeed existed, depend largely on its respective definition.[2] In other words, we cannot expect univocal agreement if we pose the question in the traditional substantialist way: "What is State Shinto?" Yet this does not mean that we should discard the term altogether. Instead, we should compare the meanings individual scholars have given to "State Shinto" in order to come up with the most plausible interpretation of reality. We should therefore put the question on the terminological efficiency of the different concepts. [. . . p. 27/28. . .]

As already mentioned, in pre-war Japanese society it was little questioned whether or not the system of State Shinto was in conflict with the separation of state and religion as opposed to "freedom of belief." [. . .] The latter was interpreted in the sense that "the state should not intervene in personal matters of religious activity,"[3] which is, according to a widely accepted juridical interpretation, also possible under a system that does not provide separation of state and religion. Within these preconditions, the Japanese government did not opt for the religious system of any particular contemporary Western [p. 28/29] nation, but applied a specific form of religious tolerance that abstained from enforcing a single belief in a state religion. Certainly, the tennō system, with Shrine Shinto as its main supporter, played the role of a state religion. Yet in order not to be drawn into an ideological contest with religions like Christianity or Buddhism, or to avoid criticism from Western countries for adopting an anti-Christian state religion, the government assigned Shrine Shinto to the realm of "morality" (*dōtoku* 道徳) that defined the civic duties of "Japanese subjects." The distinction between "morality" and "religion," however, always remained ambiguous, since morality, which was inseparably related to the power of the state, actually interfered in the realm of individual religion. The result of this policy was that any religious body could gain official recognition as long as it did not object to the tennō-centered nationalism spelled out in the form of "national morality" (*kokumin dōtoku*). [. . .]

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2 [note 11 in the original] Isomae 2007a.
3 [note 17 in the original] Ōishi 1996, p. 236.

The fact that the religious policy of the Meiji government did not comply with the separation of state and religion can also be gathered from the "Critical Petition Regarding the Three Teaching Principles" issued in 1872 by the Shin Buddhist monk Shimaji Mokurai. This petition is [p. 29/30] considered to be the first demand for the separation of state and religion ever put forward in Japan. Yet, while Shimaji maintains that "state and religion are different and should never be mixed since ancient times," he holds, on the other hand that "it was because of the interrelationship of state and religion that country became country and man became man for the first time." Based on the dualism of absolute and mundane truth, he argues that religion must serve the government as soon as it has been separated from the state. For the sake of clarity, I would like to point out an inherent contradiction in Shimaji's claim for the separation of state and religion. He writes "that institutional conspiracy of state and church (religious institutions) and institutional fusion of political and religious authority should be avoided, and their domains and respective fields of authority should be kept separate. Both should acknowledge the independence of their respective domains."[4] This assertion, however, does not fit well with what he calls the "interrelationship of state and religion."

From these facts we can detect, among other things, that pre-war Japan did not comply with a model of society where "politics and religion" or "morality and religion" were clearly differentiated according to the principle of separating state and religion. Nevertheless, immediately after the war this principle was installed by the GHQ, taking the Constitution of the United States as its model. [. . . p. 30/31. . .]

I would like to raise another point included in the Shinto Directive, namely its definition of Shrine Shinto as a form of "religion." By addressing the concretizations of "religion" and "secularity" in pre-war society, which included the tennō system, we should arrive [p. 31/32] at a perspective different from the postwar discussions, which are based on the precondition of the separation of state and religion. [. . .]

When Shrine Shinto, which had hitherto been regarded as "ritualism" (*saishi* 祭祀), was redefined as "religion" (*shūkyō* 宗教) by the Shinto Directive, this led to tremendous changes regarding the status of Shrine Shinto in Japanese society. Based on the doctrine of the non-religious nature of shrines, religion and ritualism had belonged to different categories in pre-war society or were at least officially regarded as different. [. . .]

This doctrine regarded religion as a matter of individual faith that everyone could choose freely, in contrast to ritualism, which was a public activity and the duty of every loyal citizen. Worship at shrines was defined as ritualism in order to extricate it from the competition for believers seen as characteristic of religions like Christianity or Buddhism.[5] Many contemporary intellectuals saw this distinction as based on the "separation of official and private" (*kan-shi no betsu* 官私の別), that is, the political decision that "Shinto, being [p. 32/33] the foundation of our national essence (*kokutai*), should be

4 [note 20 in the original] Ōnishi and Chiba 2006, pp. 10–11.
5 [note 22 in the original] See Isomae 2000.

promulgated by official governmental institutions."[6] Without this separation of official and private, ritualism and religion would immediately flow into one another, for as the above-mentioned newspaper author observed: "Since rituals (*saishi*) are one part of any given religion, I would never say that religion has nothing to do with ritualism."[7] [. . .]

Aside from political considerations of the above sort, Shrine Shinto might be seen as a kind of religion. For believers in other religions this meant that there was a constant danger that the veneration of shrines as a public duty might intrude on the right of religious freedom. [. . . p. 33/34. . .]

Under these conditions, the concept of "religion" became a matter of great concern for intellectuals of the time. Intimately related to ritualism, the respective definitions of religion determined not only the nature of shrines but also the extent of religious freedom. The Japanese term *shūkyō* came into common use as the standard translation of the English word "religion" around 1877. At that time we also see the beginnings of a tacit tolerance of Christianity and the competition among various religions for adherents among the common populace. In the 1890s, when governmental shrine policies had to be brought into line with the professed freedom of religion, we observe an increasing demand for a "precise definition" of religion. [. . . p. 34–38]

The concept of religion [. . .] held conflicting implications that were never resolved one way or the other. These "fluctuations of the concept of religion" are still valid today [. . .]. Similarly fluctuating meanings can be also observed in the case of "ritualism" (*saishi*), which served as the counterpart of religion in the nonreligious shrine doctrine. In the wake of the Meiji Restoration, the slogan "unity of cult and government" (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致) was put forward as one of the major political tenets. This idea deteriorated quite rapidly, however [. . . p. 38/39 . . .].

Especially at the time of the Russo Japanese War, shrine ritualism became intertwined with the national morality discourse propagated by the Ministry of Education. In the words of Kōno Seizō,[8] "Shinto makes up our National Morality, it is indeed the force behind the Imperial Way."[9] In this way, shrines were regarded as the arena of national morality. Thus, the oppositions "ritualism/religion" and "morality/religion" which had been regarded as being different up to that time, became synonymous within the non-religious-shrine discourse. [. . .]

Especially from the 1920s onward, morality in the latter sense was emphasized by Shinto scholars and conservative circles. Morality embodied a public space that subsumed also the private realm. In the same way, the indigenous ritualism at shrines tran-

6 [note 23 in the original] [. . .] quoted from Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 67.

7 [note 24 in the original] Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988, p. 274.

8 [note 38 in the original] Kōno Seizō (Shōzō) 河野省三 (1882–1963) was a professor at Tokyo's Shinto University Kokugakuin Daigaku, which he headed from 1935 to 1946. A leading scholar of Shinto, he was also very actively engaged in the ideology of State Shinto.

9 [note 39 in the original] Kōno 1933, p. 12.

scended the distinction between the "secular" and the "religious." In both cases, the concepts of Western enlightenment were increasingly rejected. [. . .]

Since Japanese society before the war did not separate religion from the state and did not draw a clear-cut juridical distinction between "religion and politics" or "religion and morality," a definition of religion that allowed [p. 39/40] the nonreligious nature of shrines and the possibility to alter the scope of religious freedom was probably the only possible strategy. As demonstrated above, both religion and morality were highly ambiguous terms that were related to each other: a change in the meaning of one term was likely to bring about changes in the other term's meaning as well. Based on this interrelatedness of religion and morality, even the borderline between public and private became fluid. [. . .]

After the war, the GHQ's policy of separating state and religion merely cemented the ambivalences found in the concept of religion and the nonreligious-shrine doctrine in its background, by providing an institutional framework for them. Certainly, the principle to separate state and religion had learned a lesson from the long history of conflicts between religious and secular powers in Western societies, but it cannot be regarded as fitting for all societies, as Islamic societies demonstrate. Regarding present debates about Yasukuni Shrine, it is equally difficult to understand the relations of state and religion, or the role of ritualism, if one does not consider how religious discourses originating in the West were articulated under the abovementioned peculiar circumstances of Japan.

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46 Sudipta Kaviraj: *Languages of Secularity* (2013)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Sudipta Kaviraj (b. 1945) is Professor of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University, New York.[I] He was born in Calcutta, where both his parents were associated with the Communist Party of India (CPI). His father, Narahari Kaviraj, was a renowned Marxist historian, with expertise on national liberation movements. Sudipta Kaviraj earned his doctoral degree at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Delhi. He taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London and at JNU; he was the Agatha Harrison Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford, and a visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Chicago, and Sciences Po, Paris. Kaviraj specialises in social theory, intellectual history, and Indian politics, and combines unorthodox Marxist and postcolonial ideas in his thinking; he was one of the founding members of the Subaltern Studies Collective. He has worked extensively on (post-)colonial modernity and the state. Among his most important books are *The Unhappy Consciousness: Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and the Formation of Nationalist Discourse in India*, *Politics in India*, *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, *The Imaginary Institution of India* and *The trajectories of the Indian state: politics and ideas.*[II]

Sudipta Kaviraj's text on *Languages of Secularity* can be read as a discussion of the political and intellectual history of Indian secularism, interpreted through the lens of his important but often-overlooked "revisionist theory of modernity."[III] Kaviraj claims

I For information on Sudipta Kaviraj, see Ahmad Saidullah, "India Now and Then," *3 Quarks Daily*, September 27, 2010, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://3quarksdaily.com/3quarksdaily/2010/09/india-now-and-then.html; Sankar Ray, "A Tribute to Narahari Kaviraj (1917–2011)," *Kafila*, December 31, 2011, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://kafila.online/2011/12/31/a-tribute-to-narahari-kaviraj-sankar-ray/; Adom Getachew and Karuna Mantena, "Anticolonialism and the Decolonization of Political Theory," *Critical Times* 4, no. 3 (2021): 359–88; "Sudipta Kaviraj: Biography," Columbia University Political Science Department Faculty and Staff Directory, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://polisci.columbia.edu/content/sudipta-kaviraj.
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III See Sudipta Kaviraj, "An Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 3 (2005): 497–526.

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a dual role here: firstly, he acts as a historian of the intellectual debate taking place in India in the late 1980s, between one side led by Ashis Nandy and T. N. Madan (see text no. 27), and another led by Rajeev Bhargava (see text no. 37); secondly – and in our context more significantly – he provides a late contribution to this debate. It is noteworthy that Kaviraj makes use of the term *secularity* to describe the different historical modes – or "languages" as he puts it – that are used to examine the relationship between society and religion(s). In a way, he takes a critical middle position in the Indian debate. He does not reject modernity and its ideas per se, but nonetheless demands that close attention be paid to historically distinct situations and the specific shape and "sequence" of modernisation processes, especially in postcolonial societies, rather than superimposing 'Western' imaginaries as universally applicable theories. He directs our attention to the fact that, in postcolonial India, democracy and secularism were introduced almost simultaneously, whereas in Europe secularisation had begun long before universal suffrage was achieved. He argues that this difference in historical trajectory accounts for what he sees as a now fundamentally different (power) configuration between the state and its elites, the people, and religion. On a historical-sociological basis, Kaviraj criticises both romanticised depictions of traditional societies *and* untenable self-images of 'Western' modernity. By conceptualising tradition and modernity as languages, he tries to show how convergent conclusions can be reached from fundamentally different foundational beliefs.

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Sudipta Kaviraj. "Languages of Secularity." *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 50 (December 2013): 93–102.

This article is driven by two related concerns. The first and more obvious is to take stock of the relatively recent debates about secularity in Indian social science. [. . .] [T]he debate as a whole showed a vitally significant truth about the nature of social theory – that theoretical evolution depends as much on a purely intellectual elaboration of arguments as on concerns coming from the historical world; and finally, it showed how the elaboration of social thought about a historical context like India inevitably leads to forms of argumentation that in one sense extend, and in another move away from the established corpus of (western) social theory. A second concern, however, is more parochial. At the time when Indian thinking produced the most interesting original insights about the colonial end of modernity, it was characterised by the existence of a public sphere that was structured in a complex fashion – quite unlike the monolingual public sphere iconically captured in Habermas' study.

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During the debates of the national movement, Indian society gave rise to a vibrant "public sphere" with a more complex construction, quite different in its structural features from 19th century Europe. Unlike Europe, the Indian public sphere was marked by deep illiteracy; yet it involved relaying nationalist ideas to a highly mobilised uneducated peasantry. This gave it a different balance between speech and writing, and between the discursive and the visual. More importantly, it was a public sphere of great diversity – vernacular public spheres were in intense activity and agitation, and were more homogeneous, although truncated by the uneven spread of literacy. Floating above them, as a first floor (as opposed to the ground floor of the vernacular), was another, equally vibrant, uproariously contentious sphere of English discourse. My sense is that in recent decades, these two public spheres show signs of drifting apart – although in some ways this process began after independence. [. . . p. 93/ 94. . .]

I want to make a point about the relation between the modern and premodern conceptual languages of secularity, which is linked to the question of language.

Historically, there are three distinct stages through which modern India fashioned a language in which questions of secularity could be thought through. Secularity in its modern form was a strange, entirely unfamiliar idea for a culture that had for centuries thought through the category of dharma – if it meant, as it did for some time, and with good reason, a culture divested of religiosity. How could a society and its culture deeply infused with religious ideas of the most plentiful kind come to have a language in which even the possibility of a world in which religion had no serious place could be conceived? Presumptions inherited from European social thought predisposes us to think that this was the most obvious, inevitable course of events, but it was not; unless we fall into the comfortable habit of treating European history as a prefiguration of all others. After all, the development of secularist conceptions was an endogenous process within the European civilisation, while in the colonial world it was not. The existing literature neglects the historical sociology of Indian secularity and the "language" that tracks its emergence.

Premodern Languages

[. . .] At least three separate linguistic modes were commonly used in premodern Indian culture immediately before the entry of western influences. Two separate languages of religious thinking existed side by side in the Hindu and the Islamic orbits of thought, with a third mode which should be more accurately called not a language, but an idiom. On the "Hindu" side of this discursive public sphere, despite theological differences between Saivas, Vaishnavas and Saktas, and other sects, there was a common use of languages of disputation [. . .].[1] Islamic religious thinking was carried out in similarly well-recognised

1 [note 2 in the original] An excellent analysis of how even the language of dispute was disputed between Saivas and Vaishnavas in 17th century south India can be found in Elaine Fisher.

linguistic terms and conventions. Between these two linguistic fields, on both sides, a third, accommodative form of thought had devised a terminology of exchange, often of mutual respect – through ideas like *sulh-i-kul*,[2] or *sarva dharma samabhava*.[3] Strictly speaking, though, this is a semantics of religious experimentation, not of secularity in the usually recognised sense of the word. This was still a language of religion, for religion, used by religious people. To have that disposition towards other religious paths required a deep but unusual interpretation of one's own religious faith. This world is untouched by the possibility of a potential decline of religion. Authors who used these ideas would have found the idea of a world without religion incomprehensible.

Two Stages of the Intellectual History of Secularity

Even after the entry of western influences – through the twin instrumentalities of colonial power and missionary debates – the idea of secularity did not appear with a sudden intellectual rupture. It entered stealthily through small, initially unnoticed steps – through minor readjustments in arguments as these debates grew in scope and intensity. Rammohan Roy's fierce attacks on all conventional religions – Hindu, Muslim and Christian – was the essential first step in an intellectual evolution which spawned entirely unintended and uncontrollable consequences.[4] Evidently, fierce deist attacks on all established religions, although made on behalf of a position that was itself deeply religious, could have the eventual effect of undermining religious belief in general. It is true that Rammohan's crusade was against premodern religiosity from the point of view of a modernist rationalist religion. But, because of its ferocity, its utter comprehensiveness, its implacable hostility to a premodern ontology, it produced complex unintended consequences. Arguments drawn from that corpus of thought led to at least two dissimilar points of arrival. By rejecting rituals, caste observance, and priestly mediation, it gave birth to a highly spiritualised aesthetic religiosity best articulated by Rabindranath Tagore; on the other side, by a separate line of radical interpretation, it led to Bengali Marxist atheism. If an "immanent frame" (using the term made acceptable by Taylor) was accepted, it remained for some to ask why they needed a god [. . .]. This line of cultural development from a deist conception of god, to an acceptance of the immanent frame, to eventual atheism was similar to the history of European secularity (for a magisterial account of this transformation, see Taylor 2008).

2 [note 3 in the original] Dabistan-i-mazahib offers a classic exposition of this view from debates in Akbar's court.

3 [note 4 in the original] A conventional example of this attitude can be found in the passage: "P V Kane uses this as an illustration of religious accommodation among the Hindu sects; but evidently, this text can be read as a subtle presentation of a hierarchy'' (Fisher).

4 [note 5 in the original] As an illustration of both the nature of the arguments and the sparkle of the polemic, we can use the *Brahmo-Pauttalik Samvad* (Stephen Hay, ed.).

About half a century after Rammohan, in evolving debates about the new Indian National Congress, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan added another essential dimension to the modern reflection on religion. In his criticism of orthodoxy, Syed Ahmed Khan was similar to Rammohan, and he offered a rationalistic translation [p. 94/95] of Islam, turning it into a religion that could be at home in modernity. [. . .] After his passionate interventions, the question of the state and its relation to religious communities – the second meaning of the idea of secularity – became an irreducibly central concern of public life.[5] By the 1880s, the two predominant concerns of modern secularity – decline in religious control over social life (ethical), and the state's address to religious communities (political), cemented by interpellations of modern politics – had been sharply defined. Clearly, the task before Indian intellectual life was to fashion a new language in which these two primary concerns of modern religiosity could be examined. [. . .] The first half of the 20th century saw a vibrant, uproarious, and eventually deeply fractious debate about the translation of modern social imaginaries into Indian circumstances – leading eventually to partition, the creation of two significantly different state structures, and on the Indian side, the construction of a secular constitution.[6] This period is crucial for understanding both the strengths and vulnerabilities of Indian secularism, as some of the most influential figures of modern Indian political thought joined that historic discussion.

The Originality of the Indian Debate

The end of colonial rule opened in three continents an immense field of political experimentation. What direction these experiments would take was uncertain. Generally, few nationalist leaders agreed with Gandhi's powerful but idiosyncratic/isolated view on this question. He claimed that these societies were at a crucial historical point. Colonial modernity had not decisively restructured their social worlds: these societies were "on the cusp of" modernity – which meant, for him, that these societies retained the historical option of following the western path into the modern, or spurn it for a future more in tune with premodern social forms.[7] [. . .] The historic opportunity, in the Nehruvian view, was not to turn towards some reconfiguration of the pre-modern, but a genuine

5 [note 6 in the original] It will be seen that here, and throughout this article, I use Rajeev Bhargava's distinction between the two sides of secularity – the ethical and the political – because it gives us a way of thinking clearly about the complex mass of issues involved in this field (see Bhargava 1998).
6 [note 7 in the original] For an excellent exposition of the principles underlying the constitutional design, see Bhargava (2011b).
7 [note 8 in the original] I am indebted to my colleague Akeel Bilgrami for this insight, which he presented in co-taught courses. It is also important to remember that Gandhi's thoughts on this question were inconsistent, complex, and at times cryptic. It is hard to extract from his works an unambiguous blueprint for the future.

surge towards authentic modernity. This Nehruvian vision implicitly made a distinction between the ideals of modernity and their historically contingent realisation in Europe, and degraded enactment in the colonies. Colonialism had soiled the ideals of the Enlightenment.

[. . .] [T]o people like Nehru, to conceive of the high ideals of rationality, secularism, or even socialism as "European" was a mistake. These were intrinsically universalist ideals that were generated by early modern European debates. In many ways, these ideals were not like theories – unascribable to individual authors, but complex figurations of ideas that were slowly elaborated by the combined efforts of thinkers and practical public actors.[8] When they went about "applying" these principles or ideals as practical politicians, they necessarily had to submit to the logic of present historical conditions. The logic of their actions showed quite a different understanding of how these ideals could be made to work. Contemporary postcolonial concerns were absent at that time, and unfortunately, the constitution framers had a regrettable tendency to underrate the newness of their own institutional moves. Yet, the constitution refused to follow any single western model, despite claims that these systems constituted legal-rational wholes that could not be taken apart.

The significant innovation lay not in any specific legal clause or particular provision, but in the constitution's general design. Western societies where modern constitutions were functioning, and which served as the major sources of constitutional thought, had undergone a prior historical process of individuation, and social habits in economic work or political association could assume a highly individualistic form of conduct. India was radically different [. . .]. Bhargava's analysis of Indian state secularism – in the literal sense of taking apart the principles and discovering the rules of assemblage of the legal machinery – shows this vital truth by demonstrating that Indian state secularism was not an imitation of the French or the American design. The variations arose not from a "failure" to follow these models, but from a deliberate crafting of different rules to respond to a historically distinct situation. [. . .]

Democracy and Secularism

I shall reuse an argument from a general analysis of modernity I offered in an earlier work: the structure and texture of the modern in each society is determined, I argued, by the sequence in which modern processes appeared (Kaviraj 2005). A major difference between Europe and India was that in Europe, institutions of state secularism emerged and entrenched themselves in the aftermath of religious civil wars, long

8 [note 9 in the original] This is a necessarily crude way of putting it; for a concise statement on the interconnectedness of these ideals, see Taylor (2008). The concept of social imaginaries, rather than theories, has several advantages, but that is a separate discussion that cannot be taken up here.

before the framing of democratic constitutions. The rules at the [p. 95/96] centre of American and French secularity were devised and embedded in their political systems centuries before modern democracy was realised. Consequently, secularism as a state principle did not undergo a democratic test, although democracy is a powerful principle which can have a retrospective effect on social institutions, and it can in principle decide to rescind legal regimes established in the past. By contrast, in India, the constitution established universal suffrage democracy and state secularity through the same constitution; and, partly due to partition, secular principles were contentious from the start. A dominant strand of Muslim nationalism formed the state of Pakistan, rejecting that principle; and a large segment of nationalists in India remained unreconciled to it. Unlike in Europe, the whole question of the secular state, simply because of the coincidence of the two principles in the constitution, was implicitly subject to a democratic test. Ever since, this has been a question that can be reopened if Hindu nationalists get a sizeable electoral presence. Given the circumstances, state secularity required not merely powerful justifications, but also careful designing of institutional mechanisms.[9]

[. . .]

From the 1980s, however, the ideals of secularism met with an unexpectedly serious challenge with the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), causing a resultant crisis in the academic analytics of secularity.

Transformation of the Hindu Nationalist Idiom

I want to focus on a "linguistic" shift that underlay the new surge of Hindu nationalism from the mid-1980s, and the nature of the academic analytical response. From the 1940s to the 1980s, Hindu nationalists asserted a frankly anti-secularist stance, openly claiming that, after partition, there was no case for a secular state in India. India ought to be a Hindu state. [. . .] A clearly anti-liberal majoritarianism, its definition of democracy was an unrestricted rule of the majority community, with little defence for minorities and their rights. Its central political argument was that the Hindus were denied their legitimate right to rule as a putative majority, and to stamp their cultural identity on the state. It is a different matter that this idea is full of solecisms: that the majorities relevant to democratic decisional processes are deliberative, and not identity majorities; that democracy is meaningless without guaranteed minority rights. What I wish to observe are not these well-known theoretical faults, but a significant shift in the theoretical bases of Hindu nationalist arguments.

From the mid-1980s, Hindutva propaganda imperceptibly shifted the grounds on which it attacked the constitutional structure, and the Congress Party as the primary instrumentality for its translation into policies. Explicit attacks on constitutional sec-

9 [note 11 in the original] For an excellent exposition of the innovativeness of Indian secularism and its structures of justification, see Bhargava (2011a).

ularity were slowly faded out, replaced by a rearrangement of the geometry of party positions. The Congress was not derided as the builder of a secular polity, it is no longer claimed that the state should have been a mirror image of Pakistan – a Hindu state. In a turnaround, the Congress was implicitly separated from the Constitution which was no longer directly attacked; rather, provisions like the directive principles urging a common civil code were deployed to claim that the Congress was really “pseudo-secular”. Clearly, the implication was that a secular state was desirable, but only if it was administered by parties which followed its principles honestly. It is important to take note of this vast reconfiguration of Hindutva polemic – because it is also an indirect admission that a direct attack on secular principles was counterproductive.

[. . . p. 96/97. . .]

In the past few decades, liberalism has won an unnoticed victory in Indian political discourse over rival languages – much before liberalisation began to transform the economy. Hindu nationalism sought a way of repositioning itself in this new discursive universe. It had to find ideas that could compete with the passionate appeals of caste and regional solidarity – both of which spoke, characteristically, in the language of “fighting against discrimination”. Formerly, “the great cause” which mobilised people was a revolutionary overthrow of an exploitative order, but with this stealthy yet decisive victory of liberalism, politicians phrased their demands in terms of a fight against discrimination – against backward regions, ignored minorities, or lower castes and untouchables. Indisputably, “discrimination”, rather than “revolution”, became the currency of political discourse.

This shift made the conventional stance of Hindu nationalism awkward: for, actually, their cause was to turn govemment policy against the Muslim minority – because in their strange perception of the world, a minority that had lost its traditional social leadership, its dominance in specific regions, that was treated with unremitting suspicion, that was educationally and economically deprived, still constituted a mysterious “threat” to the Hindu majority. Since presenting India’s Muslims as a serious “threat” was entirely implausible, the only way of refurbishing the anti-Muslim argument was to side with the powerful popular endorsement of the idea of non-discrimination; and to subtly shift the focus from the treatment of Muslims to the treatment of Hindus. [. . .] In the past, Muslim rulers had destroyed their temples, and justice required their restitution;[10] but more urgently, systematic discrimination against the majority community by a state exclusively solicitous about minority interests had treated them unfairly. After all, Hindus and Muslims were practitioners of different religions; and in the name of minority rights, allowing some privileges to Muslim and Christian institutions while denying them to the Hindus was unjust and discriminatory.

[. . .]

10 [note 15 in the original] It must be borne in mind, however, that the idea of restitution is not limited to the leaders of the BJP. After Independence, assorted Hindu groups became active in restoring the Somnath temple, with support from stalwart Congress figures like Rajendra Prasad and K M Munshi. And it is instructive to read the sharp exchanges between them and Nehru on this case.

The Academic Debate about Secularism

It is not uncommon for academic analysis to trail behind political change – particularly when the cognitive objects are not historical events, but processes. T N Madan's (1998) remarkable lecture startled academic opinion on the question of secularism. It invited academics to recognise that the crisis of the secular state also meant a parallel crisis of explanations. Although a powerful critique of the secularist consensus had been articulated earlier, most notably by Ashis Nandy (1985, 1998), that could be ignored as idiosyncratic dissent from orthodoxy, paradoxically because of Nandy's taste for heterodox ideas. [. . .] Although his [Madan's] essay has at times been misinterpreted as providing support for Hindutva politics, in reality it was concerned entirely with the second question – the political viability of a secular state.

By connecting two aspects of secularity, Madan's essay offered a powerful and plausible argument – viewing the historical process of secularisation as a condition for state secularity, and both as dependent on a peculiarly Christian culture.[11] [. . .] Despite its undoubted force, two aspects of this argument could be questioned.[12] A first objection is historical, based on a different reading of the historical evolution of European secularity. European states devised secularist political arrangements in a second stage of their response to the challenge of disastrous religious conflict. In the first stage, European elites tried to [p. 97/98] settle the problem of religious difference by a system of treaties, which sought to create entirely monoreligious states that contained serious disabilities and formal legal discrimination against minorities. But the existence of minorities remained a persistent problem, although for long periods, minority communities in Europe were forced to accept their subordinate status. Forces of economic and social modernity, however, drove European societies in the direction of more interaction and mixture, rather than population purity. As the experiment was hard to sustain in the face of the socio-economic exigencies that sustained minorities within these monoreligious states, the only rational alternative was to create a legal system which acted blind to the religious differences of the subjects. Against a romanticised picture of European modernity, it is essential to note that these legal developments were very late and inadequate (for a discussion of this process, see Stedman Jones and Katznelson 2011). Undoubtedly, this practical impulse was assisted by the movement of ideas – the increasing dominance of liberal thinking on social questions.

[. . .]

Madan's doubts about the prospects of the secular state arise precisely from this strong analytical connection: it is hard to sustain the legal practices of state secularism in a society that is not secularised. Although the rhetorical and analytical force comes from the dual occurrence of the term "secular", the semantics of the term in the two

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11 [note 16 in the original] Madan's arguments are stated fully in his work, *Locked Minds,* but I am concerned here primarily with his widely noted essay, because of its immense impact.

12 [note 17 in the original] I have presented these two objections in my short introduction to the section on the Sodology of Religion in Kaviraj (1998). This is merely an expansion of those two points.

cases are clearly distinct. The first use refers to state secularism, and the second to societal secularisation, roughly similar to what Bhargava separates as political and ethical secularism ("roughly" – because Bhargava's distinction is primarily a conceptual one, not related to questions of historical sociology). In fact, the analytical force of this distinction lies in the fact that, the moment this distinction is proposed, it allows us to see a difficulty in Madan's powerful thesis. It also helps us perceive an important discrepancy between historical and social-theoretical arguments about western modernity.

Secularised States

[. . .]

For liberal states, it becomes impossible to escape the threat of group conflict if they are based on a slope of rights rather than a level field. In the end, most European states devised a legal system in which, although society remained deeply religious, the state devised a legal procedure according to which, when citizens faced the state, the state would treat them as if they did not have any religious identity. That was not a sociological fact, but an essential legal pretence. The initial creation of secular states in Europe was thus a response not to secularisation, but to the conflicts of a deeply religious society. There is another interesting side to the paradox. Contemporary Europe shows many liberal states with a formal established church, as in the United Kingdom. Historically, in these states religion has declined as a determinative influence on everyday culture – with falling church attendance, and a general decline of religiosity. Interestingly, minority religious communities often complain about discrimination on other grounds, but not directly against the state's formal relation with an established church. With the secularisation of society, the formal absence of state secularism becomes a minor feature of institutional life. Madan's understanding of the origin of state secularity, then, is based on a questionable reading of European history.

Despite that criticism, Madan's thesis about India still remains very forceful – because the foregoing argument establishes only the normative appropriateness of a secular state in independent India. There is a sociological isomorphism between the European situation after the religious wars and India in the 20th century. These were deeply religious societies threatened by conflict between mobilised religious communities. Our argument also needs to be clear about its own status. Madan bases the creation of the secular state on elements of the intellectual history of Christianity; we suggest, on the contrary, that the relevant analytic considerations are historical-sociological. A particular configuration of social forces led to a crisis, to which the invention of the secular state was an answer. After the bloody mobilisations of the partition, the sociological situation in India was structurally similar. The institution of a secular state was therefore normatively appropriate from the point of view of statecraft. But Madan's sociological argument still has great force. How a society will respond to the construction of state

secularism [p. 98/99] is a contingent empirical question; and, as we shall see, here Ashis Nandy's argument comes into play. Madan's critique of Nehruvian statecraft is based on this sociological discrepancy: of a secular state's foundering in a deeply religious society.

[. . .]

Similar Terrain but Striking Difference

Ashis Nandy's analysis of the crisis of the secular state is commonly placed parallel to Madan's, although, in fact, it is similar only in parts. One segment of his analysis is directly opposed to Madan's. In his sociological analysis of the causes behind the difficulties of Indian state secularism, he agrees entirely with Madan. He too regards secularism as "a dream of a modernist minority", who acquired state power fortuitously through Nehru's dominance, and who believed that they had the intellectual power to remake the masses (Taylor (2008) views this as crucial to European secularity). But Nandy's understanding of the project of modernity is unusually complex: against conventional sociological theory, he regards both elite secularism and the irruptions of mass politics in favour of "communalism" as dual pathologies of modernity. He sees them as united in viewing the state as central to the life of society, and being intent on its capture. [. . .]

In contrast to Madan, secularism has two forms: a modern intellectual form in which its arguments are elaborated from the fundamental premises of unbelief or agnosticism, from a scepticism drawn from modern science about the very existence of god, in opposition to a premodern form, which begins its thinking from an unquestioned faith in his benevolent and permeating presence in the world. Additionally, modernist secularity wants to impose its imaginary on society by state coercion. Traditional "secularity" – which Nandy prefers to call "religious tolerance" – is deeply religious, and does not work through the state.

[. . .] Madan's analytics sees secularism as an exclusively modern project, and by implication, the great mass of common people with deep religious beliefs as alien to secularity. Nandy, by contrast, initiates the insightful distinction between the two aspects of religion – which many others subsequently picked up and inflected in their own ways – that allows him to offer an astonishingly distinctive sociology of the politics of religious conflict. For Nandy, the difficulty about secularism is not the conflict between intolerant traditional religiosity and modernist rationalist tolerance: as a critic of modernity, he will be totally unwilling to accept the self-images of the modern. He recognises the basic separation of the premodern and the modern, but refuses their binary characterisation as productive of hostility and of tolerance.

[. . .]

There can be two readings of what, by implication, Nandy states about premodernists, "traditional" people in his language. It appears that he thinks all traditionalists harbour a fundamentally tolerant, accommodative view of religious life. This would be an untenable opinion, in the teeth of historical evidence that traditional people did

not lack the spirit of hostility or vengeance. It will be better for the argument, if not for a textual understanding of Nandy's essay, to read it as a slightly more nuanced claim: traditional religion is usually concerned with the duster of ethical-ideal questions, and broadly interpret them in an accommodative manner. Curiously, Nandy did not explicitly connect his modern/traditional distinction with two linguistic spheres – the vernacular closer to the traditional, and the English to the modernist.

Academic analysis of secularity and its discontents has been advanced by their interventions, by forcing adherents of simple paradigms of secularity towards far greater complexity. Their interventions forced upon the academic community an acknowledgement that the rise of Hindu nationalism in electoral politics represented a crisis of Indian secularity; it required a new analysis [p. 99/100] of secularity and its problems; and finally, this required a new analytics of the field. Evidently, they tried to supply the analysis and analytics in different, but perhaps complementary ways. Madan challenged the general belief that Indian secularist institutions were secure; and all it required to succeed was simply governmental will. His analysis was a sharply outlined thesis that set up a concomitance, if not conditional dependence, between social secularisation and the success of state secularism; and it challenged Indian political pieties by suggesting that, since secularism was the dream of a small westernised minority, there was something intrinsically undemocratic in its project. This was an unsettling, unorthodox and original claim, which conceived of an uncomfortable possibility of conflict between the logics of democracy and of secularism.

Addressing the Challenge

Ashis Nandy's challenge to social science orthodoxy was also intensely radical, consisting of a series of inversions of individual articles of Weberian faith. First, it broke with the orthodoxy that with time, all societies must become secularised; but more significantly, with the idea that modern secularists were exclusively tolerant people and intolerant aggression came from atavistic traditionalists. [. . .]

Although Nandy did not directly elaborate his ideas in this direction, it had a clear implication that replacement of the modernist secular elites with religious fundamentalists would replace one domination by another. A second, more surprising element of Nandy's thought was his claim that, to the extent that Indian society enjoyed religious peace, it was due to deep irenic influences of traditional religiosity. This was not only a frontal repudiation of the Weberian thesis on secularisation, but also a deeper invitation to a new analytics of religion and social power. [. . .] The very radicalism of his hypothesis forced social scientists to respond to it in two ways: to examine if this hypothesis was true; and second, if it was – that is, if social peace was a result of traditional tolerance nestled inside culture rather than the prohibitions of state secularism – there was the further business of exploring what ideas religious traditions contained. This

was a demand for a postcolonial analytics of religious life and modern states. Nandy is thus rightly seen as a notable figure in the origins of postcolonial thinking.

Several interesting and theoretically substantial interventions were elicited by the Madan-Nandy discussion in the 1990s. I shall focus briefly on Rajeev Bhargava's contribution to this debate, because this will facilitate the introduction of a critical argument. Bhargava's central contribution was in showing that the debates about secularity got confused because the conceptual coverage of the term secular included two entirely different sets of issues.[13] Secularism meant in one context a structure of beliefs which involved the derivation of the fundamental bases of moral conduct from human sources, not from the divine – what he called ethical secularism. By contrast, the principles through which political authorities sought to produce mutual accommodation between potentially hostile religious communities were called political secularism. Once this distinction was in place, it became easy to argue partially against the somewhat large generalisations implicit in both the Nandy and Madan positions. First, it could be asserted forcefully that ethical secularity was not a precondition for the search for political secularism. Gandhi was the greatest force for political secularism without coming anywhere near ethical secularity. Deep religiosity was no obstacle to the pursuit of accommodation between communities. But it could also guard against the excessively simple equation between the modern-intolerant and traditional-tolerant in Nandy's vision, just as this could open up a distinction, disallowed by more extreme secularists, between the communal and the religious.

[. . .]

By separating ethical from political secularism, it clarified the apparently odd agreement between Gandhi and Nehru: despite divergent opinions on the question of ethical secularity, they had entirely similar views on political secularism. It allowed a criticism of Madan's thesis that a small caucus of militant ethical secularists alone pursued the imposition of their views on a reluctant religious society by the power of the state. It showed that political secularism could be the objective of those who believed in ethical secularity, and those who did not. Most significantly, it suggested that what the Nehruvian state sought to achieve was a state of affairs radically different from the objectives of Soviet and Turkish secularists. While they really sought to impose ethical secularity as a precondition for political secularism, the objectives of Nehruvian statecraft were more limited: instead of advocating an equal hostility to all existing religious doctrines, it really practised a policy of "equal respect", but interpreted it not as unconditional distance from religious affairs, but as a "principled" one. I wish to add to this continuing discussion two propositions. I shall make the first point by using a literary illustration from Tagore's novel *Gora.*

13 [note 20 in the original] I called these, following him, two clusters of questions.

Miscibility of Traditional and Modern Judgments

Like many of Tagore's novels, *Gora* is peculiarly susceptible to a structural narrative analysis.

[. . . p. 100/101. . .]

As an artist with words, Tagore delved deeply into the heart of the conceptual translation problem that affects all societies experiencing the first stirrings of modernity. Tagore shows how it is entirely possible for the two conceptual languages that must exist in parallel in such a society to arrive occasionally at identical conclusions. The two languages are entirely different in their premises: yet it is possible for individuals to work them to come to a similar judgment on ethical questions. The central question in *Gora* is not that of the state or political secularism, but the related problem of tolerance between neighbouring communities who share a social world. But its conclusion is highly significant: it shows that although the two languages are radically different, it does not follow that people using them must necessarily arrive at radically opposing conclusions. I suggested cryptically elsewhere that the two languages could be miscible in some parts (Kaviraj 2005). The question of secularism is a powerful illustration of this possibility. This calls into question Nandy's suggestion that the languages of tradition and modernity are utterly opposed, and must come to opposing conclusions.[14] We cannot presuppose that two arguments formed from traditional and modern premises must always come into conflict. To use Bhargava's terms: defence of political secularity can come from both sides. If that is true, then the secular elite is not so isolated; neither is the secular state so fragile. Secular ideas are endorsed by both traditional and modern segments of Indian society, although in distinctively different ways. [p. 101/102]

If we acknowledge this possibility, which Bhargava's conceptual analysis endorses, we are forced to revise the intellectual geometry of the Madan-Nandy line of thinking. Both Madan and Nandy make their arguments pivot on a strong binary between an undifferentiated modern and an equally undifferentiated traditional mode of thinking. Both sides are portrayed as homogeneous – which involves a misunderstanding of the character of a "language". The unity of a language, even in this sense, is alphabetic, in the sense that they are like singular systems of alphabets which allow, through infinite possibilities of recombination, the articulation of very different "doctrines". Neither modernist nor traditional languages should be seen as so homogeneous as to produce the monolithic attitudes suggested by Madan and Nandy. Their conceptualisation of the world of discourse makes it hard to explain the historical realities of nationalist politics – particularly the most significant and paradoxical of them all, the relation between Nehru and Gandhi. It also produces an unnecessarily pessimistic conclusion about the prospects of the secular state.

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14 [note 22 in the original] Nandy is an exceptionally subtle reader of Tagore, and this seems to pose a challenge to his argument.

Stratified Architecture of Theories

I think the Gandhi-Nehru relation can be explained at least in part by two arguments. The first is the foregoing one: that modernity and tradition are not doctrinal positions, but alphabetic "languages", through the elements of which quite dissimilar doctrinal positions can be fashioned. Gandhi and Nehru consistently worked within doctrinal positions of this kind, which came to very similar stances from very different foundations. It is undoubtedly true that the premises on which they based their primary ideas were entirely different – in some respects, clearly contradictory – which both freely acknowledged. However, from opposed foundational beliefs the two articulate their individual arguments in a way that, as they approach more politically practical levels of analysis, they tend to converge. The geometry of this relation is marked by immense distance at the foundations, and convergence on practical conclusions. As intellectuals, when we read them, we tend to stress the foundational beliefs – Gandhi's faith against Nehru's agnosticism; defiance of modern science against the other's belief in its powers; one's worship of modernity against the other's of tradition. But as political actors, they tended to emphasise the convergent practical conclusions. [. . .]

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47 Gudrun Krämer: *Modern but Not Secular* (2013)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Gudrun Krämer (b. 1953) is a professor emeritus at Freie Universität Berlin, where she headed the Institute of Islamic Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) from 1996 until 2019, and, in 2007, founded the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies. In 2010, she was awarded the Gerda Henkel prize for her wide-ranging and very much publicly visible work on Islamic history. The breadth of her work is reflected most strongly in her overviews of *Islamic History* and the *History of the Near East and North Africa since 1500*, both published in German. Krämer has also published on topics including the history of Palestine; Hasan al-Banna and the early Muslim Brotherhood; Islamic reformism; and democracy and secularity in Arab modernity and Islamic history.

The article which we partially reprint below was written with the *Multiple Secularities* programmatic framework (see Wohlrab-Sahr and Kleine, text no. 21, and Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, text no. 42) in mind, as Krämer would join the *Multiple Secularities* research group as a fellow after her retirement from Freie Universität Berlin. In this article, Krämer addresses several dimensions of secularity, drawing on José Casanova's famous typology distinguishing between functional differentiation, privatisation, and the decline of religion. She shows that functional differentiation has also shaped modern societies in the Arab Middle East. What is more, in pre-modern Islamic history, too, there was no fusion of religion and politics. The privatisation of religion, she argues, is an especially vexed issue. Krämer explores how the public visibility of Islam is partly due to political interest in ascertaining a hegemonic understanding of religion, and how digitalisation blurs the boundaries between public and private. On the decline of religion, Krämer argues that there is a much clearer picture: this has not occurred in the Arab Middle East. More recent trends might add nuance to this picture, but not alter it substantially. In any case, a central question, especially in view of the factual functional differentiation of societies, is how actors position themselves with regard to questions of secularity. In addition to the introduction, it is this last section on "Muslim debates on secularity" that we reprint here.

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Gudrun Krämer. "Modern but not Secular: Religion, Identity and the *Ordre Public* in the Arab Middle East." *International Sociology* 28, no. 6 (2013): 629–44; here 629–30, 637–41.

The Arab Middle East has long been viewed as an exception to broader political and sociological trends, an exception largely explained with reference to culture and religion. Thus liberty, secularity and democracy have been widely thought to be alien to Islam as the majority religion in the area. Ironically, the debate on multiple modernities, with the possibility of several distinctive paths to modernity, rests on similar assumptions, for it posits culture(s), or civilization(s), with their practices and institutions, as chief factors in shaping historical potentials and trajectories. Now Islam is certainly distinctive and indeed 'other', when compared to Christianity, Buddhism or Shintoism and the civilizations informed by their teachings. Yet it is neither uniform nor unchanging. Islam is a [p. 629/630] world religion with well over a billion adherents who live all over the world and not just in that part that is commonly called Islamic, and who experience their religion in many different ways. Some reflect 'confessional' affiliation (Sunni, Shi'i, Alevi or Isma'ili), others class, gender, locality or quite simply individual preference. Different ways of understanding Islam stretch far back into history. They have always affected the ways in which Muslims conceived of community, identity and the religious–secular divide, and they continue to do so today.

The very variety and changeability of Muslim positions and practices call for specificity when discussing secularity, with its emphasis on the social functions and cultural meanings attached to different kinds of differentiation between religious and non-religious domains, their articulations in various fields (and not just state politics), and the institutional arrangements created to express these articulations. Such differentiation has occurred in the Arab Middle East as much as in other parts of the Muslim world. A close look at modern political thought and practice (including notably Islamic discourse), economics, law, art and education would reveal that secularization processes form an integral part of Middle Eastern history and society. The question is to what extent these processes have been perceived as legitimate, useful and desirable, and by whom, and whether taken together, these processes and perceptions constitute more

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than the specificity that is characteristic of all modes of secularity, be it Indian, French, Dutch or Canadian. The emphasis on *secularity* rather than on *secularism* (the ideology of separating between religion, state and politics and the institutional arrangements resulting from it) helps to refine the analysis. [. . . p. 630–637. . .]

Muslim Debates on Secularity

Secularity is highly contested in contemporary Muslim-majority societies, including notably the Arab Middle East (see Asad, 2003; Bhargava, 1999; Tamimi and Esposito, [p. 637/638] 2000; also Joas and Wiegandt, 2009). The question here is not whether Muslims can live in a secular environment but whether they view secularity as a legitimate and desirable principle for regulating (a Muslim) state and society. Millions of Muslims, many of them devout and practising, reside in secular societies, not only in Western Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and the Russian Federation – which never belonged to the *dar al-islam*, and where according to classical *fiqh*, specific rules apply that are premised on a distinction between public and private and hence define a vital element of secularity. Huge Muslim populations live in India and Indonesia, both of which were under Muslim rule for centuries but are now largely secular, as are Muslim-majority states such as Turkey, Tunisia and the Central Asian republics, which were secularized in authoritarian fashion 'from above'.

There is a tradition of secular thought and indeed of secularism as an ideology, in the Arab Middle East going back to the early-twentieth century if not even earlier.[1] Intellectuals including Abdou Filali-Ansary, Sadiq Jalal al-Azm and Aziz al-Azmeh, the former of Moroccan and the latter two of Syrian origin, have given eloquent voice to it. Still, secular thought continues to be largely identified with leftist, European (and hence 'un-authentic') thought. What is more, its role as a mobilizing force to resist foreign domination and authoritarian rule has been eclipsed by religious discourse. National liberation movements such as the Egyptian Wafd, formed after the First World War to end British occupation, or the pan-Arab movements of the 1940s and 1950s called for national unity across religious boundaries (best known as the 'unity of crescent and cross') and advocated the modern notion of citizenship. Yet this position did not develop into a principled secularity accepted by broad segments of the intellectual elite and the general populace. Whereas nationalism made the transition from ('Christian') Europe to the Arab Middle East and was even absorbed into Islamist discourse, secularity or, to be more precise, secularism did not. It has been argued that this is in part a matter of

1 [note 3 in the original] At least in Egypt, the famous book by Shaykh ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq, *Al-islam wa-usul al-hukm* [Islam and the Foundations of Government], first published in 1925, one year after the abolition of the caliphate in the new Turkish Republic, in which he justified the separation of religion and state, was banned for years and was only republished in 2010 (Cairo: Dar Sima).

limited demand (Hashemi, 2009). The pre-modern Middle East certainly knew religious conflict and violence among adherents of various branches of Islam and less importantly, among different groups of Muslims and non-Muslims. But it was never torn and indeed existentially threatened by religious warfare as were parts of early-modern Europe. Unlike in early-modern Europe, secularity was not elaborated and institutionalized as a framework to contain inter-communal violence and re-establish social peace, lending it historical weight and legitimacy. Religious conflict re-emerged in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, triggered by colonial intervention, albeit not solely caused by it. Lebanon, Syria and Iraq are prime examples of inter-communal ('sectarian') violence, and even Egypt, where the very notion of majority and minority continues to be denounced as alien and harmful to national unity, has witnessed exacerbated conflict between Muslims and Copts.

For that reason, one would expect secularity to be presented as a suitable framework for peaceful conflict resolution today. As the Arab Spring has shown, important segments of the public do in fact advocate a secular order, not least in the hope that functional differentiation at the political and constitutional levels might limit the political use, or rather abuse, of religion and curb the violence that is committed in the name of religion. (The same is, incidentally, true of the Islamic Republic of Iran.) The critical voices include adherents of the 'moderate', 'centrist' (Ar. *wasati*) and 'progressive' Islamism that [p. 638/639] emerged well before the Arab Spring, such as the Tunisian group of Progressive Islamists and the Egyptian Wasat Party (for the former, see al-Jurshi, 2010). But they are faced with opponents who continue to reject secularity as culturally alien and politically tainted.[2]

Terminological fuzziness has long compounded the difficulties of rational argument:[3] the Arabic term *la-diniyya*, which for some time was used to describe secularity and secularism, refers to the 'absence' or 'denial' of religion. The term most commonly employed today, *ʿalmaniyya*, is less reductive but still fails to capture the multiple dimensions of secularity. The etymology of the term is not entirely clear. Some pronounce it *ʿilmaniyya* and associate it with *ʿilm*, 'knowledge'. This is not entirely convincing linguistically, not to mention the fact that at least in the pre-modern era, *'ilm* usually referred to religious learning. The *ʿulamaʾ*, who possess *ʿilm*, were by definition religious scholars. Regardless, *ʿalmaniyya* is commonly understood to signal distance from, if not hostility to, religion (and here religion is not just Islam but also includes Christianity and Judaism). The critique of secularism as godless, devoid of values and without respect for the bounds of custom and decency is of course thoroughly familiar from many sociocultural contexts. Another argument is specific to the post-colonial Arab Middle East: here, secularization is widely portrayed (*and perceived*) as the

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2 [note 4 in the original] The literature is extensive and often polemical; see, e.g., al-Qaradawi, 2001. For the scholarly debate, see Abu-Rabiʿ, 2004; Kassab, 2010; Zebiri, 1998.

3 [note 5 in the original] Incidentally, the Arabic terms for tolerance, or toleration, *tasamuh*, and for religious government, or theocracy, *al-hukuma al-diniyya*, are similarly diffuse.

core of a project of modernization imposed from outside and/or above, by colonial and post-colonial authoritarian regimes, one that jeopardizes the 'identity' of Muslims to the benefit of their enemies. The political argument – secularism as a tool of colonialism and cultural alienation, secularists as agents of foreign powers and repressive authoritarianism – carries as much weight as fears of a decline of religion. None of this flows, as it were, naturally from the foundational texts of Islam. Rather, it derives from a specific interpretation of these texts, one that reflects conditions specific to modern Arab societies. The situation is quite different in Turkey, the Central Asian successor states of the Soviet Union and Muslim societies of South and Southeast Asia, with their respective historical trajectories.

'A Civil State with Religious References'

In the Arab Middle East, the critique of secularism and secularity at large is not limited to Islamists who still dominate public discourse. The Arab Spring has provided them with their first chance in decades to actively shape not just public opinion but public policies. Following the fall of the authoritarian regimes of Zayn al-Abidin Ben Ali in Tunisia and Husni Mubarak in Egypt, in early 2011, Islamists did remarkably well in parliamentary elections. In Egypt, a Muslim Brother even won the presidential elections of July 2012. (Lest it be thought that post-revolutionary Arab societies automatically vote Islamist, it should be noted that Libya did not.) At the time of this writing, it is still too early to gauge the broader sociopolitical and cultural impact of these victories, as representatives of the old regime in the military and bureaucracy, the secret service and various branches of business, as well as champions of a more liberal and openly secular order, continue to oppose Islamist designs, and at least in Egypt, managed to bring down the Islamist government, in the summer of 2013.

The Islamist claim that 'Islam is religion and state' (Ar. *al-islam din wa-dawla*) seems to preclude any distinction between a religious and a secular sphere. Any separation of religion and state (in its broadest sense) is portrayed as an offence against Islam as well [p. 639/640] as a violation of Muslim integrity. The linkage of religion, identity and authenticity is crucial here. For decades, Islamists have asserted that Islam is an all-embracing system of norms and values that must shape individual conduct and the social order, economy, law, culture and politics, and that the Sharia is fundamentally unchanging and beyond human intervention, an argument clearly directed at authoritarian claims to power and thus attractive to many who otherwise have no Islamist leanings. However, there have been important changes over the past decade, and they have been magnified by the wave of democratic protest triggered in 2010–2011. Influential movements including the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and En-Nahda in Tunisia have started to propagate what they call 'a civil state with religious references', which suggests modified thinking not only about democracy but also about secularity.

The issue of good governance was of some concern to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Muslim reformers. Many were critical of authoritarian government or 'tyranny' (Ar. *zulm, taghut*), and propagated constitutional rule. The examples of Tunisia, Iran and the Ottoman Empire attest to the attractiveness of constitutional rule to wide audiences in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. They could draw on a rich body of literature on good governance and legitimate expressions of advice, critique and opposition. The Qur'an itself calls on the believers to 'command right and prohibit wrong' (see Cook, 2000).[4] Interpretations of what that implies and who should be charged with this duty have varied over time and place. While the quietist trend remained largely dominant, activist interpretations were put forth by various movements of moral reform, sociopolitical protest and political opposition. By the turn of the twenty-first century, important segments of the Islamist movement had moved from protest in the name of Islam as a counter-ideology to protest in the name of modern political values: good governance and the rule of law; citizenship; individual rights, and to varying degrees, liberty and freedom, highlighting the national and indeed nationalist frame of much of contemporary Islamic discourse. Within the Sunni Islamist trend there has been a gradual move from calls for an Islamic republic (albeit none modelled on the Islamic Republic of Iran) to a 'civil state' based on an 'Islamic frame of reference' (Ar. *dawla madaniyya bi-marjaʿiyya islamiyya*) (Abu ʿAjjur, 2012; see also al-Waʾi, 2001). The crucial term here is 'civil' (Ar. *madani*). Significantly, it refers to the personnel exerting power. These should be neither clerics (as is the case in Iran) nor members of the military (as has been the case in many Arab countries) but 'civil' or 'lay' men and women. This trend is in line with the anticlerical bent of much Sunni discourse which has always denounced anything resembling popery as alien to Islam. It is especially relevant to the concept of secularity, suggesting a cautious move towards functional differentiation.

This leaves the 'Islamic frame of reference' to be addressed. After years of calling for the 'application of Sharia' as the decisive element that made a system Islamically valid and legitimate, Islamists such as the Muslim Brothers and En-Nahda decided not to highlight Sharia in their drive to win broader segments of the public and perhaps also to dissipate concerns among wider non-Muslim audiences. It still remains that the only corpus of texts generally accepted as foundational are the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The majority of Muslims and non-Muslims alike will identify the 'Islamic frame of reference' with the Sharia. So do the Islamists. The electoral platforms of their parties and presidential candidates, notably Muhammad Mursi in Egypt, and the newly [p. 640/641] drafted Egyptian constitution, in which they had a major say,

4 [note 6 in the original] The Arabic terms *amr, nahy, maʿruf* and *munkar* have been variously translated, and it is common to find 'to enjoin good', 'to prohibit wrong', or similar phrases in the English-language literature.

make it abundantly clear.[5] As suggested above, the Sharia is not only amenable to interpretation but in constant need of it. It cannot be 'applied' without a process of selection and interpretation. The principles elaborated by authors from the classical and post-classical periods, from necessity to the common good to the finality of the Sharia, are still employed today and in many instances, given wider scope than previously. Outside limited circles that are usually labelled Salafist today, even Islamist authors often distinguish between a 'stable', unchanging core of the Sharia and its 'flexible' elements that can be adapted to changing conditions (Ar. *al-thabit wa-l-mutaghayyir*), thus allowing for more elasticity and variation than is widely thought, and perhaps is clear to these authors.

Of course it is of major importance to know what exactly any given author, group or party understands by Sharia, and whether they intend to reinstate legal norms and sanctions that have not been 'applied' for centuries. The canonical sanctions for crimes such as theft, the consumption of alcohol, illicit sexual intercourse, highway robbery or apostasy (Ar. *hudud*, 'limits') – flogging, stoning, amputation of hands and feet – figure prominently in public debate, even though the most influential Islamist movements do not push for their reintroduction. Yet public controversy over Islamic criminal law has not obliterated the symbolic function of Sharia, or the 'Islamic frame of reference', as a guarantee of stability and justice that is at the same time 'authentic', divinely sanctioned and beyond the reach of authoritarian rule.

Multiple secularities?

It is still too early to assess the impact of the Arab Spring. Things are in flux and there is consequently a high degree of uncertainty regarding future developments. Popular calls for good governance, freedom and democracy demonstrate that like nationalism, these ideas have been adopted by broad segments of an Arab urban public as universally valid despite the fact that they are well known to have been first developed and forcefully propagated by the West. 'Imported' notions and ideals have thus been authenticated, highlighting the processes of entanglement and connectedness that characterize the present state of accelerated globalization. With regard to core political concepts, then, the thesis of an Arab (or Islamic) exceptionalism has been refuted. It still remains that for cultural as much as for political reasons, secularism continues to be anathema to broad sections of the Arab public and not just the Islamists. Distinctions between public and private and among different spheres or subsystems with their specific func-

5 [note 7 in the original] See *Barnamij Hizb al-Hurriyya wa-l-ʿAdala* [Platform of the Freedom and Justice Party, the political branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood] Cairo, 2011; *Barnamij al-riʾasa lil- Duktur Muhammad Mursi* [Presidential Platform of Dr. Muhammad Mursi] Cairo, 2012; or, with broader focus, Shammakh, 2011.

tional logic (politics, the economy, education, family) exist. These distinctions are not always consistent and of course they are subject to change. In spite of the demonstrable effects of secularization on all these fields, a secular approach continues to be widely seen in negative terms as a loss of coherence and integrity rather than positively, as a means to liberate creative energies and to enhance social and national integration. That makes the Arab Middle East a specific case among the various articulations of secularity but hardly an exceptional one.

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48 Heiner Roetz: *The Influence of Foreign Knowledge on Eighteenth Century European Secularism* (2013)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Heiner Roetz (b. 1950) is a German sinologist and professor of Chinese history and philosophy at the Ruhr-University Bochum. He was also chairman of the German Association for Chinese Studies from 2000 to 2003. Born in 1950, Roetz obtained his PhD in sinology in 1983, and his post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main in 1990. His research interests include Chinese ethics, Chinese history of religion, Confucianism, Chinese culture and human rights, and tradition and modernity in China.

In the article reprinted here in part, Roetz demonstrates that China was a major source of inspiration for the Enlightenment in Europe. More specifically, China was seen as an enlightened secular state, ruled by a rational monarch. Early ideas about the possibility of a secular state were thus not the product of isolated reflection by European scholars, but were directly influenced by cultural encounters and the foreign knowledge that became available thereby – a fact that was quickly forgotten after the Enlightenment. Roetz thus opens up an entangled-history perspective that is conducive to overcoming the diffusionist paradigm of a significant part of social and cultural studies, with regard to the question of the sources of secularism.

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Secularism in the title of this paper does not refer to the negative antireligious ideology as which it is normally understood. Instead, I will use the term in its original meaning as a positive plea for a society free from the constraints of a religious doctrine. [. . .]

By *foreign knowledge* I mean first of all knowledge about and from the world outside of the Judeo-Christian and Greek cultural sphere, which poured into Europe in the course of its colonial expansion from around 1500. [. . .] My special focus will be on the role of China, which exerted a tremendous influence on Europe in this epoch. What happened in Europe was the product of a global encounter that represents the trans-cultural rather than the specifically European nature of the Enlightenment movement itself. It was the outcome of a confluence of ideas that for concrete historical reasons fell on fertile ground in this part of the world. But it took its ingredients and inspirations also from many other parts.

The European Enlightenment is as much a product of European history as it is an expression of an inter- and trans-cultural dynamics. This also applies to the secularist tendency of the age which is not a European invention only later to be exported to other cultures. I would like to emphasize this point in particular against Charles Taylor's voluminous analysis of the "Secular Age" which in all its learnedness is a formidable document of North-Atlantic parochialism. It dwells on the topic on nearly a thousand pages, without even once mentioning the influences of non-European cultures with partly much longer secular traditions, influences which are readily noticeable when one reads the relevant Western sources themselves.[1] [. . . p. 9/10. . .] Presumably, there is a strategy behind this neglect: To trump secular thought by making it part of the Christian culture itself.

Likewise, no mention is made of a nineteenth century English freethinker who deserves a place in a history of European secular thought: George Holyoake (1817–1906), who to my knowledge coined the term *secularism,* which is not from the eighteenth century itself. [. . . p. 10/11. . .]

What is remarkable within the context of my paper is that Holyoake defends his secularist project by referring to none other than the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius and the latter's reluctance to speak about religious matters and his aversion to proclaim truths that everybody has to follow. As Holyoake says:

> For believing less where others believe more, for expressing decision of opinion which the reader may resent, I do but follow in the footsteps of Confucius, who, as stated by Allen Upward, 'declared that a principle of belief or even a rule of morality binding on himself need not bind a disciple whose own conscience did not enjoin it on him.' Confucius, says his expositor, thus 'reached a height to which mankind have hardly yet lifted their eyes, and announced a freedom compared with which ours is an empty name.[2]

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1 [note 1 in the original] For a critique of Taylor from a trans-cultural perspective cf. also Holenstein, "China eine altsäkulare Zivilisation."

2 [note 5 in the original] Holyoake. *Bygones*, 279.

Allen Upward (1863–1926) was a British intellectual and poet who among other things published a selection of the Confucian *Analects* (*Lunyu,* Confucius' "Collected Sayings") based on James Legge's translation.[3] His description of Confucius quoted by Holyoake most probably refers to passages where Confucius encourages criticism of himself by his disciples and shows himself happy when others detect his mistakes?[4] Upward [p. 11/12] attributes this decent attitude to Confucius' renunciation of taking recourse to a supernatural truth, and the corresponding accent on this life rather than on death, on this world rather than a realm beyond, as in the famous passage from the *Analects:*

> Ji Lu asked about serving the spirits. The Master said, 'While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve spirits?' Ji Lu added, 'I venture to ask about death: He was answered, 'While you do not know life, how can you know about death?'[5]

Upward concludes:

> Is [sic!] is on this plane that his morality is established. Making no claim to knowledge of the future life, it followed that he did not pretend to train men for it, but contented himself with the humbler task of teaching them how to live on earth. Mean and insufficient as such an aim may seem to those who have been vouchsafed a clear and certain revelation from the Beyond, it entitled the Master to a lofty rank among creatures of mortal birth.[6]

This assessment of Confucius understandably aroused Holyoake's sympathy. [. . .] The secularist Holyoake's deep bow to the Chinese sage seems to be more than just than a casual compliment.

This takes us from the nineteenth to the eighteenth century and the time before that. Not only by his espousal of Confucian ideals, but by nearly all of his central topoi like the authority of nature, the emphasis on common sense, and his anti-ecclesiasticism Holyoake is a late child of the European Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment is not simply a late branch of the great tree of European cultural tradition that could be sufficiently explained by writing an internal history of the West. On the one hand, it was tantamount to a radical critique of this tradition, and on the other hand, it is characterized by a hitherto unknown interest in what has never been part of or come into close contact with it – the foreign. Both these aspects, calling [p. 12/13] into question one's own heritage and opening one's eyes to the foreign, are two

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3 [note 6 in the original] The edition available to me appeared in 1905 under the title *Sayings of K'ong the Master.* There was probably an earlier one quoted by Holyoake.

4 [note 7 in the original] In his selection, Upwards quotes Analects 11.4 ("Yan Hui gives me no help. There is nothing that I say in which he does not delight.") and 7.31 ("I am fortunate! If I have any errors people are sure to know them.") in Sayings, 23 and 41, after Legge, *Confucian Analects.*

5 [note 8 in the original] Analects 11.12; Upward, *Sayings*, 19–20.

6 [note 9 in the original] Upward, *Sayings*, 8.

sides of the same coin. Genetically as well as systematically, the Enlightenment is best understood as an intercultural phenomenon.[7] [. . . p. 13–15. . .]

Natural religion, in the name of which the demand for tolerance was raised, becomes one of the central combat terms of the Enlightenment. *Natural* means based on general human reason rather than revelation, in accordance with the Stoic cosmology. A natural religion, therefore, must be found everywhere, outside the Christian realm as well. It was via this road that the decisive attacks against the claim for exclusiveness of Christianity were carried forward for more than a century, beginning with Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1581–1648).

Thus the theoretical framework was laid for a serious and systematic interest in the foreign, and it was filled with and corroborated by material from Asia, in particular from China. The one hundred years before the French Revolution were a time of a rampant Sinophilia in many domains of European life – architecture, arts and crafts, literature and, last but not least, philosophy. Confucius in particular enjoyed extraordinary popularity. [. . .]

What was the interest which the European Enlightenment took in China, and what was the basis for it? The fascination emanating from China was first of all due to the impression that it was an "anti-Europe," as Leibniz says, in the sense of a "civilized world" that did not share some important characteristics with Europe, above all with regard to revealed religion, and had perhaps not brought forth so many sciences, but were on a level with Europe on the decisive questions of morality. [. . . p. 15/16. . .] China, which had been ruled by the Manchu dynasty since 1644, was regarded as the "Wisest empire of the world"[8] and an exemplary case of an enlightened monarchy, the highest political ideal of most European intellectuals before the French Revolution. Unlike Europe, China appeared to be free from religious oppression. While Louis XIV had abolished the tolerance edict of Nantes in 1685, the Qing emperor Kangxi had afforded the Jesuit mission freedom to preach.

China had become known in the West above all through the reports of the Christian missionaries, mainly the Jesuits, and their translations of central Confucian writings that appeared from the end of the seventeenth century. The accommodative missionary practice of the Jesuits corresponded to the positive picture of China that they spread in Europe. Jesuit accommodation was justified by the argument that Confucianism, unlike Buddhism, was not a religion and thus did not collide with Christianity, and yet was sufficiently religiously tuned to enter into a liaison with it. The Dominicans and Franciscans, but also some Jesuits themselves, criticized this view and pleaded for a harder line. They spread the suspicion that what in fact was raging in China was atheism. The

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7 [note 11 in the original] Cf. for the following Roetz, *Mensch und Natur,* §1, Israel, *Radical Enlightenment,* and Israel, *Enlightenment contested.* Cf. also Lee Eun-jung, *Anti-Europa.*

8 [note 23 in the original] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœrs* I, *Œuvres* 11, 180.

dispute finally ended in the 'rites controversy,' which resulted in the closure of the Jesuit mission.

It was this constellation that electrified critically minded European philosophers searching for alternatives beyond the religious fanaticism that was tearing Europe apart. One of the first was Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), who picked up the quarrel within the Christian mission in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique.* He refers to the opponents of the Jesuits and to the Jesuit minority opinion that "most of these scholars are simply denying the existence of God", The same Jesuit "bigots for faith," he says, report "that these scholars believe in nothing spiritual and think that the 'King on high'[9] which your Matteo Ricci has taken to be the true God is in reality nothing but the materialist heaven". "And Confucius" says Bayle, quoting Longobardi, Ricci's successor as head of the Jesuit mission in Beijing, "said some nice things with regard to morality and the art of rulership, but as far as the true God is concerned he was just as blind as all of the [p. 16/17] others."[10] Bayle does not quote these voices in order to join the anti-Confucian camp but in order to strategically launch the conceivability of a society of atheists. If atheism became a realistic option, it was due to the backing that it received from the East.

Leibniz, in accordance with his monadology which assumes that in all parts of the universe the traces of the divine perfection must be found, is driven by an ecumenical interest similar to that of the religiously sceptical Enlightenment. But he seeks to win back China for religion and to prove the complete accord of Confucian philosophy with the principles not only of a natural religion but also of a natural theology, though without a full-fledged revelation?[11] This is one of the attempts to keep the new information from the East compatible with the biblical tradition, in order to forestall the denigration of the latter to a phenomenon of historical and local value only. [. . . p. 17/18. . .]

I cannot give a full account here of the arguments that the Enlightenment discussed with regard to the East. I will instead focus on four topics which, as I see it, were of special importance to fostering the secular tendencies of the time in terms of a gradual detachment from the Christian world-view and religious forms of legitimation. These are the topics of naturalism, rationalism, autonomy and secularity itself. [. . . p. 18–22. . .]

4. Secularism. I have pointed out already that *secularism* as a term only appears in the middle of the nineteenth century, coined by the English freethinker Holyoake. But as far as its essence is concerned, the idea has its forerunners in the much older history of materialism and particularly in the Enlightenment philosophy to which Holyoake is indebted. The foremost Enlightenment protagonists of secularism are Spinoza and Bayle.

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9 [note 24 in the original] Shang Di, the name of the high god of the Shang dynasty (17th–nth century RC.), one of the candidates for the translation of *god* into Chinese.

10 [note 25 in the original] Bayle, *Dictionnaire,* vol. 3, entrance "Maldonat," 296.

11 [note 26 in the original] See his *Novissima Sinica* and his *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese.*

Spinoza confounds God with the order of nature and conceives of a state in which human law as based on the law of nature should take priority over the divine law propagated by the positive religions. He was excommunicated as a heretic by the Jewish community of Amsterdam in 1656. Thereafter, Spinozism is frequently attacked or defended as the paradigm of materialism and, interestingly, identified as such with "oriental philosophy" where "all things are *one*" – *toutes choses sont un,* highlighted as an *axiome chinois* by the Jesuits Nicolas Longobardi and Antoine de [p. 22/23] Sainte Marie.[12] In his *Entretien d'un Philosophe chrétien et d'un Philosophe chinois,* Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) presents the Chinese philosopher as a defender of Spinozism, and, in response to Jesuit criticism of his book, also directly identifies the Chinese with the "impious Spinoza".[13] In the entry "Japon" of his *Dictionnaire,* Bayle writes that what the Japanese teach is "very similar to the philosophy of Spinoza". "It is quite certain," he says, "that [Spinoza] has taught together with these Japanese preachers that the first principle of all things and all beings that constitute the universe is nothing but one and the same substance."[14] [. . .]

Spinoza not only belonged to an intellectual network that included the China fanatic Isaac Vossius,[15] whom I have already mentioned. There was also the publication of Bernhard Varen's *Descriptio regni Japoniae* (1649) which, in an addendum on "Chinensum religio," reports that the Chinese

> [. . .] assert that the whole universe consists of one and the same substance and that its creator together with sky and earth, men and beasts, trees and plants, and finally the four elements[16] compose a Single continuous body, of whose great body individual creatures are members. From the unity of this substance they teach [. . .] that we can arrive at similitude to god from the fact that he is one with him.[17]

If this did not directly influence Spinoza, the similarity with his philosophy is at least striking. [p. 23/24. . .]

As to Pierre Bayle, I have already mentioned his argument that China proves the possibility of an admirable social order without the guidance of religion, because the Chinese are atheists. Leibniz opposes this view, but it is confirmed again by Wolff. Unlike Leibniz, it is not Wolff's intention to defend Confucianism against the reproach of atheism, but to make use of this reproach and turn it against those who raised it. He stresses in the *Oratia* that the ancient Chinese "knew nothing of the creator of all things and had no natural service of God let alone traces of the divine revelation". And

12 [note 52 in the original] Quoted in Leibniz, *Discours sur la theologie naturelle des Chinois,* §§ 21. 57 and 64.

13 [note 53 in the original] Malebranche, *Entretien*, 42.

14 [note 54 in the original] Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, vol. 2, 832, translation Weststeijn, "Spinoza sinicus," 537.

15 [note 58 in the original] Cf. Weststeijn, "Spinoza sinicus," 538.

16 [[note 59 in the original] The correct number is five.

17 [note 60 in the original] Quoted after Maverick. "A Possible Chinese Source of Spinoza's Doctrine," 421.

so they could use “no other forces than natural forces not based on any service of God in order to promote the exercise of virtue”.[18] Wolff’s naturalism and his alliance with China have an openly atheistic direction of assault, even if he later tactically modified some of his statements. The strategic goal is unmistakable: Wolff wants to replace the “external reasons” of religion which the Chinese “never have paid attention to” by the “internal reasons derived from the nature of human action itself,” with China as the prime example “how far those internal reasons can take us.”[19] This is the decisive move of Enlightenment secularism: There is no world beyond in which the human being would find his orientation. There is a direct line from here to the secular foundation of ethics in Kant. According to Charles Taylor, who neither mentions Wolff nor his possible Chinese inspirers, “the discovery of the intra-human sources of benevolence is one of the great achievements of our (!) civilization and the charter of modem unbelief,” and, moreover, the decisive turning point to the ‘secular age.’[20] Obviously, the Enlightenment cosmopolitans had a broader perspective on “our civilization” than the modem Canadian philosopher. A more moderate critique of religion which, nevertheless, in the end likewise amounts to its subversion, was put forward by Deism. Deism pushes God out of the world to its very beginning where he initiates a [p. 24/25] process which then follows its natural rules without further divine intervention and mysteries and fully accessible to reason. Deism leaves the belief in and even the veneration of a higher being intact, but in such vagueness that any formation of a positive religion can only be a wrong concretization of a ‘religious normal truth’ (*religiöse Normalwahrheit*).[21] This conception not only corresponded to the new mechanistic world-explanations, but also to the growing aversion to the intolerance and the bloody quarrels among the confessions. Deism in the eighteenth century was partly a private form of religiosity and partly a polite and socially acceptable form of atheism, especially prominent in Britain, but also in France. It drew its backing again from Confucian China.

“The only regular body of Deists in the universe,” says David Hume, with the later consent of Kant, are the Confucians.[22] There is not a single one of the British Deists who would not pay tribute to Confucius, John Toland reckons Confucius among the “Votaries of Truth” along with the Greek philosophers,[23] Charles Blount uses Jesuit travelogues on China to decry “particular religions” as well as the revealed religion. It cannot be true, he says, because it is not known to all human beings.[24] Thomas Gordon expresses his wish that “all fiery Catholicks and bigots everywhere were converted into rational

18 [note 63 in the original] Wolff, *Rede*, 112ff.
19 [note 64 in the original] Wolff, *Rede*, 219f.
20 [note 65 in the original] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 257.
21 [note 66 in the original] Troeltsch, “Der Deismus,” 430.
22 [note 67 in the original] Hume, “Of superstition and enthusiasm,” 71.
23 [note 68 in the original] Toland, *Pantheisticon*, 64.
24 [note 69 in the original] cf. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods*, 210.

and sober Chinese".[25] And Matthew Tindal (1656–1733) assures in his book *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (a typically Deist title): "I am so far from Thinking the Maxims of Confucius, and Jesus Christ to differ; that I think the plain and simple Maxims of the former, will help to illustrate the more obscure Ones of the latter; accommodated to the then Way of speaking."[26] Tindal also quotes the Spanish self-critical missionary Navarrete, who says, agreeing with Leibniz, "It is God's special Providence, that the Chinese did not know what is done in Christendome, for if they did, there would be never a Man among them, but wou'd spit in our face."[27]

The Deist Voltaire, as quoted above, praised the Chinese for not knowing miracles, which is a Deist topos. He lauded Confucius in his poem as "the salutary interpreter of the one and only reason, illuminating the minds without dazzling them". [. . . p. 25/26. . .] Confucius is not a prophet – he does not claim access to a revelation which he would then preach in the name of a transcendent personal god. Confucius is the sage who simply transmits a timeless, universally valid and 'simple,' neither secret- nor mystery-laden virtue or reason – both terms are interchangeable for the *lumières* – without adding any curious inventions.[28] He venerates the "one God" of the Deists, which is certainly directed against the Christian dogma of the Trinity. Chinese religion, Voltaire says, has never been adulterated by such "absurd innovations," and unlike the Christian religion, it is "free of all superstition and barbarism."[29] The teaching of Confucius "has never been disgraced by miracle tales nor been defiled by squabble and bloodshed".[30]

I have given an overview of the China discourse of the Enlightenment and its systematic interplay with the secularistic tendencies of the age. It cannot be doubted that the Sinophilia and the anti-religious or anti-ecclesiastical radicalism of the Enlightenment are closely interconnected, although certainly not in all authors. The European development towards secularism of the centuries in question can surely not be sufficiently explained by external influences like the ones mentioned. [. . . p. 26/27. . .] However, that Europe found a solution to its centuries-long turmoil at all was due to processes of learning, and what I have called 'foreign knowledge' played a role in these processes.

In view of this pace-making function of the 'foreign' it seems astonishing how quickly modern Europe acquitted itself of this indebtedness after the Enlightenment. [. . .] There are only few notable exceptions. One of them is Albert Schweitzer who after the First World War did not share the fashionable romantic critique of "civilization". "Consciously and deliberately out of date,"[31] he joined hands with the eighteenth

25 [note 70 in the original] Quoted after Tarantino, "Le Symbole d'un La'ique," 426.
26 [note 71 in the original] Tindal. *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 342.
27 [note 72 in the original] Tindal. *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 405.
28 [note 74 in the original] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœrs, Œuvres* 11, 57.
29 [note 75 in the original] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœrs, Œuvres* 11, 57.
30 [note 76 in the original] Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœrs, Œuvres* 11, 178.
31 [note 80 in the original] Cassirer, "Albert Schweitzer," 245.

century again and undertook a new congenial interpretation of Chinese philosophy on the basis of rationalism, hoping that China might bring Europe back to what it had lost: the ethical [p. 27/28] convictions of the age of Enlightenment. [. . .] In the end, the "greatness" of Confucius, says Schweitzer, lies in "basing ethics on nothing else but itself and on the fact that it is necessary and true."[32] Whether or not there is an ethical order 'in the world is wholly dependent on humankind. Schweitzer, the theologian, admires Confucius for this "venture" of a secular ethics "out of its own power without any support in a corresponding faith".[33]

However, are the secular and 'progressive' readings of Confucianism convincing in the first place, regardless of how we evaluate their importance for the development of the Enlightenment discourse? There are already sceptical voices in the eighteenth century. The religious vs. the secular nature of Confucianism in particular has often been a topic of debate, with the pendulum swinging towards the religious side in recent decades. [. . .] As a matter of fact, the philosophers of the Enlightenment went too far in their idealization and stereotyping of the Chinese empire. But it is not the case that more [p. 28/29] information would have rendered the secular reading of Confucianism implausible – it could even have corroborated the thesis that elements of a secular civilization were a reality in China long before latter-day Western philosophers strove for it.[34] The most important text in this respect, the *Book of Xunzi* from the third century B.C., was not even known in Europe. Xunzi 荀子 (Hsun-tzu, ca. 310–230 B.C.) is the most decidedly a-religious of all thinkers in ancient China. A rationalist par excellence, he regards institutions and morals as human inventions without religious or cosmological embedding and conceives of a state built on meritocracy and distributive justice rather than aristocratic descent[35] – something that would have been to the taste of the European eighteenth century, although the naturalistic foundation is largely lacking.[36]

Xunzi's materialism notwithstanding, there is a certain religious background to some prominent ethical tenets of classical Confucianism. Confucianism inherits the early Zhou religion which claims that Heaven (*tian* 天), a moral deity, confers a mandate (*ming* 命) of rule to the most virtuous. The Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming* 天命), an "external reason" of morality in the terminology of Wolff, is later turned into an internal reason by declaring it a part of human nature in Mengzi's (孟子 ca. 370–290 B.C.) line of Confucianism.[37] It now becomes the moral law within the human being,

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32 [note 82 in the original] Schweitzer, *Geschichte des chinesischen Denkens*, 92.

33 [note 83 in the original] Schweitzer, *Geschichte des chinesischen Denkens*, 86.

34 [note 84 in the original] Cf. for this point also Holenstein. "China – eine altsäkulare Zivilisation."

35 [note 86 in the original] Cf. my article "Xunzi's Vision of Society."

36 [note 87 in the original] cf. Roetz, *Mensch und Natur im alten China,* §22. For a full translation of Xunzi's works, see Knoblock, *Xunzi.* For Xunzi's philosophy of nature see above all *Xunzi* Chapter 17, "On Heaven."

37 [note 88 in the original] In the *Book of Mengzi* and the *Zhongyong.* Cf. *Zhongyong* 1: "The mandate of Heaven means inborn nature. To follow inborn nature means the teaching." Quoted after Zhu Xi, *Sishujizhu.* I deal with this turn in my article "Die Internalisierung des Himmelsmandats."

where it is a source of moral dignity (*liang gui* 良貴) surpassing the dignity given and taken away by the powerful.[38] This theory of "inner transcendence," as it is called in contemporary New Confucianism, together with its imaginable political consequences, comes very close to Wolff's interpretation of the Chinese *philosophia practica* in terms of "internal reason" and maturity grounded in human's natural reason. This shift from the veneration of a moral deity to a normatively charged [p. 29/30] anthropology can be viewed as a shift towards naturalizing and secularizing religion, although it does not completely abandon religious diction. The same applies to the European "discovery of the intra-human sources of benevolence," which it has obviously influenced and which, according to Taylor, marks the turning point towards the "secular age". China's specific role for the Enlightenment together with these actual changes in classical Confucianism are sufficient reasons to think of global processes of secularization not primarily in terms of modern Western influences on the non-Western world. They did not come about in modern Europe for the first time in world history.

But why did the internalisation of morality, which links early Confucianism to the Enlightenment project, not yield a result in China similar to that in Europe? Zhang Junmai (張君勱 Carsun Chang, 1886–1969), one of most prominent Chinese philosophers of the twentieth century, has tried to give an answer. He has argued that Confucianism and in particular Mengzi, with his ethics of respect for the human being as an *ens morale* by virtue of its very nature, has not only influenced Enlightenment philosophy but also the Declaration of Human Rights of the French Revolution. When the human rights idea, "the completion of the process of secularization,"[39] later became known in China, it returned there, as it were, like China's own grown-up child. The Chinese 'seeds' could sprout in the West under conditions more accommodative to them than were at hand in the East, above all because Confucianism itself with its hierarchical inclinations always stood in its own way. Zhang Junmai may have overstated his case, but there is a grain of truth in it. Regardless of what proportions, the development of Enlightenment secular thought, to which we owe our modern democratic institutions, was not simply the offspring of the cultural genes of the Occident. It was the outcome of a trans-cultural joint venture.

38 [note 89 in the original] Cf. *Mengzi* 6&7: "To desire dignity *(gui,* also 'high standing,' 'honor') is an aspiration all men have in common. But every single human being has a dignity within himself which he only does not think of. What men [normally] esteem as dignity is not the good dignity *(liang gui).* To whom [a potentate like] Zhao Meng can confer dignity, Zhao Meng can also degrade." Quoted after *Harvard Yenchina Institute Sinoloaical Index Series, A Concordance to Meng Tzu.*

39 [note 90 in the original] Bockenförde, *Der säkularisierte Staat,* 69. Bockenförde was judge of the German Federal Constitutional Court from 1983 to 1996.

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49 Juan C. Esquivel: *Laicity in Argentina* (2017)

Introduced by Juan Cruz Esquivel and Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Juan Cruz Esquivel (b. 1970) is Professor of Methodology of Social Research at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). He studied sociology at UBA, and received a doctoral degree from the University of Sao Paulo. He is also a senior researcher and the director of the State, Laicity and Secularization research team at the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET) in Argentina. Esquivel has been president of the Association of Social Scientists of Religion of MERCOSUR, and a board member of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Religion within the International Sociological Association (ISA). He was also previously Chief of Staff at the Secretariat for Worship within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship in Argentina. Esquivel has directed several research projects on religion and politics, laicity and secularisation, and the relationship between church and state at the national and international level. Among his main publications are his books on the relationship between church, state and politics in Argentina and Brazil, and on the political-religious negotiations over sexual education in Argentina, and his study of Argentina's Catholic church between 1983 and 1999 – as well as numerous articles in international journals.[I]

Juan Cruz Esquivel's article presented here, on *Laicity in Argentina*, defines laicity as the autonomisation of political institutions, delivering them from religious influences. This includes, but goes beyond, the separation of church and state. Esquivel suggests not following the well-trodden path of setting the French model as the normative standard, but instead analysing different paths towards laicity, from a historical and sociological perspective (see Baubérot, text no. 34), in order to characterise its different contemporary configurations. In his broad analytical orientation, Esquivel's approach bears similarities to the *multiple secularities* approach of Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr, and Kleine (see texts no. 21, and no. 42 in this volume). Consequently, Esquivel speaks of "multiple laicities" being formed in different national contexts. In the Argentinian case,

I Juan Cruz Esquivel, *Detrás de los muros: La Iglesia Católica en tiempos de Alfonsín y Menem (1983–1999)* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2004); Juan Cruz Esquivel, *Cuestión de educación (sexual). Pujas y negociaciones político-religiosas en la Argentina democrática* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2013); Juan Cruz Esquivel, *Igreja, Estado e Política. Estudo comparado no Brasil e na Argentina* (São Paulo: Editora Santuario, 2013).

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Esquivel briefly describes the specific historical trajectory that led to what he calls "subsidiary laicity," wherein the continuation of a strong Catholic influence on the political culture, which has not been disturbed by the same historical ruptures seen in other Latin American nations, comes together with the contemporary processes of pluralisation, democratisation, and secularisation, forming a specific amalgam.

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Definition

Laicity refers to the process of autonomization of political institutions from the influence of religious norms. One of its historical manifestations has been the formal separation of churches and state, but there is record of other ways in which civil power has ceased to rely on religious power as a source of legitimacy.

Laicity is based on respect to freedom of conscience, the principle of the autonomy of the political from particular religious or philosophical values, and the state being neutral towards the plurality of religious beliefs, guaranteeing equal citizen rights and nondiscrimination (Blancarte 2000; Baubérot 2005, 2007; Bauberot and Milot 2011).

Introduction

In certain quarters of academia, it is usually considered that there is a one and only model of laicity, with an "original" and "authentic" version: the French one. In this regard, laicity is defined as the separation of churches and state and the confinement of religion to private life. There is a temptation to "standardize" laicity in normative terms, which implicitly or explicitly involves setting a parameter against which to assess the "advances" or "setbacks" of each state and, ultimately, each society.

However, state laicity processes have not all unfolded the same way. They have followed zigzag courses, depending on each country's hegemonic cultural matrix and historical configuration. In contexts where laicity resulted from religious pluralism, its

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modality was not identical to that where it meant liberation from religious control over decisions concerning public affairs. In some European countries, the state was historically constructed through its separation from the Catholic Church, and in the United States, it guaranteed religious freedom, whereas in a great part of Latin America, it consolidated interacting with religious groups according to a subsidiary logic. Undoubtedly, these three configurations give rise to different models of laicity.

These historical singularities in the formation of the state itself, and the corresponding modalities in which the laicization processes developed in each country, make it possible to understand the various meanings of the concept of laicity (Poulat 2003; Casanova 1994, 2009).

One possible way to address the manifest complexity of laicity is to operationalize it at different levels and analyze its variants in terms of such dimensions. Thus, the modalities of laicity can be explored in legal norms, in public policies and in political culture (Blancarte and Esquivel 2017). (An international team, made up of Roberto Blancarte (Mexico), Daniel Gutiérrez (Mexico), Felipe Gaytán (Mexico), Roberto Lorea (Brazil), Violeta Barrientos (Peru), and Juan Cruz Esquivel (Argentina), has met several times to develop a conceptual, real, and operational definition of laicity, in order to create an index.)

These different levels of analysis provide not only an essential empirical basis to analyze the consistencies or inconsistencies among legislation, public policies, and the hegemonic political culture, but also additional tools to identify different models of laicity and to gain a deeper theoretical understanding of the various forms in which the political and the religious have become interlocked or autonomized from each other.

Subsidiary Laicity as an Interpretative Framework of the Argentine Case

State laicization processes in Latin America have followed multiple courses. From an empirical point of view, multiple laicities have been defined by the particular historical, political, and cultural ties among the state, religion, and civil society in each national context.

In Argentina, Catholicism played a key role in shaping society's identity, and at different points in time, it has become one of the main sources of legitimacy of political processes (Esquivel 2004).

From the dawn of evangelization, the model of Christianity and the patronage regime created a complex cultural and institutional fabric where the religious and the political were intertwined, resulting in overlaps and superimposed legitimacies. The Independence process did not change this situation. On the contrary, although Catholicism was only at an institutionally early stage, it was considered as an integrating moral force and was required to bring cultural cohesion to a nation that was still forming.

Countless examples bear witness to the prevailing role awarded to the Catholic Church by civil power: the state's financial support of Catholicism, still in force today; the constitutional requirement to be a Catholic to become president and vice president, only repealed in the 1994 amendment; subsidies to religious schools; exclusive religious assistance to the Armed Forces and to enforcement agencies; management by Catholic charities of state funds allocated to social relief schemes; diplomatic and official passports for bishops and archbishops; Catholic imagery in state agencies; etc.

In the context of the modernizing and liberal spirit of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and through the actions of government elites imbued with the ideas of the European Enlightenment, the state demarcated and took over a number of functions hitherto controlled by the Catholic Church. The liberal governments of the late nineteenth century advanced a number of laicization laws (the law creating the Office of Vital Records in 1881; law 1420, which banned religious teaching during school hours in state-run schools, in 1884; and civil marriage in 1888). However, the foundations of the relationship between the state and the Catholic Church remained as strong as ever. The presence of Catholicism, which was relegated but still present, revealed its functionality in state projects. Unlike what happened in neighboring countries (Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay), churches and state were not separated in Argentina. State support of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church, enshrined in the 1853 constitution, remained untouched in spite of multiple amendments (Di Stéfano and Zanatta 2000).

During the twentieth century, Catholicism consolidated its dominant role in political and civil society. The Catholic Church contributed to social integration and to legitimizing the different political regimes, while the state guaranteed Catholicism's predominance, providing, throughout history, the legal, financial, cultural, and symbolic means to safeguard its privileged position (Mallimaci and Esquivel 2015).

Having consolidated as an institution in the 1930s, the Catholic Church deployed a number of strategies to secure a pervasive public presence. (Between 1933 and 1939, 11 dioceses, as many as the ones that already existed, were created. This matched, in 6 years, the number of ecclesiastical jurisdictions established from 1570 to 1933.) The network of Catholic educational institutions, which had grown exponentially with the arrival of new religious orders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, consolidated during this period, becoming a structure that could not be overlooked in the organization of the Argentine educational system. For the ruling classes, Catholicism began to become a recurrent source of legitimacy in the public arena, especially starting with the 1930 civil-military coups (Mallimaci 1988).

By the time democracy was restored during the late twentieth century, society had become more religiously and culturally diverse. This context witnessed the emergence of social actors who made new citizen demands, many of which were related to sexual and reproductive rights – sex education, same-sex marriage, adoption of children by homosexual couples, sexual identity, artificial fertilization, abortion, etc. Sooner or later, and more or less successfully, a great deal of such demands were included in the public agenda and gained legal status. This involved challenging and clashing with, but

also continuously negotiating and reaching agreements upon, the margins and scope of the prevailing model of laicity.

If laicity implies the autonomy of the political from the religious and the displacement of the latter as a source of legitimacy of the former, Argentina could be considered to have experienced a consistent state laicization process after having enacted, over the last decade, a number of laws that have broadened civil rights, clearly contradicting the postulates of the hegemonic religious institutions. In 2006, the Argentine Congress passed a law about comprehensive sex education, giving the state the power to outline a science-based curriculum to provide sex education to students, and in 2010, it legalized same-sex marriage, also authorizing adoption regardless of the sex of the adopting parents, making Argentina the first country in Latin America to recognize these civil rights. Two years later, a law about sex identity changes and another one on death with dignity were enacted. The processes leading up to the approval of this sequence of laws were fraught with disputes and tension, as well as negotiations, with religious actors who refused to alter the *status quo*. Generally, in hindsight, what prevailed in Congress decisions was a "spirit of the times" marked by the extension of civil rights.

Upon deeper analysis, it can be seen that the new legislation on sex and reproduction has been the consequence, to a greater extent, of a context characterized by democratic consolidation, the defense of human rights and the incorporation of minorities to the threshold of citizenship. Civil rights have been extended, but civil power has not constructed its autonomy from religious power as a mark of their institutional relationship in the long term. The legislation concerning sex and reproductive health, and even same-sex marriage, reflects the *stance* of a government – or of some of its individual officials and congressmen – rather than a *conception* of the state that is rooted in the political class (Esquivel 2009).

The gap between the passing of the aforementioned laws and the deferral of their implementation indicates, not only that religious power has a long-lasting influence on the state areas in charge of policy enforcement and [sic], but also that political decision-makers are prone to be influenced by their religious beliefs in fulfilling their public duties. Undoubtedly, this mismatch or inconsistency between the laws in force and the delays to issue their regulating provisions or to put them into practice are signs of a certain degree of disaffection with the law, but also of a dominant political culture that naturalizes the influential role of religion in the public arena. The intervention of religious actors in the public sphere is fostered, and their participation in managing public policies and in parliamentary debate is promoted.

How are we to understand, then, a scene of extended civil rights and another one in which the pursuit of religious legitimacy prevails in terms of continuity, rather than contradiction? How to understand the overlaps and the consolidation of the political and religious ties in the context of a lay state? Or, more accurately, which modalities or forms does laicity evince in this configuration of relationships among political and religious actors, discourses, and worldviews?

At least in the Argentine case, the analytical tools to understand this complex fabric of relationships can be provided by considering laicity in terms of *subsidiarity* (Esquivel 2016).

Subsidiary laicity corresponds to a type of state that presents a strong Catholic matrix in its origin and history, but in which the plurality of present-day societies is recognized in novel ways as a consequence of democratization and secularization. This state enacts innovative civil rights legislation promoting new gender, sex, and reproductive rights, at the same time as it reproduces a *subsidiarity* logic when implementing public policies and addressing citizens, through the mediation of collective actors, including religious ones. This is the distinctive feature of this conception of laicity.

The worldview underlying subsidiarity condemns direct state intervention, but legitimizes state support of civil society intermediary organizations. Such support is provided in the form of financial resources, the involvement of these organizations in the implementation of public policies, in institutional advisory bodies (national bioethics committees, advisory social councils, etc.), and even in the joint management of certain state functions.

It is not only government decision-makers that conceive of public policy from a subsidiary logic in Argentina: intermediary organizations themselves appeal to state structures based on the same conception, and to a great extent, their institutional reproduction strategies depend on such interaction mechanisms.

Where *subsidiary laicity* prevails, intricate combinations can be observed: laws based on the principles of laicity – liberty of conscience, nondiscrimination – coexist with religiously biased public policies. Far from being considered contradictory, the give and take that arises in negotiations involving a piece of legislation, its translation into public policy, and the entrenched political culture of the state officials responsible for its implementation needs to be analyzed.

At the same time, anchored in a long-standing political culture, public policy is organized in such a way as to preserve the religious structures present in the territory as intermediaries. Religious schools, the *Cáritas* food pantries, Catholic organizations that build houses and the Health Pastoral Care groups of each diocese which distribute health kits benefit from state funds and are part of the state mechanism to implement public policy among citizens.

Whether due to the Catholic culture in which many government decision-makers were socialized or to the strong perception of the extrapolitical gain that political actors assume can be derived from their relationship with Church authorities, the above components are integral to this conception of laicity (Mallimaci 2015).

Given the tensions inherent to a state governed by *subsidiary laicity*, an essential component is variability. Considering the gaps between legislation and public policies, which are a sign of the institutional precariousness of laicity, the political circumstances and the political leaders' characteristics are key factors to be considered in evaluating the relative importance of the principles of laicity in a particular context.

If the Catholic Church has historically been an influential actor in power relationships, the appointment of a Pope born in the country could not but reinforce a number of mechanisms already entrenched in the hegemonic political culture, that is, representations, imaginaries, and a *modus operandi* of political leaders who view Catholicism – its leaders, icons, symbols, and languages – as part of their everyday instruments for political construction. Pope Francis is an actor that cannot be disregarded in the local political map, not only because of what he represents worldwide but also because of the dynamics and the history of the relationship between politics and religion.

The Argentine political history evidences the dominance of a political culture that turns to the Catholic Church as a source of legitimacy. This worldview integrates and supplements the political with the religious, rather than differentiating these two dimensions' spheres of influence. This political idiosyncrasy and praxis cause laicity to take a particular form in Argentine political structures.

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50 Christoph Kleine: *Formations of Secularity in Ancient Japan*? (2019)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Christoph Kleine (b. 1962) is a professor for the History of Religions specialised on Japan and Buddhism at Leipzig University, Germany. Together with Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, he has founded and run the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" (2016–2024) funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

Kleine studied religious studies, Japanese studies, and philosophy at Philipps University Marburg in Germany, where he also earned his doctorate and habilitation. He began to intensively study Pure Land Buddhism of medieval Japan, during a two-semester stay at Bukkyō University in Kyōto (1986–1987). He wrote his doctoral thesis on Hōnen (1133–1212), the founder of this tradition in Japan. His unpublished habilitation thesis deals with Buddhist hagiography and historiography in East Asia.

From 2004 to 2008, Kleine served as Professor of Religion and Philosophy in East Asia at Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich. During this time, his focus increasingly shifted to questions of historical sociology and conceptual history. He explored the application of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory to Japanese religious history. Here he particularly examined whether Luhmann's claim that the distinction between transcendence and immanence is constitutive for the emergence of religion as a social system is also relevant outside the Christian world, especially in Japanese religious history.

After moving to Leipzig University in 2008 to take a position as Professor for the History of Religion, Kleine concluded that, contrary to the claims of the so-called "critical religionists," the distinction between transcendence and immanence, and consequently between religious and secular spheres of social action, is not unique to European intellectual history or Christianity. In a number of articles,[I] he has argued that similar con-

I See for example: Christoph Kleine, "Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, Nr. 1 (2013): 1–34; Christoph Kleine, "Religion als begriffliches Konzept und soziales System im vormodernen Japan: Polythetische Klassen, semantische und funktionale Äquivalente und strukturelle Analogien," in *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*, ed. Peter Schalk, Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, Christoph Kleine, Astrid van Nahl (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2013), 225–92; Christoph Kleine, "Zur Universalität der Unterscheidung

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ceptual distinctions and social differentiations can be identified in premodern Japan and that these may have shaped the way in which modern notions of secularity were appropriated in Japan. Within the framework of the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities," Kleine continued his research on the development of a distinct Japanese form of secularity through diachronic longitudinal studies. An extract from one of the results of this research is given below.

In the article, Kleine argues that certain decisions taken at critical junctures in ancient and medieval times have generated path-dependent processes with long-lasting effects on the way in which the Japanese appropriated principles of separating the religious from the secular in a modern nation-state. He in particular highlights the autonomous development of Buddhist institutions and the peculiar strategy of legitimating the eternal rule of the imperial family by claiming their descent from the gods.

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[. . .] In a few earlier essays (Kleine 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) I have tried to show that the medieval paradigm of "the interdependence of the nomosphere of the ruler and the nomosphere of the Buddha" (*ōbō buppō sō'i* 王法佛法相依), propagated by Buddhist thinkers as a warrant of social order, established a discourse of distinction and a practice of differentiation, which may – for [p. 11/12] some contestable heuristic reasons – be described as a form of premodern secularity, i.e. secularity *avant la lettre*. The semantics of a binary distinction and the corresponding socio-structural differentiation between 'political' and 'religious' institutions, I have argued, may have paved the way for a relatively smooth process of appropriating and implementing modern Western concepts of secularism after 1868, because the idea that Buddhist institutions represent independent social entities that are not allowed to intervene in state affairs but are to be controlled by the state, was already firmly established in the Edo period. Inasmuch as the policy of the Tokugawa regime – representing the *bu* 武 element of domination (whereas the emperor represented the *bun* 文 aspect) and leaning towards

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religiös/säkular: Eine systemtheoretische Betrachtung," in *Religionswissenschaft: Ein Studienbuch,* ed. Michael Stausberg (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 65–80.

Neo-Confucianism rather than Buddhism – aimed at a complete subordination of Buddhist organisations under a 'secular state',[. . .] one might even speak of a form of indigenous early modern secularism (cf. Teeuwen 2013).[. . .] Furthermore, the early Meiji elite, with their Confucian background, had "a humanist, mostly atheist, this-worldly mindset" (Hardacre 2018: 90) and were thus well prepared for establishing a secular state. Focussing on a medieval Buddhist perspective, however, I paid scant attention to the above-mentioned controversial issues concerning the arrangement of secularity in the Meiji period and beyond.

In this paper I would like to tentatively address these issues by identifying and analysing the preconditions for the specific way in which the Japanese appropriated Western normative concepts of secularism[. . .] and thereby created [p. 12/13] their specific form of secularity in a broader perspective, taking into account the other traditions of Japan that resist a clear assignment to one side of the binary form, 'secularity.' In other words, I am trying to reconstruct a more comprehensive genealogy of conceptual resources available to the relevant actors who transformed Japan into a modern nation-state [. . .].

The hypothesis hopefully to be tested by more thorough future studies can be summarised as follows: The relative ease with which the Japanese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries appropriated modern Western normative notions of secularism as instruments of governance, first and foremost the idea that religious institutions should be separated from state institutions, results from a long sequence of path-dependent processes originating from contingent historical events and corresponding decisions taken at a number of critical junctures in history. [. . .] What is implied in my hypothesis is that the Japanese could easily resort to indigenous epistemic and social-structural resources in order to take up the challenges of Western regimes of knowledge and governance, hegemonic and 'viral' in the late nineteenth century. On the basis of given social and epistemic structures, Japanese reformers were ready to appropriate concepts of secularity creatively, on their own terms and driven by their own interests – to a certain extent, at least. [p. 13–19]

My hypothesis is that the path-dependent process that started with the creative and selective appropriation of Chinese culture – which characterised the period between the sixth and the eighth centuries – generated structural configurations of a *longue durée* that strongly conditioned the inventory of options available to the Meiji reformers when they had to cope with Western ideals of a modern nation-state. [p. 19/20. . .] One crucial decision taken at this critical juncture was – rather as an unintended side-effect – the introduction of Buddhism [p. 20/21. . .]. Buddhism as a vehicle of continental culture in general accelerated the concomitant sinicisation of the Yamato state by the Taika reform – which almost culminated in a Buddhocracy – and the resultant new policy of Kanmu 桓武 (r. 781–806) with respect to Buddhist institutions.

The introduction of Buddhism and its eventual elevation from a clan-centred cult to a state cult had an enormous and long-lasting impact on many levels. First of all, the introduction of a system of beliefs and practices that provided cognitive and normative

orientation based on a radical duality of immanence and transcendence[. . .] gave rise to a form of basic societal differentiation into a 'secularised'[. . .] rule of state institutions, symbolically headed by the emperor, responsible for mundane (*seken* 世間) affairs on the one hand, and a socio-cultural formation responsible for supra-mundane (*shusse-ken* 出世間) affairs, namely Buddhism, on the other.

This eventually resulted in a constellation that Lamberg-Karlovsky has described as "the universal tension between temple and palace" (Árnason 2005: 29) and which, as Max Weber put it, notoriously lead to a "struggle between military and temple nobility," a struggle that "not always lead to an open conflict" [p. 21/22] (Weber, Roth, and Wittich 1978: 1160),[1] but has always played a decisive role in the formation of states and societies. This is definitely true for ancient Japan.

The introduction and establishment of Buddhism in Japan, however, represents only one crucial development in this historical phase. The most important measure taken at this critical juncture, in order to cope with the challenges posed by the events on the continent, was the so-called Taika reform [. . .]. The Taika reform concluded a "revolutionary process by which the old clan order was gradually but surely transformed into a monarchical state administered by officials appointed by, and responsible to, the emperor" (Inoue 1993: 198). The process had started in 646 after a *coup d'état* [. . .]. I cannot go into any details here, but I would like to highlight a few selected developments and related decisions made in this period, which had an extremely long-lasting effect on the formation of state, culture, and society.

First of all, during the Nara period, the adoption of Chinese culture reached its peak with the establishment of the statutory (*ritsuryō* 律令) state and its legal system.[. . .] [. . .] Although the "statutory (*ritsuryō*) system" (McCullough 1999: 24) followed the model of the Tang state, it showed some remarkable deviations. The most obvious was the establishment of the Jingikan 神祇官 (Office of [Affairs Related to] the Gods), an office not known in China, that was formally on an equal footing with the Daijōkan 太政官 (Grand Council of State). Whereas the latter served as the central administrative organ [. . .] the Jingikan was in charge of major state rituals connected with [p. 22/23] the imperial household [. . .].

Notwithstanding this organisational situation, we see here an institutional differentiation between administration and governance on the one hand and state rituals on the other. The two traditional functions ascribed to the emperor – rule (*sei* 政) and ritual (*sai* 祭) – were thus institutionally and symbolically separated, the latter being subordinated to the former. In contrast to the ideological interpretation of the Meiji reformers who reinstalled the Jingikan in 1868 and claimed the "unity of ritual and government" (*saisei itchi* 祭政一致; also "the unity of government and doctrine," *seikyō itchi* 政教一致; cf. Fischer 2001), I believe that the adoption of Chinese bureaucracy and legal codes

1 [note 18 in the original] For the German original, cf. Weber (1985: 690). Note that the English translation is rather free and vague.

actually paved the way for a disentanglement of ritual and governance. In the course of that process, the Tennō's actual political power (*kenryoku* 權力) was gradually transformed into some kind of symbolic authority or charisma (*ken'i* 權威). Nevertheless, it would be anachronistic to say that the "Nara state" was "headed by an emperor whose authority was both secular and religious" (Brown 1993b: 227). The system resembled that of imperial China inasmuch as even the rituals performed by the Chinese emperor [. . .] lack most of what would have been interpreted as religious according to the prevalent definitions formed in the nineteenth century.[. . .] They can be imagined as acts of the symbolic representation of legitimate rule through ritual procedures. I think the same applies to the rituals of the Japanese imperial family. This is the very nature of the *sai* aspect of imperial rule, whereas the *sei* aspect stands for the enforcement of legitimate rule through administration and coercion.

Furthermore, the growing influence of Buddhism and the gradual monopolisation of major parts of the ritual system by Buddhist institutions [p. 23/24] eventually deprived even the emperor of his central position in the ritual sphere. He was largely degraded to a symbolic representation of national unity. Even though the Tennō was, ideally, not only a descendent of the gods but a god-like figure in his own right, according to the hegemonic Buddhist ideology of ancient and medieval Japan "the Emperor had his post and his privileges because of good acts in previous existences," and "even the Gods, and much more so the mortal Emperor, were under the laws of *Karma*, and would have to suffer in the beyond, and/or in future incarnations, for abuse of their powers" (Steenstrup 1991: 38).

Furthermore, although the emperors and princes "were formally above the law, . . . they were in fact prisoners of precedent and ritual" (Steenstrup 1991: 38). Thus, their "officials, notably the Fujiwara [藤原], actually ruled in their place, quite officially so from 866 onwards" (Steenstrup 1991: 38). [. . .] In some sense, we may speak of a gradual secularisation of the administration starting with the Taika reform and the subsequent sinicisation and Buddhicisation of Japan.

Equally relevant is another legal and institutional differentiation represented by two sets of rules and regulations, namely the "regulations of [affairs related to] the gods" (*jingiryō* 神祇令) and the "regulations for [Buddhist] monks and nuns" (*sōniryō* 僧尼令). [. . .] The *sōniryō* [. . .] aimed at the regulation of the lives and conduct of monks and nuns beyond the monastic rules codified in the *vinaya*. Many of the 27 articles make it very clear that monks and nuns were seen as a potentially dangerous group that needed to be checked and controlled.

In any case, with the promulgation of the *sōniryō* and its specific regulations for monks and nuns, these figures were defined as a distinct social group, easily identifiable by their habitus, lifestyle, clothing, etc. This set them apart from Confucian officials, who were an integral part of the administration that they served and represented. The 'embeddedness' of Confucianism in the Chinese state bureaucracy may also account for the fact that despite its impact [p. 24/25] on Japanese culture, Confucianism in general never managed to institutionalise in Japan. Buddhists, on the other hand, had their own

distinctive forms of organisation and networks largely independent from the state institutions and could therefore establish themselves as a specific socio-cultural formation, even while supervised and strictly controlled by the state, more precisely by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Jibushō 治部省). Even before the Taika reform, the Buddhist order was incorporated into an administrative structure by the "Bureau of Monks" (*sōgō* 僧綱), officially established under that name in 701, an office in charge of ordinations and granting proper ranks.

Whether or not it is appropriate or anachronistic to speak of "Secular control over monastic life and the alignment of monasteries with the state bureaucracy" (Kodansha 1999: "monasticism – 僧院制度 *sōin seido*"), need not be decided here. The situation was clearly ambiguous. Buddhist monastics in the Asuka and Nara periods were treated as a functional unit of the state, governed and employed by the state institutions, and yet clearly distinguished from them. Monastic ranks were different from ranks within the state bureaucracy, and it was deemed inappropriate to be at the same time emperor and cleric. [. . . p. 25/26. . .] In any case, the radical reorganisation of state and society during the late Asuka and the Nara periods opened up a wide window of options, oscillating between the preservation of indigenous customs, laws, cults, etc., on the one side and a complete sinicisation on the other. Moreover, as "Buddhism lay at the center of the sinified cultural mixture known as the Asuka enlightenment" (Inoue 1993: 171) and Buddhist priests played such an important role as transmitters of Chinese culture, sinicisation could easily have meant a complete Buddhicisation of Japan. [. . .]

The so-called Dōkyō affair of the late Nara period, when "Buddhist forces . . . nearly succeeded in usurping imperial authority" (McCullough 1999: 20), may be seen as a point of culmination of the sinicisation and Buddhicisation of Japan.[. . .] [. . . p. 26/27. . .] Dōkyō, against his own intentions, fostered the strict separation of Buddhist and imperial institutions, symbolised by the exclusion of everything Buddhist from the Grand Shrine of Ise, the centre of the imperial cult (Bowring 2005: 97; Teeuwen and Breen 2018: 31–53). The separation of the imperial cult and Buddhism[. . .] made it almost impossible to establish some kind of caesaropapism in Japan.

Moreover, the involvement of Buddhist priests in political affairs towards the end of the Nara period was arguably a determining factor in Kanmu Tennō's 桓武天皇 (r. 781–806) "Buddhism reform" (*bukkyō kaikaku* 佛教改革) (Inoue 1971: 85) i.e. his decision to keep Buddhist institutions at a healthy distance when he removed the capital to Heiankyō or Kyōto[. . .] in order to keep Temmu's descendants from occupying the throne (Naoki 1993: 266–267). As part of the same process, Kanmu continued to transform "Ise into a non-Buddhist site of imperial ritual" (Teeuwen and Breen 2018: 52). This does not mean that the Confucian trained Kanmu [. . .] was generally hostile towards Buddhism. But he evidently deplored the degeneration and politicisation of Buddhist priests and institutions and wanted to keep them away from political power. Thus, his reforms can be seen as countermeasures against the "secularisation of Buddhism" (*bukkyō no sezokuka* 仏教の世俗化) (Inoue 1971: 85). At the same time, however, the new policy towards [p. 27/28] Buddhism opened up new opportunities for those priests who were

themselves critical to the tendency of Buddhist institutions to mingle with politics (Inoue 1971: 85). Thereby, [. . .] Kanmu paved the way for a much greater independence of Buddhist monastic institutions (*jike* 寺家). [. . .]

Arguably, the most significant event symbolising and accelerating the growing autonomy of Buddhist institutions was Saichō's declaration that for Tendai 天台 adepts, full ordination in accordance with the regulations both of the *vinaya* and the *sōgō* was unnecessary. This was a revolution whose consequences for the further development of Japanese Buddhism can hardly be overestimated. [. . .] Strictly speaking, the ordination autonomy of the Sanmon wing 山門派 of Tendai not only caused a schism within the Japanese *saṇgha*; but also, and what is more, the Tendaishū escaped the control of state authority over monastic affairs and thereby contributed considerably to the increasing independence of Buddhist institutions from the state. Eventually, over the course of the Heian period, the Buddhist institutions developed into one of three power blocks or *kenmon* 權門 (Kuroda 1996a),[. . .] the other two being the court nobility (*kuge* 公家) and the emerging military aristocracy (*buke* 武家).[. . .] This gain in autonomy was further supported by economic changes such as the expansion of the *shōen* 莊園 system of private landownership (Ōyama 1988–1999; Nagahara 1960; Steenstrup 1991: 66–70) during the Heian period (794–1185), which transformed Buddhist institutions into powerful, militarized [. . .] landowners. [p. 28/29. . .]

As pointed out before, an important aspect to be taken into consideration within the theoretical framework of critical junctures are options that were actually available but were, for reasons to be analysed, not chosen. For our topic, the single most important among such options is the Chinese meritocratic principle of rule by "the mandate of heaven" (*tianming* 天命).[. . .] In that regard, we should remind ourselves that Japan constructed its legitimising ideology in a period when even in China, Confucianism had long lost its monopoly as a state doctrine. From the Sui dynasty on, Chinese emperors repeatedly relied on Buddhist or Daoist strategies of legitimising their rule (Jülch 2016: 7–14; 21–24). [. . .]

When Tenmu 天武 (r. 672–686) successfully rebelled against Tenji and became Tennō in 673, he felt the need to secure his position as ruler and establish a legitimate dynasty.[. . .] In order to achieve these goals, Tenmu launched a mythological and historiographical project, which resulted in the eventual posthumous production of two national chronicles, the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and [p. 29/30] the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720).[. . .] The latter became the official historiography that "sought to legitimate the hegemonic rule of the state founded on the imperial system" (Isomae 2009: 19) by making the explicit claim that the emperor's clan was entitled by the gods to rule over Japan for eternity (Naumann 1996: 6–8). The replacement of the meritocratic Confucian principle of legitimate domination by a home-grown mythological legitimation stressing the 'hereditary charisma' of divine rulers yielded a number of evident benefits.

First of all, as demonstrated repeatedly in Chinese historiography, the heavenly mandate could be withdrawn if the ruler proved to be unworthy or incompetent. On this basis, every successful rebel could stage himself as the executor of the heavenly

will and claim the mandate of heaven for himself. The obvious consequence was that in Chinese history, dynastic change was the rule rather than the exception. The Japanese mythological principle of legitimation by divine descent precluded the possibility of a legitimate replacement of the ruling family. [. . . p. 30/31. . .]

As a result, the Japanese neither resorted to Confucian nor to Buddhist legitimation strategies but constructed their own by creating a unified state mythology, written down in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which "became the repositories of national memory" (Isomae 2009: 18). With a view to the problem of path-dependent processes in the subsequent shaping of the relationship between religion and the secular, these decisions had far-reaching consequences. The institution of the imperial house maintained a considerable degree of independence from the continent's two most important traditions of thought, Confucianism and Buddhism, and was at the same time intertwined with the myths centring on the indigenous deities, which spurred the later development of a *tennō*-centric nativism under the name Shintō.

The effect of this deliberate decision – *not* to adopt the Chinese concept of rule by heavenly mandate – cannot be overestimated in light of Japanese history up to the present day. The concept of an eternal dynasty of divine descent[...] shaped the Japanese self-conception and national identity perhaps more than any other episteme. [. . . p. 31/32. . .]

Paradoxically, the apotheosis of the Tennō as a sacred or even divine figure may have been one factor in the political disempowerment of the imperial institution. Already during the Heian period, actual power had shifted from the imperial court to the Fujiwara clan, members of which acted as regents (*sesshō* 攝政) and chancellors (*kanpaku* 關白). [. . .] After the *Ōnin* civil war of 1467–1477," says Steenstrup, "the Emperor's power [was reduced] to zero" (Steenstrup 1991: 70). Actual power had shifted to the 'secular'[...] *buke* 武家 – arguably another critical juncture – and the emperor had become a mere symbolic representation of the mundane nomosphere of "the ruler's law" (*ōbō* 王法).[...] [p. 32/33]

The decision not to rely on Buddhism for the legitimation of power allowed Buddhist institutions to develop more freely, as if they had entered into an indissoluble 'community of destiny' with the imperial house. By the end of the Heian period, Buddhist institutions had become as powerful as landowners, often enjoying tax exemption and immunity so that they felt entitled and impelled to ideologically formulate and propagate their autonomy *vis-à-vis* state institutions. They propagated the ideology of dual rule by the ruler's law (*ōbō*) and the Buddha dharma (*buppō* 佛法), two interdependent nomospheres (ideally) responsible for mundane (*seken, sezoku* 世俗) and supra-mundane (*shusseken*) affairs respectively (Kleine 2013b, 2013a, 2001; Kuroda 1996c, 1983; Satō 1985). With its strong notion of transcendence and its devaluation of immanence, its claim for exclusive or at least privileged access to transcendence, and so forth, Buddhism laid the ideological foundations for a basic kind of binary functional differentiation between a 'religious' and a 'political' sphere. I assume that the institutional autonomy gained by the powerful Buddhist monasteries and temples during the Heian period

generated social structures that called for legitimisation and the establishment of corresponding epistemic structures, namely the ideological framework of the "interdependence of the ruler's law and the Buddha dharma" (*ōbō buppō sō'i* 王法佛法相依).

The paradigm of the two interdependent nomospheres reflected to some extent institutional realities – i.e., the autonomy of Buddhist institutions *visà-vis* the 'secular' power blocks of the *buke* and *kuge* – and functioned as an emic ideal type that was widely accepted as a guiding concept of legitimate and beneficial governance. In other words, the discourse over the interdependence of the two nomospheres generated an epistemic structure that legitimised an emerging social structure, thereby functioning as a durable "plausibility structure" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 110–122). The concrete arrangements of this dual rule, however, were highly flexible and situational.[. . .] [. . . p. 33/34. . .]

The respective conceptual distinction and the corresponding social differentiation between state and monastic institutions, mundane and supra-mundane "nexuses of social activities" (Stowers 2008: 442), purposes, value spheres, and so forth, resulted in a path dependent process of a *longue durée* that was still in effect at the critical juncture triggered by the enforced opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century. In short, the social and epistemic structures that functioned as antecedent conditions relevant for the reactions of the Japanese to the common shock of the encounter with imperialist Western powers, were the consequences of decisions taken at critical junctures much earlier in history.

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51 Neguin Yavari: *The Political Regard in Medieval Islamic Thought* (2019)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Neguin Yavari (b. 1960 Tehran) is an Iranian-American historian, with a focus on medieval Islam. She did her BA within the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, USA in 1980, an MA within the Department of History at Georgetown University in 1982, and an MPhil within the Department of History at Columbia University, New York, in 1986. In 1992, she received her PhD in history from Columbia University.

She has held positions at the New School and within the Department of Religion at Columbia University in New York City, as well as several fellowships and visiting scholarships at the University of Oxford, the Central European University in Budapest, and the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" at Leipzig University.

Yavari's research focuses on Medieval Islam, especially on the twinning (and twining) of religion and kingship. Her book on the rhetoric of advice in medieval political thought, *Advice for the Sultan: Prophetic Voices and Secular Politics in Medieval Islam* (Oxford University Press/Hurst, 2014), is a comparative study of mirrors for princes from the European and Islamic worlds. Mirrors for princes across political and spatial divides is also the subject of her co-edited volume, *Global Medieval: Mirrors for Princes Reconsidered* (Harvard University Press, 2015). Her latest book, entitled *The Future of Iran's Past: Nizam al-Mulk Remembered* (Oxford University Press/Hurst, 2018), is a biography of Nizam al-Mulk, the prominent eleventh-century vizier, with a focus on the reception history of al-Mulk as both a theorist and practitioner of politics. She argues that, in a sense, al-Mulk's life spans almost a thousand years.

Yavari's current research investigates religious change, and the transition from the medieval to the early modern period, in the eastern Islamic world. The focus is on the new secularising pieties of the period, Sufi and otherwise, that offered a blueprint for a public religion that acknowledged the imperatives of governance, and, by so doing, redefined the ideational landscape.

In the selected text, Yavari develops the argument that the twinning of religion and kingship might be considered "a global political concept, operational in multiple, concurrent but non-synchronous contexts, *none* of which are original to it."

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A simple query frames the present inquiry: Is the history of political thought in a non-Western context possible? In spite of the great methodological strides in intellectual history since its emergence from the doldrums in the last decades of the twentieth century, the sub-discipline has remained stubbornly impervious to non-Western thought. Much of this is by design. Intellectual history is engaged, as Anthony Grafton has pointed out, in a search for the origins of modern political thought which is premised upon a past that diverges from the present (Grafton 2006, 1–32). Tracing the roots of a modern world that is thought to be an improvement on its past creates continuity between past and present. The recovery of the republican or neo-Roman concept of liberty at the heart of Machiavelli's ideological universe by Quentin Skinner, for example, changed the terms of the debate on the origins of modern political thought in the Western academy. That paradigm of recovery, however, implies, as hinted above, a [p. 52/53] Whiggish narrative of incremental improvement and progress. For the term "origins" does not simply imply a beginning, albeit elusive, but as observed by Marc Bloch, it carries with it a host of implicit explanations to buttress value judgments (Bloch 1953, 29–35). In more ways than one, historians are also the begetters, or rather the forgers, of intellectual history.

On those and similar grounds, many a practitioner of intellectual history has argued against comparisons with non-Western histories of thought, or comparisons that predate a globalized world. Popular justifications for cordoning off the modern West from the rest of history include the fact that state and society were not differentiated in the medieval period, that manners and modes of exchange or cross-pollination prior to the age of steam and print remain unrecoverable, and that attempts at cross-cultural engagement were few and far between and their retrieval now induces anachronistic assumptions. Samuel Moyn, for example, insists on modern and capitalist social formations for the spread of "concept global" (Moyn 2013, 187–204) and, in the case of a concept generated in non-Western societies, Andrew Sartori argues that "it would need to be fully intelligible within the European intellectual context" (Sartori 2010, 322). Global intellectual history for Sartori and others is predicated upon translatability, or the potential to formulate a political claim that, explicitly or not, reflects, illuminates, and addresses that which is already in existence.[1]

All this tends to suggest that a political claim considered worthy of its name is bound by European articulations of the political and that, from a wider perspective, histories

1 [note 1 in the original] For arguments to the contrary, see Denecke 2013; Subrahmanyam 2015, 126–37; and Holmes and Standen 2015, 106–17.

of political thought are themselves part of the arsenal of modern imperialism (Bell 2013, 537–40); or in the words of John Dunn, "the study of political thought remains intractably historical" (Dunn 1996, 13). And Jeremy Adelman has pointed out global history's lackluster engagement with disjuncture, disintegration, and dissonance – all critical components of deep histories of global transformation (Adelman 2017). To Adelman, global history has actually contributed to "the Anglicizing of intellectual lives around the world" as "English has become Globish," the tongue of globalization.

There is another valence to the predatory nature of global history that deserves our attention. In the same way that conceptions of secularism remain heavily vested in Christian discursive, infrastructural, and historical templates, no matter the numerous refutations, the linear trajectory of progress that underwrites European/Western exceptionalism remains firmly embedded in historiographical paradigms and periodization schemes that govern writings on the past. What happens if we turn our attention away from the eighteenth century and from Europe, and from the emergence of strong secular states that divided the public and private spheres, and finally, from religion brushed aside, to societies where a new set of values with long roots did not supplant the past? [p. 53/54] Are these societies condemned to a verdict of perpetual senescence? And, is it possible to read texts for context, or as a window into a worldview, if the values adumbrated in those texts do not take hold in society, or to study those that produce political communities that are radically different from the ones that emerged in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Is theirs a fundamentally different regime of historicity, to borrow François Hartog's paradigm? Is it possible to rescue the non-Western past from its present status as reified heritage (Hartog 2005, 7–18)?

While the language of politics in medieval Christian thought remains directly comparable with that produced in the Islamic world, as I hope to demonstrate, no ready comparison is allowed – on the historical or historiographical register – between modern Europe and the modern Middle East. But if it can be demonstrated that concurrent but non-synchronous discursive pasts have produced different presents, then how may continuity between past and present – the pride and joy of European intellectual history – be maintained? If intellectual historians concur that ideas must be considered in context, or that there is a 'proper fit' between an idea and its age, then how may we account for similar ideas in different historical contexts?

In what follows, I argue that juxtaposing political texts from the medieval Islamic world with their Christian counterparts will allow for a better understanding of the contours of the debate on the space for politics that Larry Scanlon has called quasi-secularity (Scanlon 1994, 322),[2] framed in medieval sources as the perennial tug of war between religious and lay authority. The comparative lens will bring into question the long-held belief that if the delineation of that relationship (between secular and reli-

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2 [note 2 in the original] It deserves mention that implicit in Scanlon's quasi-secularity is a normative definition of secularity as a harbinger of better things to come; see also Newman 2013; Strohm 2010.

gious authority) is markedly different in the modern progeny of the Christian world, i.e., the West, from the one in place in some regions of the Islamic world, it is because of a series of sharp differences in the debates in their past incarnations. Such comparisons will also put a spotlight on present-day organizations of politics – and regimes of historicity – that inform the study of past political thought. The implications of this line of inquiry for the history of European political thought are significant as well.

To a good number of intellectual historians, a proper comparative approach to political thought is bound to be a study in difference. Andrew March, for example, argues that comparative political theory "needs to explain why it is not merely expanding the canon to include non-Western texts and why a certain non-Western text is 'alien,' thus justifying the moniker comparative." (March 2006, 531) [p. 54/55]

The contribution of a Muslim theorist to political thought is not sufficient to qualify the enterprise as "comparative," for it is no different than proclamations by a Norwegian or a Buddhist, or even a Marxist thinker on the subject. March sets out ten theses to conclude that comparative political theory must be engaged, that is, it must study "the contestations of norms, values, and principles between distinct and coherent doctrines of thought." In his words, "a genuinely comparative political theory (as opposed to a better political theory or a better universalism) must have a conception of what makes a tradition distinct from another (a role, I argue, that is best filled by religion)." (ibid., 564)

There are, of course, vast differences between the worlds of Christianity and Islam in the Age of Global Intensification, to use Robert Moore's helpful label for the period from 500 to 1500 (Moore 2016, 80–92).[3] But can a comparative inquiry that focuses on difference produce new knowledge, or generate fresh approaches? Or will the results infallibly reiterate the stale claim of an apparent divergence – at some indeterminate point in the Middle Ages, and for reasons that remain opaque, between Europe and the rest of the world? Built on the method that Wiebke Denecke has called "ellipsis," such studies engage in what is a necessarily futile interrogation of one culture for lacking things commonly found in another (Denecke 2013, 12–5). [. . . p. 55/56. . .]

While medieval Europe produced institutions that combined varying degrees of power and authority notwithstanding their character or origins – institutions that arose in the Islamic world lacked authority as it was consistently denied to them by holders of legitimacy; that is, the clerics. Manzano's thesis – that strong states grew to dominate the Christian lands whereas states in the Islamic world remained weak as religion successfully monopolized the traffic in authority – has been the mantra of academic scholarship on the Islamic world for almost a century.

By way of contrast, consider here an argument for political change in the relation between court and church as reflected in political tracts from fifteenth century England.

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3 [note 3 in the original] I am also mindful here of Timothy Reuter's critical conundrum: "Do we compare societies at the same point of time, or at the same stage of development?" See Reuter 1998, 41; and Osterhammel 2011, xv–xxii, 45–76.

Strohm has demonstrated that manipulations of pictorial and textual representations of the wheel of fortune in Lydgate's (d. ca. 1451) *Fall of Princes*, his rendition of *De casibus viroum [sic] illustrium*, points to the gradual ascendancy of the king over fortune and religious authority a good number of decades before Machiavelli's (d. 1527) *The Prince*. Lydgate's opening depicts an illustration of Edward IV (r. 1461–83, with a brief interlude in 1470–1) riding the wheel of fortune, from which his Lancastrian predecessors are tumbling, and the wheel itself flanked by the clerical hierarchy on the one hand and the nobility on the other. The "image of Reason on public view and arrayed in the robes of an English judge accents a new and more general role of Reason as an arbiter of secular conduct," according to Strohm. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he argues, "Fortune is detached from its reliance upon God's Providence," and it is treated as "an autonomous locus of the unpredictability in human affairs, and thus an apt incentive to human precaution" (Strohm 2005, [p. 56/57] 114–5). According to Strohm, the idea that fortune might be mastered opened a space for the secular practice of statecraft as a product of human exertion. In this new climate, "reason is not implementing the process, or even just overseeing it, but intervening in a new and unprecedented way, by 'spiking' the wheel to arrest its course" (ibid.). It is the dawn of a new era.

Turning from fifteenth-century England to the last decade of the eleventh century in Iran, the vizier Nizam al-Mulk's (d. 1092) widely read and influential *Siyar al-muluk* ("*The Way of Kings*") is strikingly similar in political language to Strohm's mirrors and predates them by almost four centuries. A celebrated vizier and a stalwart figure of power and authority in medieval Islamic society, Nizam al-Mulk dominated the Saljuq Empire (1040–1194) in its heydays in the eleventh century. Such was his standing among the great and the good of his era that his name was put forward as an apt replacement for the ʿAbbasid caliph himself, by no less an authoritative figure than the celebrated theologian and jurist, the Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (d. 1085) (al-Juwayni 1979, 246–55, Heck 2012). In his chapter "On the Turn of Fortune's Wheel and in praise of the Master of the World – May God Confirm His Sovereignty," the turning of the wheel of fortune and kingship enjoy a direct and unmediated relationship:

> God chooses in every age and in every time, one member of the human race, and having endowed him with the interests of the world and the well-being of His servants; He charges that person to close the doors of corruption, confusion and discord, and He imparts to him such majesty and dignity in the eyes and hearts of men, that under his just rule they may live their lives in constant security and every wish for his reign to continue. (Nizam al-Mulk 1978, 11)

God's punishment for disobedience or disregard for divine law (presumably by His subjects, including the king) is the disappearance of kingship altogether, and the inauguration of civil strife and destruction. A new king then comes about:

> by divine decree one human being acquires prosperity and power, and according to his deserts The Truth bestows good fortune upon him and gives him wit and wisdom, wherewith he may employ his subordinates and every one according to his merits and confer upon each a dignity and a station proportionate to his power. (Nizam al-Mulk 1978, 11)

While the selection of the king is a divine prerogative, it is the wisdom of the king that employs good counsel and protects it, for good rule is also contingent on advice purveyed by others.

The claim here is not that Nizam al-Mulk pre-empted Lydgate and arrived way ahead at an imaginary finishing line; or that there is a connection, however tenuous, between European and Islamic political thought in the premodern period. Rather, the imperative in comparisons drawn between historically non-related cultures is to move beyond "the comfort zone of influence, travel, migration and diffusion," because, as Denecke has pointed out, textual traditions [p. 57/58] "do not travel like guns, germs and steel; not even like coins, miniature paintings, or religious statuettes" (Denecke 2013, 292). What is meant is that juxtaposing the eleventh-century vizier with the fifteenth-century poet forces a reconsideration of the linear relationship between discourse and history that is often considered an exclusive prerogative of European historiography and, by extension, history *tout court*. If mastery of fortune may be read as proof of incipient secularity, then what the comparative frame yields is the inescapable truth – evidenced in subsequent history – that secular political langue acts upon the political sphere differently in differing contexts. And secondly, the comparative frame underscores Peter Gordon's exhortation that "it is time to discount the epistemological and normative (and implicitly metaphysical) premise that ideas are properly understood only if they are studied within the context of their initial articulation" (Gordon 2014, 36–7). For implicit in this idea of initial context, Gordon argues, is the conviction that it is "not merely different than but in fact authoritative over and against all later manifestations or deployments of an idea" (ibid.). Nizam al-Mulk's irrefutably earlier although most probably not initial articulation of mastery of the wheel of fortune demonstrates that in at least one important regard – the relationship between political rule and divine will – the discursive spheres of premodern England and Iran overlap. That coincidence necessitates an argument for multiple contexts, as opposed to one native context in which an idea, principle, or ideology may be understood.

The same line of inquiry opens the discussion by another bureaucrat-turned historian, the anonymous (conventionally referred to as Ibn al-Balkhi) late eleventh-century author of *Farsnama* (Book of Fars). His is a history of Fars, the initial homeland of the Sasanians (224–650), Iran's last pre-Islamic ruling house. Written around the time of Nizam al-Mulk's death, *Farsnama* begins with:

> When God chooses from among his servants a noble person and places in his grasp the reins of kingship and sovereignty and gives to him the dominion and protection of the world, the greatest favor which He can show towards that king in particular and the world in general is to incline the aspirations of the king of the time towards knowledge and justice, because all virtues are contained in these two excellent qualities. (Ibn al-Balkhi 1921, 1)

In this instance, the cornerstone of the king's sovereignty comprises two God given, secular qualities. And God's sovereignty in this passage is legal fiction, for while the selection of the king can be conceived as strictly a divine prerogative, the craft of ruling

is an entirely human affair. In medieval Islamic political langue, although good kings are considered ipso facto pious, their success in this world is measured not by their piety but by their ability to rule with wisdom and discernment. Their demise is brought about by bad judgment and not by fortune. [p. 58/59]

The sovereignty of God in the political realm was effectively articulated in a similarly fictive manner in the medieval Christian world. There, the divine will of God, which worked in His service and at His bidding, provided the foundation for political legitimacy. But that un-historical and extra-temporal dimension, although in theory the origin of government, "provided medieval kings with few guides to action and little in the way of explicit programs of political policy" (Spiegel 1975, 315), as Gabrielle Spiegel has shown. Rule by the Grace of God, *gratia Dei rex*, was regularly complemented with norms and policies set by kings of the past, which allowed kings to justify their rule. An identical use of the past is paraded in the court historian Abu al-Fadl Bayhaqi's celebrated early eleventh-century opus, where kingship and religion are thusly separated:

> Know that God Most High has given one power to the prophets, may God's blessings be upon all of them, and another power to kings. He has made it incumbent upon the creatures on the face of the earth that they should follow those two powers and through them recognise that divinely-given straight path [. . .] The power specific to the Prophets lies in their evidentiary miracles, that is things that ordinary people are incapable of doing. The power of monarchs comprises a discriminating intellect, military might, conquests and victory over enemies, together with the justice which they dispense in conformity with the commands of God Most High. For the distinction between divinely assisted and successful monarchs and a tyrannical rebel is that, since monarchs are characterised by the dispensing of justice, good actions, good behaviour and praiseworthy deeds, they should be obeyed [and acknowledged as chosen by God for their task]. Usurpers who practise oppression and evil must be stigmatised as rebels, and holy war (jehad) must be waged on them. This is a measure by which those who do good and those who do evil are assessed and show their true nature. One can know by necessity which of those two persons one must obey. In regard to our monarchs (may God be merciful to those who have passed away and give long life to those who are still living!), one must observe how they have led their lives in the past and how they live at present – their justice, beneficent behaviour, pious restraint, religious zeal, purity of daily existence, their pacification of persons and lands, and their cutting short the hands of tyrants and oppressors – so that one becomes assured that they are among the chosen ones of the Creator, His mightiness be exalted and His name sanctified, and that obedience to them has been a divinely-imposed duty and continues to be so. (Beyhaqi 2011, 182–3)

Bayhaqi's carefully worded exhortation encourages men to follow the two powers and through them recognize the divinely ordained straight path, the *shari'a*. He points as well to the potent practical regard of historical writing, for one must learn about kings of the past to learn to distinguish the monarch from the tyrant. Reason, Bayhaqi writes, will prevent men from being misled by falsehood. While the divorcing of politics from fortune heralds the dawn of a new era in Lydgate's England, and the onset of the rule of reason, no similar transformation has been recognized in modern accounts of medieval Islamic political [p. 59/60] thought, or even politics. There, the twining of religion and state is upheld as a salient theme of medieval Islamic politics, inherited from pre-Is-

lamic Iran (Grignaschi 1966, 49), and in full force throughout a millennium. In effect, the twining of religion and politics is read to explain the failure of the Islamic world to mirror its Western neighbors and construct a modern political framework, replacing religious norms with liberal values – an almost complete inversion of Scanlon's quasi-secularity.

In medieval Islamic political langue, the twinning of kingship and religion is a strategy of domestication (Yavari 2014, 81–94). By granting to the precept deep historical roots as a pre Islamic Iranian ideal, medieval theorists sought less to justify the dominion of religion over politics than the very opposite. In modern studies, that attribution has been taken at face value. But there is very little that is exclusively or essentially Persian or Zoroastrian about the twinning of religion and state. The dictum is found in abundance in political writings from across the globe, as we shall see in several examples below. Moreover, there is nothing about it that can be contextualized to the reign of a specific Sasanian dynast. Finally, idealized representations of alien cultures were commonplace in antique historiography. Arnaldo Momigliano has pointed to the imaginary aspect of Persian representations in Greek writings of the period. "The name of Zoroaster, like that of Hermes, became the centre of attraction for any sort of speculation which had something to do with astrology, the after-life and more generally the mysteries of nature." (Momigliano 1978, 145)

In truth, there is a lot more politics embedded in this axiom than suggested in the tacitly accepted commonplace that good religion and kingship thriving in unison is the bedrock of Islamic political theory.

The exhortation to strong political rule, one of the loci where incipient secularity resides, was not limited to politicians and courtiers, nor did the augmented standing of the *ʿulama'* (Muslim theologians and jurisprudents) by the tenth century extinguish the debate. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Islam's preeminent medieval theologian, wrote on the relationship between kings and their subjects in unambiguous terms: "Everybody to whom God has given religion must therefore love and obey kings and recognize that their kingship is granted by God, and given by Him to whom He wills." God's favor is signaled in long rule, and the "unjust Sultan is ill-starred and will have no endurance, because the Prophet stated that 'sovereignty endures even when there is unbelief, but will not endure when there is injustice." (al-Ghāzāli 1964, 46)

Judgment of the king's probity belongs to God alone, but at the same time, kings are measured by their policies and practices.

Medieval Muslim intellectuals preach a strict divide between religion and politics – in religion's favor, of course – to demarcate the purview of legitimate [p. 60/61] political rule. In the anonymous *Tuhfat al-muluk dar adab* ("A Gift to Kings in Civility"), penned sometime between the early thirteenth and the latter part of the fourteenth century, Malikshah the Saljuq sultan (r. 1073–92) is chided for interfering in religious affairs by the aforementioned Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni. In one anecdote, the sultan arrives in Nishapur when 29 days have passed in the month of Ramadan. His courtiers tell him that the crescent of the new moon is visible and therefore *ʿid al-fitr*

(celebrations that mark the end of the fasting month of Ramadan) should be celebrated the next day. Word spread quickly to Imam al-Haramayn, who did not hesitate to announce that he would nevertheless keep his fast, as should his followers. Against the mischievous advice of his courtiers who advocated a swift rebuke, Malikshah asked that the theologian be summoned with great respect. When brought into his presence, al-Juwayni told the sultan that all the sultan's royal decrees (*firman*) are obligatory on his subjects. But that which belongs to the realm of religious order (fatwa) is incumbent on all sultans. The *shariʿa,* al-Juwayni claimed, stipulates parity between the *firman* of the sultans and the fatwa of the *ʿulama,'* and fasting clearly belongs to the realm of the latter. Malikshah sent the cleric home fully convinced of his righteousness (Anonymous 1938, 15–17). The way the anecdote is carefully related not only distinguishes the two spheres of divine and secular but also stresses that such a clear division stops the chaos which ensues when decision making is left on the basis of hearsay to an indeterminate and changing group of people keen to settle scores.

Just as the illustration of Edward IV juxtaposes the nobility with the clergy, Nizam al-Mulk, al-Ghazali and many others twin religion with kingship and, against the consensus of modern scholarship, render the former dependent on the latter. The intricate twinning of kingship and religion is echoed as well in medieval mirrors from distant origins, which further dispels facile contextualization.

In an anonymous thirteenth-century Norse mirror for princes,[4] the king advises his son on that which unites and separates God's kingdoms on earth:

> God has established two houses upon earth, each chosen for a definite service. The one is the church; in fact we may give this name to both, if we like, for the word church means the same as judgment hall, because there the people meet and assemble. These two houses are the halls of God, and He has appointed two men to keep watch over them. In one of these halls He has placed His table, and this is called the house of bread; for there God's people gather to receive spiritual food. But in the other hall He has placed His holy judgment seat and there the people assemble to hear the interpretation of God's holy verdicts. And God has appointed two keepers to guard these houses: the one is the king, the other the bishop [. . .] both these halls are God's houses and both king and bishop the servants of God and keepers of these houses; but they do not own them. (Anonymous 1917, 358–64) [p. 61/62]

Religion and kingship are twinned in this thirteenth-century text to demarcate their differing function and purview, and as always, to tame religion, but not before they are twinned as God's possession and in equal measure, accountable to His will. The twinning of religion and kingship as God's twin halls, in the context of an erring high priest, Abiathar, who had wrongfully deposed Solomon before God had so decreed and was therefore punished when Solomon rightfully deposed him, posits Solomon as the executor of God's judgment. King and bishop are equal servants of God, an ideological

4 [note 5 in the original] For more on the politics of religion in this text, see Bragge 1987, 11–20, 210–8.

stance firmly cast in religious language that promotes secular authority's independence from religion.

Arguing from the other side presumably, the hugely influential Augustinian Giles of Rome (d. 1316), archbishop of Bourges appointed by Pope Boniface VIII (d. 1303), twinned the temporal sword with the ecclesiastical one, to argue that although "the earthly power is appointed not only through the ecclesiastical by special divine command, but actually by the ecclesiastical," and that the Church has both swords, "she does not have the right to wield both swords," and not just because an intermediary is necessary between "the ecclesiastical power and the judgment of blood," but because "the material and inferior sword is jointed to the spiritual and superior sword, and that by these two swords the whole people is fittingly ruled, and consequently, that whole people is adorned and ornamented" (Giles of Rome 2004, 246–67). In this passage and elsewhere,[5] Giles asserts the superiority of royal power by recourse to religious metaphors.

Should the twinning of religion and kingship, deployed differently on different occasions, not be considered a global political concept, operational in multiple, concurrent but non-synchronous contexts, none of which are original to it? Reading opposites as an interpretive strategy was a common feature of political discourse in the medieval Islamic and Christian worlds.[6] The semiotic valences of paired contraries invite interpretation and unravel literal readings. The twinning of religion and kingship is neither a remnant from pre-Islamic Iran, nor is it a quintessentially Islamic concept. In abundant supply in pre-modern discourse everywhere, it signifies an opening, a strategy for thinking about politics.

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5 [note 6 in the original] For other instances where Giles uses the Aristotelian outlook as a form of rhetorical device, see Kempshall 2007, and Lachaud 2014.

6 [note 7 in the original] I have in mind Nicholas of Cusa's (d. 1464) notion of coincidentia oppositorum and its heuristic significance; see Nicholas of Cusa 1985, I: 4, 22; and for a fuller account of the twinning of religion and kingship and the pairing of contraries as political langue, see Yavari 2014, 113–42.

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3 Power, Ideology and the State

Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Introduction

The third section makes explicit an aspect of the debate that is an almost ubiquitous topos throughout all sections of this volume: the *political contexts and implications* of theories and concepts of secularisation, secularism, or secularity – including theories and concepts that *reject* the secular-religious binary. The texts collected in this section therefore directly address issues of power and ideology, and their relationship to the modern nation-state – doing so in very different ways, and from a variety of perspectives.

Ideology: Combat Concepts, Myths, and False Consciousness

One strand of the debate – one from a historical perspective, and related mainly to the academic field – deals with *ideologies* that the authors claim to be inherent to academic accounts of secularisation, or even to the recognition of a secular-religious binary.

This debate on ideology started much earlier than the recent postcolonial turn in the humanities. One of its early proponents was sociologist David Martin, who, ironically, would later become one of the most prominent figures proposing a historically informed sociological theory of secularisation. In an early piece from 1965, reproduced here (text no. 52), he presents a principled criticism of generalised notions of secularisation, which, in his view, are not sufficiently empirically grounded. Religious institutions, Martin argues, flourish or decline as a result of a multitude of interrelated factors. They do not follow one single path. The depictions of societal developments and of religion presented in theories of secularisation, are, Martin claims, not empirically based, but ideologically motivated. He maintains that these approaches employ a "rationalist"

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depiction of religion (or religious decline), as well as of societal development. The concept of secularisation, he concludes, is essentially a “tool of counter-religious ideologies.” He focusses on three ‘ideologies’ in particular: optimistic rationalism, Marxism, and existentialism. In his later works, Martin undertook a more detailed analysis of various paths of religious developments in different national settings, utilising the previously rejected terminology of secularisation.

Historian Ian Hunter (text no. 62) develops a similar argument 50 years later, with an even stronger historical foundation. As a historian of ideas, he focuses on the competing political philosophies that were present in Germany before the 1848 revolution – Protestant-rationalist, Kantian, and right- and left-Hegelian – and their concepts of secularisation. These, he argues, “do not in fact present accounts that are capable of being shown to be true or false, and in this regard, they are not theories or histories at all” – they are “combat concepts,” used by different secularist and anti-secularist factions in their struggles to determine the shape of the religious and political order. Hunter’s historically motivated argument is that it was in the philosophical constructions of histories attached to these politicised philosophies “that the conception of secularization as an epochal transition to rational autonomy first appeared.” Therefore, Hunter concludes, “these variant conceptions are best understood as instruments of the rationalist philosophies that were operating as social confessions in competition with religious ones, and as intellectual weapons [. . .].”

A similar argument was developed by Thomas Luckmann in the 1980s (text no. 53), based on his earlier book *The Invisible Religion*, from 1967.[I] This prominent sociologist of religion, however, does not depict secularisation theory as an anti-religious ‘ideology,’ nor does he see secularisation as a ‘combat concept’. Instead, he portrays it as a “myth” of modern societies. When he speaks of a myth, this is not meant as a simplistic *Ideologiekritik;* from his perspective, a myth is a narration by which people in modern societies make sense of the changes they perceive, but do not fully understand. According to Luckmann, it is religion’s changing organisational structure – a shift from the public to the private – that is mistaken for ‘secularisation.’ Luckmann, like David Martin, also addresses the academic sociology of religion, which – he claims – does not comprehend the mythological character of the secularisation diagnosis, and merely makes use of the terminology without analysing its underlying processes. Interestingly, Thomas Luckmann made one exception in his critical review of secularisation theories: the diagnosis of functional differentiation, which he perceived as a valid analysis. José Casanova[II] and Rodney Stark[III] – one of the most prominent proponents of the market model of religion, and a harsh critic of secularisation theories – have argued in

I Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society.* Edited by T. Kaden, and Bernt Schnettler. (London: Routledge, 2022 [1967]).

II José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

III Rodney Stark, “Secularisation, R.I.P,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 249–73.

a similar vein, along with David Martin in his later work.[IV] We cannot elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages of this focus on 'myth' and 'ideology.' It needs to be mentioned, however, that these approaches received much criticism for their questioning of secularisation diagnoses.[V]

From our perspective, the most interesting aspect of these approaches is not so much their critique of empirically grounded research on secularisation, but rather their *critique of the interpretative frame* that often accompanies these theories, especially their rationalist depiction of societal development. In brief: If the assumption is made that societal development will lead towards rationalisation (see for example Becker, text no. 1 in section 1), and if religion is perceived as an irrational power, then it follows that religion must become increasingly superfluous as this development progresses. Religion remains strong only where this rationalisation is impeded by developments that strengthen irrational tendencies. Even today, there are significant strands of secularisation theory that follow such assumptions (see Stolz, text no. 35 in section 2), and, when considering them, it is worth recalling these earlier authors and their critique.

Remir A. Lopatkin (text no. 54) shares a number of background assumptions with certain 'Western' diagnoses of secularisation, even though he wrote from a markedly different context, namely the Soviet Union. Lopatkin could serve as an example of the type of secularisation theorist that Martin terms "spokesmen for optimistic rationalism" (text no. 52). Lopatkin's text, in some passages, mirrors early sociological theories (above all, those of Auguste Comte[VI]) and their ideas of a gradual evolution towards a rational society where scientific rationality ("positivism") would finally overcome metaphysics and religion. Lopatkin's text implies an additional developmental assumption, insofar as secularisation is seen as part of a long-term emancipation process, which starts in bourgeois society, but finds its fulfilment only under Communism. In line with the rationalist theories mentioned, and their interpretation through Marxism-Leninism in Lopatkin's account, it is *not* secularisation theory *but* religion that is depicted as 'ideology,' in the sense of a false consciousness. The replacement of religion by a materialist worldview is not only an objective historical process, but also a political task of the state, represented by the Communist Party.

A completely different position is taken by the theologian John Milbank (text no. 55), a representative of the theological movement called *Radical Orthodoxy*. Milbank criticises secular modernity in general, and secular social science in particular. He sees the secular as a historical and normative formation, rather than a universal given that was superseded by religion prior to modernity. In this regard, Milbank shares basic

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IV David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005).

V See, for example: Detlef Pollack, *Säkularisierung – Ein moderner Mythos? Studien zum religiösen Wandel in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2012).

VI Auguste Comte, *Social Physics: From the Positive Philosophy of August Comte* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2007 [1856]).

premises with thinkers such as Charles Taylor (text no. 40 in section 2) and Talal Asad (text no. 56). Milbank places more explicit value on religious wholeness than on societal differentiation. This aligns with his denouncing of the fundamental principles of social theory, favouring an all-encompassing theological interpretation of the world and of society – a juxtaposition also seen in fundamental criticisms of the Enlightenment by other religious traditions.

One strong claim regarding the ideological underpinning of the debate on the secular comes from Russell T. McCutcheon (text no. 57). McCutcheon gained prominence for his critical work on the use of the concept of religion, an analysis that has become extremely influential in the academic study of religion. However, he extended this critique to the concept of the secular as well. McCutcheon emphasises that the concepts of 'religious' and 'secular' are co-dependent, and contends that neither refers to *any* external reality. In his view, they form a conceptual pair, coined by scholars in modern Europe, that serve specific purposes as "socio-rhetorical devices." According to McCutcheon, they are not "analytic categories helpful in accounting for the creation, the successful reproduction, and the export of the worlds that their use has made possible." He criticises (the use of) the concepts of the 'religious' and the 'secular' as reifying categories that insinuate a reference to real things, when in fact they are a strategic means of social classification within competitive economies of signification. If one follows this approach, there does not seem to be something 'out there' that corresponds to notions of religion and the secular. The use of these terms is only a strategy of rhetorical power play, a form of labelling vested with interests – all of which remains to be researched.[VII] And, McCutcheon maintains, the academic study of religion has been an influential actor in this labelling game.

There is no doubt that, in the research on secularisation, scholars tend to interpret their findings in the light of certain narratives, which may bear ideological imprints. The same, of course, holds true for counter-narratives, such as the Christian narrative of the 'radical orthodoxy' movement. Daniel Weidner has argued that the "rhetoricity of secularization"[VIII] is an irreducible part of the form in which the proposition of secularisation is presented. Without questioning the existence of the related historical processes, he stresses that these processes are not simply described, but transformed into texts "which fluctuate between historical comprehension and self-description, evaluation, claim, and analysis, and which produce special meaning effects precisely because of this fluctuation."[IX] Analysing these fluctuations, and questioning the sometimes ideological imprints of narratives, however, does not necessarily call into question the validity of empirical findings. In a certain strand of the debate, it is insinuated that

VII For a similar argument see Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2003).

VIII Daniel Weidner, and Joel Golb, "The Rhetoric of Secularization," *New German Critique*, no. 121 (2014).

IX Daniel Weidner, "Zur Rhetorik der Säkularisierung," *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 78, no. 1 (2004): 107. Our translation.

rejecting the narratives also disproves the processes to which they relate. Conversely, other strands of the debate neglect the effects of the interpretative frames within which data on religious development are presented.

Religion and Politics: The Nation-State and Its Secular Power

Another critical approach towards the secular-religious binary, especially in the context of the modern nation-state and its powers, was introduced by Talal Asad. Without exaggeration, his can be considered one of the most influential accounts of recent decades that deal with the issue of religion and the secular. The text that we document here is an excerpt from the first chapter of his seminal *Formations of the Secular* (text no. 56). It is worth mentioning that Asad distinguishes between the secular and secular*ism*, and acknowledges the existence of premodern, 'non-Western' configurations of a separation of religion and politics. Nonetheless, he makes a strong claim about the historical singularity of globalising modern secularism, its transformative powers regarding religion, ethics, and politics, and its connection to the modern nation-state. It is evident that Asad's genealogical exploration of the *Formations of the Secular* starts from his discontent with the present. He critically explores modern 'secular' forms of life – including attitudes to the body and the structure of the senses – and their genealogies, providing convincing arguments for a critique of an all too positive and self-assured self-image of secular modernity. The presented excerpt also provides a glance at a tension traceable in Asad's works: between, on the one hand, an unyielding and sophisticated immanent critique of modern 'Western' forms of life, their inner contradictions, and ideological justifications – an analysis that is in step with the long tradition of critical theories of modernity – and, on the other hand, an imagined wholeness and inner consistency of embodied 'traditional' forms of life, especially in Islam, which he does not seem to subject to this mode of critique (see Mufti, text no. 72 in section 4 and al-Azmeh, text no. 20 in section 1). This tension resonates with that found in the Indian debates regarding cultural incompatibility, or specific historical paths to secularism, which we document in section 2 of this volume.

The late Saba Mahmood, one of Asad's most eminent students, argues that – in the case of postcolonial Egypt – secularism has not pacified religious conflicts, but was itself a force that polarised differences, and led to identitarian confrontations between religious minorities and the majority (see van der Veer, text no. 28 in section 2). Mahmood brings a critical Asadian perspective on secularism and agency into dialogue with post-structuralist feminist theory, most notably that of Judith Butler. This theoretical dialogue results in a radical historicisation and contextualisation – some might say particularisation – of the notion of agency, and its separation from the notions of freedom and resistance. In *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* (text no. 64), Mahmood analyses the contradictions and paradoxes of political secularism and efforts towards religious

equality in their entanglement with modern state power, which should not be mistaken as a neutral arbiter in religious conflicts. Conceptually, she further elaborates on questions we also address in sections 1 and 2 of this volume, such as the tension between the particular origin and universal claims of secularism, as well as historical and regional trajectories in relation to universalising tendencies and power inequalities.

A similarly critical view of political secularism has been expressed by the Japanese scholar of religion, Hayashi Makoto (text no. 63). More importantly, however, Hayashi distinguishes between two different processes: "secularisation" and "laicisation." In his conceptualisation, 'secularisation' refers to a process arising from society itself, whereas 'laicisation' signifies the political fencing in and marginalisation of religion enforced by the state, which is typically captured by the term secular*ism*. It is the latter, Hayashi contends, that has happened in modern Japan, which is why it is more appropriate to speak of 'laicisation' rather than 'secularisation' in the Japanese case.

Other scholars have also dealt with the relationship between secularism and secularisation (see Madan, text no. 27, and Kaviraj, text no. 46 in section 2). Given that Pakistan's founding as a postcolonial nation-state was intended to ensure the self-determination of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, it should not come as a surprise that we present excerpts from two articles on this country in this section, although both of them also represent postcolonial trajectories, and could have easily been placed in section 2. In *Secularism and Secularisation: Untying the Knots* (text no. 59), Humeira Iqtidar takes Pakistani drone attacks against Islamic groups as a starting point. Instead of discarding the established categories of secularism and secularisation altogether, she questions conventional assumptions about their content and relationship, in light of the specific historical trajectories of postcolonial developments, but also in view of the function of these categories as historical self-images of the 'West.' In this sense, there are many parallels to arguments by Sudipta Kaviraj, Talal Asad and others, whose works she explicitly refers to. Taking a position that contrasts with that of Thomas Luckmann (summarised above), Iqtidar calls for a qualitative understanding of secularisation as a process *redefining the religious*. Her ethnographic study shows how contemporary Islamists in Pakistan – with their focus on the state and their efforts to homogenise and objectify religious belief and practice – might unintentionally be supporting processes that can be described as a specific mode of secularisation.

Another perspective on secularisation in Pakistan comes from Sadia Saeed. In her article on *Desecularisation as an Instituted Process* (text no. 60), Saeed outlines the historical trajectory of secularity in Pakistan, particularly with regard to religious minorities. She questions the applicability of classical theories of secularisation to (postcolonial) Muslim societies in general, and to Pakistan in particular. Unlike Iqtidar, however, Saeed describes the "historical modality" of the intertwining of religion and politics in Pakistan as "desecularisation" (see also Shishkov, text no. 41 in section 2). She characterises this as a historically specific but contingent form of modern state formation in response to "colonial secularity," eventually leading to a "selective de-differentiation" of state and religion. While Iqtidar argues that Pakistani

Islamists, through their rationalisation of religion, are unintentionally advancing secularisation, Saeed emphasises the de-secularising aspects of their politics, which tie the state to a specific religious identity, and thus exclude religious minorities. In terms of the modern character of the politicisation of religious differences, Saeed's argument also has affinities with Mahmood's above-mentioned work on religious minorities in Egypt, and T. N. Madan's considerations on India (text no. 27), though she seems to differ in her normative assessments of secularisation's effects on the minority question.

Embracing Secularity

In some academic presentations of the debate on secularisation and its critique, the Asadian perspective seems to be presented as the final word in the entire debate;[X] in some cases, this position is even accompanied by a short-circuiting of the 'Western' origins of secularism with an outright rejection of the separation of state and religion in postcolonial societies, especially when Islam is put centre stage (see Tamimi, text no. 8, section 1).

However, there are other voices that explicitly argue for the necessity of a secular state in Muslim societies. One important representative of this position is Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, who focuses on the relationship between shariʿa and the state. He underlines that the evolution of shariʿa is an ongoing process, the basic principles and considerations of which he formulates in his book *Islam and the Secular State*, from which we include a passage (text no. 58). An-Naʿim decidedly argues for the separation of Islam and the state, whilst advocating for Islam to play a role in society, as well as in politics. In this regard similar to Saeed (presented above) and Aamir R. Mufti (see text no. 72 in section 4), An-Naʿim argues that the very "notion of an Islamic state" is "a post-colonial innovation," as shariʿa, which would be the basis of such a state, cannot be codified. His work foreshadows Wael Hallaq's eminent book,[XI] and builds upon the writings of earlier Islamic reformists, such as ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq, or Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. An-Naʿim aims to reopen the space for Muslims to deliberate and negotiate the meaning of shariʿa. He envisions shariʿa as ethics, not as law; since politicians are guided by their ethical convictions, there is, consequently, no separation of Islam and politics. The state, in turn, has to function according to principles of constitutionalism, and act as neutrally as possible towards and regarding religions. Only such a state would allow for

X See Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Florian Zemmin, "Die Relevanz der Säkularisierungstheorie im globalen Zeitalter," Review Essay on *Säkularisierung: Grundlagentexte zur Theoriegeschichte*, eds. Christiane Frey, Uwe Hebekus, and David Martyn, *Soziologische Revue* 44, no. 4 (2021): 506–17.

XI Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

the envisioned voluntary compliance with shariʿa. Thus, in addition to the distinction between religion and the state, An-Naʿim also distinguishes between the state, politics, and society.

In his *Untold Story of Africa's Secular Tradition* (text no. 61), Nigerian activist and scholar in African Studies Leo Igwe offers an alternative narrative of Africa's secular tradition, to emphasise his strong political claim for a secular Africa, accommodating the diverse religious plurality of the continent. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he argues that "in Africa, worldly and otherworldly things have actually existed in compartments, not merged as contemporary religious ideologues claim. Unfortunately, the colonial mentality and Christian and Islamic indoctrination prevent many Africans from acknowledging the secular elements and roots in their culture." With some similarity to the Indian debate (see Madan, text no. 27, Bhargava, text no. 37 and Khan, text no. 25, all in section 2), Igwe attempts to trace secular elements in pre-colonial Africa, which, according to him, were disturbed by colonial administrations that pretended to be secular but had "a strong Christian religious coating and character." Many anticolonial movements also had a religious – Muslim or Christian – undercurrent, or were outright and explicitly religious and anti-secular. Igwe's construction of a secular precolonial Africa inverts the argument of Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, who challenge secular science to take African – read: religious – epistemologies seriously (see text no. 11 in section 1). In accordance with Matthew Engelke (see text no. 15 in section 1) he considers critique to be a key feature of secularism: "Dare to think. Dare to doubt. Dare to question everything in spite of what the superstitious around you teach and preach. [. . .] African skeptics arise."[XII] Whereas others have fundamentally criticised the secularist imprints of present-day notions of critique,[XIII] here, we find an explicitly positive evaluation of it.

XII Leo Igwe, "Manifesto for a Skeptical Africa," *James Randi Educational Foundation*, October 27, 2012, accessed 26 June, 2024, http://archive.randi.org/site/index.php/21-static-1/static/1891-leo-igwe.html.
XIII Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, CA: Townsend Center for the Humanities, 2009).

52 David Martin: *Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization* (1965)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

An important contribution to the debate was made in 1965 by David Martin in his essay *Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization*. Unfortunately, the publisher has not authorised us to print excerpts from the text, which is why we are only paraphrasing Martin's main arguments and quote a few passages for illustrative purposes here.

David Martin (b. 1929 London, d. 2019) was a British sociologist of religion. He also served for many years as a Methodist preacher, and finally as an Anglican priest. Martin first worked as a primary school teacher, and studied sociology by correspondence course for an external degree. Thereafter, he did his PhD in sociology at the London School of Economics (LSE), on *Pacifism: A Historical and Sociological Study* (published in 1965). This research had an autobiographical basis, since – following his national service – he served as a conscientious objector in the Non-Combatant Corps. After his PhD, Martin worked as an assistant lecturer at Sheffield University, then took various interim positions, before finally taking a professorship at LSE in 1971, where he stayed until his retirement in 1989. From 1986 to 1990, he also was Scurlock Professor of Human Values at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, Texas. In 2000, Martin was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Helsinki; in 2007, he was elected Fellow of the British Academy.

Martin's research covers a broad range of topics. He made important contributions to an empirically grounded comparative theory of secularisation, but also to the research on the resilience and growth of religion. His particular focus there was on the growth of Pentecostalism, first in Latin America (*Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1990]), and then beyond (*Pentecostalism: The world their parish* [Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2002]). He shared this interest in Latin America with his wife Bernice Martin, who also made significant contributions to this research area.

With his background in both sociology and theology, Martin's work reflected upon the relationship between both disciplines. One of the other fields that he was interested in was the relationship between religion and music.

With *Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularisation*, we here document one of Martin's early contributions (1965) in the field of secularisation theory, which he

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announces as “a work of ‘demolition,’” and in which he proposes erasing the concept of secularisation from the sociological dictionary. He suggests “to consider the uses to which the term ‘secularization’ has been put, and to show that those uses (or perhaps, more accurately, misuses) are a barrier to progress in the sociology of religion.” He aims to “explore the distinction between the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ – notably the line of distinction most often employed, that between ‘this worldliness’ and ‘other worldliness’” and “then consider the conventional criterion of secularization in terms of the decline of institutions labelled ‘religious.’” Martin goes “on to argue that secularization is less a scientific concept than a tool of counter-religious ideologies. Such ideologies select certain phenomena as really ‘religious’, for the purposes of their own practical politics and according to the logic of their metaphysical systems, and then for similar reasons utilize the notion of inevitability to symbolize their own triumph over such recalcitrant phenomena. I [David Martin] have chosen three of these ideologies for particular consideration rationalism, Marxism, and existentialism.” [Martin 1965: 176]

In his summary of the article he proposes that “the vastly varied religious situation needs to be studied apart from the pressure to illustrate a philosophical position. Values doubtless intrude into every sociological formulation, but the more egregious versions of ideological distortion can be avoided. The word secularization is too closely linked to such distortions to be retained. Its very use encourages us to avoid studies of the impact of, for example, geographic and social mobility on religious practice, in favour of cloudy generalizations. *Secularization* should be erased from the sociological dictionary.” [Martin 1965:182]

Martin’s argument is twofold: First, he questions the existence of a general process of secularisation: religious institutions, in his view, flourish or decline in response to a whole complex of causes. Second, he argues that the concept of secularisation is essentially a “tool of counter-religious ideologies.” He discusses several strands of religious critique, which he accuses of following a rationalist perception not only of religion, but also of societal development.

This critique of secularisation resembles the views of Ian Hunter (“combat concept”) (text no. 62) as well as those of Thomas Luckmann (“myth”) (text no. 53) , which are also presented in this volume. As an example illustrating Martin’s argument that some proponents of secularization theory are “spokesmen for optimistic rationalism,” one could read the text by Lopatkin (text no. 54), also in this volume.

However, Martin later prominently engaged in sociological research on secularisation, culminating in his book *A General Theory of Secularization* (New York: Harper&Row, 1978), with its main focus on the differentiation between politics and religion. Adopting a comparative perspective, he discusses the various paths taken, as well as their conditions, especially the confessional backgrounds of different developments. Later, he partially revised this perspective in his book *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005). David Martin himself has stated several times that at the core of his understanding of secularization is social differentiation, even if he has not particularly elaborated this term.

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53 Thomas Luckmann: *Secularization – A Contemporary Myth* (1969)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Thomas Luckmann (b. 1927, Jesenice, Kingdom of Yugoslavia; d. 2016) studied in Vienna, Innsbruck, and at the New School for Social Research in New York, where he obtained his PhD in sociology in 1956. He held professorships in New York, Frankfurt, Konstanz and Ljubliana.

At the New School, which functioned as a university in exile for European refugees during the Nazi regime, he became a student of Alfred Schütz, who had emigrated to New York, from Vienna, via France. Schütz's sociology of knowledge became very influential to Luckmann's own work. After Schütz's early death, Luckmann turned Schütz's notes into a book manuscript, published as *Structures of the Life World*.

At the New School, Luckmann also became acquainted with Peter L. Berger, with whom he wrote the seminal *The Social Construction of Reality*, a book that was heavily influenced by Schütz. Luckmann and Berger both started to work in the field of sociology of religion. There, their ways parted, however, not least because of their different perception of religion. Whereas Berger insisted that religion must have a substantial quality, which he saw in the 'sacred,' Luckmann approached religion through its function of transcending human beings' biological nature.

Characteristic of Luckmann's approach is that he sees religion as not necessarily being connected with the institutional structure of the church or other religious organizations. This organizational structure, in his view, is only temporary in nature, as religion is undergoing a structural transformation. Therefore, forms of "invisible religion," as one of his famous books is titled, become more and more relevant.

Luckmann perceived religion to have an anthropological foundation, which had implications for the possibility of secularisation. To speak of secularisation, according to Luckmann, only makes sense on the institutional level of society, in terms of functional differentiation; it does not make sense on the level of the individual, nor on the level of society as a whole. Therefore, as becomes visible in the selected text, Luckmann sees the notion of secularization as having a quality that is different from its alleged descriptive or analytical value: it serves as a *myth* of modern societies, used to make sense of the changes these societies have undergone. He sees this as being connected to a process of institutional specialisation of religion, which drives a profound change

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in the relationship between the sacred cosmos and the social structure. Thereafter, one particular set of institutions maintains and transmits the sacred cosmos. Religion acquires a distinct – and correspondingly limited – location in the social order.

Luckmann criticizes the sociology of religion for not having developed a thorough understanding of this process, and for thereby using the term secularisation still imbued with its mythological implications.

Luckmann's perspective can be linked to those of other authors, such as Ian Hunter (text no. 62), who believe that secularization should be considered a 'combat concept' in modern ideological struggles, much more than its having an analytical purpose. Luckmann, however, does keep the term for the institutional separation of religion.

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Thomas Luckmann. "Secularization – A Contemporary Myth." In *Life World and Social Realities*. London: Heinemann: 1983: 124–32. First published in Italian as "Secolarizzazione: un mito *contemporaneo*." *Cultura e Politica XIV* (1969): 175–82.

Secularization – A Contemporary Myth[1]

The career of the word secularization had a drab beginning. During negotiations for the Pax Westphalica a little over three hundred years ago, secularization described the conversion of ecclesiastic property to lay control or ownership. For almost two hundred years word and concept remained in the protective embrace of canon law and church history. It was only in the post-Hegelian era that the word began to pass through a rapid process of semantic change. In the battle of ideas that raged among the heirs of Hegel's philosophy of history, the concept of secularization played an important role. Evaluation and interpretation were almost inextricably connected in a notion by which an entire age tried to grasp some essential quality of its own. Optimistic acceptance of the present and nostalgia for a Golden Age marked the opposite extremes of an attitude that helped to transform a rather abstract notion into a popular counter of ideological exchange. Today, secularization means many things to many people. There is barely

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1 [note * in the original] This chapter was first presented as a Paper at the Symposium on Secularization, UCLA. Los Angeles in *1969.* It was first published in Italian, as 'Secolarizzazione un mito contemporaneo' in *Culture e politica.* XIV, 1969. pp. 175–82.

sufficient overlap of meaning to warrant a treatment of secularization – as one word rather than as a group of homonyms.

To most of us secularization denotes a global process of historical transformation, primarily – but not exclusively – in the realm of ideas. Most of us, to be sure, would also find it rather difficult to say exactly what dimensions of cultural and social change should be best designated by this term. Some would use it to describe the 'rationality' and the increasingly more 'empiristic' employment of reason which marks, after Copernicus, the conceptions of the physical universe and, *après les Encyclopèdistes*, the view of human affairs as well – for expert intellectuals if not for the populace at large.

In another sense, which is only partly related to the former, secularization refers to a more limited process of social change: to the shrinking influence of the churches and the religion of which the churches seemed to have possession. The data collected in the recent phase of the sociology of religion support the common observation that the everyday conduct of broad strata in the population of industrial societies had no – or only tenuous – links with the religion of the established churches. [p. 124/125]

Finally, the theologians adapted the term and adapted it to their own purposes. The confluence of various rivulets and rivers of thought – Bultmann and de-mythologization. Bonhoeffer and 'religionless Christianity' and, somewhat improbably, Nietzsche and the 'death of God' – appears to have produced a mighty stream which irrigates some non-theological fields as well as the smaller garden of theological shrubs, and flowers.

Serious intellectual, religious and moral concerns, no doubt, motivated the peculiar twists in recent theology. At the same time, it can be hardly denied that, after the shocks induced in theology by historical criticism and later by sociological data, secularization and its conceptual derivatives served as an incantation first to exercise – and later to bless a vaguely felt need for 'the opening of the church to the world'.

Secularization is a concept which evidently has *some* empirical reference; it is a notion which springs from a common experience of the epoch. This very fact may help to explain why it was transformed into a popular myth before it was fully articulated as a theoretical construct. The term encapsulates a historical narrative which contains a number of fictitious elements. It is based on tacit assumptions about the course of history that predispose us to look at contemporary society and culture in a highly selective and, perhaps, distorting manner. Philosophers of history, theologians, and sociologists contributed to the construction of what is now an element of the mythology of modern society. They contributed to it, they did not produce it.

This particular myth, whatever its antecedents in the history of ideas, was born like any other myth of the need of an era to give an account of itself. No one seems to be able to talk of the world today without using notions such as industrialization, urbanization, secularization. The unreflected employment of such terms may be useful in ordinary discourse. For the scholar and the scientist, however, such use may cover a multitude of sins. One should use intellectual abbreviations of this kind only after the implications of the concept are spelled out in full. This has not yet been done adequately for secularization.

We do not yet really know why the notion of secularization became one of the elements in the seemingly diffuse conglomeration of contemporary myths. We can make a guess, of course. But the sociologist of religion as well as the sociologist of knowledge would want to have a detailed analysis of this question. It is anything but easy to uncover the heterogeneous social and psychological needs that were met by the several versions of the myth produced, over the generations. By [p. 125/126] philosophers, theologians and social scientists, experts and laymen, scholars, visionaries, and charlatans.

There is, however, another problem. The study of religion in contemporary industrial societies would profit much if the cognitively useful and empirically relevant elements in the notion of secularization were separated from its mythological components. We can surely agree that it is the latter which are most likely to interfere with a reasonably unbiased perception of contemporary society and culture. We cannot hope to become entirely free of ethnocentric and culture-bound perspectives in the study of the world in which we live. But we can, at least, try to avoid the pitfalls of fundamentally mythological interpretations of the contemporary situation. This will be the aim of my present discussion.

I begin by stating my assumptions. I think that the notion of secularization offers a largely fictitious account of the transformations of religion in Western society during the past centuries. In consequence it camouflages the nature of religion in the contemporary world. To the extent that secularization is a myth rather than a reasonably objective sociological or historical construct, it misdirects our observations of religion as a social reality in late industrial society. I shall try to substantiate this assertion. The sociology of religion was and still is preoccupied by the problem of secularization or what it considers to be that problem. The problem is generally defined in the following fashion. Sociology is a science of social institutions. Religion becomes amenable to sociological analysis in so far as it is organized in social institutions. For all practical purposes, religion as a social fact is to be found in churches, sects and in the attitudes determined by them. As a result of a rather mysterious process, generically attributed in some fashion to social and cultural change, religious institutions in industrial societies seem to have less influence on the conduct and the attitudes of the population or, at any rate, of significant groups and strata in the population, than they presumably had in earlier times. Empirical research shows that specifically religious attitudes, i.e. attitudes defined by the norms of religious institutions, have either become marginal in industrial society as, for example, in Europe or where penetrated by traditionally non-religious values, as in the United States. Modern society is, therefore, fundamentally secular. This 'theory' is shaky and its operationalizations in research are simple-minded. But the results fit the interests of theological gamesmanship and seem to be bought by the public. Depending on personal inclinations, some parts of the public [p. 126/127] bemoan the degeneration of a Golden Age of religion while others welcome the happy outcome of a process of liberation from the irrationalities of the Dark Ages.

This is not surprising. Anybody who would talk of the religion of contemporary society meets with sharp opposition. The traditional religionist would rather acknowl-

edge that ‘true religion’ is declining than face the possibility that it may be about to be replaced. And the mind of the traditional rationalist, steeped in notions of progress, is not attuned to discordant notes such as are struck in talk of religion in contemporary society.

Traditional Marxists, finally, may admit of minor aberrations from the main course of history – but a metamorphosis of religion in late industrial society would represent no *minor* aberration. As for the proverbial man in the street: He feels entitled to stick to simple labels. As far as he is concerned, things can be only muddled by looking for ‘religion’ outside the sphere that is clearly stamped ‘religious’. Here we may stop to note an interesting fact – a fact which testifies to the force of the myth of secularization. Few people hesitate to acknowledge the presence of religion in certain instances where the label would not mean much, if anything, to the members of the societies in question. Historians and cultural anthropologists describe and analyse the religion of societies in which religion has no distinct institutional basis. Yet they seem to have no difficulty in isolating analytically a religious part of the culture. To be sure, not all cultures contain a distinct supernatural level, although many do. But in all cultures there are norms that bestow some ‘ultimate’ significance upon common experience, norms that are superordinated to the rules which govern conduct in everyday life. Since this bi-polarity marks all societies, archaic as well as modern, we have here a dimension for the general analysis of religion. Closer study shows, of course, that norms of ‘ultimate’ significance are not segregated from the cognitive and affective structure of ordinary experience with equal sharpness in all societies. An important question to ask in the study of religion is, therefore, whether a culture is bisected or divided in some other manner into a sacred and a profane part and – *whatever* the line of division – whether the sacred cosmos blends with the world of everyday life or is clearly set apart.

A second and also highly important dimension in the study of religion is the social basis of the sacred cosmos. The sacred cosmos is part of the culture and it is maintained and transmitted by social processes and institutions. Two basic kinds of arrangements deserve to [p. 127/128] be mentioned. The maintenance and transmission of the sacred cosmos may be based on the social structure in its entirety. In this case the sacred cosmos is diffused among the various parts and institutions of society. The differences that may occur in the distribution of the sacred cosmos are not socially determined; they are essentially individual. Religion in archaic societies and, in an attenuated form, in traditional civilizations, has this kind of general social foundation, collective representations that refer to the sacred cosmos shape and justify the norms of kinship, the division of labour, and the exercise of power. On the subjective side, the meaning of all ordinary conduct, insofar as it is defined and sanctioned by institutions, is linked either directly or indirectly to the transcendent reality of the sacred cosmos. The sacred cosmos legitimates conduct in a great variety of social situations and bestows ‘ultimate’ significance on all relevant stages of an individual biography. In consequence, there is nothing – whether it be their economy, kinship, or political organization – that one would want to know about such societies that can be *fully* understood without recourse to religion.

Evidently this is not the case in highly complex societies. It is emphatically not the case in contemporary industrial societies. Such societies have a social structure that consists of relatively independent institutional subsystems. The economy, politics, kinship, etc. can be analysed as to their internal organization and social functions without reference to religion. If the concept of secularization were used to refer to this state of affairs only, there would be little room for confusion. But it would also lose much of its mythological force. I am aware that it is hopeless to legislate the use of words. I shall nevertheless apply the term 'secularization' only to the process that led to increasing autonomy of the various segments of the social structure from norms originating in the sacred cosmos.

It seems that during the greater part of human history the entire social structure supported the sacred cosmos and the sacred cosmos legitimated the entire social structure. To be sure, there were differences of emphasis and minor variations of the basic arrangement. In archaic societies religious representations were indeed widely diffused among the various institutions, while in somewhat more complex societies the sacred cosmos did have strong and highly visible ties with certain selected institutions. Divine kingship may serve as an illustration of the latter case. It is only with institutional specialization of religion, however, that the relation between the sacred cosmos and the social structure changes profoundly. After that, one particular set [p. 128/129] of institutions, possibly of diverse origins, maintains and transmits the sacred cosmos. Religion like any other institution, acquires a distinct – and correspondingly limited – location in the social order.

Institutional specialization of religion is part of a global process of social change. In archaic societies institutions are characterized by what Redfield aptly called 'primitive fusion'. What men do in such societies cannot be neatly fitted into institutional categories. The 'logic' of the sacred universe constitutes the dominant 'logic' of all institutions. It joins together the meanings of the most diverse actions, combines them so that they form coherent passages in the life of the individual and integrates them with the history of the community. In traditional civilization, it is true, certain institutions tend toward consolidation. Increasing complexity in the division of labour, the production of a surplus over the subsistence minimum, growth of supra-communal and supra-tribal political organization, emergence of distinct occupational roles as well as the formation of distinct social classes are processes connected with functional differentiation of institutions. Yet the 'logic' of the sacred universe continues to support and legitimate the entire social structure. The final consequence of this process – which, to be sure, must not be seen as straightforward evolution – are palpably evident in modern societies. 'Bundles' of various institutions are tied together; they form functionally specialized domains among which the most important are the economy and the state. In contemporary industrial societies institutions may be viewed as highly interdependent elements in rather autonomous segments of the social structure. The norms of each segment are comparatively independent of the norms in other segments. Most importantly, their connection with the sacred cosmos is attenuated if not entirely

broken. This has an important consequence for the individual. The meaning of conduct, in so far as it is institutionally defined, is determined by the pragmatic requirements of institutional subsystems. The connection between various actions and different phases in the life of the individual, on the other hand, is no longer unequivocally defined by universally accepted norms. Specific segments of an individual's daily conduct derive their meaning from specific institutional norms, but mutually reinforcing institutions no longer endow the individual course of life with 'ultimate' significance. The social structure ceases to mediate in a consistent manner between the sacred cosmos and subjective consciousness.

The versions of the myth of secularization, one based on the romantic notion of a Golden Age of Christian religion, the other inspired by the rationalist utopia of progressive 'liberation' of man from [p. 129/130] the dark forces of unreason, rest on a misconception. Both versions contain the assumption that *social universality, better: cultural homogeneity, of religion and institutional specialization of religion* can endure *in* conjunction.

I suggest that their conjunction was necessarily transitory. Religion comes to be institutionally specialized in societies that are marked by a high degree of structural complexity. Social universality of religion, on the other hand, presupposes a highly integrated social structure and a homogeneous socialization of individuals into the social order.

The origin of the myth of secularization may be in part explained by a unique constellation. When the Western Empire collapsed, Christian religion had already achieved a high degree of institutional specialization. In the background there was the sharp segregation of a sacred cosmos in Ancient Israel, accompanied by an unprecedented ('Entzauberung') demythologization, de-personalization of the natural world. There was the pluralism of world views and the growth of specifically religious communities. Political and economic institutions, too, had achieved a certain autonomy. In the post-Constantinian age the sacred cosmos was held in monopoly by theological and administrative experts who systematized the doctrine and standardized the ritual in a burst of apologetic and missionary enterprise. Then came a period of reversals in the evolution of a highly differentiated social order. Throughout the early Middle Ages the economy moved to a simpler level of organization, and politics was 'tribalized' again. The Christian sacred cosmos, however, retained its organizational basis as an institutionally specialized form of religion. No serious challenge arose to it from within as long as Christianity provided a universal principle for the legitimation of new institutions.

In short: religion had retained a high degree of institutional specialization while the political and economic domains had not yet achieved – nor regained – autonomy from the sacred cosmos. The myth of secularization mistakes a unique and transitory historical situation for a lasting structural arrangement between society and religion.

Looking back, we should be able to see the *intrinsic* instability of this arrangement. Bitter jurisdictional disputes between the institutional domains mark the transition

from the Middle Ages to the Modern Era. The emancipation of power and the centralization of administrative control, the growth of cities, the contact with alien civilizations, the 'rediscovery' of ancient systems of values and of knowledge, the peculiarly Western blend of science and technology, and the rise of [p. 130/131] modern capitalism transformed the basic structure of society. One of the most important consequences of these developments was to hedge in the sacred cosmos. Religion was increasingly perceived as the ideology of an institutional subsystem. Its jurisdiction over matters of 'ultimate' concern was restricted to matters that could be of 'ultimate' concern to the 'private individual' only. The most important link of the sacred cosmos with the world of everyday life was broken. Religious institutions maintained their massive presence in society as highly visible institutions but suffered a sharp restriction of the jurisdictional domain of their norms. The 'secular' segments of the social structure developed pragmatic norms whose actual or assumed tendency toward 'functional rationality' justified the liberation of the institutional domains from the values embodied in the traditional sacred cosmos. Numerous, potentially competitive systems of ideas came into existence, each developing a social basis of its own.

This development took a peculiar turn in the nineteenth century. As the traditional sacred cosmos no longer effectively infused with significance wide areas of everyday life, certain values that originated in the context of political and economic norms, gained entry into the increasingly more permeable sacred cosmos of industrial society. Political and economic ideologies, expressing first the aspirations and then the vested interests of the bourgeoisie, or articulating the hopes of the proletariat, either merged with or replaced the dominant Christian themes. The sacred cosmos of 'ultimate' significance in contemporary society is quite heterogeneous and contains themes that originated in the 'secular' segments of the social structure. To be sure, specialized religious institutions retained their monopoly on the traditional themes in the sacred cosmos. But for several generations the traditional sacred cosmos was no longer the only transcendent symbolic reality that was mediated in social processes affecting broad strata of the population. Thus the conditions under which religious institutions entered into various kinds of arrangements with other institutional domains were radically altered.

It is evident that in modern industrial society the world view has a complex social distribution. This is also true of the sacred cosmos. At the same time, the structural hierarchy of the world view is seriously weakened. The coherence of the themes that constitute the sacred cosmos can no longer be taken for granted. There is no one 'official' model of religion. Several versions of the model compete with each other. More importantly, they compete with models of socialization that contain no specifically religious representations, although they do contain norms that are potentially of 'ultimate' significance to members of contemporary societies. [p. 131/132]

Versions of the sacred cosmos are no longer transmitted in anything like homogeneous processes of socialization. Different values and orientations that are 'ultimately' significant for the individual are produced in structurally determined variants of social-

ization. But the various subjective configurations are not massively and generally confirmed and supported by the social order. It may be suspected that they are, therefore, rather unstable and subject to modification in something like self-steered processes of secondary socialization. The social structure is secularized – but the myth of secularization fails to account for the fact that the individual is not secularized.

54 Remir A. Lopatkin: *Towards a Society Free from Religion* (1970)

Translated and introduced by Sebastian Rimestad

Introduction

Major elements of social life and academic research in the Soviet Union were based on the communist ideology, commonly referred to as Marxism-Leninism. According to this ideology, religion, as well as cultural elements, legal systems, and political structures, all form part of the superstructure that, as a rule, is conditioned to support and justify the current *modus operandi* at the economic base. There is also a developmental aspect to Marxism, namely the idea of class struggle, with the *proletariat* (working class) eventually overturning the capitalist base, instituting a new egalitarian foundation for society, upon which a radically different superstructure would then also rest. Religion, as an oppressive ideology dedicated to justifying the inequalities of capitalist society, would no longer be needed, and would fade away.

After the end of the Second World War, from which the Soviet Union emerged as a victor with an expanding influence over most of Eastern Europe, religion was no longer opposed as radically as it had been in the 1920s and 1930s. Josef Stalin, who remained in power until 1953, had rehabilitated the Russian Orthodox Church to boost morale during the war, and allowed it to continue its activities, albeit under strict supervision. At the same time, most of the Soviet Russian population had turned its back to the church over the previous decades, as the ideology still saw religion as a harmful influence on society.

It was in this context that the idea of the "secularisation of society," which had first appeared in Western scholarship, entered Soviet Russian consciousness, where it was received with enthusiasm, as it described a process that socialist ideology was already eager to further. The text reproduced below is one of the most topical and comprehensive overviews of secularisation from Soviet scholarship.[I] It was written by sociologist Remir A. Lopatkin (b. 1930) in 1970, when he was a researcher at the Institute of Scientific Atheism, within the Academy of Social Sciences under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It formed the theoretical introduction to a volume produced by this institute.

I See also Dmitry A. Uzlaner, "Sovetskaia Model' sekuliarizatsii" [The Soviet Model of Secularisation], *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, no. 6 (June 2010): 62–69. An English version of this text is reproduced in this volume, text no. 13.

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Lopatkin's text, in some passages, mirrors early sociological theories, particularly those of Auguste Comte, with their ideas of a stepwise progress towards a rational society that would finally overcome religion. While Comte's account is itself no longer accepted by Western scholars of religion, theories of rationalisation certainly still form part of some versions of modernisation and secularisation theory in the West, which at least in part resemble the theory of rationalisation depicted here. This point is particularly well illustrated by the critiques developed in the texts by David Martin (text no. 52) and Ian Hunter (text no. 62). Lopatkin's text contains another developmental assumption – namely that secularisation is an element of a long term emancipation process, which starts in bourgeois society, but finds its fulfilment only under communism.

A brief remark on the source language in the text translated below: There are some concepts in the Russian language that exist in two (or more) forms: a native Russian word and a loanword, usually from Latin via French or German. This is the case with 'secular', which may be *svetskii* (this-worldly), *mirskii* (worldly/earthly), or *sekuliarnyi* (secular). Another case is 'individual', which can be rendered as *lichnost* or *individ*.

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Translation by Sebastian Rimestad

Theologians and opponents of Marxist scientific atheism from the bourgeois camp are eager to show the impossibility of a society without religion, or the impossibility of removing religion from the spiritual world of the individual. While standing in opposition to the real fact of religious systems losing societal significance, and to the recognition of the increasingly progressive development in contemporary society and the objectively verifiable factors of secularisation in societal and personal life, they look for a way out of the current situation, trying to revive religion and increase its influence on society and individuals.

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The process of secularisation, its background, mechanisms, and consequences are the subject of social investigations, the results of which, as objective scientific knowledge, may become ammunition in the ideological battle.

For the theoretical analysis of the problem of secularisation in the sociological domain, the primary methodological insights are provided by the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir I. Lenin, describing the development and essence of religious alienation, the social roots and historically volatile character of religion, and the political principles of the Communist Party in relation to religion and the church.

Karl Marx recognised the contradictions in the earthly foundation built into religion through practical criticism, and saw a path towards overcoming religious (*inter alia*) alienation of man in his revolutionary call to action. He writes:

> We no longer regard religion as the cause, but only [p. 7/8] as the manifestation of secular (*mirskii*) narrowness. Therefore, we explain the religious limitations of the free citizen by their secular limitations. We do not assert that they must overcome their religious narrowness in order to get rid of their secular restrictions, we assert that they will overcome their religious narrowness once they get rid of their secular restrictions.[1]

This reveals an essential side of man's emancipation from religion: the objective conditionality of the process, which depends on social change and on the severing of "secular restrictions". [. . .] Karl Marx's position helps us grasp the deeper meaning of secularisation, its objective goal, and, at the same time, its dependence on the activities of mankind, as well as its enormous progressive significance for society and the individual.

The teachings of Vladimir I. Lenin on the social roots of religion, his principle of the struggle against religion as a struggle for socialism and communism, and his practical reworking of the politics of the Communist Party and the Soviet State on the question of religion also contain the most important methodological foundations for research into the process of secularisation in the context of socialist society. [. . . p. 8–10. . .]

To be fair, it must be said that, in the process of preparing this research, objections were raised against the use of the concept of secularisation as a sociological category.

These objections were as follows: since the term 'secularisation' is historically defined, it is a category of historical research, referring to the relationship between state and church, and expressing the seizure of church property – mainly land – by the state, and its transferral into the domain of secular (*svetskii*) authorities. Therefore, the use of this concept in a different context could lead to confusion. The argument was underlined with reference to the traditional use of the concept in historical research, particularly in the corresponding article in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia.

In our times, there are several terms that are rightly used for different related – or even wholly unrelated – disciplines simultaneously, keeping their particular meaning

1 [(page)8n(ote)1 in the original] Karl Marx, "On The Jewish Question" (1844). [SR: English translation taken from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/.]

in each. For example, the word 'revolution' exists in philosophy, sociology, history, scientific communism, political economy, scientific methods, etc. We also talk about a revolution with reference to concrete historical events and as a form of class struggle, i.e., as a way of fundamentally forming society. Further still, we talk about scientific and technical revolutions, revolutions in physics, in biology, etc. In each of these fields, the given meaning has a specific connotation and becomes an instrument for knowledge of reality. [p. 10/11]

Words such as development, process, progress, and others are used even more widely (and, correspondingly, have broader meanings). Being categories of general philosophy, they are applicable to practically all areas of reality and human knowledge, although each of them comprises particular aspects, and, understandably, certain limits of use. This follows not only because the objective world (in our case, society) follows inherent regularities that have a huge impact on activities, but also because reality consists of several multilevel processes and phenomena, which can only be comprehended in their entirety through the complex combined research methods of several academic fields. These include such complex social phenomena as religion, including the processes of its establishment, its function, evolution, and disappearance from the life of society. Studying religion at different levels and in various relations is a task for history, philosophy, social psychology, sociology, linguistics, law, and other social sciences. Each of them, using their own methods and systems of understanding, looks at specific aspects of this phenomenon, contributing their part towards understanding religion correctly.

Therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the notion of 'secularisation', originating in canon law and then long being used by legal scholars and historians, has, in the process of the differentiation of the social sciences, also become central to other disciplines, to the extent that the phenomenon it designates becomes the subject of research. At the same time, the concept attains a more general meaning, with an enriched content.

The meaning of 'secularisation' is developing. In order to see the cause of this development, and the plurality of current meanings of the word, we need to turn to the genesis of the term itself.

The term 'secularisation' arose in the Middle Ages, from the Latin word *saeculum*, meaning century or generation, which acquired the meaning of *world* and *worldly life*, as opposed to the church and ecclesiastical elements. That is why *saecularis* means worldly (*svetskii, mirskii*). An important element is the origin of the understanding of worldly (*svetskoi, mirskoi*) as a category denoting movement over time – the movement of society itself through time: not only secular (*mirskaia, svetskaia*) life in opposition to church life, [p. 11/12] but the passing of centuries associated with it.

Thus, when the church and religious ideology had undivided spiritual authority, when religion was the overarching worldview of society, the idea of the need for social development emerged, containing within itself the embryo of religion's transitory nature and its incipient inconsistency with the "saeculum" (*vek*).

Religion, by no means an accident in the development of human society, used to fulfil a concrete social function across history, through its institutions, but it has now outlived its usefulness in terms of societal development. In this process, its reactionary nature, which hampers societal development, is revealed all the more clearly. The functions religion once fulfilled are disappearing – or, rather, social progress engenders different forms of social consciousness, different ways for people to relate to the world, and different institutions taking up the functions previously carried out by religion. This does not lead to the death of religion either directly or rapidly. The initial stages of this process, however, are already hidden in the depths of religion itself, and appear as protests against the power and property of a particular church.

It is important to note that the concrete cases of secularisation are related to broader phenomena in the social plane, signifying stages of the progressive development of social relations – both within particular peoples and states, and in society in general. For example, whereas secularisation functioned as a ubiquitous element in the process of creating authoritarian kingdoms in medieval Western Europe, it also furthered national movements, developments in economic relations, cities, markets, etc, as one of the essential preliminary stages of the emerging bourgeois relations. It was in this capacity that secularisation went beyond limiting the economic and political power of the church, and gradually began to influence its spiritual power in society, too.

The emergence of bourgeois relations – the new socioeconomic formation, born from the depths of feudalism, and in the end replacing it through revolution – also meant a huge leap in the [p. 12/13] spiritual development of human society. The Renaissance, the sermons of Jan Hus, the Peasants' War in Germany, the Edict of Nantes, the French Enlightenment, the victory of the bourgeois revolution: all of these were not only steps on the way to a new, capitalist society with all its socioeconomic and spiritual corollaries. In relation to the issue analysed here, they were also steps in the development of the phenomenon of secularisation, going beyond the frame that had been fixed by canon law, and spilling over into other spheres of social relations and social consciousness. "The dictatorship of the Church over men's minds was shattered",[2] writes Friedrich Engels, referring to the social development in Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Obviously, in the initial phases of its development, secularisation was not, and could not have been, a struggle with religion in the current sense. But it was the first attempt of society to enter a secular [*svetskii*] path of development, limiting the omnipotence of the church. Directed against the property, economical prowess, and feudal power of the church, this attempt necessarily also contained what would later become opposition to church dominance in the spiritual life of society. With our current knowledge of society, we can cast a retrospective glance at the phenomenon of secularisation. Looking at the

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2 [13n1 in the original] Friedrich Engels, "Dialectics of Nature" (1883). [SR: English translation taken from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch01.htm.]

facts of its initial phase in the general chain of history, we can see that the encroachment on the economic might of the church was followed by challenges to it politically, before introducing limits to its spiritual hold.

All this happened within a framework guided by religious ideology (understood in this case as the ruling view of the world) and therefore often took the form of stances with religious content opposing the ruling church (e.g. the iconoclastic movement of eighth-century Byzantium, the Reformation of sixteenth-century Germany, or the sermons and struggles of Jan Hus and Thomas Müntzer). For example, the Reformation, being a religious phenomenon, aimed at strengthening religion, by instituting a form of religion that would better fit the emerging capitalistic society. In the eyes of the ruling Roman Catholic Church, however, this was seen as an act of free thought and [p. 13/14] secularisation (all the more so since it was accompanied by the actual secularisation of Catholic churches and monasteries). Once the Reformation had made its contribution to the advancement of secularisation opposed to the Catholic Church, it started to objectively reinforce the role of religion in the new society, by giving rise to a new form of religious direction – the Protestant church (or rather, churches), which became objects of secularisation in their own right. Nonetheless, Protestant criticism of Catholicism also contained within itself the criticism of Protestantism itself as a variety of Christianity. Therefore, we should not ignore these moments that left their mark on the development of secularisation, a process that has been unfolding over a number of centuries and is constantly further enriched.

At a certain stage – in principle beginning with the French Enlightenment – secularisation left the framework of progressive social forces struggling with the church, and started to include the struggle to overcome any kind of religion as a whole. Here, we might remember the assessment of Karl Marx's predecessor from the French Enlightenment, the materialist philosopher Pierre Bayle:

> He heralded the atheistic society which was soon to come into existence by proving that a society consisting only of atheists is possible, that an atheist can be a man worthy of respect, and that it is not by atheism but by superstition and idolatry that man debases himself.[3]

At a time when the young bourgeoisie represented the progressive force in society, its ideologists prepared a programme for the bourgeois revolution in relation to religion and the church: the implementation of the principle of freedom of conscience, understood as the freedom of religious affiliation, the separation of the church from the state, and the laicisation of education. It should be emphasised that not one bourgeois state managed to consistently and comprehensively apply this programme of the bourgeois-democratic revolution on the issue of religion.

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3 [14n1 in the original] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Holy Family" (1845). [SR: English translation taken from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch06_3_d.htm.]

Nonetheless, the advancement and further inconsistent implementation of the bourgeois programme in relation [p. 14/15] to religion and the church was the next phase in the development of the process of secularisation. It led to the considerable weakening of the regulatory functions of religion in society, and to the gradual additional application of secularisation outside of the spheres of church-state relations and jurisprudence, in other spheres of social relations and social consciousness, and in the fields of individual consciousness and behaviour. The individual acquired the right to take up various positions in relation to religion and the church, which were linked to the free expression of his conscience, though to a large extent only nominally.

In the second half of the nineteenth century in Western Europe (first of all in England) there emerged a social movement with a bourgeois-democratic secularist programme. The notion of 'secularism' (in contrast to secularisation, which denotes the subjective side of the process, its theoretical background, and its intentional practice) was first used in the context of this movement by George Jacob Holyoake in 1850, to denote a system of views that tried to explain reality exclusively from this-worldly life, not resorting to any belief in God or the afterlife. Based on the English and European secularist movement, the World Union of Freethinkers emerged in 1886. However, in spite of all the progressive significance of this movement, it remained inconsistent and limited to just the bourgeoisie. In the end, this movement did not open up the new era for secularisation – that was only made possible by the appearance of the working class in the arena of history.

The battle for the complete liberation of work from capitalist oppression, for social equality, and for a society built on socialist principles required going beyond the mystification of worldviews, by exposing the link between church and capital, and criticising the religious justification of the capitalist system.

The works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir I. Lenin discuss the questions of completely defeating religion, and of its historically transient character and future eradication from societal life, as a result of the revolutionary restructuring that eliminates all forms of social oppression and human alienation. The Marxist-Leninist programme and politics differs from the politics of bourgeois democracy on the issue of religion, [p. 15/16] with regard to the consistency and determination with which it aims to bring its proclaimed principles to life. [. . .]

What kind of essential features and what scope does this process of secularisation display in the context of socialism, in contrast to its bourgeois stage? [p. 16/17]

In the context of capitalism, as in socialism, the process of secularisation is objectively driven by a goal. Presented as a part of social progress, secularisation is directly related to the development of productive forces and productive relations (for example, a strong influence on secularisation emanates from the current technical and scientific revolution), and to the developments in education and culture, etc. But, as already mentioned, the secularisation of social relations and social consciousness within capitalism remains restricted to what is necessary for the establishment of bourgeois rule and freedom of private activity. Thus, it is not only concerned with limiting the church, but

also significantly supports it with capital and bourgeois government. Socialist society, on the other hand, does not need such support – neither for religious blessings of its aims and principles, nor for regulating the behaviour of its members, nor for integrating the functions of religious institutions. Moreover, the liberation of all spheres of social life and individual consciousness from religious influence becomes a necessary condition for the rise of social activity among the proletariat, for the formation of communist relations, and for the strengthening of communist morals and the creation of the new man.

In this sense, in socialism, the process of secularisation proceeds in favourable circumstances, as its essence and completion correspond to the main tenets of societal development. As a result, its speed increases, it gains in breadth and depth, and it encompasses practically all aspects and levels of social and individual activity.

In the context of socialism, secularisation finally transcends the framework of anticlerical agitation, and transforms into a process of gradual and complete emancipation of society and the individual, not only from church influence, but from religion in general.

Not limiting itself to this negative aspect, secularisation in the context of socialism enriches the positive programme and context, helping to strengthen scientific atheism in both society at large and individual consciousness, based on [p. 17/18] a materialistic understanding of the surrounding reality, on the communist system of norms and values, and on the communist relations between people. The formation of a scientific-materialistic and atheistic worldview for all members of socialist society results in their increased social activity, comprehensive spiritual development, and internalisation of the higher norms of communist morality.

In the course of the socialist development of secularisation, the role and knowledge of its positive and creative side grows. In time, this side becomes the prevailing one, leading to secularisation's completion as a process and the creation of a society completely free from religion. [. . .]

This short analysis of the development of the secularisation process clearly shows how far it has moved away from its origins and how its content has changed in contemporary society. For some time already, the process of secularisation has been the object of philosophical and sociological analysis, as well as of concrete sociological research. The sociologists are interested in secularisation as a social process with an identifiable external and internal structure that is related to other social processes. They investigate the mechanisms of this process, as well as its structure, place, and function in contemporary society.

We look at the notion of 'secularisation' as a broad sociological notion, which can be [p. 18/19] defined as follows: Secularisation is the process of eliminating religious influence from all aspects of social and individual life, strengthening a materialistic worldview in both the social and the individual consciousness, and creating a system of norms and values based on this materialistic worldview as an essential factor in the functioning and development of society and the individual. [. . . p. 19/20]

Secularisation is contrary to sacralisation – i.e. the spread, strengthening, and deepening of cult relations, providing objects, knowledge, behaviour, and human relations with 'sacred' [*sviashchennogo*] religious significance. Concrete aspects of secularisation contrast with corresponding concrete aspects of sacralisation. Thus, the decline in the role of the church and other religious institutions in various spheres of social life – i.e. the secularisation of these spheres – runs counter to efforts to strengthen and activate the role of religious institutions in them – i.e. their clericalisation. The decrease in the regulatory role of religion in society, the decomposition of religious mass consciousness, the mass exodus from religions, and the strengthening of scientific-materialistic worldviews contrasts with Christianisation and evangelisation (and in Muslim-majority regions, Islamisation) – i.e. the attempts to introduce religious beliefs and religious systems of norms and values into people's consciousness, making them part of the sphere of religious relations.

Among the structural components of secularisation, we count not only those phenomena in which we observe a weakening or eradication of religious influences or the loss of religious content, but also those that still operate within a religious sphere but that are undergoing an essential change leading to a weakening of their religious character. An example of this would be the decomposition of the religious consciousness of contemporary religious believers, with the emergence and expansion of secular motives in their behaviour, and their celebrating secular [*svetskie*] elements within a religious context, etc.

One could count several aspects of the modernisation of religion as elements of secularisation – though admittedly with hesitation, and only in those areas where secular [*svetskie*] subjects are introduced into theology. However, we should be careful not to use the epithet 'secularisation' for all sides of the contemporary crisis of religion, or for those attempts to modernise religious theology and cult that aim to strengthen the role of religion and the church, providing a new, though still religious, meaning to the phenomena whose biblical explanation is no longer plausible to the broad [p. 20/21] mass of contemporary believers. Modernisation of religion, a paradoxical process, justifies itself on the basis that the secularisation of contemporary society ought to be opposed. This is a form of opposition to the forces of social progress that aim to destroy religion, i.e., to the objective secularisation process.

Western religious literature on the problem of secularisation sometimes includes various forms of religious modifications within the term, or even forms in which religious actors carry out activities in the secular domain (for example, when they speak and write about the worldly (*svetskoi*), laïcist (*laitskoi*), and secular (*sekuliarnoi*) activities of priests in some of the spheres of social life: in the municipalities, in various secular organisations and administrations, in youth organisations, etc.; as well as calling ecclesiastical education institutions secular, even though they are under church

control).[4] These activities of religious organisations in the secular domain – this introduction of religious motives into secular activities – though equally called to life by the process of secularisation, cannot be described as part of the process. They are instead only reactions to it, attempts to counteract the secularisation of social life – i.e. they are, in reality, elements of clericalism.

In the same way, individual phenomena of religious extremism that can be observed, for example, within Russian Orthodoxy and Christian sectarianism in the USSR, are generated by the success of the process of secularisation, and become attempts to obstruct this process by presenting themselves as clerical reactions. [. . .p. 21–23. . .]

The process of secularisation is an essential and structural element of social progress. In the context of socialist society, social progress is measured in terms of the construction of communism, the set-up of its material and technical foundations, the establishment of communist relations between people, and the creation of the new man. Both the objective progress of history and the conscious strengthening of the Communist Party are directed at the implementation of the most humane goal: "All in the name of man, all for the good of man". Therefore, the final target of secularisation, perceived and consciously assumed, is also mankind, their spiritual freedom, the well-rounded development of all their interests and abilities, and the satisfaction of all their material and spiritual needs. Obviously, this does not mean that secularisation *per se* leads to the achievement of this goal in its entirety, but a secularisation of the life and activity of society and the individual are necessary conditions for its achievement.

This explains the growing interest in the controlling and the practical management of this process, which is only possible on the basis of a deep scientific knowledge of it. Even if research into the process of secularisation begins on the level of society as a whole, it interests us primarily as a process of change in the consciousness and behaviour of people: of the masses, of the group, and of concrete [p. 23/24] individuals.

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4 [21n1 in the original] Hubert Mohr (GDR), "Attempts to adapt among Catholic orders under current circumstances," *Questions of Scientific Atheism*, vol. 2, Moscow, 1966, 390–404.

55 John Milbank: *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (1990)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Florian Zemmin

Introduction

John Milbank (b. 1952) is an Anglican-Catholic theologian and professor emeritus in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Nottingham, as well as being president of the Centre of Theology and Philosophy there. Milbank received a BA in modern history from The Queen's College, Oxford, and an MA in theology from Westcott House, Cambridge. He received his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Birmingham. In 1998, he was awarded a senior Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Cambridge, in recognition of his work. Milbank became known for founding the *Radical Orthodoxy* movement (with Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock), which stands in clear opposition to liberal strands of "radical theology" in Britain. *Radical Orthodoxy* relates positively to ancient philosophy and medieval Christian theology, and sharply opposes rationalism and secularism. Both are rejected for making humanity its own arbiter of truth. Milbank's work is also informed by post-modern forms of philosophy, even though he opposes the latter's relativisation of truth.

The secular, according to Milbank, is a historical and normative formation, rather than a natural universal given that was superseded by religion before modernity. In this regard, Milbank shares basic premises with thinkers such as Charles Taylor (text no. 40) and Talal Asad (text no. 56). Milbank places more explicit value on religious wholesomeness than on societal differentiation, however. This goes hand in hand with denouncing the very bases of social theory, favouring an all-encompassing theological interpretation of the world and society – a juxtaposition known from fundamental criticism of the Enlightenment found in other traditions, too. Most influential in this regard was his book *Theology and Social Theory* (1990), which is considered a founding document of the *Radical Orthodoxy* movement. In the section of this book reprinted below, Milbank deals with the genealogy of political science, whose institutionalisation of the secular, he argues, laid the basis for all future social sciences. Whilst this institutionalisation also drew on certain theological strands, he sees it as marking an instrumentalisation and individualisation of reason, that fundamentally goes against properly understood Christian ontology.

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1 Political Theory and the New Science of Politics

The New Object of Political Science

Once, there was no 'secular'. And the secular was not latent, waiting to fill more space with the steam of the 'purely human', when the pressure of the sacred was relaxed. Instead there was the single community of Christendom, with its dual aspects of *sacerdotium* and *regnum.* The *saeculum*, in the medieval era, was not a space, a domain, but a time – the interval between fall and *eschaton* where coercive justice, private property and impaired natural reason must make shift to cope with the unredeemed effects of sinful humanity.

The secular as a domain had to be instituted or *imagined*, both in theory and in practice. This institution is not correctly grasped in merely negative terms as a desacralization. It belongs to the received wisdom of sociology to interpret Christianity as itself an agent of secularization, yet this thesis is totally bound up with the one-sided negativity of the notion of desacralizing; a metaphor of the removal of the superfluous and additional to leave a residue of the human, the natural and the self-sufficient. For this negative conception it is convenient that there should always have been some perception of the pure remainder, and the hybrid 'Judeo-Christianity' is cast in this role: from its inception, it supposedly removes sacral allure from the cosmos and then, inevitably, from the political, the social, the economic, the artistic – the human 'itself'.[...]

Received sociology altogether misses the positive institution of the secular, because it fully embraces the notion of humanism as the perennial destiny of the West and of human autonomous freedom as always gestating in the womb of 'Judeo-Christianity'. However, in this respect it is doomed to repeat the self-understanding of Christianity arrived at in late-medieval nominalism, the Protestant reformation and seventeenth-century Augustinianism, which completely privatized, spiritualized and transcendentalized the sacred, and concurrently reimagined nature, human action and society as a sphere of autonomous, sheerly formal power. Sociology projects this specific mutation [p. 9/10] in Christianity back to its origins and even to the Bible. It

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interprets the theological transformation at the inception of modernity as a genuine 'reformation' which fulfils the destiny of Christianity to let the spiritual be the spiritual, without public interference, and the public be the secular, without private prejudice. Yet this interpretation preposterously supposes that the new theology simply brought Christianity to its true essence by lifting some irksome and misplaced sacred ecclesial restrictions on the free market of the secular, whereas, in fact, it instituted an entirely different economy of power and knowledge and had to invent 'the political' and 'the State', just as much as it had to invent 'private religion'.

This consideration should govern how we view the first social theory that claimed to be a 'science', namely 'political science'. With the writings of Grotius, Hobbes and Spinoza, political theory achieved a certain highly ambiguous 'autonomy' with regard to theology. However, autonomization was not achieved in the sphere of knowledge alone; it was only possible because the new science of politics both assumed and constructed for itself a new autonomous object – the political – defined as a field of pure power. Secular 'scientific' understanding of society was, from the outset, only the self-knowledge of the self-construction of the secular as power. What theology has forgotten is that it cannot either contest or learn from this understanding as such, but has either to accept or deny its object. [. . . p. 10/11. . .]

[T]he sphere of the artificial, of *factum*, marks out the space of secularity. For Harvey Cox it is precisely this area of the free play of human constructive choice which formed the 'dominion' granted to Adam in Eden, as the counterpart to the individual and secret submission of the soul to God.[1]

However, the 'obvious' connection of the *factum* and the secular can and must be called into question. It is not enough just to point out, like Hannah Arendt or Jurgen Habermas, that the concentration of post-Hobbesian political science on instrumental reason tended to obscure another dimension of human action, namely Aristotelian *praxis*, where one seeks not to control with precision, but with a necessary approximation to persuade, exhort and [p. 11/12] encourage a growth in the virtues as ends in themselves.[2] This displacement of classical politics by a new political 'science' is of course very important, yet what these thinkers ignore is the fact that the sphere of the 'artificial' is not necessarily identical with that of the instrumental, any more than poetry is merely technology. [. . . p. 12/13]

Both insofar as it was deemed natural and insofar as it was deemed artificial, the new autonomous object of political science was not, therefore, simply 'uncovered'. The space of the secular had to be invented as the space of 'pure power'. However, this invention was itself, as we shall now see, a theological achievement, just as only a particular sort of theology could pronounce the *etsi Deus non daretur*.

1 [note 9 in the original] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (London: SCM, 1967) pp. 21–4.
2 [note 10 in the original] Jurgen Habermas, 'The classical doctrine of politics in relation to social philosophy', in *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (London: Heinemann, 1974) pp. 41–82.

The Theological Construction of Secular Politics

[. . . p. 13–18] That it was first of all the Church, the *sacerdotium*, rather than the *regnum*, which assumed traits of modern secularity – legal formalization, rational instrumentalization, sovereign rule, economic contractualism – ought to give us pause for thought. In a way, it was the increasing failure of the Church to be the Church, to preserve the 'rule of the Gospel' in the monasteries, and somehow to extend this to the laity (a failure of which the Christian humanist movement was often profoundly aware), which created a moral vacuum which the *regnum* could not easily fill, because ideals of a *purely political* virtue had been half-obliterated by Christianity. In such a vacuum, it seems likely that formal instrumentalism must increasingly reign, and this becomes still more likely after the further ecclesiastical failure which led to a divided Christendom. However, this is a retrospectively interpolated likelihood; one much too easily assumes that this formalism would be inevitably forthcoming. On the contrary, one must suppose that it could only fill the gaps because it was elaborated in theological terms, and by an ecclesiastical practice increasingly ready to redraw the bounds of *regnum* and *sacerdotium* as that between public, coercive power (the hierocratic state) and private faith (the Church as consequently mere 'aggregate'). Hence it may be that the voluntarist theological legacy allowed Europe to survive the Reformation by helping to engender the extraordinary seventeenth-century discovery of a politics that might persist and grow altogether 'without virtue' and without any substantive consensus.

Modern Politics and Biblical Hermeneutics

So far, we have seen how 'the secular' became an artificial *space* which was sheer *dominium*, or the sphere of the arbitrary. However, modern political science had also to cope with the secular which remained an interval of *time* (the *saeculum*) and with that ecclesial time with which it was concurrent. The [p. 18/19] new, secular *dominium* could not, according to the totalizing logic of wilful occupation which now mediated transcendence in the public realm, really tolerate a 'political' Church as a cohabitant. Hence it was first necessary, with Marsiglio and Luther, to produce the paradox of a purely 'suasive' Church which must yet involve external state coercion for its self-government.[3] It was then further necessary, with Hobbes, to exclude all 'private' inspiration from politics, by declaring the temporal 'interval' to be for the present 'the all', because the time of inspiration was over, bound and canonized, and its promises now exclusively referred

3 [note 41 in the original] Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of the Peace*, trans. Alan Gewirth, vol. 2 ch. 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956) pp. 24, xix, 274ff.

to an eschatological, though literal and material, future.[4] Nevertheless, the surviving presence of the authoritative text of the Scriptures within the new space of sovereign power could not be denied. It was even essentially *required* by this power, as the source of a positive divine reconfirmation of the covenantal principle, and for the truth that God stood behind the positive authority of nature. However, one use of the Bible had to be prohibited. This was its truly Catholic use, which accorded interpretative authority to a *tradition* of reading, to readers whose power proceeded not from arms, property or contract, but rather from their socially made available time for reading. It was therefore necessary for the new political science to 'capture' from Catholic Christianity the text of the Bible: to produce a new Biblical hermeneutic. [. . . p. 19–22. . .]

This 'capturing of the Biblical text' may not seem quite so constitutive for modern politics as voluntarist theology. Nevertheless, it remains latent, and the banishing of traditional ecclesial time served to reinforce a commitment to the illusion of spatial immediacy and to the exorcism of the metaphorically ambiguous. Hobbes's 'Leviathan' remained truly haunted by the 'Kingdom of the Fairies' who 'inhabite Darknesse, Solitudes and Graves',[5] because the latter's nominality echoes the nominality of Leviathan itself, and both 'engines of meaning' are equally arbitrary, although Hobbes's alone claims natural, subjective and even Biblical foundations.

Polybian Cycles versus Ecclesial Time

The abstraction of 'politics', the turning of it into a new sort of deductive science based on accident not substance and on 'artificial' and arbitrary causal [p. 22/23] connections, was the achievement of a voluntarist political theology. Here the 'secular' as an area of human autonomy is actually promoted by a theological anthropology for which human wilfulness, in certain circumstances, guarantees divine origin. This politics is a spatial abstraction out of 'matters of fact' whose 'register', according to Hobbes, is 'civil history', not 'Books of Philosophy' like *Leviathan*.[6] Yet from the Renaissance onwards, another root of a more 'scientific' politics was historicism, which tended to the conclusion that political practice must be adapted to customs, manners, religions and times.

It is false to see in the gradual emergence of a historicist perspective a wholly sudden break with traditional modes of thought. It was not, for example, necessarily incompatible with the allegorical mode of ecclesial time; a humanist like Erasmus could easily contain his sense of historical 'distance' within allegory, because the very tension

4 [note 42 in the original] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part III, ch. 35, p. 447; Part IV, ch. 44, pp. 629–30. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Time, history and eschatology in the thought of Thomas Hobbes', in *Politics, Language and Time* (London: Methuen, 1972).

5 [note 59 in the original] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part IV, ch. 47, p. 713.

6 [note 60 in the original] Ibid., Part I, ch. 9, pp. 147–8. Tito Magri, *De Cive* (Introduction) (Rome: Riuniti, 1981) pp. 12–13.

involved in typological figuration between the overarching unity of divine revelation and the difference between its successive phases can actually promote such an awareness.[7] Equally, the traditional perspectives of a 'civic' politics, inherited from Aristotle and the Romans, encouraged a reflection upon the given historical circumstances in which a civic, participatory virtue (rendered redundant by Hobbes) could best flourish.

If there is a break, then it is not rightfully located (as, for example, by J. G. A. Pocock) between a timeless, Christian, hierocratic politics and a 'purely human' temporal and activist politics.[8] This is to fail to see that doing and making remained 'sacralized' for Christian humanists from Salutati onwards, and to forget, also, that monastic institutions were regarded as humanly-instituted *politeiai*.[9] Rather, one must understand what Pocock calls 'the Machiavellian Moment' as the astonishing re-emergence of pagan political and philosophical time no longer as a makeshift, nor a Thomist preparation for grace, but rather as something with its own integrity, its own goals and values, which might even contradict those of Christianity. It is, as Grabmann recognized, a parallel phenomenon to 'Averroism', where philosophical truths may be in contradiction with the truths of the faith.[10]

Here then is another and completely different root of the secular. Yet the Machiavellian secular was not an area of pure neutrality with respect to faith. On the contrary, it only came to exist as the discovery of a new sort of *virtù* which could not be reconciled with the Christian virtues. If the Hobbesian [p. 23/24] field of power seems to be constructed by a perverse theology, then the Machiavellian field of power is constructed by a partial rejection of Christianity and appeal to an alternative *mythos*.

The humanist and historicist legacy was no less important for the emergence of modern social theory than the natural rights legacy of liberalism/absolutism. [. . .] [T]he eighteenth-century enlightenment was much preoccupied with an attempt to find a new version of antique virtue. Yet for all this, there is an important point of convergence between the two currents, which ensures that even the 'civic humanist' tradition is infected by individualism and instrumentalism. This point of convergence is the Roman stoic legacy, which directs attention to a pre-social human being which seeks sociation through an impulse belonging to its own *conatus*, or drive to self-preservation, and which also tends to redefine virtue as knowledge of, agreement with, action within or indifference to, historical *fate*.

In its Machiavellian version, civic humanism sheers off an Aristotelianism compatible with Christianity in favour of a notion of political *prudentia* as instrumental

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7 [note 61 in the original] Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Mediévale*, II, II, pp. 317–28, 249–352.

8 [note 62 in the original] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, pp. 31–80 (Princeton N.J.: Princeton UP, 1975).

9 [note 63 in the original] Salutati, *De Nobilitate*, ch. 31, pp. 218–220. J. H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

10 [note 64 in the original] A. S. McGrade, *The Political Thought of William of Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) pp. 197–206.

manipulation.[11] At the same time, it subscribes to a *mythos* of fate which takes it outside Christian theological bounds. Whereas, for natural rights theory, conflict is endemic to fallen human nature and this original conflict must be suppressed by a hierocratic counter-violence imposing a fearful peace, for Machiavellianism there is a simultaneous 'heroic' promotion of both internal civic solidarity and external enmity, a mixture which is most gloriously human and yet also most fatefully doomed.[12]

The Machiavellian republic emerges not gradually, through the ironic disciplines of linear time, but suddenly and sporadically in a favourable moment, against the background of an unpredictable *fortuna*.[13] For medieval Christianity, the uncontrollable reverses of fortune represented the deep-seatedness of original sin within an overall providential design, but for Machiavelli *fortuna* is again an antique and impersonal compound of chaos and fatality. The aim of political *virtù* is to 'use' and surmount, for a time, this fortune. Machiavelli makes historicist, relativizing observations about the chances of different republics, observing that a relatively democratic republic like Venice should not make war, because the capture of foreigners will lead to the introduction of class divisions, whereas a class-divided republic like ancient Rome is well-equipped to make war and expand its population.[14] However, it is not really this relativism which makes Machiavelli a forebear of a modern and non-Christian politics. Rather, it is his explicit *preference* for the Roman option and his return to the etymological root of virtue as 'heroic manliness', to be cultivated supremely in war. This preference encompasses [p. 24/25] also the view that continued class conflict within the republic is functionally useful in preserving political 'liberty' – the habit of independence.[15] While Machiavelli by no means wishes to deny the validity of 'more moral' social virtues within their proper sphere, it is this option for internal conflict which ensures that a manipulative bias must be dominant among those who rule.

As the republic emerges 'suddenly', so its course is contained within a cyclical time. Machiavelli is heavily dependent upon the late-antique Greek-born writer Polybius, who, standing outside and at the end of Rome, interpreted its history as a progression from the rule of the few through the rule of the one to the rule of the many, culminating, through innumerable private conflicts, in an ultimate loss of aristocratic virtue.[16] Whereas the theological natural rights tradition discovered a 'self-sustaining' world of pure power without virtue, the non-Christian Machiavellian tradition derived from Polybius insisted that human power was a form of virtue, and hence just as historically

11 [note 65 in the original] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Henry C. Mansfield, jun., XXV (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985) pp. 98–9.
12 [note 66 in the original] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Leshe S. Watter (London: Penguin, 1970) pp. 15, 16, 118–26. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 49–80, 156–218.
13 [note 67 in the original] Ibid.
14 [note 68 in the original] Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, 5; 6 (1970) pp. 118–26.
15 [note 69 in the original] Ibid., 4; 4, pp. 113–15.
16 [note 70 in the original] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 49–80.

precarious as the rarity of true virtue. The latter tradition ultimately lies behind the later dialectical and historicist theses of Hegel and Marx, but the eschatological 'resolutions' which these thinkers project depend, as we shall see, on the overlay of another theological programme, that of *theodicy*. For the pure Machiavellian tradition, by contrast, human meaning is 'present' and temporarily glorious – besides this there is only a lapsing back into the unmeaning fatality of history without the republic. The stance of this tradition towards Christianity is ambiguous. On the one hand it often supports a 'civil religion' – Christian or otherwise – which will 'functionally' promote civic solidarity. On the other hand, it attempts to revive, against Christianity, an antique sacrality, producing a new *mythos* of heroes without gods (though still, for Machiavelli, to be rewarded for the exercise of civic virtue by a single God) which is the second aspect of the modern 'secular'.[17]

Both the natural rights and the Machiavellian traditions in 'scientific politics' are heavily presupposed by all later social science. Yet from both a Christian *and* a metacritical perspective (meaning the historicist questioning of 'rational' foundations) it might seem that we have here only to do with heterodoxy on the one hand and the half-return of paganism on the other. For just as the first makes a perfect analysis only of its own artefact, so the second traces correctly the historical fate only of 'heroic man', which is precisely the ethical ontology which Christianity calls into question. In either case, it seems that, from the outset, the 'science of conflict' is not merely one branch of social science but rather that the 'scientific' approach seeks 'to know' power and conflict as ontologically fundamental. It follows that if Christianity seeks to 'find a place for' secular reason, it may be perversely compromising with what, on its own terms, is either deviancy or falsehood.

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56 Talal Asad: *Formations of the Secular* (2003)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Talal Asad (b. 1932) is an anthropologist who is currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies at the City University of New York Graduate Center. His mother, Munira bint Husayn asch-Schamar, was a Saudi Arabian Muslim; his father, Muhammad Asad (b. Leopold Weiss), was an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist who converted to Islam in the 1920s, becoming an influential Muslim intellectual voice of the twentieth century. Talal Asad was born in Medina, Saudi Arabia, but his family moved to British India shortly after. There, they experienced first-hand the violent partition of post-war British India into independent India and Pakistan. In 1950, Talal Asad moved to London to study architecture. Partially motivated by a desire to understand his Arab heritage and his disillusionment with British society, he eventually switched to studying anthropology, in which he completed an MA at Edinburgh in 1959, and a BLitt at Oxford in 1961. Following the latter, he signed up for a five-year lectureship in Khartoum – integrated into his DPhil research at Oxford – where he carried out extensive fieldwork among the Kababish people which lead to his doctoral dissertation (1968) and his first book (1970).[I] Inspired by contemporary Marxist ideas, he increasingly developed a critical standpoint towards anthropological knowledge production in colonial and postcolonial contexts, and became an early postcolonial critic of his discipline and its concepts.[II] In the mid-1970s, when he was caring for his terminally ill mother in Saudi Arabia, her embodied, self-evident religiosity made a lasting impression on his views of religion, as he distanced himself from doctrinal Marxist approaches to the topic.[III] This development is documented in *Genealogies of Religion*,[IV] a collection of his most important essays from the 1980s and early 1990s, in which one can also observe the increasing influence of Michel Foucault on his work.

The selected text is an excerpt from the introduction to Talal Asad's seminal book, *Formations of the Secular*, which brings together his works of the late 1990s and early 2000s. This book is nearly always mentioned in contemporary social scientific

I Talal Asad, *The Kababish Arabs: Power, Authority and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe* (London: Hurst & Co., 1970).
II Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973).
III For this and other (auto-)biographical Information, see: Talal Asad, "Autobiographical Reflections on Anthropology and Religion," *Religion and Society* 11 (2020): 1–29, https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2020.110102.
IV Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

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discussions of secularity. In his introduction, Asad distinguishes between the secular and secularism, and acknowledges the existence of pre-modern, 'non-Western' configurations of a separation of religion and politics (see Yavari, text no. 51, Kleine, text no. 50, Kleine and Wolhrab-Sahr, text no. 21, Dumont, text no. 23). Nonetheless, he makes a strong claim about the historical singularity of globalising modern secularism (see Hoekendijk, text no. 2), its transformative powers regarding religion, ethics and politics and its connection to the modern nation state (see Iqtidar, text no. 59, van der Veer, text no. 28, Madan, text no. 27, Dreßler, text no. 17). The heated debates in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 evidently influenced his work – while not altering its overall direction – and informed the extensive discussion of the religious or secular origins of political violence in this text. It is evident that Asad's genealogical approach to the *Formations of the Secular* starts from his discontent with the present. Asad turns the anthropological perspective around to critically explore modern forms of life, including (the genealogies of) attitudes to the body and the structure of the senses. Last but not least, the excerpt also provides a glimpse of a tension that is traceable in all of Asad's works: that between, on the one hand, a fierce and sophisticated immanent critique of modern 'Western' life forms and their inner contradictions and ideological justifications – joining a long tradition of critical theories of modernity – and, on the other hand, an imagined wholeness and inner consistency of embodied 'traditional' forms of life, which he does not seem to subject to the same unyieldingly thorough critique (see al-Azmeh, text no. 20, Mufti, text no. 72). In some of his work, he seems to project onto these holistic imaginaries his faint hope for change.[V]

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V See, for example, Asad's conversation with David Scott, in which he extensively reflects on his critical position towards ('Western') modernity: David Scott, "Appendix: The Trouble of Thinking: An Interview with Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,* ed. Charles Hirschkind and David Scott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 243–303, esp. 291–94.

Introduction: Thinking about Secularism

I

What is the connection between "the secular" as an epistemic category and "secularism" as a political doctrine? Can they be objects of anthropological inquiry? What might an anthropology of secularism look like? This book attempts, in a preliminary way, to address these questions.

The contemporary salience of religious movements around the globe, and the torrent of commentary on them by scholars and journalists, have made it plain that religion is by no means disappearing in the modern world. The "resurgence of religion" has been welcomed by many as a means of supplying what they see as a needed moral dimension to secular politics and environmental concerns. It has been regarded by others with alarm as a symptom of growing irrationality and intolerance in everyday life. The question of secularism has emerged as an object of academic argument and of practical dispute. If anything is agreed upon, it is that a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular is no longer acceptable. But does it follow that secularism is not universally valid?

Secularism as political doctrine arose in modern Euro-America. It is easy to think of it simply as requiring the separation of religious from secular institutions in government, but that is not all it is. Abstractly stated, examples of this separation can be found in medieval Christendom and in the Islamic empires – and no doubt elsewhere too. What is distinctive [p. 1/2] about "secularism" is that it presupposes new concepts of "religion," "ethics," and "politics," and new imperatives associated with them. Many people have sensed this novelty and reacted to it in a variety of ways. Thus the opponents of secularism in the Middle East and elsewhere have rejected it as specific to the West, while its advocates have insisted that its particular origin does not detract from its contemporary global relevance. The eminent philosopher Charles Taylor is among those who insist that although secularism emerged in response to the political problems of Western Christian society in early modernity – beginning with its devastating wars of religion – it is applicable to non-Christian societies everywhere that have become modern. This elegant and attractive argument by a highly influential social philosopher demands the attention of everyone interested in this question.[1]

Taylor takes it for granted that the emergence of secularism is closely connected to the rise of the modern nation-state, and he identifies two ways in which secularism has legitimized it. First, there was the attempt to find the lowest common denominator among the doctrines of conflicting religious sects, and second, the attempt to define a

1 [note 1 in the original] Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

political ethic independent of religious convictions altogether. It is this latter model that is applicable throughout the world today [. . .].

[. . . p. 2–5. . .]

When Taylor says that the modern state has to make citizenship the primary principle of identity, he refers to the way it must transcend the different identities built on class, gender, and religion, replacing conflicting perspectives by unifying experience. In an important sense, this transcendent mediation *is* secularism. Secularism is not simply an intellectual answer to a question about enduring social peace and toleration. It is an enactment by which a *political medium* (representation of citizenship) redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion. In contrast, the process of mediation enacted in "premodern" societies includes ways in which the state mediates local identities without aiming at transcendence.

[. . .]

In short, the assumption that liberal democracy ushers in a direct-access society seems to me questionable. The forms of mediation characteristic of modern society certainly differ from medieval Christian – and Islamic – ones, but this is not a simple matter of the absence of "religion" in the public life of the modern nation-state. For even in modern secular countries the place of religion varies. Thus although in France both the highly centralized state and its citizens are secular, in Britain the state is linked to the Established Church and its inhabitants are largely nonreligious, and in America the population is largely religious but the federal state is secular. "Religion" has always been publicly present in both Britain and America. Consequently, although the secularism of these three countries have much in common, the mediating character of the modern imag[p. 5/6]inary in each of them differs significantly. The notion of toleration between religiously defined groups is differently inflected in each. There is a different sense of participation in the nation and access to the state among religious minorities in the three countries.

So what does the idea of *an overlapping consensus* do for the doctrine of secularism? In a religiously diverse society, Taylor claims, it allows people to have different (even mutually exclusive) reasons for subscribing to the independent, *secular* ethic. For example, the right to life may be justified by secular or religious beliefs – and the latter may come in several varieties that belong to different traditions. This means that political disagreements will be continuous, incapable of being authoritatively resolved, and that temporary resolutions will have to depend on negotiated compromise. But given that there will be quarrels about what is to count as *core political principles* and as *background justifications*, how will they be resolved? Taylor answers: by persuasion and negotiation. There is certainly a generous impulse behind this answer, but the nation-state is not a generous agent and its law does not deal in persuasion. [. . .] What happens, the citizen asks, to the principles of equality and liberty in the modern secular imaginary when they are subjected to the necessities of the law? It emerges then that although she can choose her happiness, she may not identify her harms. Or to put it

another way: When the state attempts to forcibly establish and defend "core political principles," when its courts impose a *particular* distinction between "core principles" and "background justifications" (for the law always *works through* violence), this may add to cumulative disaffection. Can secularism then guarantee the peace it allegedly ensured in [p. 6/7] Euro-America's early history – by shifting the violence of religious wars into the violence of national and colonial wars? The difficulty with secularism as a doctrine of war and peace in the world is not that it is European (and therefore alien to the non-West) but that it is closely connected with the rise of a system of capitalist nation-states – mutually suspicious and grossly unequal in power and prosperity, each possessing a collective personality that is differently mediated and therefore differently guaranteed and threatened.

Thus a number of historians have noted the tendency of spokespersons of the American nation, a tendency that has dramatically resurfaced since the September 11 tragedy, to define it as "good" in opposition to its "evil" enemies at home and abroad. "It is an outlook rooted in two distinctive American traditions," says Eric Foner, a historian at Columbia University. "The country's religious roots and its continuing high level of religious faith make Americans more likely to see enemies not just as opponents but as evil. Linked to that is the belief that America is the world's last best hope of liberty, so that those who oppose America become the enemies of freedom."[2]

[. . .]

Regardless of the religious roots and the contemporary religiosity that historians invoke in explanation of this pattern, America has – as Taylor rightly observes – a model secular constitution. My point is that whatever the cause of the repeated explosions of intolerance in American history – however understandable they may be – they are entirely compatible (indeed intertwined) with secularism in a highly modern society.

[. . . p. 7/8. . .]

Another instructive example is India, a country that has a secular constitution and an outstanding record as a functioning liberal democracy – perhaps the most impressive in the Third World. And yet in India "communal riots" (that is, between Hindus and various minorities – Muslim, Christian, and "Untouchable") have occurred frequently ever since independence in 1947. As Partha Chatterjee and others have pointed out, the publicly recognizable personality of the nation is strongly mediated by representations of a reconstituted high-caste Hinduism, and those who do not fit into that personality are inevitably defined as religious minorities. This has often placed the "religious minorities" in a defensive position.[3] A secular state does not guarantee toleration; it puts into play different structures of ambition and fear. The law never seeks to eliminate violence since its object is always to *regulate* violence.

2 [note 7 in the original] Robert F. Worth, "A Nation Defines Itself by Its Evil Enemies: Truth, Right and the American Way," in the *New York Times*, February 24, 2002.

3 [note 8 in the original] See, in this connection, Partha Chatterjee, "History and the Nationalization of Hinduism," *Social Research*, vol. 59, no. 1, 1992.

II

If secularism as a doctrine requires the distinction between private reason and public principle, it also demands the placing of the "religious" in the former by "the secular." Private *reason* is not the same as private *space;* it is the entitlement to difference, the immunity from the force of public reason. So theoretical and practical problems remain that call for each of these categories to be defined. What makes a discourse and an action "religious" or "secular"?

[. . . p. 8/9. . .]

Let me pursue this point briefly with reference to what is described in our media, and by many of our public intellectuals, as "the Islamic roots of violence" – especially since September 2001. Religion has long been seen [p. 9/10] as a source of violence,[4] and (for ideological reasons) Islam has been represented in the modern West as peculiarly so (undisciplined, arbitrary, singularly oppressive). Experts on "Islam," "the modern world," and "political philosophy" have lectured the Muslim world yet again on its failure to embrace secularism and enter modernity and on its inability to break off from its violent roots. Now some reflection would show that violence does not *need* to be justified by the Qur'an – or any other scripture for that matter.

[. . .]

One need only remind oneself of the banal fact that innumerable pious Muslims, Jews, and Christians read their scriptures without being seized by the need to kill non-believers. My point here is simply to emphasize that the way people engage with such complex and multifaceted texts, translating their sense and relevance, is a complicated business involving disciplines and traditions of reading, personal habit, and temperament, as well as the perceived demands of particular social situations.

The present discourse about the roots of "Islamic terrorism" in Islamic texts trails two intriguing assumptions: (a) that the Qur'anic text will [p. 10/11] force Muslims to be guided by it; and (b) that Christians and Jews are free to interpret the Bible as they please.

[. . .]

In fact in Islam as in Christianity there is a complicated history of shifting interpretations, and the distinction is recognized between the divine text and human approaches to it.

Those who think that the *motive* for violent action lies in "religious ideology" claim that any concern for the consequent suffering requires that we support the censorship

4 [note 10 in the original] "In the case of the Bible the tradition handed down from the Middle Ages has been to regard it as a collection of texts, any of which could be detached from its surroundings and used, regardless of the circumstances in which it was written or by whom it was spoken, as divine authority for conduct; often (as we know) with devastating consequences. Texts have been set up as idols, as cruel as ever were worshiped by savage idolaters" (ibid., p. viii). [refers to note 8 in the original: *The Bible Designed to Be Read as Literature*, ed. and arranged by E. S. Bates, London: William Heineman, undated.]

of religious discourse – or at least the prevention of religious discourse from entering the domain where public policy is formulated. But it is not always clear whether it is pain and suffering as such that the secularist cares about or the pain and suffering that can be attributed to religious violence because that is pain the modern imaginary conceives of as gratuitous. Nor is it always clear how a "religious motive" is to be unequivocally identified in modern society. Is motivated behavior that accounts for itself by religious discourse ipso facto religious or only when it does so *sincerely*? But insincerity may itself be a construction of religious language. Is it assumed that there is always an *unconscious* motive to a religious act, a motive that is therefore secular, as Freud and others have done? But that begs the question of how to distinguish between the religious and the secular. In short, to identify a (religious) motive for violence one must have a theory of motives that deals with concepts of character and dispositions, inwardness and visibility, the thought and the unthought.[5] In modern, secular society this also means *authoritative* theories and practices – as [p. 11/12] in law courts, or in the hegemonic discourse of the national media, or in parliamentary forums where the intentions of foreign friends and enemies are assessed and policies formulated.

It would be easy to point to innumerable "secular" agents who have perpetrated acts of great cruelty. But such attempts at defending "religion" are less interesting than asking what it is we do when we assign responsibility for "violence and cruelty" to specific agents. [. . .]

In brief, although "religious" intentions are variously distinguished from "secular" ones in different traditions, the identification of *intentions* as such is especially important in what scholars call modernity for allocating moral and legal accountability.

III

Many critics have now taken the position that "modernity" (in which secularism is centrally located) is not a verifiable object.[6] They argue that contemporary societies are heterogeneous and overlapping, that they contain disparate, even discordant, circumstances, origins, valences, and so [p. 12/13] forth. My response is that in a sense these critics are right (although the heuristic value of looking for necessary connections should not be forgotten) but that what we have here is not a simple cognitive error. Assumptions about the integrated character of "modernity" are themselves part of practical

5 [note 12 in the original] Two excellent conceptual investigations appeared in 1958: G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, Oxford: Blackwell; and R. S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Herbert Morris, *On Guilt and Innocence* (published by University of California Press in 1976), looks at the question of motivation from an explicitly juridical perspective.

6 [note 13 in the original] For example, Bernard Yack's *The Fetishism of Modernities: Epochal Self-Consciousness in Contemporary Social and Political Thought*, Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

and political reality. They direct the way in which people committed to it act in critical situations. These people *aim* at "modernity," and expect others (especially in the "non-West") to do so too. This fact doesn't disappear when we simply point out that "the West" isn't an integrated totality, that many people in the West contest secularism or interpret it in different ways, that the modern epoch in the West has witnessed many arguments and several irreconcilable aspirations. On the contrary, those who assume modernity *as a project* know that already. (An aspect of modern colonialism is this: although the West contains many faces at home it presents a single face abroad.[7]) The important question, therefore, is not to determine why the idea of "modernity" (or "the West") is a misdescription, but why it has become hegemonic *as a political goal*, what practical consequences follow from that hegemony, and what social conditions maintain it.

It is right to say that "modernity" is neither a totally coherent object nor a clearly bounded one, and that many of its elements originate in relations with the histories of peoples outside Europe. Modernity is a *project* – or rather, a series of interlinked projects – that certain people in power seek to achieve. The project aims at institutionalizing a number of (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market – and secularism. It employs proliferating technologies (of production, warfare, travel, entertainment, medicine) that generate new experiences of space and time, of cruelty and health, of consumption and knowledge. The notion that these experiences constitute "disenchantment" – implying a direct access to reality, a stripping away of myth, magic, and the sacred – is a salient feature of the modern epoch. It is, arguably, a product of nineteenth-century romanticism, partly linked to [p. 13/14] the growing habit of reading imaginative literature[8] – being enclosed within and by it – so that images of a "pre-modern" past acquire in retrospect a quality of enchantment. Modern projects do not hang together as an integrated totality, but they account for distinctive sensibilities, aesthetics, moralities. It is not always clear what critics mean when they claim that there is no such thing as "the West" because its modern culture has diverse genealogies taking it outside Europe. If Europe has a geographical "outside" doesn't that itself presuppose the idea of a space – at once coherent and subvertible – for locating the West? In my view that is not the best way of approaching the question. Modernity is not primarily a

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7 [note 14 in the original] "Simultaneously, and despite the parochialism of the governments at home," wrote Count Carlo Sforza, "a sort of international solidarity was slowly evolving in the colonies. . .. Out of interest if not out of good will, an embryonic European understanding had at last been found in Africa. We could hate one another in Europe, but we felt that, between two neighbouring colonies, the interest in common was as great as between two white men meeting in the desert" (*Europe and Europeans*, 1936).
8 [note 15 in the original] Benedict Anderson's discussion of "print-capitalism" focuses on the significance of newspaper reading for imagining the nation as a community (1983), but he does not consider the simultaneous growth of serialized novels published in periodicals and the enormous expansion in the market for imaginative "literature" – both prose and poetry – that mediated people's understanding of "real" and "imagined." See Per Gedin, *Literature in the Marketplace*, London: Faber and Faber, 1982 (Swedish original 1975).

matter of cognizing the real but of living-in-the-world. Since this is true of every epoch, what is distinctive about modernity *as a historical epoch* includes modernity as a political-economic project. What interests me particularly is the attempt to construct categories of the secular and the religious in terms of which modern living is required to take place, and nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy. For representations of "the secular" and "the religious" in modern and modernizing states mediate people's identities, help shape their sensibilities, and guarantee their experiences.

[. . . p. 14/15. . .]

"Seldom," observes Serge Halimi, "has the development of the whole of humanity been conceived in terms so closely identical and so largely inspired by the American model." As Halimi notes, that model is not confined to matters of free trade and private enterprise but includes moral and political dimensions – prominent among them being the doctrine of secularism.[9] If this project has not been entirely successful on a global scale – if its result is more often further instability than homogeneity – it is certainly not because those in a position to make far-reaching decisions about the affairs of the world reject the doctrine of a singular destiny – a transcendent truth? – for all countries. (That the opponents of this project are themselves often driven by totalizing ideologies and intolerant attitudes is undoubtedly true. However, it is as well to stress – in the aftermath of the September 11 tragedy – that my point here is not to "blame America" and "justify its enemies," but to indicate that as the world's only superpower, the protection of its interests and commitment to "freedom" require America to intervene globally and to help reform local conditions according to what appear to be universal values. The reformed local conditions include new styles of consumption and expression. Whether these are best described as "freely chosen" or "imposed" is another question.)

We should look, therefore, at *the politics* of national progress – including the politics of secularism – that flow from the multifaceted concept of modernity exemplified by "the West" (and especially by America as its leader and most advanced exemplar). But should we not also inquire about the politics of the contrary view? What politics are promoted by the notion that the world is *not* divided into modern and nonmodern, into West and non-West? What practical options are opened up or closed by the notion that the world has *no* significant binary features, that it is, on the contrary, divided into overlapping, fragmented cultures, hybrid selves, continuously dissolving and emerging social states? As part of such an understanding I believe we must try to unpack the various assumptions on which secularism – a modern doctrine of the world in the world – is based. For it is precisely the process by which these conceptual binaries are established or subverted that tells us how people live the secular – how [p. 15/16] they vindicate the essential freedom and responsibility of the sovereign self in opposition to the constraints of that self by religious discourses.

9 [note 17 in the original] See S. Halimi, "Liberal Dogma Shipwrecked," *Le Monde diplomatique*, Supplement to *The Guardian Weekly*, October 1998.

IV

It is a major premise of this study that "the secular" is conceptually prior to the political doctrine of "secularism," that over time a variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities have come together to form "the secular." In the chapters that follow I therefore begin with a partial genealogy of that concept, an effort aimed at questioning its self-evident character while asserting at the same time that it nevertheless marks something real. My resort to genealogy obviously derives from ways it has been deployed by Foucault and Nietzsche, although it does not claim to follow them religiously. Genealogy is not intended here as a substitute for social history ("real history," as many would put it) but as a way of working back from our present to the contingencies that have come together to give us our certainties.

[. . .]

Finally: Can anthropology as such contribute anything to the clarification of questions about secularism? Most anthropologists are taught that their discipline is essentially defined by a research technique (participant observation) carried out in a circumscribed field, and that as such it deals with particularity – with what Clifford Geertz, following the philosopher Gilbert Ryle, called "thick description." And isn't secularism a universal concept, applicable throughout the modern world – capable at once of explaining and moderating the volatility of cultural multiplicities? [p. 16/17]

In my view anthropology is more than a method, and it should not be equated – as it has popularly become – with the direction given to inquiry by the pseudoscientific notion of "fieldwork."

[. . .]

What is distinctive about modern anthropology is the comparison of embedded concepts (representations) between societies differently located in time or space. The important thing in this comparative analysis is not their origin (Western or non-Western), but the forms of life that articulate them, the powers they release or disable. Secularism – like religion – is such a concept.

An anthropology of secularism should thus start with a curiosity about the doctrine and practice of secularism regardless of where they have originated, and it would ask: How do attitudes to the human body (to pain, physical damage, decay, and death, to physical integrity, bodily growth, and sexual enjoyment) differ in various forms of life? What structures of the senses – hearing, seeing, touching – do these attitudes depend on? In what ways does the law define and regulate practices and doctrines on the grounds that they are "truly human"? What discursive spaces does this work of definition and regulation open up for grammars of "the secular" and "the religious"? How do all these sensibilities, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors come together to support or undermine the doctrine of secularism?

Trying to formulate such questions in detail is a more important task for anthropology than hasty pronouncements about the virtues or vices of secularism.

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57 Russell T. McCutcheon: *On the Co-Dependency of the Religious and the Secular* (2007)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Russell Tracey McCutcheon is a prominent Canadian-American scholar of religion. Born in 1961, he obtained his PhD in religious studies from the University of Toronto in 1995. He has been a professor at the University of Alabama since 2001. His areas of interest include the history of scholarship on myths and rituals, secularism, theories of religion, and the relations between the classification of 'religion' itself and the rise of the nation-state.

In theoretical discussions in the study of religion, McCutcheon has become known above all for his critical work on the use of the concept of religion. In the article excerpted here, he emphasises that the concepts of 'religious' and 'secular' are co-dependent, and do not refer to any external reality. They are a conceptual pair that was coined in modern Europe, and serve specific purposes as "socio-rhetorical devices." According to McCutcheon, they are not, however, "analytic categories helpful in accounting for the creation, the successful reproduction, and the export of the worlds that their use has made possible." McCutcheon's critique of regarding the concepts of the 'religious' and the 'secular' as quasi-natural categories referring to real things, rather than realising that they are a strategic means of social classification in competitive economies of signification, has become extremely influential in the academic study of religion. Similar arguments can be found in the contributions by Fitzgerald (text no. 10) and Horii (text no. 22), excerpts of which are printed in this volume.

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I propose that the modernist invention that goes by the name of secularism is in fact religion's alter-ego (see Arnal 2000, 2001), that it is the *only* means for imagining religion even to exist, because "the religious" and "the secular" are, as my friend Willi Braun has phrased it, co-dependent categories. To put it another way, for those interested in talking about this thing that goes by the name of religion, that is somehow presumed to be distinguishable from that other thing that we commonly know as politics – the one premised on private experience and the other on public action – then *there is no beyond to secularism*. [. . .] [T]he conceptual pairing of the secular with the category religion provides the intellectual and social conditions in the midst of which, as phrased by Talal Asad, "modern living is required to take place" (2003: 14). Moreover, [. . .] [p. 178/179] attempts to assess the adequacy of secularism for studying religion not only presupposes the existence of the secular, but also effectively reproduce that location where this act of assessment – an act constitutive of our modern living – is taking place, the site made possible by these categories' use: the liberal democratic nation-state.

In entertaining this thesis we need to keep in mind Emile Durkheim's basic, though crucial, insight [. . .] that sacredness is a contingent attribute that results from actors *choosing* to implement sets of negotiable social rules; after all, as he famously defined it, people, places, actions, and things are sacred *not* because of some inner quality expressed or manifested in the world but, instead, because they can all be "set apart and forbidden" – highlighting both *placement* and *regulation*, activities that beg us to inquire just who did this setting apart, for what reason, and apart from what or whom. Asking such questions is therefore premised on our post-Durkheimian ability to entertain that, just as with early anthropological studies of other peoples' use of such designators as "clean" and "unclean," our "religious" and "secular," our "sacred" and "profane," do not name substantive or stable qualities in the empirical world, one predating the other or one superior to the other.[1] Instead, [. . .] they are mutually defining terms that come into existence together – what we might as well call a binary pair – the use of which makes a historically specific social world possible to imagine and move within; a world in which we can judge some actions as safe or dangerous, some items as pure or polluted, some knowledge as private or public, and some people as friend or foe. [. . . p. 179/180 . . .]

[S]ocial groups use a variety of local devices to navigate decisions over which of the many items of the empirical world get to count as significant and thus memorable. We would therefore be wise to avoid either universalizing or concretizing these devices [. . .]. To make this point, consider the now widely used, and thus taken for granted, conceptual pairing of citizen/foreign national. Although it may be correct to assume

1 [note 5 in the original] Keeping in mind Mary Douglas's biting critique of Durkheim exempting his own society's cherished truths (i.e., science, mathematics, etc.) from his own social analysis (see the Preface to the first edition in Douglas 1999), we could say that the fact of our being able to look upon the familiar with the same Durkheimian eyes that we use to see the strange is evidence of the limitations of his original work as well as its profound influence on subsequent theorists.

that "[s]ocial classification is a cultural universal, and categorical differences are coeval with human history" (Lie 2004: 13), as John Lie immediately goes on to observe, we would be doing rather sloppy history if we assumed that the means by which we do this in the modern nation-state were representative of all such social techniques. We therefore cannot elevate our local "citizen/foreign national" distinction to the status of an analytic category quite so easily.

Returning from citizen/foreigner to binaries of more direct relevance to our field, we [. . .] must be prepared to enter[p. 180/181]tain that our own "religious" and "secular" are, for our purposes as scholars, folk or phenomenological categories. No doubt, they will continue to be useful in our scholarly description of some people's world-making activities – activities taking place in the very groups that we in the modern liberal democratic world inhabit, as well as those elsewhere who, for whatever reason, have adopted (or, possibly, been forced to adopt) these social techniques. However, without careful retooling, they are *not* analytic categories helpful in accounting for the creation, the successful reproduction, and the export of the worlds that their use has made possible. This very point is nicely made by John Bowen in his new book, *Why The French Don't Like Headscarves* (2007). Referring to the French term "laïcité," only roughly translated as "secularism," he observes that, although French politicians may speak of laïcité as a causal agent or explanatory principle, "[it] does not. . . serve as a useful analytical tool. It makes no sense for a social scientist or historian to ask, 'Does this policy reinforce laïcité ?" (2007: 2). Why? Because, as he points out, "there is no historical actor called 'laïcité': only a series of debates, laws, and multiple efforts [on the part of various social participants with differing interests] to assert claims over public space" (33). [p. 181–184] Names and identities are not neutral and thus inter-changeable descriptors of stable items in the natural world. Instead, they are devices that we use and argue over while making a world that suits our differing purposes. [p. 184/185]

Apparently, then, classification is a lot more complicated than common sense tells us. Taking this into account, our work on the religious and the secular will have to keep in mind the historical nature and practical utility of our terms, no longer treating them as natural kinds. Instead, we must be open to scrutinizing the socio-political worlds and practical interests that the very existence of such a term as "religion" helps to make possible and persuasive. As well, our scholarship will no longer be able to spin nostalgic yarns, as did that lecturer on African religions, about a simpler, pre-colonial time comprised of [p. 185/186] undisturbed religious identities. Instead, it will have to be open to entertaining, that, as phrased by the French scholar, Jean-François Bayart, "the crystallization of particular identities . . . took place *in the colonial period*, under the combined (but possibly conflictual) action of the foreign occupiers, their autochthonous collaborators, and their adversaries" (2005: 88; emphasis added). As he then concludes: "Far from pre-existing the state, primordial groups, whether religious or ethnic . . . are the more or less poisonous fruit of the state itself" (emphasis added). Much as a discourse is but the sum total of a series of practices, Bayart argues that there are no authentic, pristine social identities that move through time or which can be violated

by alien naming conventions. Instead, there are only a series of historically discrete strategies, always developed and deployed in situations of difference (possibly contest), for specific reasons and with practical effects, that work to establish and normalize this or that thing that we come to call an identity – strategies working in concert with, or against, those practiced in other locales.

The question for scholars is whether we will take all of this into account when studying not only distant and unfamiliar social practices but local and familiar ones as well, prompting us to be more methodologically self-conscious in our labors, studying how and for whom such strategies work, or whether we will simply adopt those that suit us – or at least the "us" that we each wish to be perceived as – thereby adopting the illusory but nevertheless useful identities that they make possible.

Now, I recognize that I have used the term "methodologically self-conscious" but without elaborating on it. When using this phrase, I have in mind the work of Jonathan Z. Smith: "The student of religion," he writes, "must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed, this self-consciousness constitutes his primary expertise, his foremost object of study" (1982: xi). Why? Because, as he memorably stated in the lines immediately preceding those that I have just quoted, "Religion is solely a creation of the scholar's study. . . . Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy."

On my reading, Smith is arguing that when used as a name for a universal, experiential trait which, due to the varying sites of its public expression, comes in a relatively small number of more or less stable forms [p. 186/187] (known today as "the world's religions"), then we have little choice but to conclude that the modern concept "religion" – complete with its emphasis on belief over behavior and experience over expression – was developed in that research laboratory we call the modern academy; it is an academy whose history parallels the movement from the so-called "the Age of Discovery" and "the Enlightenment," through the colonial era, and past the rise of the nation-state. For it is during this period that reconnaissance reports from abroad prompted Europeans intellectuals and administrators to confront human novelty of a magnitude previously unknown. The category "religion," for those reworking their society's epistemological and socio-political grids in light of these new Others, became a handy indicator of intangible likeness in the face of what seemed to be overwhelming empirical difference. For [. . .], "[t]he question of the 'religions' arose in response to an explosion in data" (Smith 1998: 275). In fact, it was this explosion of data that led to what Tomoko Masuzawa (2005: 147–178) has characterized as the fissure in the once taken-for-granted European sense of its direct link to the ancient Greeks and Hebrews – a gap resulting from such novel developments as the philological studies of Sanskrit made possible by colonial contact.

[. . . p. 187/188] Throughout the period that we know as modernity, then, the category "religion" became a shorthand designation for the degree to which "they" were or were not like "us." If they were, then the question was just how much; but if they were not, then a number of designators was at hand for naming the new found alien peoples' beliefs, behaviors, and institutions: along with the already mentioned term "magic,"

such classifiers as apostasy, pagan, heathen, native, savage, uncivilized, and superstition come to mind.[2] [. . .]

The category "religion," then, used as a designator of an intangible likeness shared across cultures is therefore just as Smith says: solely a creation of the modern scholar's study [. . .], one situated in a world where [. . .] the prior, taken-for-granted economy of social affinity and estrangement was being shaken in a rather dramatic manner. That people around the world eventually adopted this category [. . .], such that now people worldwide routinely conceive of themselves as having an active, inner religious life that is distinguishable from their outer political activities, does not undermine Smith's point. Rather, it provides compelling evidence of the transportable utility of a distinction originally developed several centuries ago to address challenges to a specific set of identity claims. [. . . p. 188/189. . .]

Instead of keeping in mind "that our current practice is haunted by moral compromises made centuries ago" (Spiegel 2005: 12), and thereby recognizing that the faith/practice, belief/institution, and religious/political distinctions, from the seventeenth-century on, have been strategic contrasts [. . .] our historical amnesia allows us to ontologize these tactical distinctions. The result is that we have turned them into commodities that can be exported to distant shores and distant times, as if all groups naturally manage issues of social affinity as we do. Much like the current young generation's inability to imagine a world without computers, scholars who see religion lurking around every cultural corner fail to imagine the category as our historical invention, helping us to satisfy our intellectual interests and to achieve our practical goals, thereby making it a crucial building block in our social world. [p. 189/190. . .]

But how, specifically, does this conceptual pairing accomplish all this? [. . .] Having created these binary types, they can now be used to mark a discursive boundary of a structure that manages the various items that constitute actual historical existence. [. . .] Once the arbitrary limits are established – either by persuasion or coercion – discourse can then take place, identities conceived, comparisons entertained, and judgments made.

Which brings me back to the category "religion:" [. . . p. 190/191. . .] I suspect that the modern invention of "belief" and "practice" and "the sacred" and "the secular," continue to play a central role in regulating that high stakes game that we call modern

2 [note 12 in the original] This point is nicely made by Chidester in his historical study of comparative religion in colonial era southern Africa (1996). Unfortunately, much like some authors already cited, he recognizes the historical nature of our terminology while yet universalizing that to which it supposedly points, as in when he faults early colonialists' failure to "recognize the existence of indigenous religions in southern Africa" (xv). If "religion" – both word and concept – is part of a bundle of conceptual and social relations that we trace to early modern Europe, then "indigenous religions" is no longer a neutral descriptor, as it is often used by such scholars. Instead, it is an imperial move to project backward in time not only our local taxon but also the social interests that drive it and the social relations that it helps to make possible.

identity. For the concept "religion," in naming that which is understood to be both universal and ineffable, when paired with the concept "politics," identifying that which is particular and tangible, establishes an always useful structure capable of regulating the many social differences that jockey for any group's attention, energy, and resources – especially those large scale groups we call nation-states, in which common identities are presumed to unite their millions of citizens, all of whom also identify themselves with a variety of differing (often competing, sometimes contradictory) sub-groups.

I say that this discursive pairing is always useful – and thus is easy to keep on our minds – because the goal posts of this particular game are, as already stated, ideal types that inhabit discourse and can thus be applied in virtually any situation. For the historical world of public particularity that goes by the name of "the secular" is populated by far too many discrete items for the concept secular ever to be useful in any act of signification – for secular names a cacophony of unregulated stimuli, somewhat akin to white noise. And as for the term "religion"? Well, ask anyone who has tried to define it and you'll learn that its utility is linked to its inability to be defined – much like someone telling you, "I can't quite put it into words" – making it applicable to virtually any situation yet meaningless, because it has no agreed upon limits. So, when juxtaposed to the infinite particularity of what we classify as the political world, that which goes by the name of religion turns out to be our version of the utterly empty – and, because of that, the immensely useful – French phrase, "Je ne sais quoi." In the midst of saying nothing, it seems to say everything.

So, whereas "the secular" says far too much (i.e., is over-determined), "the sacred" says far too little (i.e., is under-determined). Whereas one category is too full the other, as termed by Ernesto Laclau (1996), is an empty signifier.[3] On their own, they are therefore useless concepts; but, when used as a binary pair, they set malleable limits that make almost anything possible to say. [. . . p. 191/192. . .]

As for our pairing of the sacred and the secular, what lies between their coordinated use? None other than the idea of the largest social formation we've yet come up with: the nation-state, with its regulating conventions (e.g., the police, the courts) that are used to negotiate the ever changeable limits of novelty and tradition, affinity and estrangement. They do so not only by defining certain items as more vegetable than fruit, but also as more allowable than prohibited, more private than public, more religious than secular – simply put, more empty, more inconsequential, more tolerable, and therefore in less need of governance, or more full, more consequential, more intolerable, and thus in greater need of regulation. [. . . p. 192–197. . .]

So what's the moral of this tale? As a scholar of social classification, I see no reason to assume [. . .] that the categories "religion" and "politics," or "sacred" and "secular,"

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3 [note 14 in the original] For example, as phrased by Sullivan, "[t]here is no accepted legal way of talking in the United States about the vast array of religious beliefs and practices that are represented" (2005: 100). While for some this may seem to be a shortcoming of U.S. law, according to this paper this is necessarily the case.

refer to actual qualities in the real world. Instead, they are nothing more or less than co-dependent, portable discursive markers whose relationship we can date to a specific period in early modern Europe, and whose utility continues to this day [. . .]. Developing just such a self-consciousness in our use of the categories that we have invented, distinguishing those that are phenomenological and descriptive from those that are analytic and redescriptive, strikes me as one of the more important pieces in the methodological puzzle in front of those trying to go beyond secularism in their studies of religion. [. . .] I don't see why we cannot understand such distinctions as church/state, private/public, and sacred/secular as socio-rhetorical devices that have stayed on our [p. 197/198] minds because they continue to prove so useful to a variety of groups over the past several hundred years, all of which have tried to regulate – to divide and rule – their highly competitive economies of signification.

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58 Abdullahi A. An-Naʿim: *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shariʿa* (2009)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim (b. 1946 in what then still was Anglo-Egyptian Sudan) is Professor Emeritus of Law at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. After completing a BA in law at the University of Khartoum, he went on to do an MA at Cambridge University, and a PhD at Edinburgh University, which he completed in 1976. Before joining Emory University in 1995, he worked at several universities in Sudan, the US, and Canada. Central to his work are questions of Islam, constitutionalism and human rights. An-Naʿim thus combines his legal expertise with considerations of how to reform Islam and Muslim societies. Crucial in this regard is the relation between shariʿa and the state. He regards "the evolution of sharia" – as his personal website is entitled – as an ongoing process, the basic principles and considerations for which he formulated in his book *Islam and the Secular State.*

In *Islam and the Secular State*, An-Naʿim argues in favour of the separation of Islam and the state, whilst advocating Islam having a role in society and politics. He sees the very "notion of an Islamic state" as being "a postcolonial innovation," as shariʿa, which would be the basis of such a state, cannot be codified. This position foreshadows Wael Hallaq's eminent book *The Impossible State*, published in 2014, and itself builds upon the work of earlier Islamic reformists. Noteworthy among these earlier reformists is ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq, whose book on *Islam and the Foundations of Rule* from 1925 is conventionally credited with being the first Islamic argument in favour of separating religion and state (see text no. 34 in vol. 2). Even more central to An-Naʿim's work is that of the Sudanese reformer Mahmoud Mohamed Taha (executed in 1985), who argued that there was a categoric difference between Qurʾanic verses revealed in Mecca and those revealed in Medina, where the Muslim community formed following the hijra. According to Taha, only Meccan verses contain the timeless Islamic message and principles, while verses revealed in Medina were historically and socially contingent.

An-Naʿim aims to reopen the space for Muslims to deliberate and negotiate the meaning of shariʿa in their communities and societies. In a sense, he envisions shariʿa as ethics, not law. Since politicians are guided by their ethical convictions, there is thus no separation of Islam and politics. The state, in turn, has to function according to

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principles of constitutionalism, and must be as neutral as possible concerning religions. Only such a state will allow for the envisioned voluntary compliance with shariʿa. In addition to distinguishing between religion and the state, An-Naʿim thus also distinguishes between the state, politics, and society.

He perfectly pinpoints the argument elaborated throughout his book in the very first paragraph: “In order to be a Muslim by conviction and free choice, which is the only way one can be a Muslim, I need a secular state. By a secular state I mean one that is neutral regarding religious doctrine, one that does not claim or pretend to enforce Shariʿa – the religious law of Islam – simply because compliance with Shariʿa cannot be coerced by fear of state institutions or faked to appease their officials. This is what I mean by secularism in this book, namely, a secular state that facilitates the possibility of religious piety out of honest conviction. My call for the state, and not society, to be secular is intended to enhance and promote genuine religious observance, to affirm, nurture, and regulate the role of Islam in the public life of the community. Conversely, I will argue that the claim of a so-called Islamic state to coercively enforce Shariʿa repudiates the foundational role of Islam in the socialization of children and the sanctification of social institutions and relationships. When observed voluntarily, Shariʿa plays a fundamental role in shaping and developing ethical norms and values that can be reflected in general legislation and public policy through the democratic political process. But I will argue in this book that Shariʿa principles cannot be enacted and enforced by the state as public law and public policy solely on the grounds that they are believed to be part of Shariʿa. If such enactment and enforcement is attempted, the outcome will necessarily be the political will of the state and not the religious law of Islam. The fact that ruling elites sometimes make such claims to legitimize their control of the state in the name of Islam does not mean that such claims are true.” (An-Naʿim, 1)

For An-Naʿim, it is only through public debate that shariʿa can and should play a role in society. As citizens, Muslims naturally cannot be expected to leave their ethical convictions aside. In presenting and negotiating shariʿa in society, the core principle is that of civic reason, as An-Naʿim stresses: “The separation of Islam and the state does not prevent Muslims from proposing policy or legislation stemming from their religious or other beliefs. All citizens have the right to do so, provided they should support such proposals with what I call “civic reason.” The word “civic” here refers to the need for policy and legislation to be accepted by the public at large, as well as for the process of reasoning on the matter to remain open and accessible to all citizens. By civic reason, I mean that the rationale and the purpose of public policy or legislation must be based on the sort of reasoning that most citizens can accept or reject. Citizens must be able to make counterproposals through public debate without being open to charges about their religious piety. Civic reason and reasoning, and not personal beliefs and motivations, are necessary whether Muslims constitute the majority or the minority of the population of the state. Even if Muslims are the majority, they will not necessarily agree on what policy and legislation should follow from their Islamic beliefs.” (An-Naʿim, 7–8)

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59 Humeira Iqtidar: *Secularism and Secularisation* (2012)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Humeira Iqtidar is a professor of politics at King's College, London.[I] She has studied at Quaid-e-Azam University in Pakistan, McGill University in Canada, and the University of Cambridge, where she completed her PhD in 2008. Iqtidar joined King's College in 2011, having previously held a position at the University of Cambridge. She has also held visiting positions at Lahore University of Management and Sciences, Punjab University, and Princeton University. She received the Britain and Ireland Association of Political Thought Mid-Career Prize 2021. Her research focuses on social and comparative political theory, especially in relation to modern South Asia; here, she combines an interdisciplinary, theory-driven approach with ethnographic research. She has worked on questions of modern Islamic thought, justice and tolerance, politics of knowledge, the legacies of colonialism, and the place of religion in contemporary postcolonial states and societies. Her published and edited books include *Secularizing Islamists? Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in Urban Pakistan*, a four-volume collection on *Fundamentalism and Charismatic Movements* (edited with David Lehmann), and *Tolerance, Secularization and Democratic Politics in South Asia* (edited with Tanika Sarkar).[II] Iqtidar is actively involved in supporting faculty and curriculum development at various universities in the Global South; she also engages in human rights activities, such as supporting marginalised and minority populations in Pakistan.

Here, we print excerpts from her article *Secularism and Secularisation: Untying the Knots* from 2012. The article takes Pakistani drone attacks against Islamic groups as its

I For biographical information on Humeira Iqtidar see: "Professor Humeira Iqtidar," King's College London, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/people/humeira-iqtidar, accessed 24. April 2024; "Humeira Iqtidar," Academia, https://www.academia-net.org/profile/humeira-iqtidar/78853, accessed 24. April 2024; "CSAS Lecture Series: Justice and Tolerance in Islamic Thought: Maududi's Al-Jihad fil Islam," Center for South Asian Studies, Michigan University, 2017, https://lsa.umich.edu/asian/news-events/all-events.detail.html/31512-4311331.html, accessed 24. April 2024; "BIAPT 2021 Mid-Career Prize winner: Dr Humeira Iqtidar," BIAPT, 6 September 2021, https://www.associationforpoliticalthought.ac.uk/biapt-2021-mid-career-prize-winner-dr-humeira-iqtidar/, accessed 24. February 2024.
II *Secularizing Islamists? Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011); *Fundamentalist and Charismatic Movements*, ed. with David Lehmann (London: Routledge 2011); *Tolerance, Secularization and Democratic Politics in South Asia*, ed. with Tanika Sarkar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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starting point for redefining the relationship between secularism and secularisation in a postcolonial setting. Drawing on her own ethnographic material, Humeira Iqtidar discusses contemporary examples of Islamist secularisation that would probably have escaped the social scientific gaze without this theoretical redefinition. To begin with, she defines secularism as a state policy, and secularisation as a societal process (see for example Madan, text no. 27, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, text no. 42). Instead of discarding these established categories, she questions conventional assumptions about their content and their relationship to one another, in an illuminating discussion of both very current and long-established theoretical arguments, – especially in light of postcolonial developments – with their specific historical trajectories, and in their function as historical self-images of 'the West'. In this sense, there are many parallels to the recent considerations of Sudipta Kaviraj (see text no. 46) and Talal Asad (text no. 56), to whose works she explicitly refers.[III] Iqtidar calls for a qualitative understanding of secularisation as a process redefining the religious. With regard to her own ethnographic material, she shows how contemporary Islamists in Pakistan – with their focus on the state and their efforts to homogenise and objectify religious belief and practice – might unintentionally support rationalisation processes that can be described as a specific mode of secularisation (see also Madjid, text no. 24) while aiming to oppose that which they perceive as colonial secularism.

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For the last two decades but particularly since the war of terror began, the conflation of Islamism with terrorism, and secularism with democracy, has precluded any clear-headed discussion about secularism, democracy and Islamism in Pakistan. Prominent liberal activists such as Pervez Hoodbhoy and Ayesha Siddiqa, who in other contexts have done valuable work, have remained mired in an earlier history, refusing to acknowledge the differences within the range of Muslim fundamentalists and changes within Islamism, as well as in its context. All Islamists are not militants and all militants are not Islamists. Policy and political responses need to be calibrated to the actual problems posed by the different kinds of groups. Damagingly, these liberal activists

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III For Iqtidar's discussion of Asad, see also Humeira Iqtidar, "Thinking Across Traditions of Thought," Critical Times 3, no. 3 (2020): 450–55, doi: https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-8662320.

have supported a military dictatorship that proclaimed “Enlightened Moderation” as its raison d’etre, just as an earlier one claimed Islamisation as its own, and they have championed sustained bombing and drone attacks in one of the poorest regions of Pakistan purportedly to save democracy and secularism from the generic genie of Islamism. There have been few moves by these liberals to understand the range of motives and strategies employed by the different groups or the differences between militants and others.

Drone Attacks to Save Secularism and Democracy?

[. . . p. 50/51. . .]

[I]t is critical that we recognise that to divorce secularism from democracy is to deal it a deathblow, to assume that secularism will always lead to secularisation is to misread history, and to conflate all kinds of political mobilisations that use religious language with terrorism is to comply with an imperial logic that leads to war on the poorest. [. . .]

Much has been written in scholarly circles about secularism and secularisation in the last two decades. Yet, the precise modalities of the relationship between secularism and secularisation have not received any concerted attention. Indeed, more often than not the two terms have been used synonymously. It seems particularly imperative at this time that we disentangle the two, not for arcane academic debates, but mostly for political purposes: to think through the implications of political stances and arrangements. The questions I raise in this article do not come packaged with ready answers, but there are important political and theoretical considerations tied to them. Does the adoption of a state policy of secularism inevitably lead to secularisation at a societal level? Can secularisation happen without secularism? Is it possible that secularism could, in specific contexts, actively undermine secularisation? Is it possible that the very groups that oppose secularism may be facilitating a kind of secularisation? In short, how precisely are secularism as state policy and secularisation as a societal process, related?

My own path into these questions was through an ethnographic study of two Islamist parties in Pakistan, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (Iqtidar 2011a) to understand the long-term impact of Islamism. Towards the end of this article I will bring in some insights from that research. For now, let me just note that Islamists are those that are situated within the larger umbrella category of Muslim fundamentalists or Islamic revivalists, and who focus on taking over the state to transform society. They can be distinguished from the pietists such as the Tablighi Jamaat, the militants such as Lashkar-e-Jhangavi and the traditionalists who do not wish to engage directly with the state. However, to start with, I want to focus on the theoretical and historical considerations that alert us to the gap in our understanding of the relationship between secularism and secularisation. Scholars and activists from across the political spectrum can agree that something profound has happened to religious belief and practice in con-

temporary life but we have been hard-pressed to define exactly what that might be. The changes do not seem to fit neatly into the categories we had used previously but they also do not spill out so conclusively that the previous categories seem totally redundant. Perhaps one way to move forward is by looking at how existing categories can be better understood and utilised at their most capacious. Conversations about secularisation have, in recent decades especially, revolved around the public/private and the more/less religion distinction. Here, I propose engaging with other meanings of secularisation that have been ignored in our attempts at quantifying the changes in religious thought and practice.

Any Religion Will Do. . .

The relationship between secularism, the policy and ideology, and secularisation, the process, has remained largely unexamined and mostly buried under the rubric of grand projects of colonialism, modernisation and now the "War on Terror". In politics, secularism is a doctrine that ostensibly calls for a separation of the church and the state. Yet, such an innocuous and seemingly simple statement of separation hides a complex interplay of historical trajectories and political realities revealed as vastly variegated interpretations and manifestations of this project. Secularism continues to have immensely positive normative associations intertwined with a continued assumption of universal application.[1] Although in terms of academic disciplines and their tribal boundaries, theories of secularisation have been housed primarily in the field of sociology, their paradigmatic dominance within the broader social sciences remained uncontested until the 1980s. Until this time, these theories had, with a few notable exceptions (Martin 2005 [1978]) conflated diagnosis with prescription, description with projection. This becomes particularly problematic in studying societies that are markedly different from the contexts in which these concepts took initial shape.

In parallel with the notion of universal application, and in considerable contradiction with it, is the idea that Christianity is somehow particularly sympathetic to secularism. This view of an inherent sympathy within Christianity refutes history. The secularism that emerged in the predominantly Christian west was a matter of bitter conflict and

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1 [note 6 in the original] A nascent stream of scholarship within political science and international relations is beginning to recognise the importance of historical context in shaping secularism as it is practised in different parts of the world (Kuru 2007; Hurd 2008.) Masud (2005: 368) suggests that the very difference between the English term secularism and the French term laicism alerts us to the differences in the actual manifestations of the project. The English term secular means "age" in a temporal sense. The French laicite derives from laic, i e, lay people as opposed to clergy. Both reflect the difference in actual playing out of "secularism" in the local context.

struggle over many centuries between different segments of the society and "not just an intellectual exercise rooted in Christian theology and practice" (Keddie 1997: 35–37). Nevertheless, polemical contrasts are made with the relationship between other religious traditions and secularism and with particular emphasis in recent years, between Islam and secularism – a relationship that seems particularly fraught with tensions.

As a first step in thinking through the relationship between secularism and secularisation, I draw heavily upon Talal Asad's seminal work in realigning our understanding of the "secular" [p. 51/52] along with the "religious" as analytic categories. Asad's unique contribution is to suggest that our concept of the secular cannot operate outside our understanding of the idea of religion, or vice versa, and that this relationship is an ongoing, dialectical one (2003: 193–200). How we define secular is bound inextricably with how we define religion and vice versa.

[. . .]

Secularism is not a separation between religion and the state but a continuous management of the first by the second. In its attempts at regulating religious influence in the public sphere, the state cannot help but impinge upon the formation of subjectivities, norms and standards that influence the practice of religion in the private sphere. In this and his previous work *(Genealogies of Religion,* 1993) Asad has gone beyond the criticism of Eurocentric notions of secularisation and secularism raised by many others who claim that the idea of a separation of church and state does not make ready sense in societies where there was no equivalent of the Catholic Church's control of state functions. [. . .]

Asad moves beyond these valid criticisms to point out that it is not just that our notions regarding secularisation derive essentially from a European experience that was thus universalised in colonial and postcolonial policies regarding secularism; what is critical to our study of Islam and other non-western religious interactions is also the definition of religion that we employ in this endeavour. Asad's argument is that, "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes" (1993: 29). Moreover, religion consists not just of particular ideas, attitudes and practices but also, most critically, of followers. To discover how these followers, "instantiate, repeat, alter, adapt, argue over and diversify'" (2003: 194) these practices, ideas and attitudes in relation to the traditions within that particular religion, is a key step in our understanding of how that religion might be secularised in different places and times.

As Long As It Is Secularised. . .

In contrast to Asad's suggestion, contemporary debates about secularisation assume a static, rigid definition of religion, unchanged until secularised. For too long, differences in the modalities of secularisation have been linked to levels of development. Modern

social theory took secularisation as a largely inevitable process and this inevitability was linked to its relationship with the cognate concepts of modernisation and development. Paradoxically, secularisation was and continues to be seen not just as a product of development and modernisation but also as a facilitator of the same. Critics contend that with very little empirical evidence beyond western Europe, secularisation theorists made projections and assumptions about processes of secularisation in different parts of the world. Some of the first academic criticisms emanated from the "western" and developed, yet non-European, context of America.

The dichotomy between steady church attendance in the US during a period of rapidly falling attendance in Europe in the post-war years has led to contradictory conclusions. Some proposed that Europe is the exception while others suggested the US is outside the norm (Davie 2002). In fact, the field of secularisation is littered with exceptionalisms, as the continued interference of the state in religious affairs in third world countries was seen as a signifier of "Third World exceptionalism" (Chatterjee 1998: 345). For decades, the exceptions did not do much damage to claims of universal applicability implicit in secularisation theory. Until the last decades of the 20th century evidence, or lack thereof, regarding secularisation in other parts of the world was explained with reference to the "backward" level of those societies, continuing the stagiest view embodied in development and modernisation theories.

[. . .]

In this narrative secularisation becomes not just necessary for private freedom and democracy but also as a largely [p. 52/53] inevitable process. [. . .]

However, this idea of inevitability was again in some contradiction with the policy imperatives of imposing secularism, particularly in the third world. The fact that secularism in Pakistan, and in many other countries, particularly Muslim ones, has been imposed often by dictatorial regimes and in contradiction to democracy does the project no favours. At the same time, it does expose the fallacy of assuming an undeterred relationship between secularism, secularisation and private freedom. [. . .]

. . .And As Long As It Remains Private?

Central to our understanding of both secularism and secularisation is the notion of separate, or at least separable, public and private spheres. Secularisation is seen primarily as the privatisation of religious belief and practice.

Contemporary debates about the public sphere remain largely indebted to Habermas' pioneering work. Empirical and theoretical criticisms of Habermas' formulation have succeeded in raising some profound questions about a ready and easy demarcation of the private and the public.

[. . .]

In more recent work, Habermas has also tried to incorporate the continued and defiant presence of religion in the public sphere (Habermas 2002).

However, the relatively uncomplicated understanding of the Habermasian public sphere remains a dominant one in academic debates, but even more strongly in social imagination.[2] What is interesting for my purposes here is to note that the prevailing understanding of the Habermasian public sphere does not analytically unpack the "critical rational" nature of the debate. It is precisely the assumptions about the nature of critical-rational debate that are seen to be under threat from the resurgence of religion in the public sphere. The history of a particular type of secularisation in Europe has meant that religion has been removed from the domain of rational discussion. [. . .] Readily available cultural material in the form of stories, such as Galileo's fate after placing rationality above church dogma, tend to draw attention away from the fact that many of the scientists – representatives of rational thinking – during the Enlightenment era, including Galileo, were in fact believing men who often attempted to harmonise their findings with their faith.[3] My aim here is not to suggest that religion is inherently rational, but rather that our notions of "rational-critical" debate, particularly with reference to religion, have tended to proceed along relatively strict, historically conditioned, delineations.

The relegation of religion, as the illogical and the superstitious, to the private sphere, anchored precisely in this notion of the public sphere as the space for rational discussion and decisions, assumes a public sphere innocent of inequalities in power. However, as Seyla Benhabib (1992) has suggested, a claim to "dialogic neutrality" in rational-critical public debate has blinded us to the actual mechanics of power relations in politics. [. . .]

Moreover, such an aversion to interrogating the mechanics of the public sphere negates the continued importance of religious imagery, values and political culture of many of the "secular" western states. The religious registers of "persuasion, judgment and discourse" (Connolly 1999: 19) remain hidden in large part due to the fact that the precise relationship between secularism, the *project,* and secularisation, the *process,* remain understudied and a matter of implicit understanding. It is critical to disentangle the political project of secularism and its life trajectories, from the historical process of secularisation in Europe, and from the theories of secularisation that relied heavily, although often implicitly, on a reified reading of this particular historical experience.

2 [note 7 in the original] Taylor's (2004: 23) distinction between social imaginary and social theory are useful here. Social imaginary focuses on the way people imagine their social surroundings carrying it in stories, images and legends. It is distinct from theoretical frameworks, and is more widespread than theory making possible common practices and a shared sense of legitimacy.

3 [note 8 in the original] Frank Manuel (1983) provides an interesting glimpse into this through a focus on Galileo, Kepler and Newton.

The vague but generally accepted assumption seems to be that secularisation in Europe led to secularism, but that secularism in the non-western societies will lead to secularisation.

Secularism Beyond the State

As an ideology and an explicit policy, secularism evolved in the 18th and 19th centuries. In a retrospective reading of historical developments to date, many 19th century writers attributed to it a uniformity and depth of character it lacked on the ground. Several competing trends were glossed over and [p. 53/54] differences in not just the intensity but also the quality of religiosity across classes were underplayed (Thompson 2010).

[. . .]

[C]uriously, for a concept with wide currency, secularism has been very loosely conceptualised, if at all. It is broadly conceived of as a separation of state and religion and left largely at that. In this sense the very looseness of the concept allows it great elasticity; the forms that this separation may take in particular has seen huge variations almost all involving a very active shaping of religion to fit the state's view of it.

[. . .]

Notwithstanding the continued promise of the state as the locus of social transformation, much recent research has highlighted the limitations to democratic engagement inherent in the modern state's structure. The tendency, indeed, need, for modern states to reduce citizens to manageable, simplified categories and to regulate intimate and previously private aspects of life suggests that it may be wise to locate our hopes for change at a site broader than the state (Scott 1998; Kaviraj 2010). An alternative reading of secularism would need to recognise that secularism manifests itself in concrete power relations and modes of governance tied to the emergence of the modern state and capitalism (Asad 1993, 2003; Salvatore 2005).

In Europe, secularism led to the release of ecclesiastical property into private hands and market circulation. This was a gradual process with many reversals and contradictory thrusts in the different parts of Europe (Katznelson and Stedman-Jones 2010). [. . .] Nevertheless, the increasing sovereignty of states sanctioned by the treaty of Westphalia of 1648 and its control over the property and role of the church led to a fundamental redefinition of religion and its limits under the modern state. This went, hand in hand, with a series of intellectual and political ruptures that supported a new version of religious practice, allowing the state to take over many functions that were previously performed by the church including education, healthcare, and the provision of meaning to collective life substituting the idea of the nation for the religious congregation (Chadwick 1975; McLeod 2000).

The ruptures were never as complete (Schmitt 1922; Taylor 1989) as has been assumed in secularisation theory [. . .]. Thus, while the case for separation remains

murky, the key change that did take place was that the state took charge of oversight and management of religious thought and practice through setting up the institutional framework within which it would operate.

Secularism then, following Asad, can be fruitfully reconceptualised, not as a one-time separation of religion and state, but as the management of religious thought and practice by the state. How this management of religious thought and practice creates new opportunities for religious groups as well as profound changes in the fabric of religiosity requires close attention to context. Critically, recognising the historical variation and conceptual gap between secularism and secularisation alerts us to the possibility that the two may at times move in opposing directions, albeit not by active design. Certain types of state management of religion may actively stymie the secularisation process, just as secularisation may be supported by the very elements that oppose the ideology of secularism (Iqtidar 2011a). All this is not to denounce secularism, but to understand better which aspects of it are we to defend and how.

Imagining Another Kind of Secularisation

This contextualised reading of changes in religious thought and practice has to proceed along with a shift in emphasis away from quantity to quality. Secularisation has been understood primarily as an increase or decrease in religiosity in the public sphere but contemporary developments suggest a change in the texture and fabric of religious thought and practice rather than a clear-cut change in numbers. The emphasis on a qualitative change is a relatively under-appreciated aspect of secularisation theory and I propose that we recalibrate given its explanatory potential. Linked to, but not exhausted by, the notion of secularisation as the privatisation of religion, is the idea of secularisation as disenchantment and rationalisation. This is widely understood to mean that [p. 54/55**]** not only would the sphere of religion's influence be limited by its relegation to the private sphere but the sense of enchantment would disappear with it. Weber's notion of the rationalization of religion is one that is often subsumed within the privatisation debate.

This is a useful start but I would argue that rationalisation is best understood as an attempt to view religion as a logical, cohesive whole erasing out the contradictions that may have been part of religious thought and practice previously, but that it is not exactly the same thing as disenchantment. To take a concrete example, that of changes brought about by Islamism, I would suggest that this rationalisation manifests itself in an attempt to homogenise religious practice eradicating folk and local practices but in the process, inadvertently, also making it a matter of conscious, individual choices. Then, given the Islamists' interest in political structures, a source of public debate about what the place of Islam is to be in contemporary life.

[. . .]

Secularisation as Objectification

It seems that the values of transcendence take a different form. Rather than complete obliteration, they are subjected to a certain “objectification”, a term I borrow from Eickelman and Piscatori (1996). Eickelman and Piscatori are particularly sensitive to the interplay of various long-term trends including the impact of mass education, fragmentation of religious authority, and the rise of ethnicity and nationalism in Muslim politics. [. . .]

I understand this objectification to include the subjection of religious practices and beliefs to the structures of a homogenising logic insofar as an attempt is made at easing out contradictions, but more critically to a conscious engagement with the many aspects of religious praxis. My research shows that members of Islamist groups are constantly making comparisons with *other* Islamist groups and related ways of being. Given the multiple ways of being a good Muslim that are offered to the masses, there is an increased awareness of, and debate about, what religion means and how it should impact everyday practice. This I contend, is an important aspect of the objectification of religion in which religion is transformed into a more historically situated, critically analysed set of values and practices. Religious practice is no longer a matter of following norms unthinkingly. Transcendence is not erased but consciously sought through a modelling of subjectivities, behaviours and praxis.

That over the last two centuries there have been significant changes in the structures of Islamic religious authority is increasingly gaining recognition within academic literature (Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996; Masud, Messick and Powers, 1996; Zaman 2002). Some of the same scholars have also alerted us to the changes in the content of Islamic authority in terms of the issues and subjects that are considered within the purview of authoritative rulings. The role of new media, mass literacy, international migration, new legal regimes and global communication have all been highlighted as leading to a fragmentation of Islamic authority (Mandaville 2001, 2007; Anderson and Eickelman 2003; Eickelman 1992; Turner and Volpi 2007; Salvatore 2007). This notion of fragmentation of Islamic authority needs to be nuanced by the recognition that there may never have been a seamless, consistent, unanimous discourse of authority (Hallaq 2001; Weiss 1991). [. . .]

Even as we acknowledge the heterogeneity of notions and practices of authority in Islamic history over the last 14 centuries, we can recognise that the modern period has seen a significant change in the pace and scale of fragmentation of both political and religious authority, particularly when compared to the period immediately preceding it. The Islamists with their insistence on a reduced role for the ulema and for individualised responsibility to follow the scripture are both a product of this fractured authority and contributors to its further splintering.[4]

4 [note 9 in the original] It is useful to remember that Maududi was criticised severely by traditionalist ulema for his stances. I have highlighted some of these debates in Iqtidar (2011a), Chapter 3.

But what precisely are the implications of this fragmentation? The ready equation of this fragmentation in authority with a decrease in belief may be satisfying in its simplicity, but does not really hold up in the light of historical and contemporary experience. Despite the fact that its particular [p. 55/56] blend of political and religious authority was uniquely its own, the European experience has nevertheless framed contemporary discourse in all parts of the world about the relationship between authority and belief. But even within Europe whether or not the fragmentation resulted in a less believing populace remains open to question, not only because we have not necessarily measured closely what happened after Enlightenment, but also because we may be incorrect in what we presume happened before it.

[. . .]

Secularisation As a Qualitative Change

Despite several reversals and geographical variations, the view of the preceding centuries as more religious – certainly not without empirical evidence at least at the structural level if not at the individual level – emerged as a framework within which progress was measured. Weber's influential work on *The Protestant Ethics and the The Spirit of Capitalism* (1950 [1904]) emerged in a context where intellectuals were grappling with a relatively rapid pace of change in everyday life (Aron 1968). Weber's work while sharing the assumption of some change in religious belief and practice, contains a sophisticated appraisal of the long-term implications of changes in and through religious belief. [. . .] Paradoxically, given his concern for keeping centre stage the human motivations and agency, Weber also derails the link between agency and outcome. What comes out of a particular set of actions may be very different from what the actors themselves expected. In this context he highlights first, the subtle distinctions among Protestants and then emphasises the increase in religious surveillance and personal piety that went hand in hand with their break from the authority of the Catholic Church (1950: 117). [. . .]

The increase in religiosity is linked closely in his narrative with the rationalisation of belief. [. . .]

The Protestant reformers, the secularisers in standard narratives of secularisation, were asking for more religion not less, albeit a different kind of religion.

Weber's reading of the Protestant challenge to Catholicism and of the rise of capitalism has never been without contestation both on empirical and theoretical grounds. My purpose here is not to read into this the lateness of Muslim societies when compared to the European context. It is not a reiteration of a stagiest view that Muslims are going through the reformation that Christians in Europe experienced many centuries ago. At the same time, while keeping the differences in mind, I do not want to underestimate the similarities. It is a similar but not the same process, and will certainly not lead to the same kind of subjectivities and norms. A key difference that needs to be kept in mind is

the vastly different notions of the "public" and the place of religion in it. The Protestant reformers were not clamouring, at least initially, for greater state control unlike the Islamists. Indeed, the notion and reality of the "state" that the Islamists contend with is very different from the one that the early Protestant reformers had to deal with. The secularisation facilitated by the Pakistani Islamist is not the same as that supported by the German Protestant.

Our focus on difference, on "Provincialising Europe", has to go hand in hand with an acknowledgement and clear understanding of the similarities in experiences of modernity around the globe. On the one hand, there is no clear mapping of the south Asian, or Muslim, or Latin American experience onto the history of the European one and yet, not only does the European experience inform and thus shape experiences elsewhere but there are certain features common to economic and political structures shared by the disparate populations of the world today. Contemporary capitalism weaves together divergent local historical trajectories within a global context, even as the local trajectories strain to shape the global context.

[. . . p. 56/57. . .]

Secularising Islamists?

Hindu nationalist groups and Islamist ones like the Jamaat-e-Islami share much – their origins in colonial secularism, organisational strategies and demographic constituencies. The birth of Islamists, as those among Islamic revivalists who focus on taking over the state to transform society, is not a particularly unique phenomenon when we place it within the context of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – a period when the "State" was the dominant political idea. From communists to liberal nationalists, fascists to socialists, the wide range of options discussed for transforming society all envisioned a route through the control of the state. In recent years, as the state is being dislodged from its position as the "master noun" of politics by the idea of the "market", we see some corresponding shifts taking place in the strategies pursued by the Islamist groups (Iqtidar 2011b).

The Islamists are not primarily militant, nor premodern. They are modernist in the structure of their thought, in their organisation (unlike the pietist such as Tablighi Jamaat) and in the categories and political structures that they engage with (unlike the ulema groups). Indeed the Jamaat-e-Islami was organised on the Leninist model of a cadre-based vanguard party. The Islamists are vehement in their public insistence on dislodging the idea of secularism as universal, claiming it to be a parochial, European experience – with some justification. Yet, the process of raising these and other questions about the definitions of public and private in the political arena, the fierce competition amongst Islamists to provide a definitive answer and the emphasis in Islamist thought on homogenisation, erasing internal contradictions and an individual relation-

ship with religious texts has led to a deep, conscious and critical questioning of the role of religion – an objectification, a secularisation – in predominantly Muslim polities. I discuss these in detail in my book *Secularising Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan,* but here I want to note that secularisation is not an unadulterated good nor the sole preserve of progressive politics.

[. . .]

In raising the possibility that Islamists may be inadvertently facilitating secularisation in the predominantly Muslim context of Pakistan, the suggestion is not that the Islamists are wittingly supporting secularisation, or that they can be seen as liberals or progressives. The attempt is not apologetic in its intention either; it is not that "they" are also ultimately like "us". The imagined polity and citizen of this Islamist secularisation are likely to be extremely different from the products of secularisation in other contexts. The larger implication of this research lies in recognising the current limits of political theory in appreciating the difference that must arise from localised historical trajectories and in attempting to theorise about them in ways that would allow these differences to be acknowledged. Islamism's challenge to social science theorising is no less significant for its obliqueness. But the immediate political value of these questions lies in recognising that Pakistanis do not have to fall into the trap of choosing between the individualised terrorism of the suicide bomber and the state terrorism of drone attacks, between denouncing the religiously political as unmitigated evil and the secular as always imperial. We can reject both.

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60 Sadia Saeed: *Desecularisation as an Instituted Process* (2013)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Sadia Saeed is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology at the University of San Francisco.[I] She grew up in Pakistan, and studied sociology and history at Lahore University of Management Sciences; she received an MA from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and completed her PhD in Sociology at the University of Michigan in 2010. Saeed held postdoctoral fellowships at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law, and Yale University's Department of Sociology. She is a historical sociologist, with interests in religion – particularly Islam – politics, law, and international human rights, in postcolonial contexts and beyond. By her own account, her awareness of – and interest in – global inequalities was sparked while growing up and studying in Pakistan, and continues to inform her research. Saeed's first book, *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2017.[II] She is currently working on a comparative historical project on religious minorities in Indo-Persian societies during transitions from premodern to modern forms of rule, and on a book manuscript on struggles over the decolonialisation of human rights in the United Nations General Assembly.

In her article on *Desecularisation as an Instituted Process*, which is informed by research that led to her book on *Politics of Desecularization*, Saeed outlines the historical trajectory of secularity in Pakistan, particularly with regard to religious minorities. She questions the applicability of classical theories of secularisation to (postcolonial) Muslim societies in general, and Pakistan in particular. Saeed describes the "historical modality" of the intertwining of religion and politics in Pakistan as desecularisation (see Shishkov, text no. 41), which she characterises as a historically specific but contingent form of modern state formation in response to "colonial secularity," eventually

I For biographical information an Sadia Saeed see "Sadia Saeed," University of San Francisco Faculty, accessed 25 April, 2024, https://www.usfca.edu/faculty/sadia-saeed; "Sadia Saeed," OMICS, accessed 25 April, 2024, https://biography.omicsonline.org/united-states-of-america/university-of-san-francisco/sadia-saeed-536398; "Sadia Saeed," Yale University, https://sociology.yale.edu/people/sadia-saeed, accessed 25. April 2024; "Faculty Spotlight: Sadia Saeed," University of San Francisco, 15 March 2017, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://usfblogs.usfca.edu/crase/2017/03/15/faculty-spotlight-sadia-saeed/.
II *Politics of Desecularization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

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leading to a "selective de-differentiation" of state and religion (see Kyrlezhev, text no. 67). Where Humeira Iqtidar (see text no. 59) argues that Pakistani Islamists are, through their rationalisation of religion, unintentionally advancing secularisation, Saeed – without contradicting Iqtidar on this point – emphasises the desecularising aspects of their politics, which tie the state to a specific religious identity, and thus exclude religious minorities. In terms of the modern character of the politicisation of religious differences, Saeed's argument also has affinities with Saba Mahmood's work on religious minorities in Egypt (see text no. 64), and T. N. Madan's and Peter van der Veer's reflections on the Indian situation (see text no. 27, and text no. 28) – though Saeed seems to differ in her normative assessments of secularisation's effects on the minority question.

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[. . .]

Religious norms have significantly shaped the evolution of political and legal institutions across many Muslim societies. The validation of Islam as the state religion in numerous constitutions (Arjomand 2007), the increasing electoral presence of Islamist parties in countries with diverse political trajectories (see Bayat 2007; Tugal 2009; and Zubaida 2005 for comparative discussions on Egypt, Iran and Turkey), and a host of other factors attest to the continued relevance of Islam for Muslim states and politics. This public visibility of Islam has been analysed through multiple, and often overlapping, lines of scholarly inquiry. A number of scholars have noted the "resurgence" of religion in general and Islam in particular in the past few decades (for example, Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Gole 2002; Hurd 2007). Others have examined historical processes of religious reform dating back to the colonial era, and the subsequent transformations of religious life in the postcolonial period (Asad 2003; Zaman 2002). A third line of inquiry has focused on Islamic (and other) "fundamentalisms", examining "reactionary" bursts of violence as a rejection of secular values (see Appleby 2011). Finally, a fourth line of inquiry is increasingly depicting how modern Muslims are dynamically engaged in articulating individual and social subjectivities (Khan 2012; Mahmood 2005).

All these interventions draw attention to the poverty of the "secularisation theory" – the thesis that modernisation leads to a decline of religion in individual minds and social institutions (see Gorski and Altinordu 2008 for a review of recent scholarship

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on secularisation theory and its critics). The historical experiences of Muslim societies depict a world characterized by the active presence of religion in shaping political and institutional realities, although with significant differences across time and place. The case of Pakistan, analysed in this article, is particularly suggestive for highlighting one historical modality of these relationships.

Political secularism as state ideology has been virtually absent throughout Pakistan's history.[1] The institutional role of Islam within the state has been an object of contestation since Independence from colonial rule in 1947. [. . . p. 62/63. . .] [T]his article instead proposes the conceptual usefulness of desecularisation as a historically contingent, instituted process for analysing how distinct notions of politics, citizenship and national identity have become embedded in Pakistan. I argue that desecularisation has led to the slow exit of religious minorities from organised political life, an increase in the cultural power of religious parties in dictating the religious content of state policies, and the entrenchment of both politics of expediency and politics of fear in the way state authorities respond to physical and symbolic violence against religious minorities. The case of Pakistan provides a cautionary tale of how the exclusion of religious minorities can both become institutionalised and adversely transform the realm of politics itself, as an unintended consequence of political practices that seek to construct the nation state on the basis of religion.

A Framework for Analysing Pakistan

Recent scholarship on secularism has noted that among advanced industrial countries, only western Europe fits the classic model of secularisation theory, thereby forming an exception to be explained rather than the normative yardstick for evaluating other national cases (Calhoun et al 2011). This emerging literature is analysing various forms of secularization processes and political secularisms across national cases, with some critical voices noting that ideologies about secularism themselves produce distinct forms of exclusions, silences, and physical and symbolic violence (for example, Asad 2003; Chatterjee 1994; Connolly 2000). Clearly, neither secularism nor religious "isms" such as Islamism can be evaluated through the normative goods and values emphasised within their respective discursive traditions (see Bilgrami 2011 for an elaboration). The notions of secularisation – and desecularisation, as discussed below – are useful pre-

1 [note 1 in the original] Ayub Khan and Pervez Musharraf have defined their regimes in more secular terms than others. While Ayub Khan made an unsuccessful attempt to distance Islam from state ideology by dropping "Islamic" from Pakistan's official name, no other political leader has sought to constitutionally incorporate secularism as state ideology. See Khan (2005) for an excellent constitutional history of Pakistan, and Haqqani (2005) for a critical discussion of the Pakistani Army's relationship with Islamic ideologies and rhetoric.

cisely because they draw attention to the complex and historically contingent processes through which key features of modern political life, such as citizenship rights, political claims-making and national identity, are linked to religion, constituting new understandings of religion, nation and state in the process.

Within the sociology of religion, very few attempts have been made to conceptualise desecularisation. When undertaken, desecularisation has been treated normatively as a lack or a failure, measured through implicit comparisons with idealtypical secularisation and modernisation processes. Desecularisation is consequently treated synonymously with "countersecularisation", a reactionary process aimed at revolutionizing society, through physical violence if necessary. This coupling can be found in Peter Berger's (1999) classical sociological treatment of the phenomenon. Berger differentiates between desecularisation in the realm of society and the state, but focuses primarily on the former, emphasising the role of religious movements in the rejection of secularism as a world view and the presence of "religiously identified institutions" formed in reaction to secular reality.[2]

The other term that holds much currency, especially in the context of Pakistan, is "Islamisation" (see, for instance, Nasr 2001; Toor 2011; Weiss 1986).[3] It refers to processes whereby state authorities take measures to anchor state laws and policymaking within (specific understandings of) Islamic norms and values. While counter-secularisation refers to reactionary processes, Islamisation conjures a top-down statist project that seeks the forward march of religion through state institutions and policies.

The case of Pakistan depicts the limitations of both counter-secularisation and Islamisation. The mutual constitution of religion and politics has entailed multiple actors, interests and strategies over time, with some political regimes adopting measures to halt or even reverse state desecularisation. Islamisation, on the other hand, describes formal state policies, and explanations remain centred on periods of high Islamisation activity, for instance, the Zia-ul-Haq regime (1977–88) [. . .]. This article proposes an alternative framework that is able to account for both of these as historical modalities, while reducing desecularisation to neither. I argue that desecularisation is a creative, yet contingent, process anchored in concrete historical moments, in which linking religion with national discourses, state formation or political practices crystallise as a sociopolitical imperative.

Jose Casanova (1994) had noted the emergence of the deprivatisation of religion in a host of countries and across religious traditions in the 1980s. This deprivatisation, or the emergence of a public role for religion, has a longer postcolonial trajectory in coun-

2 [note 2 in the original] This notion of desecularisation has remained largely unexamined beyond Berger, but see Karpov (2010) for an exception. However, following Berger, Karpov too defines desecularisation as counter-secularisation. For a nuanced discussion of desecularisation processes in the early-modern European context, see Gorski (2000).

3 [note 3 in the original] See Arjomand (1980) for an account that describes the immediate post-revolutionary Islamisation in Iran as desecularisation.

tries like Pakistan, and is characterised by attempts by political and religious groups to selectively define and link aspects of religion with secular institutions of state and nation formation.[4] It is analytically fruitful to examine this process as reflecting a quest towards finding a place for, and consequently defining and articulating aspects of, religion within the bounds of an emerging postcolonial polity as desecularisation.

Desecularisation is an instituted process entailing specific actors, interests, practices and discourses, through which the political importance of religion is reflected, reformed and transformed over time, constituting the texture of mundane political life in the process (see Asad 2003 for a discussion of secularisation). Desecularisation is neither reducible to "essential" features of religion, nor to the always-already present religious zeal. Consequently, it is never inevitable and cannot be analysed through teleological frames. It is a manifestation of central modern imperatives of state formation – defining, rationalising and containing religion – in one set of societies in which citizens hold convictions about the significance of religion in shaping political and institutional life. Certainly both state secularisation and desecularisation are political processes that relationally link particular conceptions of religion with state and politics. Desecularisation, however, connotes those processes that seek to efface the perceived distance between the supposedly separate spheres of religion and secular life, either through design or as an unintended consequence.

This is a particularly useful framework for analysing Pakistan, which was founded on the basis of a Muslim political [p. 63/64] identity. In the immediate postcolonial era, neither religious nor political actors perceived themselves as "fragile, vulnerable, and under siege from a hostile secular world" (Juergensmeyer 2011: 185). Instead, they actively engaged in defining the role of Islam for the budding nation state. The emergence of desecularisation in Pakistan was a specifically postcolonial response to both the preceding regime of colonial secularity and the imperatives of nation state formation.[5] British colonial rule in India since the mid-19th century had been premised on the explicit principle (if not practice) of state neutrality vis-à-vis the different religious traditions of India.[6] The colonial state, however, had begun to carve out a highly differentiated role for religion within formal state and political institutions much earlier. The Islamic legal corpus was codified and its relevance relegated to the sphere of Muslim personal law (Kozlowski 1985; Singba 1998). Religious identities subsequently became crucial in the evolution of political institutions, especially through the institutionalisa-

4 [note 4 in the original] See Casanova (2011) for a discussion of the cognate terms "secular", "secularism" and "secularisation".

5 [note 5 in the original] Stuart Hall (1996) argues that two different meanings are inscribed in the word "postcolonial", one as temporally "after", exemplified by the end of the colonial relationship at the specific moment of independence, and the other as "going beyond" colonial discourses and practices. I employ the term in both of these senses.

6 [note 6 in the original] See Devji (2007) and Viswanathan (1998) for a critical appraisal of colonial secularity.

tion of separate electorates in the context of struggles over proportional representation in the central and provincial legislatures (Gilmartin 1988).

Within the Muslim nationalist movement preceding the independence of Pakistan, no wholesale programme of transformation of state-religion relations was advocated. The largely secular postcolonial political elite significantly shied from undertaking any such transformation. However, the postcolonial imperative of redefining the boundaries between public and private, moral and legal, and state and nation culminated in new institutional relations between Islam and the state on the one hand, and Muslim national identity and politics on the other. If the immediate postcolonial period witnessed creative articulations of what independence for a specifically Muslim people means for nation state formation, each subsequent moment analysed in this article entailed entanglements with existing modes of state-religion relations to institute novel symbolic and institutional forms, but within the contingencies of that moment.

Akin to secularisation, desecularisation processes can unfold at the level of the state or specific social realms. Furthermore, multiple trajectories of secularisation and desecularisation may coexist, be mutually constitutive, or even fragmentary and contradictory. For example, Humeira Iqtidar (2011: 22–23) argues that Islamist parties are a secularising force in society by virtue of the rationalisation of religion. This article depicts that this very process of rationalisation has been equally pivotal in state desecularisation, since the objectification of religion through national symbols and legal codes is inherently geared towards linking the state with a religious identity. Analysing the state's management of religious difference also suggests that desecularisation has led to the institutional exclusion of religious minorities from politics, while transforming how political authorities address issues pertaining to religious difference. In other words, the constitutional and legal objectification of Islam has led to fundamental changes in the very terms of political discourse.

[. . .]

National Identity and the Postcolonial Polity

It is generally held that the political leaders who founded the state of Pakistan, particularly Jinnah, proposed a conception of a secular Pakistan. [. . .] Jinnah held that the basis of inclusion in Pakistan was political citizenship, which vested each formal citizen with "equal rights, privileges, and obligations" (Constituent Assembly Debates, 11 August 1947, p 19). One of the crucial distinctions that the polity would have to deal with, as Jinnah very well understood, was religious identity, about which he proclaimed: "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State" (ibid: 20). Jinnah further added: "You will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as

citizens of the State" (ibid). On the whole, this speech provides a vision of the Pakistani state as a secular political entity.

An oft-overlooked dimension of this foundational moment in Pakistan's history is that this speech was followed by a debate on the design of the future flag of Pakistan. This "flag debate" constituted the first legislation passed by the Constituent Assembly, attesting to the importance of the flag as a core symbol of a state's sovereignty. More importantly, it formed the first formal engagement between Muslims and non-Muslim representatives over a crucial national symbol, and consequently over national identity itself, of the emerging postcolonial state. An examination of this moment reveals the first institutional articulation of Pakistan's trajectory of desecularisation, linking Muslim national identity with exclusionary politics vis-à-vis religious minorities.

[. . . p. 64/65. . .]

The origins of the Pakistani flag go back to the flag employed by the Muslim League during its struggle for Muslim autonomy in colonial India.[7] The Muslim League flag was set on a dark green background with a crescent and a moon in the centre. The flag proposed and eventually adopted added a white rectangular stripe on the side of the same design. However, when the emergence of Pakistan became a concrete possibility, it was a far from foregone conclusion that the flag of the Muslim League would become the flag of Pakistan. Jinnah had in fact received numerous letters and proposals from future citizens of Pakistan, both Muslim and non-Muslim, about the design of the flag. Even a cursory examination of these proposals depicts the centrality of the issue of the symbolic representation of religious minorities on the flag.[8] [. . .]

No mention of these letters emerged during the flag debates that followed Jinnah's speech. Liaquat Ali Khan moved the motion for adoption of the flag while maintaining that Pakistan "will be a State where there will be no special privileges, no special rights for any one particular community or any one particular interest" (Constituent Assembly Debates, 11 August 1947, p 22). The non-Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly unanimously expressed their disapproval of the proposed flag by stating that the minority communities had not been consulted in the design, and suggested that a new inclusive committee be formed to reconsider the design. It was also noted that the proposed flag was "almost identical with the Party flag of the Muslim League", that it represented "the flag of a particular community", and was therefore contrary to Liaquat's own admission that "the flag should be a secular one, should not be identified with any religion or any community" (ibid: 26).

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7 [note 8 in the original] The flag proposed by Gandhi in 1923 for staging collective Hindu and Muslim protests against the British was subsequently reframed as the "national" flag in 1931. It was criticized for being the flag of the Congress Party and hence not adequately representative. In 1937, the Muslim League officially rejected its use as the national flag (Virmani 1999).

8 [note 9 in the original] Quaid-e-Azam Papers, File no 57/G G/47, National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad.

Two issues were thus raised: one about the formal political processes determining the design of the proposed flag, and the other about the "content" of the flag, in particular its identification with religion. In his response, Liaquat alluded to the incorporated white stripe as making "room for not only all the minorities that are today but for any other minorities that might spring up hereafter". Following this discussion, the motion to form a committee to reconsider the flag was put forth by minority representatives and defeated through the majority Muslim League vote. The flag proposed by Liaquat was put on the table and accepted by the majority Muslim League vote.

National Identity and Politics of Religious Difference

[. . .]

The plethora of symbols proposed provide a flavour of that moment of transition, in which a more inclusive polity was perceived as a real possibility. But the outcome of the flag debates was the emergence of an institutional process inscribing otherness on non-Muslim citizens of the polity.

The marginalisation of the concerns of non-Muslim minorities at this stage set an important precedent for future constitutional debates, particularly on the preamble of the constitution, termed the Objectives Resolution, which took place in 1949 after Jinnah's death in 1948.

[. . . p. 65/66. . .]

Of the 11 clauses of the Resolution, reference to Islam appears explicitly in three, with the first clause of the Resolution vesting sovereignty in God. The nation state envisioned by the Resolution is one constituted by the Muslims for the Muslim majority. Liaquat explicitly maintained that "Pakistan was founded because the Muslims, of this sub-continent wanted to build up their lives in accordance with the teachings and traditions of Islam" (Constituent Assembly Debates, 7 March 1949). The checkered history of the idea of Pakistan as a bargaining tool for Jinnah until the very end of colonial rule, and alternate visions of the nation state were silenced as the category "Muslim" was placed at the centre of the nationalist imaginary (Jalal 1985).

Liaquat also firmly denounced the notion of a theocracy: "If there are any who still use the word theocracy in the same breath as the polity of Pakistan, they are either labouring under a grave misapprehension, or indulging in mischievous propaganda." While not a theocratic Islamic state, he maintained, Pakistan was to be a "Muslim" state as Islam recognizes no separation between religion and politics. The ambiguity manifestly present in this distinction between an "Islamic" and a "Muslim" state was immediately noted by non-Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly. The objections put forth were numerous, and revisions intended to bring all religious communities on an equal footing were demanded. Again, all such proposed amendments were shot down and the original resolution upheld through a majority Muslim League vote.

These instituted linkages among majoritarian politics and religio-symbolic dimensions of state formation have been pivotal in the emergence of the trajectory of desecularisation in Pakistan. Instead of reflecting the social aspirations of the time, they reveal that distinct notions of politics (formal Muslim majoritarianism) and national identity (Muslim) were instituted through the simultaneous adoption of religiously infused national symbols *and* the institutional silencing of religious minorities by the relatively secular political elite. Through a discussion of the exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in 1974, this article next traces the continuities and transformations of these notions in another formally democratic era.

Democracy, National Identity and Constitutional Law

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto came to office in 1971, following an election campaign celebrating "Islamic socialism". Notwithstanding his rhetoric, Bhutto was neither personally nor politically religious-minded. Like his predecessors, Bhutto can be characterised as secular, yet desecularising. While he significantly shied from turning Pakistan into a state based on Islamic laws, Islam was constitutionally declared the "state religion" of Pakistan for the first time under the 1973 constitution passed during his regime. Furthermore, the Second Constitutional Amendment (SCA) of 1974, which forcibly declared the Ahmadiyya community a non-Muslim minority, was enacted by the democratically elected National Assembly formed under his regime.[9]

[. . .]

While Jinnah and Liaquat had valorised a Muslim nationalist discourse by linking the symbols of the nation with Muslim national identity, they retained a commitment to formally include religious minorities within the political apparatus organised around the Constituent Assembly. By the time a new constitution was debated in 1973 and the religious status of Ahmadis in 1974, a marked change was in place. There was a visible absence of any public narrative reflecting the political subjectivities of religious minorities. Indeed, these debates did not even witness major political parties offering competing narratives about Islam's role in the state. [. . .]

Second, non-Muslim politicians felt that they could not intervene in national debates about religion. Raja Tridev Roy was the minister of minority affairs and tourism at the time, as well as the only non-Muslim member of the National Assembly. [. . . p. 66/67]

9 [note 10 in the original] The SCA defines a non-Muslim as "A person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets or claims to be a Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (Peace be upon him), or recognises such a claimant as a Prophet or religious reformer, is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law" (Article 260, Constitution of Pakistan).

In response to a query about whether he could have launched an official protest against the SCA in his capacity as a representative of minorities, Roy maintained that his official task was to hear and then convey the plight of minorities to the proper state authorities, implicitly implying that to intervene in the issue would have amounted to overstepping his official jurisdiction. His accounts are suggestive of the largely symbolic and ceremonial role of the Ministry of Minority Affairs in Pakistan. This significantly reduced role of religious minorities within both formal politics and national debates is directly related to the anti-Ahmadi politics of religious groups that emerged in 1974. [. . .]

The constraints perceived by Muslim Members of the National Assembly (MNA) sympathetic to religious minorities provide an even grimmer picture. For example, Gul Aurangzeb, an MNA belonging to an opposition party, explicitly referred to the "punishment" he would have received at the hands of the militant "mob" in his home constituency in Swat, should he have voted against the SCA in the National Assembly.[10] That the "mob" exists and is always-already willing to act at the behest of religious groups is the assumption – often borne out in practice – upon which popular religious politics rests, leading to an entrenchment of what I term the *politics of fear.* This politics of fear, when effectively exercised, further solidifies narratives of the religious establishment, and fundamentally alters and constricts the discursive space of national imaginaries.

[. . .]

A constitutive aspect of this moment of the enactment of the SCA is that it consolidated the symbiotic relationship between the exclusion of religious minorities and the formation of a Muslim national identity through a specific mode of religious politics within a formally democratic framework. Formal "Islamic" laws do not provide comprehensive accounts of processes of desecularisation. More revealing are the discourses, actors, practices and interests underlying their enactment. [. . .]

Politics of Fear Meets Politics of Expediency

Measures to Islamise the Pakistani state and society were initiated by Zia-ul-Haq as soon as he came to power in 1977, in large part necessitated by the imperatives of claiming political and cultural legitimacy for his authoritarian usurpation of state power. His project of Islamisation entailed instituting puritanical laws such as the Hudood Ordinances and Blasphemy Laws (Weiss 1986). [. . .] The broader Islamisation project to which these laws belong have justifiably led to a host of commentators identifying the Zia-ul-Haq regime and its geopolitical embeddedness within the Cold War politics of the 1980s as the biggest culprit in the institutionalization of an intolerant Islamic polity, rife

10 [note 13 in the original] Interview with Gul Aurangzeb, Islamabad, 4 March 2008.

with sectarian divisions and religious intolerance. [. . .] The Zia-ul-Haq era thus emerges as foundational in the launch of a novel trajectory of the desecularisation of Pakistan.

A consideration of the circumstances surrounding the promulgation of the 1984 Ordinance complicates this picture, and reveals that this Ordinance was a moment in the broader trajectory of desecularisation analysed above. The 1984 Ordinance movement was preceded by an organised religious movement that sought to make the effects of the SCA more tangible for Ahmadis. Some of the demands put forth included the introduction of the death sentence for apostasy, and a complete ban on the publication and distribution of Ahmadi literature. The Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutionally mandated advisory body, openly aligned itself with these demands (Kaushik 1996: 63–64). In February, religious groups threatened to launch a nationwide anti-Ahmadi campaign if the government did not accede to their demands by the end of April. If the government did not demolish all Ahmadi mosques, it was announced, the ulema would be compelled to do so themselves. Popular national newspapers such as *Jang* and *Nawa-e-Waqt* advocated vocally on behalf of the movement. On 26 April, the government promulgated the Ordinance.

[. . .] [T]his Ordinance added two Sections [. . .] to the Pakistan Penal Code. The first section stipulates that the use of "epithets, descriptions and titles, etc, reserved for certain holy personages or places", such as Azan (call to prayers) and Masjid (mosque), is reserved for "Muslims", and "misuse" by Ahmadis is liable to punishment by fines and imprisonment. [p. 67/68] The second section criminalises any Ahmadi who refers to herself/himself as Muslim, who "preaches or propagates" her/his faith, or "*in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims*" (italics mine). [. . .] The Ordinance, undertaken in the name of the putative Muslim citizen of Pakistan, effectively consolidated the religious establishment's vision of an Islamic polity within the domain of criminal law.

The religious movement preceding the Ordinance, however, was not a popular one. [. . .] The movement was "confined to religious parties" and was aimed at intimidation through gathering riotous crowds.

[. . .] That Zia-ul-Haq's perceived constituency was *petit-ulema* and not the "common man" indicates that political authorities accommodate the narratives and demands of conservative religious groups because they both desire cultural alliances with religious groups for political ends – politics of expediency – and fear the mobilisation potential of these groups – politics of fear.

That religious parties can strategically deploy this politics of fear across regime types (consider Bhutto's electoral democracy and Zia-ul-Haq's authoritarian regime) suggests the usefulness of the nuanced distinction between "politics" and "democracy" suggested by Akbar Zaidi (2005). Zaidi argues that political parties in Pakistan have been successful in engaging in political claims-making independently of the political regime in place, thereby splintering the supposed connections between democracy, political parties and political claims-making. In the present empirical case, the effect of this splintering is that religious parties have come to significantly shape the religious

dimensions of state formation in Pakistan. The fact that it is a religious minority that has been the primary site of the exercise of this agency can be ultimately attributed to the close linkages between nation-formation and the exclusion of religious minorities, which shaped the trajectory of desecularisation in Pakistan until the mid-1980s.

The Pakistani state's policies of expedient alignments with militant sectarian and jihadi groups during the second half of the 1980s to fight its proxy wars in Afghanistan and Kashmir have further infused Pakistani society with internal sectarian differences (Haqqani 2005; Hussain 2008). [. . .] [W]hile neither the Musharraf nor the Zardari regime openly endorsed Zia's project of Islamisation, the linkages analysed in this article, as well as other factors such as the influence of Wahabi Islam, funding (often through foreign sources) for ultra-conservative madrasas, and considerable evidence of widespread social intolerance of religious difference continue to hinder state efforts to curb sectarian violence, whose targets now include Ahmadis, Shias (particularly Hazaras) and Christians.

Conclusions

Through an analysis of desecularisation processes in Pakistan, this article has argued that the institutionalisation of religious nationalism not only excludes minorities both institutionally and symbolically, it also fundamentally transforms politics by harnessing the cultural power of conservative religious forces and silencing voices that hold divergent viewpoints. This process of desecularisation has not entailed a wholesale collapse of the formal "religious" and "secular" spheres envisioned and instituted by the preceding colonial state. It has instead led to a selective de-differentiation of religion and the state, primarily in the legal sphere, and most often oriented towards vulnerable social groups such as religious minorities. Analysing desecularisation as an instituted process that creates linkages among distinct notions of religion, politics, state and citizenship brings to light the interests and aspirations of "successful" religious and political actors engaged in constructing an Islamic polity, while acknowledging the presence of those who attempt, but are ultimately unable to partake in, instituting this project.

This article has sought to point to the dangers of one historical modality of desecularisation – when it emerges through the institutionalised, official tropes of a religious nationalism foundationally premised on the exclusion of religious minorities. The construction of Pakistan's national identity as a country for Muslims has been erected through the exclusion of religious minorities across time by both political and religious actors. All the moments analysed above together constituted this outcome. [. . . p. 68/69]

The dominance of a very particular form of religious politics, informed by the religious identity of the state, monopolised by belligerent religious groups, and consolidated through the exclusion of both minority and dissenting voices, remains a defining feature of desecularisation processes in Pakistan. The pressing issue, unfortunately,

is not which interpretations of Islam should hold sway, but whether interpretations conflicting with mainstream, orthodox religious groups can even be undertaken in the public sphere. That Javed Ghamdi, a "liberal" public religious authority, felt compelled to leave Pakistan because of threats from conservative religious groups; that prominent politicians like Salman Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti were assassinated by militants because of their vocal criticisms of blasphemy laws; and that ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was condemned by Islamist parties for sympathising with Ahmadis after the 2010 attacks on Ahmadi mosques all attest both to the politics of fear and the monopolisation of religious politics by increasingly militant groups.[11] Political and judicial leadership continues to be deferential to the religious establishment, both because of its own interests in maintaining ties with religious groups and as a consequence of the politics of fear. These political realities are not reducible to the cold war politics of the Zia era, or to the post-9/11 escalation of militant religious violence in Pakistan. Instead, the roots of desecularisation extend back to the very foundational moment of Pakistan's impending statehood.

Religious commitments play a significant role in shaping Muslim selves, communities and politics in diverse ways. Consequently, it is fruitful to develop a conceptual language that reflects this historical reality. At the same time, the very specific symbiosis of religion, nation, and the modern state produces unique forms of symbolic violence. It is by taking these multiple realities into account that we can begin engaging with comparative and historical questions about which institutional forms of religion and politics produce inclusive, egalitarian outcomes, and which ones exclusion and marginalisation.

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11 [note 18 in the original] This is not to suggest that religious groups and Islamist parties have remained static during this time. The religious establishment in Pakistan is a heterogeneous assemblage that has undergone significant transformations, both as a consequence of domestic shifts, and geopolitical and global factors such as the Cold War and America's War on Terror.

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61 Leo Igwe: *The Untold Story of Africa's Secular Tradition* (2014)

Introduced by Magnus Echtler

Introduction

Leo Igwe (b. 1970), founder of the Humanist Association of Nigeria, has been active in Nigerian and international atheist and human rights organisations for over twenty years, and, in 2017, received Humanists International's Distinguished Service to Humanism Award. He is the founder and CEO of Advocacy for Alleged Witches (Ibadan, Nigeria); it was his fight against the anti-witchcraft practices of Nigerian Pentecostals that, in 2009, first brought him international attention.[I] Witchcraft has also stood at the centre of Igwe's academic work. In his PhD thesis, he emphasised the agency of the accused in witchcraft cases.[II] There, as well as at a roundtable on "Contesting the Modernity of Witchcraft" that we jointly organised in 2014, at the biannual meeting of the German Association of African Studies, Igwe criticised the notion of an enchanted modernity in Africa. Jean and John Comaroff, for example, have argued that "the practice of mystical arts in postcolonial Africa, witchcraft among them, [. . .] is often a mode of producing *new* forms of consciousness; of expressing discontent with modernity and dealing with its deformities," rather than a resurgence of tradition.[III] While they consider occult economies to be a global phenomenon symptomatic of late capitalism, their main example is a surge of anti-witchcraft violence in South Africa in the 1990s. Igwe rejects this interpretation, because it denies Africans a central normative promise of modernity – namely liberation from irrational beliefs and practices, and fixes them to transcendental frames outside the secular age.[IV] Instead, Igwe promotes the immanent frame of secular humanism amongst Africans.

His atheistic stance links Leo Igwe to the poet Okot p'Bitek. However, p'Bitek wanted to use pre-colonial "atheistic" beliefs to decolonise Africa from the Western or Christian imposition of religion (see text no. 4). By contrast, Igwe holds that, in order to reach an "African Age of Reason," Africans must do away with "irrational beliefs [. . .]

I Martin Robbins, "Face to Faith," *The Guardian*, August 7, 2009, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/aug/08/nigeria-witch-children-polio.
II Leo Igwe, "The Witch is not a Witch: the Dynamics and Contestations of Witchcraft Accusations in Northern Ghana" (PhD diss., University of Bayreuth, 2017). https://epub.uni-bayreuth.de/id/eprint/3377/.
III Jean and John Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *American Ethnologist* 26, no. 2 (1999), 284.
IV Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 11.

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informed by fear and ignorance" – be they African, Christian, or Islamic.[V] Consequently, in the text presented here, he criticises religion across the board. The text was originally printed in *Conscience*, the magazine published by Catholics for Choice – an organisation promoting religious and reproductive freedom in the US. Igwe's secular critique of religion inverts the argument of Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar, who challenge secular science to take African – understood as religious – epistemologies seriously (see text no. 11). Igwe certainly agrees with Matthew Engelke (see text no. 15), in so far as he, too, considers critique to be a key feature of secularism.

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Unlike in Europe and in other parts of the Western world, secularism has not succeeded in defining the political landscape in Africa.

In fact, the secularization of Africa has been marked by contrasts and contradictions, false starts and setbacks, misconceptions and misrepresentations, dilemmas and ambiguities due to the complex interplay of religion and politics in the region. The process of separating religion and state has been under siege due to the powerful influence of Christian churches – including support from the Vatican and American evangelical groups – and Islamic organizations funded and backed by Saudi Arabia, Iran and other Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries. The major challenge is that the notion of secularization is largely misrepresented by politicians in Africa, who are bent on sustaining the image of a "religious continent" to further their own interests.

Rooted in the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment, secularism guarantees the state's neutrality and impartiality on religious matters and provides institutional protection against the establishment of theocracy and religious dictatorship. Constitutionally, separating religious and state authorities guarantees the equality of individuals of different faiths and of none before the law and protects the human rights of all, including the rights of religious minorities.

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V Leo Igwe, "A Manifesto for a Skeptical Africa," James Randi Educational Foundation, 27 October 2012, accessed 26 June, 2024, http://archive.randi.org/site/index.php/component/content/article/37-static/1891-leo-igwe.html.

Africa is religiously and culturally plural. Hence, it is imperative that governments be secular – that is, unbiased for or against any religion. But this is often not how it turns out. Many African states are constitutionally secular in principle, but in practice there is a lot of melding of religious and political spaces. Religious groups pressure governments to make their dogmas and doctrines state policies.

As Nigerian columnist Abimbola Adelakun observed: "Religion in Nigeria, by the way, is about politics and politics is about contesting spaces. When sects push for space for their religion to thrive, it is not necessarily about social equality. The aim is their cut of socio-political relevance and the capital they can build with it."

Religious groups interfere with state matters as they contest for space and influence. Many of the de jure democracies we have in Africa today are really only quasi-democracies – de facto Christian, Islamic or "chrislamic" theocracies. Many politicians regard the idea of separating religion and state as a Western notion that is alien to African political culture and values. Some view secularism as a legacy of European cultural imperialism and political irreligionism. They equate secularism with atheism and think secularization is a process of eliminating religion from society and enthroning atheism as the state "religion." Some Africans think separating religion and state is incipient communism – a creeping socialist agenda. To certain Muslim eyes, the roots of secularism lie in Christian Europe, making it a repugnant worldview to Muslim theocrats, who do not subscribe to the notion of separating mosque and state.

But the idea of separating religion and government is not new to Africa. Elements of secularism are identifiable in pre-colonial African societies, unlike what some African religious leaders would have us believe. For example, in 2006, Professor Maake Jonathan S. Masango from South Africa told the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus that "in the African tradition, religion is a very integral part of our culture. So it is not easy to simply place things in compartments; 'this is the religious part [and] this is the secular part.'" Such misrepresentations serve the interests of priestly politicians and political priests. On the contrary, in Africa, worldly and otherworldly things have actually existed in compartments, not merged as contemporary religious ideologues claim. Unfortunately, the colonial mentality and Christian and Islamic indoctrination prevent many Africans from acknowledging the secular elements and roots in their culture.

Separation of Religion and State in Pre-Colonial Africa

Kingdoms and chiefdoms, or their variants, prevailed in pre-colonial Africa. Magico-religious beliefs were strong and widespread. Priests, soothsayers and diviners were among those social actors who managed the communities.

Still, political and spiritual roles were separate and distinct, and these royal and clerical powers were not always invested in one person. The kings and chiefs were not

the priests or clerics. The chiefs handled secular issues and usually referred spiritual matters to the priests. Secular and sacred spaces were not one and the same. The palace was distinct from the shrine. The distinct roles of traditional rulers and priests/priestesses have been documented in communities in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zambia. Indeed, there was the notion of the divine rights of kings, which meant that the kings were chosen by the gods, not that the kings were priests. Among the Azande in Central Sudan, the duties of kings and princes were separate from those of the oracles. And for the Ibos in Southern Nigeria, the functions of the traditional rulers – the Ezes and Obis – were different from those of shrine managers (Didia afa) and other custodians of the local deities and spirits.

There were, however, also cases where the chiefs were the priests and performed political as well as religious duties. These were the exceptions, not the rule, in pre-colonial Africa. In the Mamprusi region in contemporary Ghana, the Gambarana, as the chief of Gambaga is called, is the only chief in the area who has both political and spiritual powers. Other chiefs do not; they have priests who carry out religious functions and responsibilities. The Gambarana, by contrast, is both the chief and the chief priest of Gambaga.

So the idea that the separation of religious and state affairs was completely unknown in precolonial Africa is patently untrue and does not reflect the social and political reality at this phase in African history.

Secularism in Colonial Africa

The situation changed with the advent of colonialism. The colonial authorities introduced new dynamics to politics and religion in Africa. These dynamics transformed state-religion relationships in the region.

Colonial authorities enthroned the European model of legal and governmental institutions to assert their power and legitimacy over the colonies in Africa. The state bureaucratic system they established was supposed to be secular, but it was not. The colonial establishment had a religious layer – a strong Christian religious coating and character.

The colonial presence comprised not only administrators, explorers, armies and settlers, but also missionaries sent to Africa by different Christian religious orders and denominations in Europe. The colonial state system was not religiously neutral. Through the colonial alliances with churches, Christianity was introduced into the African political process.

This meant that Christian colonial authorities faced resistance from Muslim-dominated parts of Africa. (Before European colonists arrived in Africa, Islamic rule and religion held sway in parts of the continent. Muslim clerics and warriors from North Africa and the Middle East had colonized many parts of the region through trade, preaching

and holy wars.) Through their policy of indirect rule and military conquests, colonial governments were able to forge alliances with local Muslim rulers and establish political control over these communities. However, Muslim theocrats opposed colonial rule because they saw it as a front for Christian domination and expansionism. This opposition galvanized into an anti-colonial struggle that engulfed the region.

The Catholic church did not play an active role in the early days of the struggle against colonial authorities because the hierarchy of the African church was mainly white missionaries, some of whom were also part of the colonial establishment. The church had a vested interest in the colonial status quo. In fact, some colonial governments provided financial aid to mission schools. State grants were critical to the sustenance and survival of Christian mission schools in Nigeria.

This was not the case in Muslim-majority communities. Muslims opposed European Christian domination and the rule of "infidels." They mobilized against colonial oppression and exploitation, but for reasons that were incompatible with secularism. According to historian Benjamin Talton, Sheikh Almadou Bamba, a Muslim leader who founded the Mouride Brotherhood in late 19th century Senegal, was an example of an African leader who worked to separate "from colonial authority rather than challenge it." Bamba's goal in establishing his fraternal organization for Sufi Muslims was to "protect Islam from the corruptive forces of European rule," and not directly oppose European rulers, although he was targeted by colonial authorities all the same.

Other Africans – Christians, traditionalists or non-believers – allied with liberation movements from other countries in their fight for independence and self-rule. The movements against colonial domination had a religious undercurrent, as politics in postcolonial Africa would reveal.

Separating Religion and State in Postcolonial Africa

The early days of independence were promising for secularism in Africa, with the separation of church and state offering a solid framework upon which to build modern, progressive states. The prospect of shaping a free, democratic and secular Africa was bright. Many countries adopted a secular constitution establishing a wall separating religion and state – with the powers of the presidents on one side and those of priests and bishops, imams and sheikhs on the other. But decades after independence, many of the secular hopes and promises have been dashed. Some governments have pulled down this wall of separation or have gone so far as to merge religion and state. Many African politicians have campaigned with, and were elected for, religious reasons. Others campaigned as democrats but ruled as theocrats. This trend has been mainly due to pressures from religious groups and institutions.

At the end of colonial rule, Muslim-majority countries in Africa adopted Islam as the state religion and sharia (Islamic law) or its adaptation, as state law. For example,

shortly after Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, Muslim-majority states in the north imposed sharia law in a country that "was supposed to be secular," as Ali Mazrui, a writer on African and Islamic studies, observed. The espousal of sharia has had numerous negative impacts on human rights in the region. In 2003, a sharia court sentenced a Nigerian woman to stoning for adultery. In 2010, Sani Ahmed Yerima, a Nigerian senator, defended his marriage to a 13-year-old girl by citing Islamic law. The freedom of religious minorities has also suffered in the region. Since sharia came into force, non-Muslims have been subjected to discrimination in the workplace, in education and in political appointments. Churches have been destroyed, Islamic dress and codes curtailing drinking have been imposed on non-Muslims. In November in the Nigerian city of Kano, police enforcing the Islamic principle of Hisbah – maintaining a society in conformity with the laws of Allah – destroyed over 240,000 bottles of beer as part of its crackdown on "immorality" in the state.

The separation of religion and state in Africa has had some of its most pronounced breaches in matters concerning sexuality education and the reproductive rights of women. The Catholic hierarchy in Africa opposes sex education in schools as well as the use of condoms, even with the continent gripped by the HIV & AIDS pandemic. The hierarchy continues to frustrate African governments' plans to make contraceptives more accessible and abortion safe and legal. The hierarchy in Uganda, under the aegis of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), has come out against the proposal to legalize abortion from Sarah Opendi, the state minister for health. The executive secretary of the UJCC, Fr. Silvester Arinaitwe Rwomukubwe, explained his opposition to the proposal in an interview with Uganda's Observer, stating that abortion was against the teachings of the Bible and the church. Health experts say that at least 1,500 girls in Uganda die every year from complications resulting from unsafe abortions.

In Nigeria, the Catholic hierarchy recently pressured Governor Rochas Okorocha, the governor of the Imo state in the southern region, to repeal a law that had legalized abortion – according to the local archbishop's interpretation of it. Archbishop Anthony Obinna mobilized the hierarchy and the community against the governor because of a section of the law that stated: "Every woman shall have the right to enjoy reproductive rights including the right to medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest and where the continued pregnancy endangers the life or the physical, mental, psychological or emotional health" of the pregnant woman. The Catholic hierarchy in Nigeria, in the name of its "prolife" campaign, continues to block the government's efforts to provide legal protection for the lives and health of women by guaranteeing access to safe and legal abortion.

The Endangered State of Secularism

Zambia's Frederick Chiluba, a Pentecostal Christian who ruled the country from 1991 to 2002, declared Zambia a Christian nation shortly after he was elected. Chiluba was praised by Christian groups and leaders across the world, including American evangelist, Par Robertson. The case of Chiluba is indicative of the endangered state of secularism in Africa.

In particular, it demonstrates that there is an international dimension to mixing religion and politics in the region. African religious organizations and leaders often act under the influence of the Vatican and the Organizations of Islamic Cooperation. They receive moral and financial backing from rich and powerful evangelical and Islamist groups and institutions around the globe. Until African politicians begin to muster the will and the statesmanship to neutralize these pressures from theocratic establishments, the promise of a secular Africa will continue to elude the people of this region, and the idea of an Africa where religion and state are separate will remain a pipe dream.

62 Ian Hunter: *Secularization – The Birth of a Modern Combat Concept* (2015)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Ian Hunter (b. 1949, Shepparton, Australia) is an Australian intellectual historian. He gained a BA in English and history in 1971, and a diploma in education in 1973 from La Trobe University, Melbourne. After working as a teacher, he received his PhD from Griffith University in Brisbane in 1986, for his work on the intellectual history of popular literary education. After an association with Griffith, and several international appointments, Hunter joined the Centre for the History of European Discourses at the University of Queensland in Brisbane (2001–2012), where he is currently a professor emeritus within the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities.

Hunter's research focuses on the history of early modern political and philosophical thought, and the history of theory in the modern humanities academy – e.g. the intellectual history of 1960s humanities theory. His book publications include *Rival Enlightenments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *The Secularisation of the Confessional State: The Political Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

In the selected text, Hunter argues that the main philosophical-historical conceptions of secularisation in the early nineteenth century were not theories or histories at all, instead being "'combat concepts' of competing cultural-political programs advanced by factions engaged in multisided struggles to determine the shape of the religious and political order." Their epicentre was in Protestant Germany, in the *Vormärz* period that preceded the March Revolution of 1848. This reference to secularisation theories not as historical depictions, but as competing ideologies, resembles Thomas Luckmann's (text no. 53) perception of secularisation theory as a "myth" of modern societies, or David Martin's (text no. 52) early attack on secularisation theory, both of which are presented in this volume.

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Ian Hunter. "Secularization: The Birth of a Modern Combat Concept." *Modern Intellectual History* 12, no. 1 (2015): 1–32; 2–5, 31–32.

Modern debates over secularization in the Christian West share a common understanding of the term. "Secularization" refers to an epochal transition, beginning in late medieval or early modern times, in which a culture based in religious belief was transformed into one based in an autonomous human reason. The debating positions advanced within this shared conception, however, differ widely and sometimes vehemently. Among these positions we find celebratory accounts of the linear emancipation of reason from religion through philosophy and science.[1] No less positive are dialectical accounts that regard this secularizing emancipation as one that "translates" and preserves religious ideals within rational morality and society.[2] In close proximity, though, we also find regretful anti-secularist histories, mainly advanced by Catholic intellectuals. Here the autonomizing of human rationality is treated as a catastrophic effect of Protestant theology, whose "disembedding" of reason from human nature and community delivered them over to the merciless instrumentalization of a "secular age".[3] I shall show that these variant conceptions of secularization as an epochal transition to rational humanism are the product of a particular form of philosophical history. This first emerged in the early 1800s in several related forms, all of which were committed to treating history itself as the temporal unfolding of human reason.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the history of the historiography of secularization in the twentieth century is the degree to which it was able to ignore the fact that prior to the early 1800s nobody used the term "secularization" to refer to an epochal transition from a culture of religious belief to one of rational autonomy. It turns out that

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1 [note 1 in the original] John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and "Early Enlightenment" Europe* (Cambridge, 2006); Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford, 2011).

2 [note 2 in the original] Jürgen Habermas, "Glauben und Wissen", *Dialog*, 1 (2002), 63–74; in English, Habermas, "Faith and Knowledge", in Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, 2003), 101–15. Habermas, "'The Political': The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology", in E. Mendieta and J. Van Antwerpen, eds., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York, 2011), 15–33. Peter E. Gordon, "What Hope Remains?", *New Republic*, 14 December 2011, available at www.newrepublic.com/article/books-andarts/ magazine/98567/jurgen-habermas-religion-philosophy.

3 [note 3 in the original] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

apart from its earlier and persisting canon-law use to name a species of exclaustration, between 1640 and the early 1800s "secularization" was a term used in public law and diplomacy to refer to the transfer of ecclesiastical property and jurisdiction to civil ownership and [p. 2/3] authority.[4] No less remarkable, though, is the degree to which the historiography of secularization failed to confront the brute historical fact of the persistence of confessional religions themselves. For this historical persistence was on display not just in early modernity, when the process of secularization is supposed to have begun, but also during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when this process is supposed to have been completed.[5] Furthermore, in the German context with which our discussion is particularly concerned, this historical persistence was juridically cemented in the constitutional recognition of a plurality of confessional religions, first in the short-lived Weimar constitution of 1919 and then again in the Federal Republic's Grundgesetz of 1949. Both constitutions treat confessional religions as a permanent feature of the German state and society.[6]

I shall propose, then, that if prior to the early 1800s nobody spoke about secularization as an epochal transition from religious belief to autonomous rationality that is in part because the language in which to do so had not been invented and in part because no such transition had taken place. In developing this historical argument my aim is not to directly engage sociological and social-historical evidence regarding church attendance, patterns of belief and non-belief, and institutional church organization. Neither is it to show that the competing philosophical histories are false theories or histories of secularization. Rather it is to argue that they do not in fact present accounts that are capable of being shown to be true or false, and in this regard they are not theories or histories at all. If the main philosophical-historical conceptions of secularization conceived a transition to a rational autonomy that had never been thought before, to name a process that had never taken place, this, I shall argue, is because they were "combat

4 [note 4 in the original] This difference between the public-law (*Säkularisation*) and philosophical-historical (*Säkularisierung*) usages of "secularization" began to be marked in the 1930s and was clearly spelled out in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, as was the identification of the early 1800s as the point of emergence of the philosophical-historical meaning. See Hans-Wolfgang Strätz and Hermann Zabel, "Säkularisation, Säkularisierung", in O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 5 (Stuttgart, 1984), 789–829.

5 [note 5 in the original] See the revisionist essays by Christopher Clark: "From 1848 to Christian Democracy", in I. Katznelson and G. Stedman Jones, eds., *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge, 2010), 190–213; Clark, "The Napoleonic Moment in Prussian Church Policy," in L. Riall and D. Laven, eds., *Napoleon's Legacy: Problems of Government in Restoration Europe* (Oxford, 2000), 217–36; and Clark, "Confessional Policy and the Limits of State Action: Frederick William III and the Prussian Union 1817–40," *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 985–1004.

6 [note 6 in the original] Martin Heckel, "Religionsfreiheit: Ein säkulare Verfassungsgarantie", in K. Schlaich, ed., *Martin Heckel, Gesammelte Schriften: Staat, Kirche, Recht, Geschichte*, 4 vols. (Tübingen, 1997), 4: 647–849.

concepts": concepts that were the instruments of competing cultural-political [p. 3/4] programs advanced by factions engaged in multisided struggles to determine the shape of the religious and political order.

Despite their European-wide character, the epicenter of these struggles lay in Protestant Germany in the period of the *Vormärz*, the period of religious and political instability that preceded the March "revolution" of 1848. It was here, in the aftermath of Napoleon's dissolution of the empire's multiconfessional structure and suspension of Brandenburg-Prussia's "tolerationist" constitution – the latter serving to maintain a plurality of confessional religions and defend them against the solvent of Protestant rationalism – that a plethora of secularist and anti-secularist factions could seek to imprint their programs on the future religious and political order of Germany. As a result of their capacity to supply the proliferating political factions, parties, and sects with galvanizing charismatic visions of Germany's "rational" religious and political future, it became possible for an array of elite philosophies, whether Protestant-rationalist, Kantian, or right- and left-Hegelian, to migrate from tolerated academic enclaves and enter the political arena. It was in the philosophical histories attached to these politicized philosophies that the conception of secularization as an epochal transition to rational autonomy first appeared, whether this was conceived in terms of the elimination of religion through philosophy and science, in terms of the transformation of religion into a moral philosophy that preserved religious norms, or in terms of the sublimation of religion into secular social institutions or its atheistic desublimation into anthropology or sociology. These variant conceptions are best understood as instruments of the rationalist philosophies that were operating as social confessions in competition with religious ones, and as intellectual weapons of the factions and sects whose leaderships the philosophies helped to groom.

This is why early nineteenth-century philosophical histories could overlook the fact that the concept of secularization they were inventing – as an epochal transition from religious belief to rational autonomy – was one that had not been previously thought and concerned a process that had not taken place. It is also why these "histories" could ignore the fact that, far from vanishing in the face of this putative transition, confessional religions had displayed a striking historical persistence and longevity through their capacity to adapt to changing historical circumstances. The fact that today's philosophical histories of secularization continue to ignore the same fundamental historical facts should be seen as testimony to the longevity of the cultural-political struggles in which they emerged, and to the durability of the rationalist philosophical "confessions" underpinning them.

If it is the case that philosophical histories of secularization first arose as instruments of rival early nineteenth-century cultural-political programs, then the task of the intellectual historian must be to provide an account of [p. 4/5] the emergence of the philosophical histories from these factional programs, thence to describe the ensuing cultural-political conflicts in which the variant philosophical-historical conceptions of secularization first appeared. This is what my discussion aims to provide. The first step

will be to make good on my claim that prior to 1800 the modern discourse on secularization was absent, and the transition to a rationally autonomous humanity that it topicalizes had never taken place. At the same time it will be necessary to clarify the historical fact that while there was an early modern use of the adjective "secular" to name a domain from which religion and theology had been excluded – namely the domain formed by the great public-law settlements to the religious civil wars – this usage was not grounded in "secular reason". It therefore had nothing to do with putatively secular movements in philosophy and the natural sciences, and thence with an epochal transition to a "secular age". [. . . p. 5–31. . .]

Conclusion

As we have seen, none of these putative processes of secularization had actually taken place, or ever would, since they were in fact historical projections of the exercises in spiritual grooming through which rationalist philosophers cultivated the charismatic persona required for leadership roles in an array of academic, political, and theological factions. It thus represents a significant misunderstanding of this state of affairs to imagine that any of the philosophies were connected to a "progressive" politics through some historical materialization of their concepts or theorizations.[7] But it is no less fantasmatic to imagine that [p. 31/32] the sectarian rationalism of the Protestant philosophies ensured their political realization courtesy of their instrumentalization by a bureaucratic state bent on an "Erastian" subordination of the churches.[8]

What swept the rationalist philosophies into political reality was neither their materialization (secularization) in a moral state or social class, nor their instrumentalization (secularization) by a secular state bent on their ideological imposition, but a set of circumstances of an altogether different kind. In one regard these circumstances were formed by the capacity of the rationalist philosophies and histories to imbue the leadership of political sects with the charismatic authority to propose installing their particular "theory" of secularization as the constitutional foundation of religion, law, and state. At the same time, it was only the military and political suspension of the existing constitutional order that permitted the rationalist philosophies to migrate from their tolerated academic enclaves and enter the political sects that were proposing to refound the pluralistic and relativistic religious constitution on the basis of a "true"

7 [note 80 in the original] See, for example, Warren Breckman's philosophical-historical argument that left-Hegelian debates over the revolutionary de-alienation of religious personhood represented an unfolding emancipatory "theory" of politics and society, in Warren Breckman, "Politics, Religion, and Personhood: The Left Hegelians and the Christian German State", in D. Moggach, ed., *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates* (Evanston, IL, 2011), 96–117.

8 [note 81 in the original] The central argument of Howard's *Protestant Theology*.

theory of religion and politics. For just this reason, however, the rationalist philosophies could be swept out of political reality if, for example, political circumstances led to the reinstatement of the pluralist religious constitution as the modus vivendi between the rival cultural and political factions. This is what happened with the short-lived constitution of 1849, which terminated the rival programs for the philosophical-historical secularization of religion and society by reestablishing the constitutional protection of a plurality of confessional religions.

A subsequent military and political suspension of the religious constitution between 1933 and 1945 would be terminated in two quite different ways. In West Germany this would occur through the 1949 reinstatement of the secular and relativistic religious constitution, which now extended protection to "philosophical ideologies" such as Marxism, to the extent that they did not interfere with pluralistic order of confessional religions. In Soviet East Germany, however, the constitutional interregnum would be terminated through a program to impose the Marxist conception of secularization through the instrumentarium of a party state, thereby demonstrating the only form in which philosophical history could deal with both the nonexistence of the process of secularization and the historical persistence of confessional religions.

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63 Hayashi Makoto: *Not Secularisation, but Laicisation – Religious Freedom in Modern Japan* (2016)

Translated and introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Hayashi Makoto (b. 1953) has held the position of professor at the Department of Religion and Culture, Faculty of Arts, Aichi Gaku'in University since 1999. Aichi Gaku'in University is a private university in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, which started out as an academy of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism in 1876, before being transformed into a university in 1953. From 1972 to 1976, he studied religious studies, and was enrolled in the Graduate School of Humanities of the University of Tokyo from 1976 to 1982.[I]

Hayashi's area of specialisation is religious studies and the history of Japanese religions, with a special focus on the early modern and modern periods, modern Buddhism, the "Way of Yin and Yang," calendar studies, divination, folk religion, and Shintō.[II] He has published widely, including publishing in English.[III]

In the short paper reproduced below in an English translation, Hayashi argues for a distinction between 'secularisation' as a process arising out of society itself and 'laicisation' as a fencing in and marginalisation of religion, enforced by the state. It is the latter that has happened in modern Japan, he claims, which is why it is more appropriate to speak of 'laicisation' rather than 'secularisation' with regard to Japan.

I "Hayashi Makoto," researchmap Database, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://researchmap.jp/kurota/education.

II "Hayashi Makoto," KAKEN Researcher Database, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://nrid.nii.ac.jp/en/nrid/1000090156456/.

III E.g., "Tokugawa-Period Disputes Between Shugen Organizations and Onmyōji over Rights to Practice Divination," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (1994): 167–89. With Hiroshi Yamanaka, "The Adaption of Max Weber's Theories of Religion in Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 20, no. 2–3 (1993): 206–28. With Ōtani Eiichi, and Paul L. Swanson, eds., *Modern Buddhism in Japan,* Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture 230 (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2014); "Religion in the Modern Period," in *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, ed. Paul L. Swanson. Nanzan Library of Asian Religion and Culture (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

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Hayashi Makoto 林淳, "Sezokuka de wa naku raishizeshon: Kindai nihon no shinkyō no jiyū 世俗化ではなくライシゼイション－近代日本の信教の自由" [Not Secularization, but Laicisation: Religious Freedom in Modern Japan]. *Shūkyō Kenkyū* 宗教研究 (*Journal of Religious Studies)* 89, Suppl. (2016): 44–45.

Translation by Christoph Kleine

The concept of secularisation (*sezokuka* 世俗化) in the sociology of religion has long implied, among other things, the individualisation, and a reduction in the influence, of religion. However, since the 1980s, with the revival of Islam, the rise of evangelical Christianity, and the emphasis on the public role of religion, the concept of secularisation has lost its persuasive power. My discomfort with the notion of secularisation is due to the fact that it has been associated with modernisation. It is usually understood as a change in religion that occurs automatically from within society, as a consequence of modernisation. At this point, the coercive power of the modern state is ignored. The French idea of separation of government and religion (*seikyō bunri* 政教分離) was formed in a process of confrontation and negotiation between republican and Catholic forces. I emphasise the fact, however, that *laïcité* has been promoted from outside, by the coercive power of the state. In this paper I would like to call the relationship between the state and religion caused by the coercive power of the modern state 'laicisation' rather than 'secularisation'.

I will consider the relationship between power (*kenryoku* 権力) and religion (*shūkyō* 宗教) since the Meiji Restoration [1868–1890], in comparison with that in the Edo period [1603–1867]. In the Edo period, there was a status system, with samurai, peasants, townspeople and religionists all part of the same system. Within this system, Buddhist priests played a particularly important social role. The Buddhist priests were involved in preparing certificates to verify individuals' affiliation to a particular denomination of Buddhism, ensured that the parishioners (*danka no hito* 檀家の人) were not Christian, and represented the Edo shogunate at the most local level. Buddhist priests also prepared, for example, documents for their parishioners' travel or marriages. In the community, Buddhist priests also acted as teachers in the temple, teaching children how to read characters and books.

The new government abolished the status system of the Edo shogunate by issuing a series of decrees. In 1868, a 'decree for distinguishing between Shintō and Buddhism'

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(*shinbutsu hanzen rei* 神仏判然令) was issued to separate Buddhism and Shintō. As a result, a movement to destroy Buddhism, known as 'abolish Buddhism, destroy Śākyamuni' (*haibutsu kishaku undo* 廃仏毀釈運動) arose in various regions. The Edo shogunate had placed the status system at the foundation of society. The new government, however, tried to dismantle the status system and create commoners (*heimin* 平民). In 1871, the government issued a 'decree for returning land to the state' (*agechi rei* 上知令) to nationalise all land held by temples and shrines. The temples and shrines were thus no longer the legal owners of the land. In 1872, a law was passed allowing Buddhist priests to eat meat and marry. Thus, Buddhist priests were no longer a special class, but became ordinary commoners [p. 44/45]. Priests were obliged to pay taxes, and perform military service. In this way, the new government sought to abolish the official role and status privileges of traditional Buddhism (*dentō bukkyō* 伝統仏教), and to remove its influence from public space.

Let me summarise the discussion so far. Since 1868, the government had stripped traditional Buddhism of its public role, and tried to reduce the economic base of traditional Buddhism. Christianity was socially recognised by the article of freedom of religious faith (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由) in the Imperial Constitution.[I]

However, the Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) of 1890, and the Ministry of Education's (*monbushō* 文部省) prohibition of religious education in 1899, placed restrictions on Christianity's entry into the educational system. It was on the basis of this policy of weakening traditional Buddhism (*datsu dentō bukyyō ka* 脱伝統仏教化) and weakening Christianity (*datsu kirisutokyō ka* 脱キリスト教化) that the Imperial Constitution was conceived and enacted, with the emperor's supreme authority at its core. It was hoped that the emperor system (*tennōsei* 天皇制) would represent the national doctrine (*kokkyō* 国教). Imperial nationalism was fostered and spread throughout society, with the enactment of the Imperial Constitution as a turning point. Schools, armies and shrines were the agents of the dissemination of imperial nationalism. In the case of the modern Japanese state, it was the secular state (*sezoku-teki kokka* 世俗的国家) that had accomplished the weakening of traditional religion (*datsu dentō shūkyō ka* 脱伝統宗教化) and the weakening of Christianity. I use the term laicisation rather than secularisation, because, in the case of Japan, it was the coercive forces of the modern state that enforced the weakening of traditional religion, and the secular state was a result of this. Because of the formation of the secular state, conditions were created that were conducive to the fostering of imperial nationalism in the public space, which functioned as a centripetal force for national unity.

I CK: Promulgated by the Meiji emperor on 11 February 1889; enacted on 29 November the following year.

64 Saba Mahmood: *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* (2016)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Saba Mahmood (1961–2018) was a professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, and was married to anthropologist Charles Hirschkind.[I] Mahmood was born in Pakistan, and came to the USA in 1981. After achieving a BA and an MA in architecture and urban planning, she later shifted her attention to political science and anthropology. She received a PhD in anthropology from Stanford University in 1998. In the preface to her first book, *Politics of Piety* – an ethnography of a women's mosque movement in Cairo – she positions herself as a progressive leftist whose secularist certainties have faltered over time, as a result of geopolitical developments such as 'Western' (secular) democracies allying themselves with the most conservative religious forces in some regions of the world, as well as her first-hand experiences of forms of popular Islam in the 'Islamic Revival.'[II] In this book, Mahmood brings a critical Asadian perspective (see text no. 56) on secularism and agency into dialogue with poststructuralist feminist theory, most notably that of Judith Butler. This theoretical dialogue results in a radical historicisation and contextualisation – some might say particularisation – of the notion of agency, and its separation from the notions of freedom and resistance. A symposium involving these authors at Berkeley in 2007 resulted in the book *Is Critique Secular?*, edited by Mahmood together with her interlocutors Talal Asad, Wendy Brown and Judith Butler, in 2009.[III]

I Different sources give different years (1961 or 1962) and different places (Quetta or Lahore) of birth. For bibliographical information on Saba Mahmood, see: Sumit Saurabh Srivastava, "Saba Mahmood (03 February 1961 – 10 March 2018)," *Indian Anthropologist* 48, no. 1 (2018): 99–101, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26633119; Nauman Naqvi, "Saba Mahmood, 1962–2018," Royal Anthropological Institute, March 2018, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://therai.org.uk/archives-and-manuscripts/obituaries/saba-mahmood; "Obituary: Dr. Saba Mahmood, 1962–2018," UC Berkeley, 12 March 2018, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://anthropology.berkeley.edu/news/obituary-dr-saba-mahmood-1962-2018. "Remembering Saba Mahmood," *The Immanent Frame*, 13 March 2018, accessed 26 June, 2024, https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/03/13/remembering-saba-mahmood/; Noah Salomon, "Saba Mahmood (1961–2018)," *American Anthropologist* 123, no 2 (2021): 453–56, https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13564.
II Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
III Talal Asad, et al., eds., *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, CA: UC Berkeley Townsend Center for the Humanities, 2009).

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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The excerpt presented here is from Saba Mahmood's second single-authored book *Religious Difference in a Secular Age*, in which she argues that secularism has not – in the case of postcolonial Egypt – pacified religious conflicts, but has itself been a force that has polarised differences, and led to identitarian confrontations between religious minorities and the majority (see van der Veer, text no. 28 and the documentation of the Indian debate in section 2, see also Saeed, text no. 60). Again closely following Talal Asad, Mahmood analyses the contradictions and paradoxes of political secularism and efforts to achieve religious equality, which are entangled with modern state power. Conceptually, she further elaborates on questions such as the tension between the particular origin and universal claims of secularism (see section 1), how historical and regional differences relate to universalising tendencies and power inequalities, and the fundamental entanglement and interdependence of the religious and the secular in modernity. Mahmood concludes her introduction with some critical remarks on the concept of the postsecular (see section 4, especially Habermas, text no. 69, and Mufti, text no. 72).

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Saba Mahmood. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016: 1–11, 20–23.

Introduction

[. . .]

This book argues that modern secular governance has contributed to the exacerbation of religious tensions in postcolonial Egypt, hardening interfaith boundaries and polarizing religious differences. This claim will appear counterintuitive to many who [p. 1/2] believe that secularism is a solution to the problem of religious strife rather than a force in its creation. Yet, as I hope to show, we cannot understand religious conflict in Egypt today without adequate attention to how modern secularism has transformed religious identity and interfaith relations. Secularism has an inescapable character that emanates, in part, from the structure of the modern liberal state, which promises to demolish religious hierarchies in order to create a body politic in which all its members are equal before the law. The secular ideal of religious equality, introduced in the nineteenth century, transformed relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, making it

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possible for the latter to imagine a future of civil and political equality. Despite this foundational promise, religious minorities continue to suffer various forms of discrimination in contemporary Egypt and other parts of the Middle East. While Islamic concepts and practices are crucial to the production of this inequality, I argue that the modern state and its political rationality have played a far more decisive role in transforming preexisting religious differences, producing new forms of communal polarization, and making religion more rather than less salient to minority and majority identities alike. Furthermore, I suggest that insomuch as secularism is characterized by a globally shared form of national-political structuration, the regulation of religious difference takes a modular form across geographical boundaries.

Two paradoxical features of this secular political rationality are particularly germane. First, its claim to religious neutrality notwithstanding, the modern state has become involved in the regulation and management of religious life to an unprecedented degree, thereby embroiling the state in substantive issues of religious doctrine and practice. Second, despite the commitment to leveling religious differences in the political sphere, modern secular governance transforms – and in some respects intensifies – preexisting interfaith inequalities, allowing them to flourish in society, and hence for religion to striate national identity and public norms. While these features characterize all modern states, in the case of non-Western polities such as Egypt they are often judged to be the signs of their incomplete secularization. My book challenges this diagnosis by asking us to attend to the structural paradoxes that haunt the secular project and how these paradoxes have helped shape the particular form that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims have taken in modern Egypt.

My analysis in this book is indebted to the burgeoning field of secular studies that has, over the past two decades, definitively challenged the conventional account of secularism as the separation between church and state, religion and law, and ecclesiastical and political authority.[1] Scholars from a variety of disciplines have argued [p. 2/3] that modern secularism is far more than this minimalist formulation allows; it entails fundamental shifts in conceptions of self, time, space, ethics, and morality, as well as a reorganization of social, political, and religious life. The secular, in other words, is not the natural bedrock from which religion emerges, nor is it what remains when religion is taken away. Instead, it is itself a historical product with specific epistemological, political, and moral entailments – none of which can be adequately grasped through a nominal account of secularism as the modern state's retreat from religion. Roughly speaking, this emergent scholarship explores two distinct, albeit related, dimensions of the secular: political secularism and secularity. The former pertains to the modern state's relationship to, and regulation of, religion, while the latter refers to the set of

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1 [note 3 in the original] Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*; Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*; Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled*; Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption;* McLeod*, Secularization in Western Europe, 1848–1914;* Modern*, Secularism in Ante- bellum America;* Scott*, The Politics of the Veil;* Taylor*, A Secular Age.*

concepts, norms, sensibilities, and dispositions that characterize secular societies and subjectivities.[2] [. . .]

Following Talal Asad, I conceptualize political secularism as the modern state's sovereign power to reorganize substantive features of religious life, stipulating what religion is or ought to be, assigning its proper content, and disseminating concomitant subjectivities, ethical frameworks, and quotidian practices.[3] Secularism, in this understanding, is not simply the organizing structure for what are regularly taken to be a priori elements of social organization – public, private, political, religious – but a discursive operation of power that generates these very spheres, establishes their boundaries, and suffuses them with content, such that they come to acquire a natural quality for those living within its terms.

The state's sovereign power to define and regulate religious life is neither monolithic nor predetermined. Rather, it is shot through with a *generative* contradiction. [p. 3/4] On the one hand, the liberal state claims to maintain a separation between church and state by relegating religion to the private sphere, that sacrosanct domain of religious belief and individual liberty. On the other hand, modern governmentality involves the state's intervention and regulation of many aspects of socioreligious life, dissolving the distinction between public and private and thereby contravening its first claim. This does not mean that the liberal state's ideological commitment to keep church and state apart is false or specious, or that secularism constrains religion rather than setting it free. Rather, the two propensities internal to secularism – the regulation of religious life and the construction of religion as a space free from state intervention – account for its phenomenal power to regenerate itself: any incursion of the state into religious life often engenders the demand for keeping church and state separate, thereby replenishing secularism's normative premise and promise. Consequently, the question of *how* and *where* to draw the line between religion and politics, between what is deemed public and private, acquires a particular salience in liberal polities and is constantly subject to legal and political contestation.[4]

A reader might object at this point that the model of secular liberal governance I outline above applies to Euro-Atlantic democracies, but not to Middle Eastern states that are best described as "authoritarian" because of their flagrant violation of individ-

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2 [note 4 in the original] For an insightful discussion of how secularity and political secularism are related, see John Lardas Modern's engagement with Michael Warner in Modern, "Confused Parchments, Infinite Socialities."

3 [note 5 in the original] Asad, "Trying to Understand French Secularism."

4 [note 6 in the original] This is evident in the interminable debates over questions such as: Does the French government's ban on Islamic headscarves in public schools violate a Muslim woman's right to religious freedom? Should the US government allow prayer in public schools, or fund religious programs in federal prisons? Can Germany allow Christian and Jewish religious symbols to be displayed publicly while banning Islamic ones, without violating its claim to secular neutrality? What should the proper role of Islam be in the new constitutions of Egypt and Tunisia (following the uprisings in 2011)? Do India's religion-based family laws violate the state's secular laws of general applicability?

ual freedoms and liberties. For some, this distinction means that Middle Eastern societies are inadequately secular, while for others it requires that a typology of secularism be developed so as to distinguish this authoritarian variant from the kind practiced in paradigmatically secular Euro-Atlantic societies.[5] While I understand the importance of attending to historically specific trajectories of secularism, I do believe that this way of casting the difference blinds us to common features of the secular project shared by Middle Eastern and Euro-Atlantic societies. [p. 4/5]

To begin with, liberal and authoritarian states are not mutually exclusive entities. Authoritarian practices exist in paradigmatically liberal states, just as authoritarian regimes are held accountable in national and international courts for their violation of principles of liberal governance. Consider, for example, the series of executive decisions that have authorized torture, covert surveillance of the civilian population, and the suspension of individual liberties in the United States following the events of 9/11 – all of which violate liberal norms of governance.[6] Furthermore, the hard distinction between liberal and authoritarian states does not acknowledge how liberal concepts and institutions, key among them the liberal ideal of legal and political equality for all citizens, have come to define a global norm from which no modern society is exempt. What distinguishes the secular dimension of the liberal project is an elaboration of the concept of equality in relation to religious difference – namely, the claim that all people ought to be treated equally regardless of religious affiliation. As an aspiration and a principle, religious equality signaled a sea change in how interfaith inequality was historically perceived: from a commonly accepted practice in the premodern period to a problem that requires a solution in the modern world. This aspiration is manifest in state reforms as well as the platforms of political parties and social movements; it provides the basis for a range of state laws and institutions that delimit the kind of religious claims one can make publicly. Even in the most repressive states, the variety of social

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5 [note 7 in the original] Among the scholars who make a categorical distinction between democratic and authoritarian secularism is Abdullahi an-Naʿim: See an-Naʿim, *Islam and the Secular State*, esp. chap. 5, "Turkey: Contradictions of Authoritarian Secularism." This distinction now permeates popular political discourse in the Middle East, as evident in the following remark made in 2007 by a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood: "Labeling the Egyptian regime as 'secular' gives it unwarranted credit. In fact, the regime is neither secular nor Islamist. It is not liberal, conservative, or socialist for that matter. The only term that could accurately describe the Egyptian regime is 'authoritarian.' " Ibrahim El-Houdaiby, "Egypt's Two-Faced Regime: Not Secular, Not Islamic, Authoritarian," *World Politics Review*, March 30, 2007, www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/671/egypts-two-faced-regime-not-secular-not-islamic-authoritarian#.

6 [note 8 in the original] One might argue in response that the United States' respect for constitutional protections reigns in aggressive national-security practices in a manner that makes it quite distinct from authoritarian states. However, as Aziz Rana's work shows, the reverence for American constitutionalism emerged historically "in tandem with the national security state, functioning critically to reinforce and legitimate government power rather than simply to place limits on it." Rana, "Constitutionalism and the Foundations of the Security State."

movements fighting for religious equality attests to the global reach of this ideal and its promise.[7] I take this ideal and its attendant social imaginary to be a constitutive feature of political secularism, one that is shared across the Western and non-Western divide. The impossibility of its realization should not blind us to its power, its ongoing promise, and its constitutive contradictions.

[. . . p. 5/6. . .]

The fact that the Egyptian state is obliged to respond to demands for religious equality, that its constitution pays homage to religious freedom, and that its courts entertain legal challenges to its discriminatory policies points to a set of liberal legal and political norms that it shares with Euro-Atlantic states that are regarded as secular exemplars.

A second objection to the characterization of Middle Eastern states as secular centers on the role Islam plays in the articulation of national identity and law, a role that clearly violates the principle of state neutrality toward religion (however formally and minimally conceived). Egypt seems to exemplify this problem. Not only does the [p. 6/7] Egyptian state proclaim an Islamic identity, it also regards the sharīʿa as the principal source of law in the country (enshrined in the country's constitution since 1981). While most of Egypt's laws derive from French legal codes, Islamic concepts continue to permeate court decisions and political debates. [. . .]

All these features of Egyptian political life seem to violate the norm of secular neutrality, a norm that Euro-Atlantic societies are supposed to exemplify. Such an understanding, however, overlooks the centrality of Christianity, increasingly glossed as "Judeo-Christian civilization," to the identity of Euro-Atlantic states, an inheritance that politicians, judges, and public intellectuals widely hail.[8]

[. . .]

While the theological and doctrinal predicates of Western Christianity made secularism [p. 7/8] possible, it is also the only religion capable of transcending its own historicity to spawn a truly universal model of secular governance.[9] This assessment is now widely echoed by contemporary Euro-American intellectuals such as Marcel Gauchet, Charles Taylor, and Slavoj Žižek.[10] The following comment by the much-celebrated secular liberal philosopher Jürgen Habermas captures the spirit of this valuation:

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7 [note 9 in the original] For example, in countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel, where the religious identity of the majority reigns supreme in the nations' laws, the ideal of religious equality continues to motivate a range of social struggles against religious supremacy.

8 [note 15 in the original] David Sorkin notes that the "Judeo-Christian tradition" is a term of post–World War II American coinage that had no equivalent in pre-Holocaust Europe. Sorkin, "Religious Minorities and the Making of Citizenship," 8.

9 [note 17 in the original] On this point, see Hirschkind, "Religious Difference and Democratic Pluralism."

10 [note 18 in the original] See, for example, Gauchet, *Disenchantment of the World*; Taylor, *A Secular Age*; Žižek, *On Belief*. See also my response to Taylor's characterization of secularism as a unique achievement of "Latin Christendom" in Mahmood, "Can Secularism Be Other-Wise?"

> Egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and social solidarity, of an autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, of the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct heir to the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. [. . .] To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of the current challenges of a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.[11]

Remarkably, in one fell swoop the entire history of the development of secular institutions and democratic governance is attributed to the "Judeo-Christian" principles of justice and love. The old standoff between clerical and republican values, as well as the long history of anti-Semitism, is set aside to represent secularism as a unique achievement born of the conjoining of Christianity and Judaism. I cite this example not to highlight its historical inaccuracy but to draw attention to the centrality of Christianity within narratives of European identity. Statements such as these do not simply invoke a historical legacy in the abstract, but occur in a context where the Muslim presence in Europe is increasingly cast as a threat to Europe's civilizational identity. These claims, however, are not simply expressions of European prejudice. They are, I suggest, symptomatic of the fundamental centrality of Christian norms, values, and sensibilities (however Judaic they are made out to be) to European conceptions of what it means to be secular. Prejudice against European Muslims today (and European and non-European Jews of the past) is constitutive of, and emanates from, this self-understanding of Europe as essentially Christian and simultaneously secular in its cultural and political ethos. [. . .]

Far more importantly, for my purposes, the purported incommensurability of non-Western and Western secularism (the former deficient, the latter accomplished) [p. 8/9] fails to grasp how secularity structures the practice of religion in polities like Egypt. It overlooks the fundamental ways in which key aspects of the secular episteme cut across the Western and non-Western divide, such as the concept of empty homogenous time as a precondition for the politics of the nation-state.[12] It also fails to appreciate the shared history of the institutionalization of the modern state, whose political rationality is predicated upon the private-public distinction that, in turn, is foundational to the promise of civil and political equality. [. . .] In countries as diverse as Egypt, India, and Israel, this manifests in the exaggerated importance accorded to family law as the exemplary site for the preservation and reproduction of religious identity. Similarly, the distinction between religious *practice* (public) and religious *belief* (private), so consequential to European and Egyptian legal traditions, continues to justify state sanctions against minority religious symbols and practices in the public sphere. [. . .] We cannot make any of these related forms of secularity legible if we remain stubbornly

11 [note 19 in the original] Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, 150–51, emphasis added.
12 [note 20 in the original] For a discussion of the secular temporality that structures the historicity of the nation-state, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; and Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Pasts."

entrapped within a logic of essential, often civilizationally weighted differences that keep the boundaries of the West and the non-West intact and stable.

These shared modalities of being secular notwithstanding, it is nonetheless important to attend to the historically specific forms of life into which secular concepts and institutions were inserted in the Middle East. In Egypt, for example, the political rationality of the modern state had to adjust to the legacy of Islamic political rule, which did not simply restrain the modern state's emancipatory project, but also inflected the way that project came to be interpreted and enacted. The fact that national sovereignty itself was predicated upon being able to claim a unique culture, religion, and language further entrenched the place of Islam in the making of Middle Eastern polities. As a result, one might say that premodern Islamic concepts of governance in a place like Egypt have rearticulated and transmogrified the principles, concepts, and institutions of political secularism, thereby giving them a specific form. [p. 9/10]

How do we render such historical differences conceptually visible, while at the same time being attentive to the globally shared features of secularism? One strategy within postcolonial scholarship has been to argue for multiple secularisms, dislodging a Eurocentric account by showing other ways of being secular – one Protestant, another Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist, each offering a unique trajectory of secularism. This position recalls the debates in the 1990s waged under the rubric of "multiple modernities," which was also meant to challenge Eurocentric accounts of capitalist modernity by drawing attention to the heterogeneous, local, and regional developments in the non-West.[13] Despite its popularity in the academy, a number of trenchant critics argued at the time that something important was lost in this purportedly pluralist account. Timothy Mitchell, for example, pointed out that "the language of alternative modernities" implied "an almost infinite play of possibilities, with no rigorous sense of what, if anything, gives imperial modernity its phenomenal power of replication and expansion."[14] He also suggested that the vocabulary of alternatives continued to imply "an underlying and fundamentally singular modernity," adapted to different cultural contexts, leaving undisturbed the epistemological hegemony of European forms of life and historical teleology.[15]

The call for "multiple secularisms" suffers from similar problems in that it constructs the history of the Middle East either as a deviation from Western models of secularism or as a local and regional story that adds little to its conceptual formulation. I treat secularism neither as a single formation that homogenously transforms all his-

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13 [note 21 in the original] Alfred Stepan, a strong proponent of the "multiple secularisms" approach, explicitly draws upon the "multiple modernities" argument of the 1990s. See Stepan, "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes." The notion of "multiple secularisms" is also espoused by a number of contributors to two edited volumes on the topic: Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and Van-Antwerpen, *Rethinking Secularism*; and Jakobsen and Pelligrini, *Secularisms.*

14 [note 22 in the original] Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity*, xii.

15 [note 23 in the original] Ibid.

tories nor as a plurality expressed in local cultural forms. Rather, I suggest that secularism entails a form of national-political structuration organized around the problem of religious difference, a problem whose resolution takes strikingly similar forms across geographic contexts. In light of this, the critical issue is not so much to pluralize secularism as to conceptualize its variations in relation to a universalizing project, which, in the postcolonial context, also involves the ongoing subjugation of non-Western societies to various forms of Western domination.

This is no doubt a comparative enterprise, one that entails the analysis of how concepts travel across time and space in societies that are situated differently in a global matrix of power relations. Secularization in the postcolony is entwined with the history of power inequalities between the West and non-West, not least because [p. 10/11] many of its signature concepts, institutions, and practices were introduced through (direct or indirect) colonial rule. Their ongoing exercise in the postcolonial period, as I hope to show in this book, continues to be beholden to this history of differential power. As Asad reminds us, the issue is not the Western or non-Western origins of these concepts but "the forms of life that articulate them, the powers they release or disable."[16] The question that follows therefore is how these secular concepts have transformed the self-understanding of people of the Middle East, opening certain avenues of action while foreclosing others.[17]

[. . .]

Briefly put, my argument is that even though religious minorities occupy a structurally precarious position in all modern nation-states, the particular shape this inequality takes – its modes of organization and articulation – is historically specific. Consequently, the means by which religious minorities wage a struggle against this inequality, as well as the paradoxes and contradictions such struggles generate, vary according to context (Egypt, France, Syria).

[. . . p. 11–20. . .]

Secular Objections

At this point, I would like to briefly address some common objections that readers may raise against my analysis of secularism. One might argue that I have painted too bleak a picture of secularism, in which it is nothing more than the exercise of state and (neo) colonial power, and that I have ignored its more promising and liberatory dimensions: the protection it extends to individuals and religious minorities to hold and practice their religious beliefs freely without state or social coercion; or its guarantee that a citizen's religious affiliation is inconsequential to her civil and political status in the eyes of the law; or that it allows believers and nonbelievers to speak their mind without

16 [note 24 in the original] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 17.

17 [note 25 in the original] For an illuminating discussion of this point, see ibid., 212–18

fear of state or social discrimination. These are not negligible freedoms, as anyone who has been harassed for his or her religious (or nonreligious) beliefs knows full well. Furthermore, the history of religious persecution has taught us to be wary of fusing the identity of the state too closely with institutions of ecclesiastical power. If the Christian inquisition is an early example, then more recent ones from Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iran should surely make us cautious about abandoning the principle of state neutrality toward religion.

While I appreciate the protections and freedoms that secularism might extend to religious dissenters and nonbelievers, I would also like to point out that political secularism is not *merely* the principle of state neutrality or the separation of church and [p. 20/21] state. It also entails the reordering and remaking of religious life and interconfessional relations in accord with specific norms, themselves foreign to the life of the religions and peoples it organizes. This dimension of political secularism – shot through as it is with paradoxes and instabilities – needs to be understood for the life worlds it creates, the forms of exclusion and violence it entails, the kinds of hierarchies it generates, and those it seeks to undermine. The two dimensions of political secularism – its regulatory impulse and its promise of freedom – are thoroughly intertwined, each necessary to the enactment of the other. A scholarly inquiry into this dual character, its limits, contradictions, and violence, should not be mistaken as a denunciation of secularism or as a call for its demise. Secularism is not something that can be done away with any more than modernity can be. It is an ineluctable aspect of our present condition, as both political imagination and epistemological limit. To critique a particular normative regime is not to reject or condemn it; rather, by analyzing its regulatory and productive dimensions, one only deprives it of innocence and neutrality so as to craft, perhaps, a different future.

[. . .] It seems to me that to talk about secularism in today's world is to engage in what Quentin Skinner once called "evaluative-descriptive" speech acts, wherein to describe a political system is also to comment it by treating the normative claims of a given system as the grounds for assessing its superiority.[18] It is perhaps for this reason that when I have questioned the secular state's promise to deliver religious equality, I have been at times accused of infidelity to the principle itself, as if to interrogate secularism's promise is to reject the ideal. But the secularist hope that a truly secularized state *will* deliver us from religious conflict and prejudice is premised on a fundamental misunderstanding of what exactly the state is (or can be) neutral toward. As Marx argued, the secular liberal state does not simply *depoliticize* religion; it also embeds it within the social life of the polity by relegating it to the private sphere and civil society. [. . . p. 21/22]

Many critics of Egypt's discriminatory policies toward religious minorities argue that if the state were to be truly secularized – that is, if it became neutral in regard to its

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18 [note 42 in the original] Skinner, "Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics." See David Scott's discussion of this point in relation to liberal democracy, "Norms of Self-Determination."

Islamic identity as well as those it governs – then it would eliminate interreligious conflict. While there is no doubt that this would improve the life of Egypt's religious minorities, it ignores the fact that the modern secular state is not simply a neutral arbiter of religious differences; it also produces and creates them. To think through *this* problem, one has to begin by recognizing the contradictions and inequalities that political secularism itself generates and the religious presumptions it embeds in the legal and political life of the nation. My suggestion is not that religious conflict is an inevitable or solely a product of secularism. But insomuch as secularism is one of the enabling conditions of religious conflict today, it behooves us to understand its paradoxical operations so as to mitigate its discriminatory effects.

It may be obvious to readers of the debate on secularism that this text eschews any use of the term *postsecular*, which has become fashionable these days in certain academic circles. This eschewal registers my basic disagreement with the assumptions this term entails. At the most fundamental level, the term *postsecular* expresses a sense of surprise that, despite the prediction that religion would wither away in modern society, it continues to be important to political and social life. Thus, in Jürgen Habermas's influential formulation of the term, despite "secularistic certainty that religion will disappear world-wide in the course of modernization," it continues to maintain "public influence and relevance."[19] This understanding, in its temporal accent on the *post-*, suggests that there is something unexpected and novel about the persistence of religion in the present. Yet, as much of the critical scholarship on the topic suggests, religion has been a constitutive feature of secularism throughout its modern history. There is nothing new about the copresence of the religious and the secular.

Perhaps most importantly, the term *postsecular* in its prosaic observation that religion is part of the secular present implicitly subscribes to a conventional theory of secularization that Charles Taylor aptly calls a "subtraction theory," wherein the secular is assumed to be that which remains after religion is taken away. The idea that secularism is devoid of religion is common among its champions and detractors alike. Christian fundamentalists and Islamists, for example, oppose secularism for undermining the place of religion in public life, and secularists champion it as an antidote to the rise of religious politics. Both subscribe to the same dichotomous view of religion and secularity, and hence fail to take stock of their mutual imbrication and interdependence. This anemic understanding of secularism (as the absence of religion) does not account for its substantive shape and form, the political and social [p. 22/23] arrangements it engenders, and the ethical/moral commitments it normalizes. In this important sense, secularism is not simply another term for modernity; it is indexical of those social phenomena, institutions, and practices in which the distinction between the religious and the secular is recurrently salient and often contested.

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19 [note 43 in the original] Habermas, "Notes on a Post-Secular Society."

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4 Prognosis and Projection

Johannes Duschka, Christoph Kleine, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Florian Zemmin

Introduction

This section comprises texts that, in various ways, raise questions about current and future developments. In view of the perceived failure of secularisation theories' prognoses, it is commonly asserted that many societies in the Global North are now transitioning into a post-secular phase. Initially, the term 'postsecular' emerged in response to the acknowledgment that religions remained vibrant and influential throughout the world, despite the initial expectation that advancing modernisation would be accompanied by comprehensive secularisation. In this sense, 'postsecular' serves as a proxy for the resurgence of religious beliefs and practices, sometimes referred to as the 'return of the gods.' In postsocialist societies, it may signal the end of an era of secularism being officially promoted as the norm.

However, the secularisation thesis cannot simply be replaced by the assertion of a general re-enchantment of the world. On the structural level, this concerns the assessment and prognosis of functional differentiation in global modernity. On the level of actors, it is evident that religious individuals exist; however, there is also a significant proportion of people who perceive themselves as secular, and strongly reject any intrusion of religious authorities into their lives. Thus, modern societies face the constant challenge of finding a modus vivendi that allows both religious and secular individuals to live in accordance with their respective convictions and values, while safeguarding individual freedom, and mitigating social conflicts.

Ironically, according to prevailing accounts, the differentiation of religious and secular institutions, activities, ideas, symbols, and norms, is supposed to fulfil this very function – namely, to ensure the orderly and conflict-free coexistence between various confessions, and between religious and nonreligious individuals. However, policies that we would call 'secularist,' aimed at normatively enforcing such differentiation as a principle of social order, are often perceived by religious individuals as a one-sided preference for the secular. Consequently, William Conolly (text no. 65) suggests that the

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traditional secular modus vivendi may be coming to an end. Thus, he proposes modifications to secular practices, to accommodate a more diverse range of both religious and nonreligious perspectives in public life. An additional unresolved challenge revolves around the foundation of common values and norms that are not derived from particular religions. Conolly explicitly advocates a postsecular ethics, recognising that secularism may not always be adequate in preventing conflicts in the context of increasingly pluralistic societies.

It must be noted here that the texts collected in this volume often use the terms 'secularism,' 'secularity,' and 'the secular' ambiguously, or even interchangeably, and it is often not entirely clear what exactly is being referred to with the term 'secularism': Is it ethics or ideology, or does it simply refer to religion-state arrangements? It is because of these implications that we have opted to use the concept of *secularity* in our own research, even if it is clear that the term 'secularity,' too, cannot completely avoid normativity. Normativity is *necessarily* inherent in the ideas, practices, and regulations of secular-religious boundary demarcations. When the term 'secularism' is used, however, it is often insinuated that this always goes along with a strong, if not authoritarian, ideological commitment to a strict separation of religion from politics, and exclusion of religion from the public sphere. Yet, this is not necessarily the case. Rather, we would consider this strict variant a specific type of religious-secular boundary demarcation, which cannot be generalised to all variants of secularity.

If ('Western') secularism – however understood concretely – is indissolubly linked to ('Western') modernity, this raises the question of what happens when societies enter what has been labelled a *postmodern* phase. Is it not natural to assume that the transition from modernity to postmodernity must be accompanied by a transition from a secular to a postsecular condition? This is what Ingolf Dalferth (text no. 70) proposes. Indeed, he sees the secular state as a transitional formation. In Western Europe, he claims, religious states were replaced by tolerant states, which in turn have been replaced by secular states. Religious states prescribe a specific religion; tolerant states allow various religions; secular states are neutral and accept citizens' freedom to practise any religion – or none at all. Postsecular societies, by contrast, emerge when the state no longer identifies as secular, and refrains from explicitly taking any stance on religious matters.

Putting aside for the moment the question of the global applicability of concepts of the 'postsecular,' it is questionable how stable the supposed indifference towards secularism really is even in 'Western' societies. The heated debates in many Western European societies about religious symbols and actions in the public sphere (especially those of religious minorities and migrants) regularly provoke strong reactions from the majority society, and affirmations of the secular character of the state from politicians. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that predictions about a supposed postsecular future will eventually suffer the same fate as the prognoses of the classical secularisation thesis. It remains to be seen whether we are actually entering a postsecular age, or only experiencing either a temporary weakening of secularity as an organising principle of (post)

modern societies, or just an increasing contestation of certain forms of political secularism.

It is reasonable to surmise that the dominant attitude of the twenty-first century may not turn out to be mere indifference to the religious and the secular. Religion evidently continues to have a great – perhaps even growing – influence on politics and culture in many countries. This raises the question of whether some imaginaries of a postsecular society could be a viable option, or even a necessity, for maintaining civil social relations in the context of growing cultural and religious pluralism, and for establishing and maintaining the balance between common citizenship and cultural difference.

This normative question has been addressed particularly prominently by Jürgen Habermas (text no. 69). In doing so, he takes a stance on the often controversial question of whether secularism is a suitable means of securing peaceful coexistence in multicultural and multi-religious societies. Critically observing the debate between radical multiculturalism and militant secularism, he proposes a postsecular arrangement that ensures both the protection of collective identities *and* the inclusion of minorities in the political framework. In Habermas' vision of a postsecular society, both secular and religious groups must reach across the divide. Religious citizens and communities need to understand and integrate secular principles into their own faith, and be ready to adapt their demands to the logic of the political arena. On the secular side, it must be recognised that the political public sphere remains open to religious input, without becoming a battleground for competing religious worldviews. While the state should maintain its neutrality towards and distance from the internal disputes of religious communities, religious expression should be allowed in the political public sphere, as long as formal decision-making processes remain secular.

In cultural contexts in which the application of the concept of 'secularity' seems inherently problematic, due to the lack of church-state configurations similar to those in Latin Christendom, any concept of 'postsecularity' faces the same problems. Particular difficulties arise where ethnic and religious identity are closely linked for historical reasons, such as in Israel (Jewishness as opposed to Judaism). If secular is to mean non-Jewish, then identity problems arise for a nation that sees itself as Jewish without propagating a religious way of life or demanding adherence to religious norms. In his contribution, Ben-Porat (text no. 66) argues that the religious-secular dichotomy is incapable of adequately capturing the situation in Israel and the complexity of Jewish identity. Likewise, Zionism's normative vision of a secular Judaism – Herzl's 'State of the Jews' as a secular state with Jewish identity – must be abandoned, to enable new concepts of citizenship for Israel. However, Ben-Porat also argues that, in Israel, the institutionalised arrangement of religion and state fosters exclusion and discrimination, and fuels a nationalist ethos – contrary to principles of pluralism and pluralisation. To foster true pluralism, it would be necessary to separate religion from state affairs, allowing an equal voice for non-Jews and a diversity of Jewish practices; it would also be necessary to extend generosity beyond nationalist limitations. Notwithstanding, Ben-Porat is in

agreement with the prevailing view that secularity, as a binary distinction between the religious and the secular, is a product of the historical development of those societies that were dominated by Latin Christendom.

In a similar vein, Kyrlezhev (text no. 67) argues in his reflections on *The Postsecular Age* that secularist principles are inextricably connected to 'Western' history, and that it is thus inappropriate to apply them in areas dominated by Orthodox Christianity. From this perspective, secularity is considered to be inseparably linked to the formation of modern nation-states, in the aftermath of the confessional wars in Europe; it appears to be too closely linked to the specifically Western European path to modernity to be applied to other contexts. Kyrlezhev calls for Christian Orthodox dominance, but also cautions against abusing this dominance to silence other religious voices.

Aamir R. Mufti (text no. 72) is critical of such accounts, and questions the "emergent Orthodoxy" of postsecular theorisation. In his view, "postsecularism typically maps the secular-religious antagonisms of the history of the West onto postcolonial spaces in general and Muslim societies and communities in particular." Mufti is particularly critical of attempts to contrast secular modernity with notions of an unalienated, authentic religious tradition, particularly with regard to Islam. Instead, he calls for a dialectical understanding of contemporary developments, by viewing the Islamic revival not as a return to religion, but "rather its historical transformation under the conditions of late, postcolonial capitalism."

The American scholar of Islam Sherman Jackson's argument for an "Islamic secular" (text no. 73) is in step with others who have deemed 'Western' conceptions of the secular to be inapplicable to Islam. However, Jackson also reveals the lasting grip of secularism, for which he formulates a decidedly Islamic variant. To Jackson, the Islamic secular is preferable and superior, since it is not a rival or adversary to religion, but rather a differentiated domain that is not governed solely by religious law (shariʿa), whilst still being part of religion more broadly. The Islamic secular may thus enable Muslims to construct a plausible structure for Islam in the modern world, without compromising their religious beliefs. While the argument for the need to retain religion under the conditions of modern society is not novel, doing so by explicitly terminologically coining an "Islamic secular" certainly is, highlighting the firm establishment of secularity.

Beyond normative questions about the possibilities and advantages of a postsecular society, Gorski and Altınordu (text no. 68) suggest that the – often deadlocked – discussion about secularisation should use concepts that are more analytically specific, and less politically charged, to move the debate forward. They contend that secularisation should be treated as an analytical variable, switching from making predictions about the future of religion, to understanding the relationship between secularism and democracy, and exploring the different forms of secularism.

This approach is shared by Nilüfer Göle (text no. 71). She highlights the plurality of secularisms found in different national and cultural contexts, and emphasises the need to decouple secularism from the 'Western' experience. In fact, as Göle points out, it is

the interaction between different cultures in the public sphere that has led to current debates about religious visibility in the supposedly secular states of the Global North. Thus, instead of institutional and legal issues, everyday practice and the problem of using public space is becoming increasingly crucial for understanding configurations of secularity.

In all their diversity, the texts reprinted here make it clear that predictions about the fate of secularism and the emergence of postsecularity are as heterogenous as the entire academic debate on *global secularity* captured in this volume. However, a recurring theme – echoing the intention of the *multiple secularities* approach – is the call for a more nuanced analysis of different ways of distinguishing between the religious and the secular in various cultural contexts. *Secularity* as a *heuristic concept* is well suited to capturing normative secularist and postsecularist claims as well as analytical arguments for the emergence of a postsecular condition, inasmuch as these continue to conceptually draw on a distinction between religion and other social spheres.

65 William E. Connolly: *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (1999)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

William Eugene Connolly (b. 1938) is an American political scientist at Johns Hopkins University. He received his BA from the University of Michigan at Flint, and his PhD from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He held professorships at Ohio University, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Johns Hopkins University. At the latter of these, he was the Department Chair in Political Science until 2003, and remains the Krieger-Eisenhower Professor until today. For his book *The Terms of Political Discourse*, he received the Benjamin Evans Lippincott Award, in 1999.

The main focus of Connolly's work is the theory of pluralism, which he developed from a theory of order into a theory of democratic contestation and engagement. Connolly has also dealt with the issue of secularism, which he sees not only as the division between public and private realms that allows religious diversity to flourish, but, as he argues, as a carrier of exclusions, too. He thereby relates to the work of Talal Asad (text no. 56), and his critique of the conceptual secular-religious divide which, as he argues, bears the history and heritage of Christianity. Therefore, he questions the alleged value-neutrality of liberal secularists, for failing to acknowledge their own metaphysical investments. Against that background, he argues in favour of a post-secularist politics that acknowledges the ubiquity of faith, in order to allow for a radical pluralism. The aim that he proposes would then be "to cultivate a public ethos of *engagement* in which a wider variety of perspectives than heretofore acknowledged inform and restrain one another." This is a stronger formulation than that we find in Jürgen Habermas' lecture from 2001, which argues in favour of acknowledging religious voices in the public sphere (see also Habermas, text no. 69).

Other works by Connolly focus on issues of capitalism, inequality, and the intersections between capitalism and climate change. In 2017, Connolly received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the International Studies Association.

In the selected text, which is written in the style of a confession, he develops the notion of post-secularity, thereby wondering if "the time of the secular modus vivendi is drawing to a close." Other scholars, like Guy Ben-Porat (text no. 66) or Aamir Mufti (text no. 72), who are also presented in this volume, have referred both positively and critically to the framework and claims that were set up by Connolly.

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Introduction: Refashioning the Secular

Visceral Aptitudes and Secular Doctrine

[. . .] The historical modus vivendi of secularism, while seeking to chasten religious dogmatism, embodies unacknowledged elements of immodesty in itself. The very intensity of the struggle it wages against religious intolerance may induce blind spots with respect to itself. I also wonder whether the time of the secular modus vivendi is drawing to a close. We may need to fashion modifications in secular practices today, modifications that both honor debts to it and support more religious and nonreligious variety in public life than many traditional secularists and monotheists tend to appreciate.

This is a risky track to pursue. Many believe that the thin blue line of secularism, however frayed and tattered it has become, is still necessary to contain religious enthusiasm and dogmatism. While I harbor a few such anxieties myself, the strains of dogmatism in secularism may make a contribution to the effects secularists decry. People say that Communism kept virulent nationalisms alive in Eastern Europe by suppressing public engagement with them. Maybe secularism in democratic capitalist states has muffled the public ventilation of diverse religious and irreligious perspectives needed to adjust public life to the multidimensional pluralism of today. Or perhaps it is wise to remain agnostic about the past ambiguities of secularism while focusing upon the confining effects of that legacy on the present. There is little doubt that some compromise formation was needed with the breakup of the Catholic monopoly over religious belief in Christendom, and that the [p. 4/5] secular formation contained admirable features. But there is also a case to be made in favor of its reexamination under new conditions of being.

I am aware that several doctrines walk under the large umbrella of secularism, even if you limit yourself – as I do because of limitations in my grasp of the world – to Western conceptions of the secular. But there is also a discernible hierarchy among them. The shape of that hierarchy may be governed by a general secular wish to provide an authoritative and self-sufficient public space equipped to regulate and limit “religious” disputes in public life. The pursuit of a modified ideal of public life, then, may strengthen the hand of minority perspectives already circulating within secularism. Refashioning secularism might help to temper or disperse religious intolerance while

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honoring the desire of a variety of believers and nonbelievers to represent their faiths in public life. It might, thereby, help to render public life more pluralistic in shape and, particularly, more responsive to what I call the politics of becoming. These are big "ifs" and "maybes," but it seems timely to give them a hearing.

Several variants of secularism kill two birds with one stone: as they try to seal public life from religious doctrines they also cast out a set of nontheistic orientations to reverence, ethics, and public life that deserve to be heard. These two effects follow from the secular conceit to provide a single, authoritative basis of public reason and/or public ethics that governs all reasonable citizens regardless of "personal" or "private" faith. To invoke that principle against religious enthusiasts, secularists are also pressed to be pugnacious against asecular, nontheistic perspectives that call these very assumptions and prerogatives into question. That's one reason it rolls off the tongue rather easily to describe John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Amy Guttmann, and Hans Blumenberg as secularists and to think of Alasdair Macintyre, Paul Ricoeur, and Charles Taylor as defenders of a larger role for theological concern in public life, while a diverse set of nontheistic thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Paul Patton, Thomas Dumm, Romand Coles, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Wendy Brown, and Michael Shapiro do not fit comfortably on either side of that unstable line between secular and sacred orientations to public life. For to adhere to a separation of church and state is not automatically to concur in those conceptions of public life most widely bound up with secularism. To put the point briefly, the secular wish to *contain* religious and irreligious passions within private life helps to engender the immodest conceptions of public life peddled by so many secularists. The need today is to cultivate a public ethos of *engagement* in which a wider variety of perspectives than heretofore acknowledged inform and restrain one another. [p. 5/6]

Today reflective engagement is needed among a variety of religions and irreligions to support a more vibrant public pluralism. Bound up with these judgments is the conviction that secular models of thinking, discourse, and ethics are too constipated to sustain the diversity they seek to admire, while several theocratic models that do engage the density of culture do so in ways that are too highly centered. The division of labor that fell out of that historic compromise within predominantly Christian states may indeed have provided fragile protection against sectarian conflict and intolerance for a few centuries. But it also spawned practices of public life too dogmatic and terse to sustain the creative tension needed between democratic governance and critical responsiveness to the politics of becoming. And the destructive orientations it supported to non-Christian countries left a lot to be desired too. Limitations in the early organization of secularism leave fingerprints all over contemporary life. And yet, ironically, the precarious, multidimensional pluralization of life occurring before our eyes may create new conditions of possibility (I do not say probability) to renegotiate the old modus vivendi of secularism.

Is it, again, possible to refashion secularism as a model of thinking, discourse, and public life without lapsing into the "opposite" view that "Christianity" or "the

Judeo-Christian tradition" must set the authoritative matrix of public life? Not if you think the world comes predesigned with these two options alone. Or even if your goal is to elevate the particular faith to which you are attached into the *new* center of gravity around which secularism and a couple of monotheisms rotate. Such a game plan recapitulates the historic objectives of secularism and Christianity, respectively. There is another way. *If* the objective is to project your own perspective into the fray while also decentering the political imagination of the ensconced contestants so that each becomes an honored participant in a pluralistic culture rather than the authoritative embodiment of it, *then* the positive possibilities expand. Now partisans of several types might negotiate a public ethos of engagement drawn from several moral sources. Here no constituency would be allowed to represent authoritatively the single source from which all others must draw in public life, even as each continued to articulate the strengths of the source it honors. For, again, secular and religious struggles to occupy the authoritative center help to manufacture those reciprocal recipes of dogmatism discernible in and around us.

Secularism is represented by some of its religious detractors to be a set of procedures that eventually drives virtue, morality, and faith out of culture. What if that charge is onto something, even in its false reduction of secularism to proceduralism, while the authoritative conceptions of virtue, moral[p. 6/7]ity, and faith prominent antisecularists often endorse are too stingy, exclusionary, and self-sanctifying? If that were so, the last thing needed would be the introduction of another perspective asserting its obligation to occupy the authoritative center. We need, rather, to renegotiate relations between interdependent partisans in a world in which no constituency's claim to *embody* the authoritative source of public reason is sanctified.

Sure, a few formalists will scream from the rooftops that any proposal to diversify the center constitutes – formally, as it were – a new center. But since they often advance such critiques on the way to supporting an old, narrow center, they reveal an ability to distinguish between a network of constituency relations modulated by a general ethos of generosity and forbearance drawn from multiple sources and a narrow practice of public life governed by one conception of reason or morality. The success of the formalist ruse, in this instance, depends upon the critic's and the target's both forgetting momentarily the care for the plurovocity of being that inspired the latter to support pluralization of the center in the first place. If the formalist recognizes no source of morality beyond the dictates of argument, it is all too easy to override a different *type* of element in the ethic of cultivation endorsed by the other. But when that discordant element is folded back into the engagement, the power of the formalist critique fades.

Such a result does not mean that either formalists or secularists must now endorse care for the plurovocity of being as a key element in their ethic – for one version of formalism may be set in a contestable metaphysic that promises the possibility of an intrinsic community while another is lodged in one that projects automatic harmonization between self-interested parties abiding by general principles of rationality in a market society. It means only that both formalists and secularists are now placed under ethical

pressure to negotiate in good faith with those inspired by alternative faiths, doing so at least until they establish the *positive capacity* to fix their own moral practice as necessary and universal. Every such attempt to date has fallen far short of the mark.

There are several ruses of formalism. Those adopted by one type of secularist (for many secularists are not formalists) are prefigured in Augustine's critiques of heretics and pagans. But the faith that inspired Augustine's tactics against the heretics of his day was lifted to the forefront of his presentations, while contemporary formalists generally keep their own faith in what Gilles Deleuze calls "the good nature of thought" shrouded. Nonetheless, I have yet to meet a formalist who is simply one. There is always a sensibility moving below and within the argument, propelling the intensity with which a critique is advanced and the insistence through which the [p. 7/8] terms of the other are contracted.[1] Maybe it is timely, then, to place the question of ethical sensibility more actively onto the agenda of political reflection, for in matters such as these variations in sensibility make much of the difference. There may be expansive modes of persuasion, convincing, and inspiration that can alter the sensibility in which an argument is set and open up new lines of communication among partisans. At least the explorations to follow of the visceral register of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, an ethic of cultivation, relational arts of the self, freelancing and micropolitics, and a generous ethos of public engagement pursue these possibilities.

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1 [note 6 in the original] It is pertinent here to call attention to a book by Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). She shows how various performances of the selfperformative contradiction depend upon a reworking of key terms until they have moved away from several meanings invested in their initial presentation and toward a tight network of definitions that capture the unwary in circles. It is a very thoughtful and timely study. I would add that there are times when thought gets caught in paradox. The question then is the mood or temper with which you approach that effect and what you think: it may indicate. [. . .]

66 Guy Ben-Porat: *A State of Holiness: Rethinking Israeli Secularism* (2000)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Guy Ben-Porat (b. 1967) is a professor of political science in the Department of Politics and Government at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He was born in Israel, and completed his BA in political science and psychology at Tel-Aviv University. In 1996, he began his studies at Johns Hopkins University, where he did his PhD in political science, on the impact of globalization on peace processes in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. He was especially interested in the role of business communities in peace processes. The book was awarded the Czempiel Prize of the Frankfurt Institute for Peace. Since 2001, Ben-Porat has held a professorship at Ben-Gurion University.

After his PhD, Ben-Porat investigated issues of religion and state, as well as secularization in Israel, focusing on the question of how economic and demographic changes influence religious and secular identity, practices, and values. For this, he was awarded the best book award prize of the Association for Israel Studies and Israeli Political Science Association. Ben-Porat's later research has been on minority policy, and – more recently – on new religious movements in Israel.

In the text presented below, Ben-Porat criticises the assumption of a clear secular-religious divide in Israeli society and politics, arguing that even secular Zionists share certain notions of the holiness of the land and the religious connotations of Jewishness with their religious counterpart, leading to non-Jews being denied certain basic rights. This, he argues, is made invisible by the idea of secularists and orthodox religious groups opposing one another. He refers to Connolly's notion of post-secular ethics (see text no. 65), and considers this apt for Israeli society, whereas he sees the secular ethos in Israel as being enclosed within the parameters of a national identity. However, in an interesting move, he deviates from others who refer to the notion of post-secularity, by arguing that a clear separation of "state and church," which is not realized in Israel, would be the precondition for a post-secular ethics in the country.

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> I am proud to be a Jew but sorry that I am not religious. – *Ariel Sharon*
> We are bound together only by the faith of our fathers. – *Theodor Herzl*

It is common to describe Israel as a society divided between (among other fault lines) the religious and the secular, which are in a struggle over the control of the public and the political sphere.[1] The dominance of (Jewish) religion in both spheres is considered to be either the result of pragmatic political compromises or, in a more negative view, of ultrareligious groups taking advantage of their ability to tip the scale of (or pejoratively, blackmail) the political system. Although there is some truth in the negative view, in this article I would like to suggest that there is more to the relationship between religion and state than the above description suggests. Religion serves an indispensable role in consolidating and demarcating territorial boundaries and legitimating the exclusionary practices of the nation-state within the ostensible secular national system as well. When operating within the framework of a national discourse, secularism often relies on religious foundations; it has, therefore, a far more complex relationship with religion than most secularists would be willing to admit – one that often undermines an ethos of equality and freedom.

A recent survey study of religious beliefs and behavior of Israeli Jews produced some startling information, alluding to the complexity of the debate. The press release that summarized the results and was quoted on all of Israel's media channels stated: [p. 223/224]

> The rhetoric of secular and religious polarization used to characterize Israeli society is highly misleading. It is truer to say that Israeli society has a strong traditional bent, with a continuum from the "strictly observant" to the "non-observant," rather than a great divide between a religious minority and a secular majority. Israeli Jews are strongly committed to the continuing Jewish char-

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1 [note 1 in the original] The Sharon epigraph is from *Maariv,* March 10, 1986; quoted in Charles Liebman, "Religion and Democracy in Israel," in Deshen, Liebman, and Shokeid, eds., *Israeli Judaism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995).

acter of their society, even while they are selective in the forms of their observance. They believe that public life should respect tradition, but they are critical of the 'status quo' governing State and Religion.[2]

A reading of the survey findings, I suggest, reveals not only the insufficiency of the religious/secular dichotomous divide, as the authors note, but also that existing tensions disguise the strong *affinities* between the religious and the secular national discourse. Recognizing this, I suggest, reveals the more general problems of a secular ethos enclosed within the parameters of a national identity. In other words, since an overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews, including those who do not define themselves "religious," and even many who explicitly regard themselves secular, affirm the definition of the state as "Jewish," religion's central position is granted. This adherence to the Jewish boundaries of the nation-state, and the denial of its limitations and injuries, is indicative of the moral and intellectual limits of secularism itself.

In this article, largely drawing on William Connolly's postsecular ethos and critique,[3] I suggest that secularism in Israel falls short of the declared ambitions of its proponents, that even its theoretical articulation is problematic, and, consequently, that it needs to be refashioned in order to face new (and old) challenges of identity and difference. I begin with a discussion of the secular and postsecular to set the theoretical parameters of my work and will then offer the following arguments:

1. That much as with the role of religion in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (and Connolly's reading of it) Judaism was essential for drawing the boundaries of identity and for the legitimation of claims over territory in the process of Israeli nation building and state building.
2. That this established an ambivalent relationship between Jewish secular nationalism (i.e., Zionism) and Judaism as religion. On the one hand, nationalism negated religion, but on the other hand, nationalism was dependent upon Jewish religious symbols and Jewish collective identity.
3. That secular Zionism established its own homogenizing code of values, norms, and symbols, and its own limits and [p. 224/225] intolerance toward the "otherness" it either attempted to assimilate or excluded.
4. That secularists generally chose to blame religious orthodoxy for the unseparation of church and state and avoid the real issues, touching upon their own status and identity, that a real separation entails.

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2 [note 2 in the original] Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinson, and Elihu Katz, "Beliefs, Observances, and Social Interaction among Israeli Jews-the Guttman Institute Report," in Liebman and Katz, eds., *The Jewishness of Israelis: Responses to the Guttman Report* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997).

3 [note 3 in the original] William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

5. That unwilling to challenge the Jewish definition of the state, secularists ignore the limits of their conceptions of pluralism, democracy, and freedom in regard to non-Jews.
6. That the secularist desire to maintain the Jewish form of the state without its "metaphysical" content (i.e., religion), while still relying on religious themes to unify the nation and determine the state's boundaries, renders it unable to formulate an effective moral and intellectual response to counter religious-nationalist claims to be a renewed and authentic form of Zionism.

I will argue, therefore, that despite its apparent agenda, the secular-liberal ethos in Israel is radically limited in its capacity for tolerance, its ability to acknowledge a spectrum of religious attitudes, and its ability to create a pluralist political society. A postsecular ethic might offer fresh reflections on the meaning and requirements of freedom and democracy, open new public spaces and practices of politicization, and create an open discourse of negotiation rather than a general grammar of civil society. Transcending the secular/religious dichotomy in Israel might thus be a first step toward creating new and generous ideas of citizenship, participation, democracy, and boundaries.

Secular, Postsecular, and Zionism

A strange thing happened to Zionism, a self-declared secular rebellion against the confinement of Jewish religion, on its way to establishing a nation and a state. In the process of state building and nation building, Zionism reestablished a normative and public standing of Jewish identity, in a secular form, and in so doing established its own set of hierarchies and exclusions rather than the open and tolerant society envisioned by some of its thinkers.

Difficulties to ground a firm, nonreligious, nonmetaphysical morality, however, are not unique to Zionism. In fact, this might be a constitutive problem of Western secularism. In the *Conflict of the Faculties,* Kant struggles to give "universal philosophy" a primacy over ecclesiastical (Christian) theology. This attempt to [p. 225/226] employ the "proper" division of universal life in the organization of public discourse ends up by suggesting an elevation of universal philosophy (or what he calls "rational religion") to the authoritative position previously reserved for Christian theology. Eventually, in his attempt to grant morality priority over ecclesiology, Kant's rational religion shares much structurally with that "dogmatic" religion it sought to replace, invoking its own authoritative conceptions of thinking, reason, and discourse. As Connolly suggests, those objections levelled against the arbitrary authority of ecclesiology return to haunt the critic and every attempt to secure secular authority in the public realm after Kant.[4]

4 [note 4 in the original] Ibid.

Western secularism, in fact, is bound up with more generic characteristics of Christian culture than most of its proponents are willing to acknowledge. Secularism presents itself in a historical narrative of a modus vivendi between different sects of Christianity that ended in the secularization of public life, securing private freedom, pluralistic democracy, individual rights, public reason, and the primacy of the state. The above story prevailed according to Connolly because it "presented a picture of a self-sufficient public realm fostering freedom and governance without recourse to a specific religious faith."[5] As such, secularism sought "to dredge out of public life as much cultural density and depth as possible so that muddy 'metaphysical' and 'religious' differences don't flow into the pure water of public reason, procedure and justice."[6]

Religious critics of secularism, however, claim that it lacks the ability to come to terms with the sources of morality most citizens endorse, and that it is unable to provide a firm moral ground. Religion, claims one source examined by Connolly, creates "the most loyal of citizens."[7] Loyalty to a nation, state, and religious belief, I would argue, have very much in common in their conception of purity, boundaries, and order. It is exactly the affinity between the moral order demanded by religion and the one demanded by the state that makes national secularism either hostile to the competition from religion or, many times, defer to religion, which reads the national-secular mode as a weaker version of itself, lacking the perseverence religion has over its subject. In relation to issues of territoriality, religion and secular-nationalism may nevertheless find a common ground of understanding and a mutual interest in protecting boundaries and punishing deviant or disloyal behavior. Hence, the "flirtation" between Israeli secular nationalists employing a discourse of security and religious nationalists employing a discourse of holiness to justify the exclusive right of Jews over occupied territories. Or to use another example, the mega reverend Billy Graham was described by a Johnson White House aide as representing "a basic kind of patriotism in this country – [p. 226/227] an unquestioning, obeying patriotism, a loyalty to the authority of the president. Billy was always uncritical, unchallenging, unquestioning."[8] Those affinities between the national and the religious discourses are expressed also in the nostalgia invoked by various authors, troubled by current political uncertainties, such as Samuel Huntington in the *Clash of Civilizations,* for the Christian moral order of the United States of the nineteenth century.[9]

Secularism, in its liberal-national version, ends up many times either redrawing the boundaries set by religion or invoking religion to demarcate a territory. At the deepest levels, fundamentalisms of self-identity, religious faith, ethnic identification, and the nation replicate each other. In Connolly's words: "Each externalizes threats to fixed

5 [note 5 in the original] Ibid.

6 [note 6 in the original] Ibid.

7 [note 7 in the original] Editorial, *First Things* (January 1997).

8 [note 8 in the original] Robert Sherill, "Preachers to Power" *Nation*, July 13, 1998.

9 [note 9 in the original] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

identities threatened by new evidence of their contingency and lack of self-sufficiency; each deflects pressures to renegotiate relations with which they are implicated. The fundamentalism of the self and religion asserts itself in relation to others within domestic politics; *the fundamentalism of the nation asserts itself in relation to the foreign inside and outside the state.*"[10] The secularist attempt to divide labor between "religious faith" and "secular argument" suppresses complex registers of persuasion, judgment, and discourse operative in public life. In refusing to acknowledge that secularism is a political settlement rather than an incontestable dictate of public discourse itself, secularists limit possibilities of an ethic of cultivation, a generous ethos of engagement and critical responsiveness. Therefore, as Connolly asserts, the counterreligious liberal concept of pluralism remains "too stingy, cramped, and defensive for the world we now inhabit."[11]

The secularism that Connolly's work addresses refers to a specific context of a Western or US political culture and its institutional arrangements. In a different political system, in which state and religion are, de jure and de facto, unseparated, as in Israel, secularism has a different interpretation and significance that I will later address. In both cases, however – a country in which religion and state were separated and a national movement with a secular ethos – religion has played a larger role than secularists are willing to admit. Moreover, in both cases it appears that liberal-secularism falls short of its aspiration and, hence, could use the "nudge" of new modes of thought.

Tocqueville, Herzl, and Territoriality

Issues of territoriality, specifically exclusive claims over it, illuminate the affinities between religion and the nation/state discourse and practices. One way to examine these affinities and their political [p. 227/228] consequences is to compare the conceptualization of religion in Tocqueville's and Herzl's thought. Both of these authors professed a separation between religion and state, whether in observation (Tocqueville) or program (Herzl), yet in both accounts religion reappears at strategic points to help legitimate the exclusion of dangerous "others." It is religion's status as absent-present that characterizes both thinkers as well as contemporary articulations of Israeli secularism. [. . . p. 228–230. . .]

While Theodor Herzl's vision of the Jewish state was a modern and secular idea (and Herzl himself was far from religious),[12] "Zionism was never detached from Jewish religion even when it sought to transform and replace it. Scholars make a valid analyti-

10 [note 10 in the original] William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 120 (my emphasis).

11 [note 11 in the original] Ibid.

12 [note 19 in the original] Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (New York: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946/1988).

cal distinction between Judaism and Jewishness, relating the former to religion and the latter to culture, ethnicity, and a historical sense of belonging to the Jewish people."[13] The two, however, overlap, and as such, very much like Christianity in Tocqueville's America, Judaism would function as the binding glue and as a source for mobilization and legitimation from which Zionism would borrow its symbols and legitimate its territorial claims through a divine promise of redemption. Despite the mutual disdain between Zionists and the traditional religious Jews in Europe, Zionism was first and foremost a movement of the Jewish people with specific territorial claims and collective boundaries. In maintaining close affinities to the content and the form of Jewish religion, Zionism would, on the one hand, remain dependent upon Jewish religion and, on the other, would be replicating its quest for purity and uniformity, only changing their codes, replacing "God" by the nation and the state endowed with divinity.

Interestingly, the title of Herzl's *The Jewish State,* the book in which he outlines a program for establishing a state, would be more accurately translated as "The State of the Jews." The English translation of the title pinpoints the yet unresolved problem: a state of the Jews, or a Jewish state? The former would be a secular form of state with Judaism as a primarily cultural and/or ethnic identity, while the latter would be a more theocratic state of believers. The state of the Jews, claim contemporary secularists, was the book's intended message, and is (or should be) the foundation for separating religion and state. However, even in the secular idea of "the state of the Jews," Jewish religion would have a larger role than Zionists were willing to attribute to it and contemporary secularists are willing to acknowledge. [p. 230/231]

Herzl's ideas seem to resonate with the claims of current secularists and inadvertently to expose their weaknesses. His statehood plans explicitly envision a secular entity in which religion is confined within its own sphere. As he explains: "Shall we end by having a theocracy? No, indeed. Faith unites us, knowledge gives us freedom. We shall therefore prevent any theocratic tendencies from coming to the fore on the part of our priesthood. We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks."[14] Faith would therefore serve as a binding glue, but would nevertheless be kept separated from politics ruled by "Knowledge." As in Tocqueville's America, Herzl's secular state and its freedoms would be dependent upon religion establishing the moral ground; labor is divided between the faith that unites and determines the belonging and the knowledge that gives freedom, but this division could never be complete.

[. . .]

Engagement with issues of territoriality exposed Herzl to the dependence of his ideas upon religion. Although preferring Palestine, Herzl was willing to accept any ter-

13 [note 20 in the original] Charles Liebman and Bernard Susser, "Judaism and Jewishness," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 555* (January 1998): 15–23.

14 [note 21 in the original] Ibid.

ritorial solution for the Jews and was toying with the idea of receiving a "charter," an immediate grant of sovereignty by the European powers in one of their colonies. But the attempt to bring the idea of settlement in Uganda to the Jewish Congress was a complete failure that threatened to split the movement. Herzl was called a traitor to his face, [p. 231/232] and another Zionist leader who supported the Uganda idea was almost killed. In his closing speech, worried about the fate of the Zionist movement, Herzl reaffirmed his commitment to Palestine, stating: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither."[15] Secular Zionists have quickly learned, therefore, that the "Land of Israel" *(Eretz Israel)* is the only territory that could evoke sentiments among a critical mass of Jews, sentiments mediated through traditional-religious symbols.[16] With the commitment of the Zionist movement to restoring the old homeland in Palestine, religion would become more than the mobilizing instrument Herzl thought it would be. The Jewish past and religion will be rewritten and at times reinvented in order to legitimate modern national claims, entrenching religion's status in the future state. [. . .]

In *The Jewish State,* Herzl calls for tolerance toward those of different nationalities who go to live among the Jews in their state, but ignores the Arabs, already living there. Their presence is acknowledged in his utopian novel *Altneuland;* his solution, very much motivated by the universalistic, humanistic ethos of the novel, proposes that all Arab inhabitants could join the new society as equal members. But not only does he not explore the possibilities and problematics of such equality within a Jewish state, he overlooks the possibility that Arabs might wish to establish their own national movement.[17] Zionism would follow this line of thought. When turning to practice, it would encounter difficulties accounting for actual Arab presence, but would, nevertheless, establish a discourse of Jewish rights to the land, superseding all other claims, by describing the land as empty and waiting for the return of its true owners.

Common Ground

[. . . p. 232/233. . .]
Religion was perceived by the large majority of Zionists as unfit for the purpose of nation and state building. First, its symbol system and worldview was fit for the individual member of a powerless nation rather than a modern state; second, its ultimate source of authority was God and not the nation or the state; and, third, because tradi-

15 [note 23 in the original] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972).

16 [note 24 in the original] Baruch Kimmerling, "Religion, Nationalism, and Democracy in Israel," *Zmanim 50–51* (in Hebrew).

17 [note 26 in the original] Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism* (New York: Basic, 1981), pp. 98–100.

tional religion had lost its appeal for the many Jews in Europe who preferred assimilation.[18] Nevertheless, since religion had a symbolic value and a potential to function as a source of identity, Zionism, like many other national movements have done, attempted to incorporate religion without its metaphysics,[19] and create a "civil religion" with a unifying moral code and a system of belief. [. . .]

Israeli civil religion adopted and transformed aspects of Jewish tradition and religion for its own purposes and according to its interpretation. In essence, civil religion attempted to replace Judaism (as religion) by Jewishness. The two, however, were closely intertwined. Traditional symbols that were associated with the Temple periods in which Jews lived on their land and biblical stories were selected to establish Zionism as the ancestor of its heroes. The attitude toward the intermediate period of two thousand years of exile, and the rabbinical tradition it produced, on the other hand, was generally negative. Jewish holidays such as Passover and Hanukkah, which celebrate victories of the Jewish people, were reinterpreted no langer as religious holidays (the nation saved by God) but as holidays of national revival (a victory of the spirit of the nation), setting an example to the present life of the [p. 233/234] nation (courage and vigorousness). Another process was "linguistic secularization" – the use of idioms and phrases derived from religious sources and detached from their original meaning. Religious terms such as *Kedusha* (holiness), *mitzva* (commandment), *brit* (covenant), and *korban* (sacrifice) were often employed in the nationalist discourse to describe the relation to the territory.[20]

The active pioneer *(Halutz),* not the passive religious Jew, was perceived as the bearer of the Jewish national mission and the model for the new belief system. While the Halutz did not believe in God, he believed in the sanctity of the land and the nation. Accordingly, his work was described in religious terms: his engagement with physical agricultural labor, his attachment to the land, and his asceticism were conceptualized as the "religion of labor." While Zionism was critical of religious Jews, not taking an active part in its mission, its dependence on history and religion created spaces that allowed those religious Jews in favor of nationalism to bandwagon. While their numbers and impact were relatively small, they would grow and assume importance, especially after the establishment of state and the 1967 war.

Religious Zionists such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook attempted not simply to follow but to close the gap opened between religion and the new nationalism. They bestowed a religious meaning to the national project. Kook saw the return to Zion as an immediate imperative for every Jewish person, as a redemptive act. Moreover, while secular Zionists operate under their own set of beliefs (political-secular), according to

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18 [note 30 in the original] Ibid., pp. 15–16 [refers to note 28 in the original: Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myth of Israel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998)].
19 [note 31 in the original] Ibid., p. 57.
20 [note 33 in the original] Ibid., p. 38 [refers to note 32 in the original: Charles Liebmann and Elizier Don-Yehia, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 9.].

Kook, they are actually acting within a cosmic scheme of a divine will and are tools in the hands of divine providence. Zionism, which secularized religious symbols, was thereby sanctified by the religion it sought to negate. [. . . p. 234–236. . .]

Religion, the State, and the Secular

Although Israeli civil society might be seen as having a larger atheist content within it than the US one, a separation of church and state has never materialized in Israel. Those inherent tensions between its secular and religious foundation are evident in the declaration of independence. Like Herzl's notion of the "faith of our fathers," the declaration circumvented the issue, declaring: "By virtue of our *natural and historic rights* and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations assembly [we], hereby, declare the establishment of a Jewish state."[21] This duality manifested itself in the state granting Orthodox Jews a monopoly over key aspects of civil life (such as marriage and divorce, burials, and so on), has ordered Jewish dietary rules *(Kashrut)* in all government and army institutions, and established the Jewish holidays as official state holidays. In addition, since the law of return has granted automatic citizenship to all Jews, the decision over who is a Jew, after a debate, was done according to the more strict demands of the religious parties.[22]

Although the power that is given to the religious parties is often explained as resulting from short-term political considerations, the importance of religious elements is actually due to a much larger structural interest and need of the nation-state: its own legitimacy. First, because the raison d'etre of the state was to represent *all Jews,* non-Zionist religious parties were approached for support and cooperation. Coalitions with religious parties had, therefore, a significant symbolic value: they entitled the state to speak for the "Jewish people." Therefore, threats of religious leaders that secular marriage would split the Jewish people (and break up the coalition) were taken seriously by secular leaders afraid to lose this source of legitimacy. Second, the political elite was concerned over what would be the unifying tradition for the new state, which as shown before was to be largely dependent upon religious sources. Third, the religious groups

21 [note 40 in the original] Israel's declaration of independence (emphasis mine).

22 [note 41 in the original] This yet unresolved debate over "who is a Jew" points to the fact that tensions also exist in the relations between the state and religion. This debate was between Zionists (who were interested in a large number of Jews and were willing to accept that a Jew could be "any person declaring in good faith that he is a Jew") and the religious (who were concerned over the Jewish character of the state and demanded, and won, that a Jew was only a person born to a Jewish mother). Zionist demography prevailed in 1970 when it was decided that one Jewish grandparent would suffice to entitle a person and spouse to enjoy the privileges granted by the law of return. See S. N. Abramov, *Perpetual Dilemma: Jewish Religion in the Jewish State* (Rutherford, NJ.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976); and Shafir and Peled, note 37.

were respected as the guardians of Jewish tradition, especially outside of Israel, and as such were important for the state to maintain its relationship with the Diaspora. Fourth, Orthodox Judaism was instrumental in legitimating the state boundaries. [. . . p. 236/237. . .]

The upshot of the duality described above is that most secularists would accept Jewishness (ethnicity) as defining rights and boundaries, but would object to Judaism (religion) constraining their personal freedoms. This accounts for the outright rejection of non-Zionist ideas questioning the identity of the state, as well as to the intolerance toward religious non-Zionist *(Haredi; Haredim* in the plural) groups. The Haredim are often demonized in the secular discourse since many of them do not serve in the army and, in that, do not conform to the civic virtue; they thus are easily blamed for the tensions between religious and secular. Proposals to draft Haredim and cancel their exemption are often invoked by politicians and enjoy popular support. Similarly, the demands of Haredim that roads in their neighborhoods be closed for the observance of Shabat, or religious protests against archeological grave digging, evoke intolerant responses from secularists, who argue that their liberal rights are violated by any compromise. This onslaught on the Haredim mostly reflects the inability of secular leaders to touch the real issues of separating religion from state, which entails a wider distribution of rights and freedoms, a breakdown of hierarchies and privileges, and a renegotiation of their own identities.

The Other from Without

[. . . p. 237/238. . .]
The liberal discourse through which Palestinian citizens of Israel are incorporated entitles them to individual rights (which have gradually increased), but exclusion from the ethnic and the republican discourses maintains their secondary status. This has led to what Yifttachel [sic] describes as “ethnocracy,” a regime in which, despite several democratic features, ethnicity rather than territorial citizenship is the main organizing logic for allocation of state resources and that is dominated by a “charter group” that enjoys a privileged position.[23] [. . .]

The establishment of the state was accompanied by territorial restructuring of the land through an all-encompassing and expansionist Judaization (or de-Arabization) program that was adopted by the new state. Israel rushed to settle the towns and villages whose Palestinian inhabitants (close to 800,000) had fled or were expelled during

23 [note 45 in the original] Oren Yiftachel, “Israeli Society and Jewish-Palestinian Reconciliation: ‘Ethnocracy’ and its Territorial Contradictions,” *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 4 (1997): 505–525.

the war.[24] The idea of the Jewish people's exclusive rights over territory was put into practice. Confiscated Arab land became "Jewish land," giving organizations based in the Diaspora statutory power over land that is withheld from local Palestinians.[25] As in Tocqueville's America, religion has confined the discourse and prevents certain issues that might disturb harmony from arising. [. . . p. 238/239. . .]

The overarching definition of a Jewish state practically prevents non-Jewish citizens from fully participating in politics and is accepted by a majority of Jewish-Israelis as just (historical rights) or necessary (security concerns). By definition, the possibility that an Arab may become a "good citizen" is extremely limited. All governments, left and right, have attempted to include Jewish non-Zionists in their coalition, but have refrained from incorporating Arab parties. Only 38.8 percent of leftist Jewish voters agree unconditionally to the inclusion of Arab parties.[26] Secular Zionists attempt to maintain the Jewish character of the state that privileges Jews over non-Jews, but at the same time they want this character to be "cleaned" from all religious metaphysics limiting liberal freedoms. This is not only a weak moral claim, since its call for freedom is limited to Jews, but it is also intellectually weak. It rejects the imposition of the "metaphysics of religion" as a binding moral code, while embracing an abstract idea of common ancestry as valid for determining civil rights.

Facing the Challenge

The civil religion of Labor-Zionism was unable to maintain its dominance for long. Its attempt to impose a unifying system of belief and denouncement of the tradition of the new immigrants, together with the social and economic disparities between European [p. 239/240] and non-European Jews, caused much resentment toward the old elite. Another important undercurrent was the rise of Jewish religious nationalism after the Six Day War of 1967; this military victory might be the marker of the decline of secular Zionism.

The victory of the war and the new territories conquered evoked mystical feelings among secular Israelis. There arose a new discourse of historical rights, with new and strong affinities with religion. Israeli control of the holy sites, like the Wailing Wall, Rachel's tomb, and the graves of the patriarchs, now seemed, despite the Arab population, "natural" to most Israelis. It seemed to them to be their inheritance. The capture

24 [note 46 in the original] Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy or Democracy? Israeli Territorial Politics," *MiddleEast Report 27* (1998): 8–14.
25 [note 47 in the original] Ibid.
26 [note 49 in the original] Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2 (1997).

of the old city of Jerusalem, divided during the war of 1948, and its "unification" were especially significant. [. . .]

The infatuation of secular Israelis with the holy sites and the evocation of historical rights enabled a new movement of young religious Israelis to attempt, and to a large extent succeed, to appropriate the national discourse. What is telling is the weakness that secular Zionism was exposed to in confronting the challenge of a new movement that saw itself as a fresh and vital version of Zionism and that has "religionized" the secular and the national sources of legitimacy. A circle was completed. First, in its rebellion against religion, Zionism borrowed its symbols and secularized them. Then a counterrevolution has not only reinstilled religion into those symbols but has transformed the symbols of secular Zionism (hiking across the land, settlement, and even clothing style) and its value system (collectivism, sanctity of the land, self-reliance, honor, and so on) and has endowed them with religious significance. In so doing, this new movement declared itself the true bearer of Zionism and took pride in its coherent value system, beliefs, and legitimation of the nationalist drive.

For the new movement, Gush Emunim, which took upon itself to settle the occupied territories in order to establish Israeli control, questions of rights over land were self-evident. [. . . p. 240/241. . .]

The success of the movement in its ability to settle the occupied territories is explained by Sprinzak as their being the tip of a "serious social and cultural iceberg" – the religious public at large.[27] This explanation would be incomplete without, to continue the metaphor, understanding that the iceberg is not foreign to the water in which it floats. In other words, the fact that Gush Emunim's rhetoric resonates much of the ethos that national secularists identify with – pioneering, commitment, and purity – has awarded them in the early stages wide support and sympathy. Their colonization project has recreated the mythical frontier of the pre-state and the early state. The sanctification of nation and territoriality was used again: *aliya la-karka* (ascent to the land); *geualat ha-karka* (redemption of the land); and *Hitnachalut* (the biblical term for Jewish settlement). Only this time, the religious terms were in fact religious.

[. . .] Not only was secular Zionism criticized for being a weak, and untrue to itself, form of Judaism, but it was said to have lost its national drive and its commitment to the land. Challenging Labor-Zionism, Gush Emunim has amplified (and, some claim caricaturized) the Zionist discourses of Jewish redemption, nationality, and claims to a territory, and has appropriated the republican notion of "good citizenship." [. . . p. 241/242. . .]

In Israel, unlike in the United States, the engagement of religion and state is institutionalized and is translated into practices of exclusion and discrimination, contrary to both pluralism and pluralization. Moreover, the coming together of religion and ter-

27 [note 52 in the original] Ibid. [refers to note 51 in the original: Ehud Sprinzak, „The Iceberg Model of Extremism," in D. Newman, ed., *The Impact of Gush Emunim* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985)].

ritoriality has produced a dangerous nationalist ethos that not only deplores any concepts of generosity and pluralism, but restricts any real possibility of engagement or generosity beyond its boundaries. In Israel, then, the secular ethos and the separation of church and state are preconditions for the possibilities of engagement – because only such separation could allow an equal voice for non-Jews and a plurality of Jewish practices. Pluralism, despite its limits, might therefore be a good starting point. Such pluralism would require, first, a separation of church and state, but, second, would have to advance its generosity beyond the boundaries and limitations of the nation-state and open itself to new possibilities.

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67 Aleksandr Kyrlezhev: *The Postsecular Age* (2004)

Introduced by Sebastian Rimestad

Introduction

The church historian and publicist Aleksandr I. Kyrlezhev (b. 1954) has been avidly commenting on religious developments since 1985, when he finished his studies at the Moscow Theological Seminary, and became one of the editors of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* – the largest ecclesiastical publication in Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he became the deputy director of the newly established Centre for the Study of Religion in Moscow, where he primarily worked on translating the writings of contemporary Greek and French Orthodox theologians, as well as on re-publishing twentieth-century Russian émigré theologians. Kyrlezhev left the Centre when it was integrated into the Russian State University of the Humanities in 1996; he continued to disseminate its ideas through a large array of Russian print outlets and websites, and, for some time, also hosted a weekly radio programme.

The article reproduced below, published in 2004, comprises an analysis of the concrete meaning that the term "post-secular" had acquired in the post-Soviet consciousness. The article was one of the first contributions to an intellectual debate that was to take place in Russia over the meaning of secularisation and its cognates, largely influenced by Jürgen Habermas' analysis of a "post-secular society" (see text no. 69). While in debates in Western Europe and North America since the 1960s, "post-secular" had been understood as an abstract evolution of the concept of secularisation, in post-Soviet Russia, "post-secular" very concretely meant a societal climate where secularism was no longer the officially propagated norm. The forced silencing of religious voices from the public sphere, which had characterised the Soviet era, was replaced by freedom of conscience, and a proliferation of religiously tainted public discourses, battling for dominance. Kyrlezhev, as with most of those commenting from within the Orthodox scene, wanted the natural outcome of this battle to be the dominance of the Orthodox Church. However, he cautions against abusing this dominance to silence other religious voices. His is thus a voice of the middle way, neither overly liberal and 'Westernising,' nor reactionary and nationalist. He attempts to alert the Russian public to the danger of uncritically importing 'Western' notions into the Russian post-Soviet context.

The English translation was undertaken by Joera Mulders and Philip Walters, for a special section of the journal *Religion, State and Society* in 2008.

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Not all that long ago we were talking about a postreligious and post-Christian age. This talk was basically going on in the so-called free world, describing what had happened in western society. It was only in the postsoviet age, after a delay of decades, when we were trying to understand the outcome of western developments that we who were living under the Soviet regime at that time started talking about these issues. In the 1960s sociologists and radical theologians had the distinct impression that a shift from quantity to quality had occurred in the process of secularisation and that a ‘secular age’ had started. We might mention the names of the sociologist Peter Berger (a chapter of his book about secularisation, written in 1967, was published not long ago in the Russian journal *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 32, 2003) and the theologian Harvey Cox (whose book *The Secular City* was translated into Russian in 1995). That was the time of the so-called ‘death of God’ theology: people like Thomas Altizer tried to conceptualise the proclamation of the Gospel in a world that no longer had a place for the sacred, so that even religion, paradoxically, needed to secularise, meaning that it had to find itself a place within a society and a mentality that had become completely secular. [. . . p. 21/22. . .]

Religion has always occupied its own sphere, but it has existed in a dialectical and dialogical relationship with the sphere of the other, the non-religious, in the well-known dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. It is precisely in its relation to the sacred that the profane is profane, and the two spheres define each other and interact even though they are separate. The religious is present in the non-religious; the latter does not exist without a connection and relationship with religion. This was always the case – until the modern age. It is still characteristic of today’s pre-modern societies and cultures.

It is secularisation, however, which has revolted against this dual structure and has set out to destroy it. It has singled out the secular as autonomous and self-sufficient, banishing religion from the social world, and so forcing it either to die out or to secularise, to recognise that everything in the world is essentially secular, that the world has discovered its real foundation. Religion thus becomes something superfluous and non-essential, an optional hobby for individual people, like going fishing or writing poetry, and so theologians like Altizer write that ‘the actualization of the profane. . .requires

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the negation of the sacred' and that 'transcendence has been transformed wholly into immanence' (Altizer and Hamilton, 1996, pp. 90–91).

Secularisation has identified a 'new substance', the absolutely secular, which is secular without reference to or relationship with its former dialectical partner, the religious (which would earlier have been inconceivable). The paradox of secularisation (or, perhaps, its logical consequence) lies in the fact that its theory and practice have simultaneously shaped a new religious 'substance' for religion: a purely religious religion, without any necessary relationship with the non-religious.

The secular project did not intend the violent annihilation of religion, but its expectation was that religion would be ousted and subsequently die a natural death. However, a new understanding of religion has emerged. The process has turned out to involve a rebirth of religion, but religion of a qualitatively new kind.

II

The secular project has its roots in the age of the Enlightenment. The project envisaged the emergence of secular man, completely of this world, formed by positivist science and socially engaged. [. . .]

As far as 'Truth' was concerned, the Enlightenment fed itself with a passion for the abolition of universal religious truth and the transition to an optimistic period of new and private truths that would be quite sufficient for secular man. After all, it is this secular man who discovers the realm of nature and history, who exists in order constantly to uncover its secrets, unconstrained by superstitions and dogmas and free in his self-realisation. This is a man who has finished once and for all with the divine in its literal meaning, a man rational in knowledge and reasonably irrational in the domain of feelings – a man in whom the public and the private, the social and the individual are reasonably balanced and for whom there remains only one kind of religious feeling, which is the dedication to happiness here and now and to the bright future of mankind. [p. 22/23]

The secular man is antireligious until in due course he simply becomes non- religious.

It is important to underline the fact that the ideal of the secular man was oriented towards a particular notion of religion, which was identified with the institution and the practice of the Christian Church that is the dominant, titular religion of European societies. The main point was to deprive the Church of its social role and to secularise the public sphere, so that social identification would cease to be religious, but would come to be entirely grounded in civil notions. We may compare this aim with the situation as it subsequently developed in the USA, where the establishment of a contemporary political system and the principle of the separation of state and church go alongside high levels of religiosity among its citizens but without any dominant confession. As a result

the USA has become simultaneously the most secular and the most religious country in the western world. The aim was that religious identity should become only one of the identities of man and should not occupy a central position among them. Secularisation means first of all the desacralisation of politics, which takes place in the context of the development of a pragmatic and desacralised economy: an economy with its own special designated sphere and not subject to regulation by non-pragmatic values. Meanwhile the secularisation of culture is reflected first of all in the public legitimacy of a pluralism of ideas, cultures and religions.

The new European secular project was in the first place social and anthropological, and not ideological in the sense of aiming to replace a complete religious system with another quasi-religious one. This took place only later, with the emergence of Marxism and its practical realisation in the antireligious ideocratic state. Up until 1917, however, secularisation certainly did not aim to annihilate religion. It proposed only to transplant it: and not even so much to transplant it from the public to the private sphere, but rather from the sphere of culture to the sphere of personal religiosity. Culture ceased to be determined by religion, but religion came to be interpreted by culture and culture determined the place of religion in the world. Correspondingly religion no longer determined man, but man himself could choose a religion – even when he was already raised in one.

Of course, this was nothing other than a spiritual revolution.

[. . .] The new European project of the Enlightenment, of which the most important aspect was secularisation, was in essence a cultural project; 'culture' in its contemporary definition is its offspring. Culture emerged as an alternative to the pre-modern system of ideological and behavioural norms, whose foundation and core was religion. 'Culture' is that which remains after the withdrawal of actual religiosity from the cultural life of man and society. In 'culture' there is nothing but culture. From this perspective religion itself can be understood as a part of culture; religion is reduced to a particular type of immanent experience that permits one to take all that is valuable from the age-old religious legacy of humanity, interpreting it all from a cultural- secularist point of view, but thereby rendering religion as religion harmless.

In this situation, however, culture itself acquires sacral characteristics and starts to perform religious functions, as it relegates religion as religion to its particular place outside culture. In the context of culture, for example, going to church on Sunday and the act of confession are no longer considered to be cultural norms, but on the other hand reading books or newspapers and attending cultural events like the theatre or [p. 23/24] concerts come to be understood as culturally normative activities. [. . .]

One interesting and characteristic feature of the ideology of modernity is that for all its historicism it was relatively unconcerned with objective history. Its historicism was primarily ideological, passionate, quasi-religious; its goals were to justify the Enlightenment revolution and to immortalise the 'historical' conclusions it had drawn. Paradoxically enough, the idea of Progress is completely static. Progress is a constant, the finally revealed eternal truth of the world. Progress is the forward movement of history

towards a certain goal. The champions of Progress could not conceive of the idea that real history might not have a purpose. The idea of Progress is in fact repressive: objecting to it is considered to be treason against faith, to be punished by civil death. According to Dostoyevsky the new European freedom masked an ideological totalitarianism (and indeed Marxism held that freedom is the recognition of necessity). This freedom does not countenance, or indeed permit, the existence of any alternative truths. The understanding of freedom and progress established as the result of the objective historical process was considered definitive (and is still considered so in some quarters), not subject to appeal to any higher court or authority (and in fact no such court or authority exists). Humanity is thus doomed to live in the eternity of a one-dimensional history. 'Secular man' is understood to be 'eternal man'. Religion has been reduced to the level of secular interests, because Man by definition simply cannot have any other interests.

From a historical point of view, however, secularisation is only an episode, a stage in socio-cultural evolution, a process with a beginning and an end. Moreover this process has spatial borders. It is important to remember that we can speak about secularisation only in reference to the Christian world or in reference to reflected processes within the zones of westernisation in other religio-cultural worlds.

III

Today we can say that the process of secularisation is complete – and there are grounds for going further: a postsecular age is in the process of emerging.

The start of the postsecular age is difficult to pinpoint in time, just as it is difficult to pinpoint the shift from modernity to postmodernity in the sociocultural history of the West. It is, however, clear that these two rubicons are intimately connected; indeed, one can argue that they are two different dimensions of one and the same turning-point. Most likely we need to focus on the last quarter of the twentieth century, a time of change from quantity to quality which became fully evident at the start of the new century. [p. 24/25]

In the debate about secularisation some sociologists and scholars of religion prefer to speak about the 'secularisation thesis' or the 'myth of secularisation', in view of the complexity of the relationship between religions and contemporary societies and the appearance and development of new forms of religiosity in the era of the supposed victory of secularisation. Religion is not only expressed in doctrinal and institutional forms, but it also manifests itself in a range of mental and psychological phenomena. Religion is still with us; religion lives and continues to evolve. The successes of secularisation in the social-political sphere, such as the separation of church and state, freedom of religious choice and secular standards in education, are accompanied by failures. New Religious Movements, for example, and religions in non-western countries that

are resisting westernisation are continuing to fulfil social functions and mean that it is incorrect to speak about the secularisation of public and political life in most countries.

We need to take another point into consideration as well. The end of the secular ideologies that claimed an integrated vision of the world and man, and hence stood as hostile rivals to traditional religion, meant an end to aggressive and systematic resistance to religion and to the ideological quasi-religious project that was to replace religion. Secularisation may be considered complete only after an absolutely secular situation has established itself, but this can happen only when those quasi-religious, postreligious ideologies which developed within the 'enlightening' project of modernity – religious in their passion and their claim to totality – have been historically exhausted. The age of war against religion, the age of attempts to find substitutes for it, must be over and a time of indifference to religion needs to have set in. Only that kind of indifference reveals the essence of the secular: when religion is no longer being attacked, uprooted, interpreted and clarified from the outside, but simply exists alongside the outside world. Then religion, turned by secularisation into religion *par excellence*, into purely religious religion, re-enters the socio-cultural field and is discovered by society.

IV

The start of the postsecular age coincides with the start of the postmodern age. Postmodernism is a reaction to the monologue of the Enlightenment, a cultural counterrevolution. Historically it was tied up with the struggle against totalitarianism in the twentieth century, but its role has also been to render the quasi-religions of the 'modern' harmless and to break with the repressive antireligiosity of secular ideologies obsessed with the aim of annihilating religion as a rival in deep all-embracing relationships with the foundations of human existence. The postmodern separates modern truths of political and individual freedom from the excesses of antireligiosity. Postmodernism stands opposed to religious totalitarianism, not because it is religious but because it is totalitarian. At the same time, however, it rejects the new European idea that religion will necessarily be totalitarian, suppressing the individual, the idea that religion is first and foremost a repressive ideological institution. Postmodernism does not understand religion as a religious institution aiming at domination. Postmodernism gives freedom to religion as religiosity and it thereby marks the start of the postsecular age in European cultural history. It is symptomatic that the quasi-religious concept 'culture' is becoming archaic and is giving way before other concepts: the socio-cultural space, and 'discourses' that are not an ideological monologue and hence not repressive. [p. 25/26]

Postmodernism thus suddenly raises up religion, but typically it also thrusts it into the broad post-ideological sea of singularities and simulacra, into absolute cultural pluralism. It thereby gives a powerful impulse to the emergence of a diversity of forms of religiosity and legitimises this diversity. This is why in today's European culture (or

post-culture) 'traditional religions' are experiencing a new crisis of identity. Unlike modernism, postmodernism raises no objections to religiosity and religious tradition as such, but it does refuse them the right to dominate and determine 'post-culture'.

In the postmodern age, religion returns from the solitary confinement to which it was banished by the modern. This is not a return to the old 'sacred–profane' structure, however. The postsecular age does not mean desecularisation in the sense of a reversal of the results of secularisation and a return to the old. Restoration is impossible. This is indeed a postsecular situation, corresponding to a new socio- cultural situation. The world can no longer be divided into religious and nonreligious. Both spheres now coincide. They mutually penetrate each other to the degree that they are indistinguishable. Today, nothing is intrinsically secular or religious. Everything can be sacred and everything can be profane. Postmodernism protects and strengthens a situation of complete freedom and pluralism, but it does discriminate against religion in that it permits it to exist alongside everything else. It is quite happy to accept religious experience, religious meaning and religious symbols, without valuing them any more highly than other experiences, meanings and symbols. Where everything is blended together everything is equal.

The non-ideational nature of postmodernism thus turns out to be the new enemy of religion as religion. While secularism chased religion into the religious ghetto, the post-secularism of the postmodern accepts and dissolves religion within itself. Religion may exist everywhere together with the secular, but not in the old forms – not, for example, in the form of a church as a social and cultural institution, claiming universality and a dominating role in culture. [. . .]

V

Let us now look at the state of the world today from an anthropological perspective. What conclusions should be drawn by someone living today?

One important conclusion is that religion, it appears, does not stand in contradiction to anything contemporary (or, more precisely, postcontemporary). Since secular ideas have all, one after another, turned out to be neither absolutely true nor universal, they have become private ideas that are not in a position to refute religion as such. Scientists who by definition consider themselves atheists are looking more and more like obscurantists who have not noticed that their day is over. In their parrot language of scientific mythologies they tell fables about the origin of the universe, the beginning of life and how men are descended from apes. Today their public discourse has lost its 'plausibility structure' (as Peter Berger wrote about religious discourse in the 1960s – see, for example, Berger, 1967).

It is clear that today science and technology present a greater danger than good old religion, which is actually in a position to be of assistance: to me, the nation, society,

the state, the world. Religion emerges as an alternative that can rescue us from the attacks of the worldly. These attacks come through everyday life, with its cultural [p. 26/27] postmodernism, where everything is, in the popular phrase, 'politics, money and arbitrariness' (*'politika, den'gi i proizvol'*), where there is no higher unifying Idea, and no general Morality which is not reduced to rational egoism, and thus shallow pragmatism. In this situation people begin to hope that religion or the church stands above all for morality, but when people accept religion, and it starts defining their outlook on the world, then it also starts defining politics, culture and civilisation. It does this as a consequence of its 'total' character: not as 'religion for religion', as it is understood from the secularist perspective, but rather as something which permeates everything.

At the same time, in the postsecular age religion has lost its status as a universal lawmaker speaking in the name of God the Creator, and there are areas which are clearly independent of religion, like the natural sciences, technology, economics, secular culture. In these circumstances religion as religion will not be too demanding on man. That is why my positive involvement in religion can give me something without taking away all the rest, the nonreligious. For example, religion might signify the border between 'my own' and 'the other' in cultural, national or civilisational oppositions. For me that might be enough and this has no relation to how active I am in my religious practice.

For some people, then, religion (as has always been the case in the past) may truly become the content of their inner, spiritual life, guiding their most important aspirations and engendering genuine religious experience; we may call this 'introverted religiosity'. For others, meanwhile, the function of religion is primarily to structure an external 'view of the world', of social and cultural reality; we may call this 'extraverted religiosity'.

In other words, religion in the postsecular age may resurface in a symbolic form, as some sort of marker (for example, 'I am Russian Orthodox', as opposed to a Russian Baptist or sectarian, or 'I am a Muslim', meaning that I belong to the 'Muslim world', as opposed to the cosmopolitans and atheists). This use of religion as a marker of tradition does not necessarily imply belonging to a religious tradition in the sense of faith and practice. [. . .]

A new attitude to religious ritual is also developing. Not long ago a visible display of religiosity in the form of participation in ritual would have been seen as a disgraceful sign of involvement in religious obscurantism. Today it has become completely normal and even respectable. Religion after all is no longer the enemy of progress and culture. Participation is no longer embarrassing psychologically because it does not require a deep immersion into the religious; it no longer signifies an alarming religiosity on the part of the participant.

Of course this kind of positive attitude to religious practice has for a long time been completely normal and natural in the USA, where half the country goes to church on Sunday while remaining secular pragmatists in everyday life. When Muslim women fight for the right to wear the hijab in public places, in Europe and in Russia alike

nobody accuses them of religious obscurantism. The issue in these cases is not their religiosity as such, but the consequences of their behaviour for the postsecular pluralist society as a whole. In a different way the same applies to the Orthodox president of the Russian Federation and leading figures in the political, economic and cultural elite. [p. 27/28]

VI

If we now look at the postsecular age from a more general, socio-cultural point of view, what are its key characteristics?

Once again, religion finds itself in a situation of antagonism, this time with postsecular culture, but now having to resist relativism rather than privatisation and annihilation. The indifference to religion that set in everywhere where secularism prevailed almost immediately turned into a new indifference shaped by the postmodern. Under these new conditions traditional religion (unlike New Religious Movements, which because of their inclusive character do not conflict with the postmodern) emerges precisely as religion, with its own truth, tradition and experience, resisting both secularism and the plurality of sects.

We can see this clearly, for example, in the discussions on the draft of the European Constitution. Secularists have taken a stance against any reference to the Christian heritage of Europe, while a number of arguably not fully secularised countries are in favour [sic] its inclusion. [. . .] Under postmodern conditions religion ceases to be a private affair of the individual and becomes a focus of political attention and at times even a political problem.

One characteristic of the postsecular situation is variety, syncretism and the erosion of religious notions (beliefs, images, ideas). God in the postsecular age has no normative image. There is no general understanding of what God, religion, faith, the Church, or a religious community is. A statement by someone that he believes in God says nothing about the content of that belief; finding out the nature of religiosity is the task of specialised sociological researchers. We are living in a new age of polytheism, generated by religious voluntarism. It feeds on the whole spectrum of religious ideas and practices, on which information is available to all via the internet, for example. Even within one particular religious tradition it is not acceptable simply to speak about ignorance and superstition; rather one should speak about individually constructed faith. Even well thought-out and organised religious teaching cannot eliminate religious syncretism because accepted religious notions as well as notions of nonreligious origin now coexist within an individual's consciousness.

Meanwhile, scientific critique and comparative religious studies have destroyed the unity of old religious–cultural complexes. Globally available information reports on the most diverse manifestations of religiosity in all parts of the world. In this situation

traditional religions turn back to their sources, to the essence of their doctrines, with the aim of interpreting these in the new conditions while remaining faithful to the original meaning. Hence the growth of religious fundamentalism and purism, which refute all that is not part of the religion in question and insist anew on the totality of religion: its all-determining role in culture and society.

The most important thing, however, may be that religion is again starting to perform an integrating function, as shown in its ability to serve as an identifier for members not only of confessional, but also of national, ethno-cultural, civilisational and other communities. Here religion is not so much a source of transcendental meaning as a means whereby individuals and communities can self-identify, with practical consequences (the division between 'our own' and 'alien', collective ethics, [p. 28/29] legitimacy of particular norms of behaviour, claims to cultural autonomy and at times even to national sovereignty). Religious markers have become absolutely commonplace and it is hard to ignore them.

In today's conditions of cultural postmodernism and globalisation a struggle over ethnic and ethno-cultural identification and solidarity is going on. Today the theory and practice of the nation-state (a phenomenon of modernism) are in crisis, and consolidation is impossible without a religious component. The state has turned out to be weaker than phyletism, the aspiration for an ethno-religious community; and phyletism is emerging as a form of self-identification in reaction to the strengthening of transnational structures and the processes of globalisation. The issue is some form of ethno-religious or cultural-religious autonomy which can serve as the basis of a separate civilisation. A civilisational approach is increasingly being invoked. Formerly it was nation-states, classes, races and religions that used to fight over their differences; now it is 'civilisations' that are in conflict. These are not civilisations as Toynbee or Spengler understood them, macro-civilisations, but rather communities on a much smaller scale, micro-civilisations, which are increasingly based on religions or large confessional communities.

Inasmuch as the secular (anti-religious and non-religious) attitude to the world and human values is unclear and unconvincing, the conditions have been created for the return of religion and religiosity to the spheres of public interest: intellectual, socio-cultural and political. The completion of secularisation does not imply just the secularisation of communism or Nazism, but also the secularisation of scientism, the scientific world-view, which fulfilled a quasi-religious function in the period of struggle against religion. Now the place of scientism is amidst the other integrated worldviews, together with religions as such, fundamentalist religious-political ideologies, 'economism' and secularism itself. The secularisation of secularism is taking place. This is the logic and inertia of the secularising process. After the completion of the process of de-monopolisation of religion it was time for the de-monopolisation of secularism: as a 'postreligious' worldview secularism loses its function as a social integrator, and in the global context now works as a disintegrating force.

VII

Despite the classical definition of the postmodern as the death of metanarratives, a new political, economic and even cultural metanarrative has made its appearance: globalisation.

Globalisation can be seen as a direct consequence of that optimistic Enlightenment secularism which inspired Europeans in their secular missionary approach to the entire world. The origins of globalisation can be found in the dynamics of the western post-Christian world, in the power of industrial and technological modernisation: it was the success of the latter, together with the 'religious' belief of Europeans in the truth of that success, which impelled them to impose modernisation as westernisation on the rest of the world, together with secularisation as an integral component.

[. . . p. 29/30]

Now the whole world has been conquered by post-Christianity, and the result of this is growing opposition from cultures and societies that are not postreligious. Globalisation is not only the outcome of the development of the western world, but also its project, because it is based not only on expansion as such but also on the very new-European secular idea of culture: the idea that all people are equal and that cultural differences are immaterial, because now culture is determined by science, technology and human rights, and not by archaic, traditional peculiarities such as religion. [. . .] Globalisation is a challenge to cultures and religions (and even to individual Christian confessions) issued by unifiers inspired by the paradigm of Enlightenment which is secular in its very essence. The new European idea of 'culture' has become a quasi-religious project because its goal is to replace real culture (or cultures), an impossible goal outside and without religion. In this sense postmodernism acts more justly. It does not replace anything by itself, but simply ascertains the result of secularisation.

The main significance of globalisation as a postsecular phenomenon is the extension of the religious situation in the 'post-Christian' world to the dimensions of humanity as a whole. This is the end of eurocentrism, which now becomes a form of provincialism. (Eurocentrism was one of the motors of the globalisation process, but as a result undermined its own position.) Today, religion means not only the traditional dominant religions and confessions of the western world, it means all the religions of the world, including even the smallest cults, both new and indigenous. Now there is awareness of all of them at the global level and they all influence each other, so that the religious situation in the West is now the global religious situation.

Nevertheless, no secularisation is taking place, or is likely to take place, in the Islamic world, nor in the traditional communities of Asia and Africa. The western world clashes face to face with the traditional. In these areas religion, far from being marginalised, still determines what happens in many spheres, including the political, and so religion returns to the secular world. Globalisation fills the postsecular age with its own particular meaning. Within the global context religion becomes a significant political factor.

For the western world (including Russia) one of the things this means is the end of religious liberalism and modernism as phenomena characteristic of the middle phase of secularisation (in the nineteenth century). The last phase of secularisation (in the twentieth century) produced examples of anti-liberal reaction (the Protestant neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, Roman Catholic neo-thomism, Eastern Orthodox neo-patristics) as well as examples of explicitly 'secular religion' (like the theology of the death of God). Religion in the postsecular age does not need to adjust; there is no need for it to make itself 'modern', because the western world now has already moved on to the 'postmodern' phase. [. . . p. 30/31. . .]

Secularism conquered religion and took its place, but through this Pyrrhic victory it lost its power, which was built on the basis of the old religious paradigm. Now it is time for the revenge of religion, in all its diverse forms and manifestations and in many different arenas.

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68 Philip S. Gorski and Ateş Altınordu: *After Secularization?* (2008)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Philip Gorski (b. 1963) has been a professor of sociology and religious studies at Yale University since 2004. From 1996 to 2004, he was a professor of sociology at Madison, Wisconsin. Gorski holds an Associate of Arts Degee from Deep Springs College (1983), and a BA in Social Sciences from Harvard (1986). In 1996, he obtained his PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, under the supervision of Robert N. Bellah. He has held visiting professorships at Shanghai, Brussels, Konstanz, and Singapore. Gorski is co-director (with Julia Adams) of Yale's Center for Comparative Research (CCR), and of the Religion and Politics Colloquium at the Yale MacMillan Center.

In his research, he focusses on comparative-historical sociology. He has a strong interest in both theory and methods. He has worked on modern and early modern Europe, as well as on white Christian Nationalism and American civil religion.

Gorski's publications include *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Growth of State Power in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago, 2003); *American Babylon: Democracy and Christianity Before and After Trump* (New York: Routledge, 2020), and *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2022, w. Samuel Perry).

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The article below gives an overview of the development of the debate on secularisation, secularism, and post-secularity as a field of contestation, in which diverse agendas conflict with each other.

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In an undergraduate textbook written more than 40 years ago, the British social anthropologist Anthony F. Wallace confidently asserted that "[t]he evolutionary future of religion is extinction. . . . Belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as the result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge" (Wallace 1966). Even at the time, most sociologists of religion would probably have found this statement overdrawn. Some would have argued that the future of religion was privatization or generalization, rather than extinction (Luckmann 1967, Parsons & Toby 1977). Others would have attributed less weight to scientific knowledge than to other forms of religious or social change, such as the Protestant Reformation or the industrial revolution (Berger 1969). Still, most would have agreed with the general thrust of the argument: that modernity was somehow undermining the social significance of religion (Wilson 1966).

Wallace's words would probably not even be known to contemporary sociologists had they not been repeatedly used as a set piece by Stark and collaborators in a series of articles attacking secularization theory from the mid-1980s onwards (Stark & Bainbridge 1985, Stark & Finke 2000, Stark & Iannaccone 1994). They presented Wallace's words as a canonical formulation of secularization theory. This was hardly fair because there were, and are, many different versions of the theory, most of which do not predict extinction (Gorski 2000; Tschannen 1992a, b; Yamane 1997). Still, it was effective: Stark and the supply-siders sparked a new round of debate about secularization theory and helped to revive the sociology of religion.

Of course, the fuel for that debate had already been accumulating for some time: the rise of the Moral Majority, the Iranian Revolution, the collapse of communism qua secular religion, the rapid spread of Pentecostalism in the global South, communal violence in South Asia. These and other developments challenged the confident pronouncements of religious decline that humanists, rationalists, and social scientists had been repeating since the days of Hume (1976, Hume & Coleman 2007), Voltaire (1974), and Comte (Comte & Lenzer 1998), to name only the best known. Secularization certainly seemed to have slowed or even stopped. Stark went further: He argued that secularization had never happened and urged that the term be expunged from the sociological lexicon (Stark 1999).

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Stark was not the only one drawing conclusions in 1999. That was also the year in which Peter Berger, one of the principal architects of secularization theory (Berger 1969) – and, for a time, one of Stark's favorite whipping boys (Finke & Stark 1988) – publicly recanted his earlier pronouncements concerning the purported link between religious pluralism and secularization. Surveying the contemporary world scene, Berger (1999) found little evidence of religious decline, except perhaps on the campuses of American universities and maybe also in Western Europe. The real puzzle, he countered, was not why religion had not declined in most parts of the world, but rather why it had declined in these particular milieus.

Nor were the second thoughts confined to the American academy. Religion was also being rediscovered on the other side of the Atlantic, in the very heartlands of secularity: Western Europe. In October 2001, just three weeks after the fateful attacks of September 11, 2001, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas gave a high-profile public address before the German Publishers Association. Habermas, long an icon of secular rationalism, pronounced that the world had entered a "postsecular age" (Habermas & Reemtsma 2001). He did not mean that the world was returning to a presecular age in which unbelief would be impossible and rationality would be reunited with religion. Rather, the postsecular age would be one in which religious and secular worldviews could coexist and even enter into dialogue with one another (Habermas 2006, Habermas & Mendieta 2002).

Not everyone was jumping on the postsecular bandwagon, though. During these very same [p. 56/57] years, as values voters (supposedly) returned George W. Bush to the White House and the Iraq War raged on, various natural scientists were busily writing up secularist manifestos defending unbelief and attacking religion (Dawkins 2006; Dennett 2006; Harris 2004, 2006). Their contributions were both cheered and jeered. The natural scientists were joined by prominent social scientists and public philosophers, who rose up in defense of secularization theory (Bruce 2002, Gauchet 1997, Hitchens 2007, Norris & Inglehart 2004). While acknowledging the historical contingency and geographical variability of secularization processes, they argued that secularization remained a useful concept – and a real process.

Though hardly exhaustive, the foregoing examples do show how much the terms of the secularization debate have shifted since the late 1960s. Today, secularism qua political project and secularization qua sociological theory both find themselves in an increasingly defensive and even beleaguered posture. Once hegemonic, liberal secularist philosophies and sociological theories of secularization are violently rejected by many outside the West, very much on the defensive in North America, and under fire even in Western Europe. Nor does the divide between religious and secular voices coincide with the division between left and right to the degree that it once did.

This review provides a brief introduction to secularization theory and a rapid survey of the current discussion of secularization. It is in four parts. We begin with a genealogy of the concept, tracking its various layers of meanings in sociological and presociological discourse. We then review the existing evidence for and against, noting

what is and is not known about the history and evolution of religiosity in the West. The third section of the paper focuses on debates concerning the relationship between religious movements, secularism, and democracy. This sets the stage for the conclusion of the paper, where we reflect on the current state of the field and suggest some general guidelines for future research. [. . . p. 57–75. . .]

Conclusion: After Secularization?

“After nearly three centuries of utterly failed prophesies and misrepresentations of both present and past, it seems time to carry the secularization doctrine to the graveyard of failed theories, and there to whisper ‘*requiescat in pace*’” (Stark 1999). Thus, Stark’s epitaph to the secularization debate almost a decade ago. In retrospect, Stark’s graveside jig appears in an even more comic light. One imagines the dead theory rising up from the grave, like a zombie in an old-school horror movie. To really push the horror-show imagery, though, secularization theory might be better compared to a Frankenstein monster, stitched together, as it is, from the remnants of long-dead debates – Augustinian theology, canon law, the Henrician Reformation, positivist philosophies of history, and so on. And the Frankenstein analogy can be pushed further still. Like the monster in Shelley’s tale, the theory began as a product of scientific hubris, which sometimes rebels against its masters, slipping out of their control and out into the public square of political debate, where it dances to the tune of other masters, who use it to denounce secular humanists and beckon religious ideas back into the public square. What is one to do with such a monstrous theory?

One strategy would be to invoke it less and use more analytically specific, and less politically laden, concepts whenever possible. For example, when analyzing the historically Christian countries, one could substitute unchurching or de-Christianization for individual-level secularization without any loss in meaning, and with a considerable gain in precision. One would no longer have to make (often questionable) assumptions about the nature and the future of religion tout court. For the same reasons, one might replace societal secularization with differentiation between church and state or the declining cultural authority of the Christian clergy.

This strategy is not without its disadvantages, however. Terms like secularization provide a focal point for scholarly debate, and empirical knowledge tends to condense and accumulate around theoretical concepts of this sort. The latest round of the secularization debate may not have produced consensus – an elusive goal in any event – but it has generated a great deal of knowledge. But if we wish to use it, we need to use it more carefully.

Another strategy, then, one advocated by Smith and others, is to treat secularization as an analytical variable. This means that we define secularization in a particular way for a particular project, and we use this definition in an ideal-typical fashion, as a means

of identifying variation that is explained by other concepts or mechanisms, instead of invoking secularization as both explanans and explanandum, the traditional practice. Or, conversely, we compare the variations in secularization to variations outside the religious field, e.g., in party politics or civic life. In short, secularization could be used in much the same fashion as, say, bureaucratization or democratization. The key proviso, here, is that we explicitly acknowledge the manifold and contradictory usages to which the secularization concept has been put and firmly renounce any pretenses to fixing a correct meaning once and for all.

So, we reject Stark's unwarranted recommendation. But we understand his frustrations. The debate about secularization has often led scholars of religion to focus narrowly on a scientifically unanswerable question and ignore other, more tractable ones, some of which are, arguably, just as urgent. The unanswerable question concerns the future of religion: Will it survive or will it die? All too often, debates about secularization degenerate into vehicles for partisan debates about the future of religion, with those who wish religion would finally disappear defining secularization in the [p. 75/76] most expansive possible way, so that they can accumulate as much evidence as possible that it is occurring, with the partisans of religion pursuing the reverse strategy.

Meanwhile, there are other more answerable, and more urgent, questions. We have noted two of them in this review. The first concerns secularism and democracy, particularly, but not exclusively, as they relate to Islam. Most Western theorists of democracy would agree that the establishment of a democratic polity involves some renunciation on the part of religious actors and, indeed, of all comprehensive worldviews. Why? First, because recognition of the right of conscience – the historical fount of all human rights (Jellinek & Farrand 1901) – inevitably generates religious pluralism. And second, because religious pluralism, combined with majority rule, creates the possibility of religious tyranny and minority oppression, which can be prevented only by codifying certain basic rights. Or so, at least, the Western experience suggests. The skeptics argue that Islam's claim to be a comprehensive way of life does not allow the necessary renunciation (e.g., Lewis 2002). Their critics counter by pointing to the internal pluralism and decentralized structure of the umma (Roy 2007). As we have noted, the critics' view is further buttressed by the history of Western Catholicism, which faced similar charges, charges that were eventually proven false (Gross 2004).

Another answerable question concerns the varieties of secularism. Unfortunately, this question has been doubly obscured by the secularization debate, insofar as it has been framed as a yes/no question, rather than a how question, and insofar as secularization theorists have, until recently, denied the importance of secularism qua movement and ideology. As we have seen, however briefly, there have been a wide variety of secular settlements, governing the proper boundaries and roles of religious and nonreligious institutions and actors across a variety of domains – education, social provision, marriage law, etc. Although political scientists have done some comparative spadework on these issues, and historians have dug fairly deeply into individual cases, sociologists have not contributed much in this area. This is unfortunate. In an era when secular set-

tlements in many parts of the world, including the United States, are under challenge, knowledge of the various forms of secularism, with their attendant advantages and dilemmas, would be useful knowledge indeed.

Are we then entering into a postsecular age, as Habermas and others have suggested? In our view, this is not a question that social scientists qua social scientists can answer. What can be said with some confidence, though, is that 2008 looks a lot different than, say, 1968. Outside of Western Europe, organized religion is flourishing, even resurging. So, too, is politicized religion. As the old political religions (e.g., nationalism, fascism, communism) have faded or disappeared, traditional, transcendent religion has become a key cleavage in domestic and international politics – in many contexts the key cleavage. The ranks of the pro-Enlightenment party of reason, meanwhile, have dramatically thinned, and not only in the West, with many one-time partisans adopting a more appreciative and open stance toward religion, even if they do not go native. This is not to say that the secularists have disappeared, or that secularism has vanished. Hitchens and Dawkins and other secular humanists and scientific naturalists are perhaps more vociferous now than they have been in almost a century. And with good reason: They are under attack! Still, it seems certain that their party will live to fight another day. With what outcome we cannot know. For the moment, however, they are in no position to expand the boundaries of the secular. It should be noted, though, that humanists are not the only secularists. There are many people of faith throughout the world who support some form of secularity because they believe the religious community must be shielded from political contamination, because they fear tyranny of the religious majority, or because they believe that religious pluralism is itself a positive good that should be protected, a fact that is vehemently denied by culture warriors of the right, who define secularism in such a way as to [p. 76/77] include everybody except themselves and their closest allies, and by the culture warriors of the left, who define religion in such a way that it includes only their most implacable enemies. Which is to say that the definition of the secular and its relationship to the religious are as hotly disputed now as ever, and that the scope of the debate is probably wider than ever. Whether this period of contestation marks the beginning of a postsecular age, or merely a period of secular ebb and religious flow, only time will tell.

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69 Jürgen Habermas: *Notes on Post-Secular Society* (2008)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) was born in Düsseldorf, Germany.[I] He studied philosophy, psychology, literature, and economics in Göttingen, Zürich, and Bonn. He received his doctoral degree at Bonn in 1954. Habermas worked with Theodor W. Adorno at the Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) in Frankfurt, before being appointed extraordinary professor of philosophy in Heidelberg. He eventually succeeded Max Horkheimer as chair of philosophy and sociology in Frankfurt in 1964. From 1971 to 1983, he was director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Living Conditions in the Scientific and Technical World in Starnberg, before returning to his chair of philosophy at Frankfurt. Habermas is the recipient of numerous honorary doctorates, and has been awarded a number of prizes and distinctions for his work. He has long been one of the leading public intellectuals in Germany, and his academic works are read and discussed worldwide. Although widely considered a second-generation critical theorist, he is mainly concerned with critical interventions and contributions to liberal political and social theory. Among his most popular works are *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere)*[II] and *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (The Theory of Communicative Action)*,[III] his intellectual interventions in the so-called *Historikerstreit*,[IV] and *Faktizität und Geltung (Between Facts and Norms)*,[V] with his reflections on deliberative politics.

I For biographical information on Jürgen Haberman see: James Gordon Finlayson and Dafydd Huw Rees, "Jürgen Habermas," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, and Uri Nodelman, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/habermas, accessed 25.06.2024; Max Cherem, "Jürgen Habermas (1929-),“ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://iep.utm.edu/habermas/, accessed 25.06.2024; "Friedenspreis 2001: Jürgen Habermas," Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels, https://www.friedenspreis-des-deutschen-buchhandels.de/alle-preistraeger-seit-1950/2000-2009/juergen-habermas, accessed 25.06.2024; Barbara Schmidt and Irmgard Zündorf, "Biografie Jürgen Habermas," LeMO-Biografien, Lebendiges Museum Online, Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, https://www.hdg.de/lemo/biografie/juergen-habermas.html accessed 25.06.2024.
II *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1962 [English: 1989]).
III *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981 [English: 1984 and 1987]).
IV See *Historikerstreit*: *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, ed. Rudolf Augstein, and Karl Dietrich Bracher (München: Piper, 1987).
V *Faktizität und Geltung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1992 [English: 1996]).

Johannes Duschka, Leipzig University, Research Centre Global Dynamics, KFG 2344 "Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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A central reference point for Habermas' reflections on and diagnosis of post-secularity is his famous speech at the award ceremony of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2001, which was widely discussed in the media.[VI] In the intellectual aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Habermas attempts to rethink the controversial relationship between religion, science, reason, and the state in modernity, drawing on the notion of the post-secular society (see Mahmood, text no. 64, Kyrlezhev, text no. 67, Dalferth, text no. 70, Mufti, text no. 72). The text we reproduce here in excerpts is a later, more sociological elaboration on the topic. In light of the diagnosis of a religiously mobilised world, and the critique of the classical secularisation thesis as Eurocentric, Habermas suggests holding on to accounts of differentiation und individualisation (see Casanova, text no. 32, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, text no. 42). He nonetheless agrees that premature projections of religious decline cannot be upheld, in light of religionised conflicts and growing pluralism in a postcolonial world. These are the defining elements of the Habermasian post-secular society, raising the normative question of how to organise social and political life "despite the growth of a plurality of cultures and religious worldviews." Calling for a "filter" instead of a wall between religion and state, Habermas attempts to navigate the diagnosed *Kulturkampf* between multiculturalist or communitarian and radically secularist or liberal positions, by resorting to a modest plea for complementary learning processes – which clearly draws on his idea of a deliberative democracy. The question remains, however, how convincing the idea of an "institutionalized decision-making process at the parliamentary, court, governmental and administrative levels [...] clearly separated from the informal flows of political communication and opinion formation among the broader public of citizens" really is, in a world characterised by vast social, political, and economic inequality, and corresponding power relations.

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Jürgen Habermas. "Notes on Post-Secular Society." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2008): 17–29; 17–28. This text originally appeared in German in *Blätter für Deutsche und Internationale Politik*, in April 2008. It was initially written for a lecture which Jürgen Habermas gave on March 15th, 2007 at the Nexus Institute of the University of Tilberg, Netherlands.

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VI "Friedenspreis 2001: Jürgen Habermas."

The controversial term "post-secular society" can only be applied to the affluent societies of Europe or countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where people's religious ties have steadily or rather quite dramatically lapsed in the post-World War II period.

These regions have witnessed a spreading awareness that their citizens are living in a secularized society. In terms of sociological indicators, however, the religious behavior and convictions of the local populations have by no means changed to such an extent as to justify labeling these societies "post-secular" even though trends in these societies towards deinstitutionalized and new spiritual forms of religiosity have not offset the tangible losses by the major religious communities.

Reconsidering the Sociological Debate on Secularization

Nevertheless, global changes and the visible conflicts that flare up in connection with religious issues give us reason to doubt whether the relevance of religion has waned. An ever smaller number of sociologists now support the hypothesis, and it went unopposed for a long time, that there is close linkage between the modernization of society and the secularization of the population. The hypothesis rests on three initially plausible considerations.

First, progress in science and technology promotes an *anthropocentric understanding* of the "disenchanted" world because the totality of empirical states and events can be causally explained; and a scientifically enlightened mind cannot be easily reconciled with theocentric and metaphysical worldviews. Second, with the *functional differentiation of social subsystems,* the churches and other religious organizations lose their control over law, politics, public welfare, education and science; they restrict themselves to their proper function of administering the means of salvation, turn exercising religion into a private matter and in general lose public influence and relevance. Finally, [p. 17/18] the development from agrarian through industrial to post-industrial societies leads to average-to-higher levels of welfare and greater social security; and with a reduction of risks in life, and the ensuing increase in existential security, there is a drop in the personal need for a practice that promises to cope with uncontrolled contingencies through faith in a "higher" or cosmic power.

These were the main reasons for the secularization thesis. Among the expert community of sociologists, the thesis has been a subject of controversy for more than two decades. Lately, in the wake of the not unfounded criticism of a narrow Eurocentric perspective, there is even talk of the "end of the secularization theory." The United States, with the undiminished vibrancy of its religious communities and the unchanging proportion of religiously committed and active citizens, nevertheless remains the spearhead of modernization. It was long regarded as the great exception to the secularising

trend, yet informed by the *globally extended* perspective on other cultures and world religions, the US now seems to exemplify the norm.

From this revisionist view, the European development, whose Occidental rationalism was once supposed to serve as a model for the rest of the world, is actually the exception rather than the norm— treading a deviant path. We and not they are pursuing a *sonderweg.* Above all, three overlapping phenomena converge to create the impression of a worldwide "resurgence of religion": the missionary expansion; a fundamentalist radicalization; and the political instrumentalization of the potential for violence innate in many of the world religions.

A first sign of their vibrancy is the fact that orthodox, or at least conservative, groups within the established religious organizations and churches are on the advance everywhere. This holds for Hinduism and Buddhism just as much as it does for the three monotheistic religions. Most striking of all is the regional spread of these established religions in Africa and in the countries of East and Southeast Asia. The missionary successes apparently depend, among other things, on the flexibility of the corresponding forms of organization. The transnational and multicultural Roman Catholic Church is adapting better to the globalizing trend than are the Protestant churches, which are nationally organized and the principal losers. Most dynamic of all are the decentralized networks of Islam (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa) and the Evangelicals (particularly in Latin America). They stand out for an ecstatic form of religiosity inspired by charismatic leaders.

As to fundamentalism, the fastest-growing religious movements, such as the Pentecostals and the radical Muslims, can be most readily described as "fundamentalist." They either combat the modern world or withdraw from it into isolation. Their forms of worship combine spiritualism and adventism with rigid moral conceptions [p. 18/19] and literal adherence to the holy scriptures. By contrast, the "new age movements" which have mushroomed since the 1970s exhibit a "Californian" syncretism; they share with the Evangelicals a de-institutionalized form of religious observance. In Japan, approximately 400 such sects have arisen, which combine elements of Buddhism and popular religions with pseudoscientific and esoteric doctrines. In the People's Republic of China, the political repression of the Falun Gong sect has highlighted the large number of "new religions" whose followers are thought to number some 80 million.

Finally, the mullah regime in Iran and Islamic terrorism are merely the most spectacular examples of a political unleashing of the potential for violence innate in religion. Often smouldering conflicts that are profane in origin are first ignited once coded in religious terms. This is true of the "desecularization" of the Middle East conflict, of the politics of Hindu nationalism and the enduring conflict between India and Pakistan and of the mobilization of the religious right in the US before and during the invasion of Iraq.

The Descriptive Account of a "Post-Secular Society" – And the Normative Issue of How Citizens of Such a Society Should Understand Themselves

I cannot discuss in detail the controversy among sociologists concerning the supposed *sonderweg* of the secularized societies of Europe in the midst of a religiously mobilized world society. My impression is that the data collected globally still provide surprisingly robust support for the defenders of the secularization thesis. In my view the weakness of the theory of secularization is due rather to rash inferences that betray an imprecise use of the concepts of "secularization" and "modernization." What is true is that in the course of the differentiation of functional social systems, churches and religious communities increasingly confined themselves to their core function of pastoral care and had to renounce their competencies in other areas of society. At the same time, the practice of faith also withdrew into more a personal or subjective domain. There is a correlation between the functional specification of the religious system and the individualization of religious practice.

However, as Jose Casanova correctly points out, the loss of function and the trend toward individualization do not necessarily imply that religion *loses influence and relevance* either in the political arena and the culture of a society or in the personal conduct of life. Quite apart from their numerical weight, religious communities can obviously still claim a "seat" in the life of societies that are largely secularized. Today, public consciousness in Europe can be described in terms of a "post-secular society" to the extent that at present it still has to "adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment." The revised reading [p. 19/20] of the secularization hypothesis relates less to its substance and more to the predictions concerning the future role of "religion." The description of modern societies as "post-secular" refers to *a change in consciousness* that I attribute primarily to three phenomena.

First, the broad perception of those global conflicts that are often presented as hinging on religious strife changes public consciousness. The majority of European citizens do not even need the presence of intrusive fundamentalist movements and the fear of terrorism, defined in religious terms, to make them aware of their own relativity within the global horizon. This undermines the secularistic belief in the *foreseeable disappearance* of religion and robs the secular understanding of the world of any triumphal zest. The awareness of living in a secular society is no longer bound up with the *certainty* that cultural and social modernization can advance only at the cost of the public influence and personal relevance of religion.

Second, religion is gaining influence not only worldwide but also within national public spheres. I am thinking here of the fact that churches and religious organizations are increasingly assuming the role of "communities of interpretation" in the public arena of secular societies. They can attain influence on public opinion and will formation by making relevant contributions to key issues, irrespective of whether their arguments are convincing or objectionable. Our pluralist societies constitute a respon-

sive sounding board for such interventions because they are increasingly split on value conflicts requiring political regulation. [. . .]

Pushing the issue closer home, let me remind you that the visibility and vibrancy of foreign religious communities also spur the attention to the familiar churches and congregations. [. . .]

The third stimulus for a change of consciousness among the population is the immigration of "guest-workers" and refugees, specifically from countries with traditional cultural backgrounds. Since the 16th century, Europe has had to contend with *confessional schisms* within its own culture and society. In the wake of the present immigration, the more blatant dissonances between different religions link up with the challenge of a *pluralism of ways of life* typical of immigrant societies. This extends beyond the challenge of a *pluralism of denominations.* In societies like ours which are still caught in the painful process of transformation into postcolonial immigrant societies, [p. 20/21] the issue of tolerant coexistence between different religious communities is made harder by the difficult problem of how to integrate immigrant cultures socially.

[. . .]

If we henceforth adopt the perspective of participants, however, we face a quite different, namely normative question: How should we see ourselves as members of a post-secular society and what must we reciprocally expect from one another in order to ensure that in firmly entrenched nation states, social relations remain civil despite the growth of a plurality of cultures and religious worldviews?

All European societies today face this question.

[. . . p. 21/22]

From an Uneasy *Modus Vivendi* to a Balance Between Shared Citizenship and Cultural Difference

[. . .]

[The] constitutional state is only able to guarantee its citizens equal freedom of religion under the proviso that they no longer barricade themselves within their religious communities and seal themselves off from one another. All subcultures, whether religious or not, are expected to free their individual members from their embrace so that these citizens can *mutually recognize* one another in civil society as members of *one and* [p. 22/23] *the same* political community. As democratic citizens they give themselves laws which grant them the right, as private citizens, to preserve their identity in the context of their own particular culture and worldview. This new relationship of democratic government, civil society and subcultural self-maintenance is the key to correctly understanding the two motives that today struggle with each other although they are meant to be mutually complementary. For the universalist project of the political Enlightenment by no means contradicts the particularist sensibilities of a correctly conceived multiculturalism.

The *liberal rule of law* already guarantees religious freedom as a basic right, meaning that the fate of religious minorities no longer depends on the benevolence of a more or less tolerant state authority. Yet it is the democratic state that first enables the impartial application of this principled religious freedom. When Turkish communities in Berlin, Cologne or Frankfurt seek to get their prayer houses out of the backyards in order to build mosques visible from afar, the issue is no longer the principle per se, but its fair application. However, evident reasons for defining what should or should not be tolerated can only be ascertained by means of the deliberative and inclusive procedures of democratic will formation. The principle of tolerance is first freed of the suspicion of expressing mere condescension, when the conflicting parties *meet as equals* in the process of reaching an agreement with one another. How the lines between positive freedom of religion (i.e., the right to exercise your own faith) and the negative freedom (i.e., the right to be spared the religious practices of people of other faiths) should be drawn in an actual case is always a matter of controversy. But in a democracy those affected, however indirectly, are themselves involved in the decision-making process.

[. . . p. 23/24. . .]

Without the inclusion of minorities in civil society, the two complementary processes will not be able to develop hand in hand, namely, the opening of the political community to a difference-sensitive inclusion of foreign minority cultures, on the one hand, and, on the other, the reciprocal opening of these subcultures to a state which encourages its individual members participate in the political life at large.

Kulturkampf Between Radical Multiculturalism and Militant Secularism: Philosophical Background Assumptions

[. . .] The party of the multiculturalists appeals to the protection of collective identities and accuses the other side of representing a “fundamentalism of the Enlightenment,” whereas the secularists insist on the uncompromising inclusion of minorities in the existing political framework and accuse their opponents of a “multiculturalist betrayal” of the core values of the Enlightenment. In some European countries a third party plays a major role in these battles.

The so-called multiculturalists fight for an unprejudiced adjustment of the legal system to the cultural minorities’ claim to equal treatment. They warn against a policy of enforced assimilation with uprooting consequences. The secular state, they say, should not push through the incorporation of minorities into the egalitarian community of citizens in such a manner that it tears individuals out of their identity-forming contexts. From this communitarian view, a policy of abstract integration is under suspicion of subjecting minorities to the imperatives of the majority culture.

Today, the wind is blowing in the multiculturalists' faces[.] [. . . p. 24/25. . .] In fact, Muslim immigrants cannot be integrated into Western society in defiance of their religion but only with it.

On the other hand, the *secularists* fight for a colorblind inclusion of all citizens, irrespective of their cultural origin and religious belonging. This side warns against the consequences of a "politics of identity" that goes too far in adapting the legal system to the claims of preserving the intrinsic characteristics of minority cultures. From this "laicistic" viewpoint, religion must remain an exclusively private matter. [. . .] Such protection [the introduction of collective cultural rights] for entire cultural groups would in fact curtail the right of their individual members to choose a way of life of their own.

Thus the conflicting parties both pretend to fight for the same purpose, a liberal society that allows autonomous citizens to coexist in a civilized manner. And yet they are at loggerheads in a *Kulturkampf* that resurfaces at every new political occasion.

[. . .]

The radical reading of multiculturalism often relies on the notion of the so- called "incommensurability" of worldviews, discourses or conceptual schemes. From this contextualist perspective, cultural ways of life appear as semantically closed universes, each of which keeps the lid on its own standards of rationality and truth claims. Therefore, each culture is supposed to exist for itself as a semantically sealed whole, cut off from dialogues with other cultures. With the exception of [p. 25/26] unsteady compromises, submission or conversion are the only alternatives for terminating conflicts between such cultures. Given this premise, radical multiculturalists cannot discern in any universalist validity claim, such as the claim for the universality of democracy and human rights, anything but the imperialist power claim of a dominant culture.

[. . .]

Ironically, the very same relativism is shared by those militant Christians who fight Islamic fundamentalism while proudly claiming the Enlightenment culture either as part and parcel of the tradition of Roman Catholicism or as the specific offshoot of Protestantism. [. . .] "The Enlightenment has become attractive specifically because its values are not just universal, but because they are 'our,' i.e., European, Western values." [. . . p. 26/27]

Complementary Learning Processes: Religious and Secular Mentalities

[. . .] Whether or not we consider the application of the predicate "post-secular" appropriate for a description of West European societies, one can be convinced, for philosophical reasons, that religious communities owe their persisting influence to an obstinate survival of pre-Modern modes of thought – a fact that begs an empirical explanation. From the viewpoint of secularism, the substance of faith is scientifically discredited

either way. As such, discussions about religious traditions and with religious figures, who still lay claim to a significant public role, escalate into polemic.

In the use of terms I distinguish between "secular" and "secularist." Unlike the indifferent stance of a secular or unbelieving person, who relates agnostically to religious validity claims, secularists tend to adopt a polemical stance toward religious doctrines that maintain a public influence despite the fact that their claims cannot be scientifically justified.

[. . .]

It is to the credit of the secularists that they, too, insist on the indispensability of including all citizens as equals in civil society. Because a democratic order cannot simply be *imposed* on its authors, the constitutional state confronts its citizens with the demanding expectations of an ethics of citizenship that reaches beyond mere obedience to the law. Religious citizens and communities must not only superficially adjust to the constitutional order. They are expected to appropriate the secular legitimation of constitutional principles under the premises of their own faith. [. . .] Many Muslim communities still have this painful learning process before them. [. . .p. 27/28. . .] But the discussion on a desired Euro-Islam makes us once more aware of the fact that it is the religious communities that will themselves decide whether they can recognize in a reformed faith their "true faith."

[. . .] But a change in mentality cannot be prescribed, nor can it be politically manipulated or pushed through by law; it is at best the result of a learning process. And it only appears as a "learning process" from the viewpoint of a secular self-understanding of Modernity. In view of what an ethics of democratic citizenship requires in terms of mentalities, we come up against the very limits of a normative political theory that can justify only rights and duties. Learning processes can be fostered, but not morally or legally stipulated.

[. . .] A *complementary learning process* is certainly necessary on the secular side unless we confuse the neutrality of a secular state in view of competing religious worldviews with the purging of the political public sphere of all religious contributions.

Certainly, the domain of a state, which controls the means of legitimate coercion, should not be opened to the strife between various religious communities, otherwise the government could become the executive arm of a religious majority that imposes its will on the opposition. In a constitutional state, all norms that can be legally implemented must be formulated and *publicly justified* in a language that all the citizens understand. Yet the state's neutrality does not preclude the permissibility of religious utterances within the political public sphere, as long as the institutionalized decision-making process at the parliamentary, court, governmental and administrative levels remains clearly separated from the informal flows of political communication and opinion formation among the broader public of citizens. The "separation of church and state" calls for a filter between these two spheres – a filter through which only "translated," i.e., secular, contributions may pass from the confused din of voices in the public sphere into the formal agendas of state institutions.

70 Ingolf U. Dalferth: *Post-Secular Society: Christianity and the Dialectics of the Secular* (2010)

Introduced by Christoph Kleine

Introduction

Ingolf U. Dalferth (b. 1948) is a German philosopher of religion and Protestant theologian. His main field of expertise lies in the contemporary philosophy of religion and orientation. He studied theology, philosophy and linguistics in Tübingen, Edinburgh, Vienna, and Cambridge. After receiving his doctorate and post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification in theology from the University of Tübingen, he held various positions, such as lecturer in Durham, and professor in Tübingen, Uppsala, and Frankfurt. From 1995 to 2013, he was Professor of Systematic Theology, Symbolism and Philosophy of Religion at the University of Zurich. He has also been a professor emeritus at Claremont Graduate University since 2020.

In his article, a small part of which is printed below, Dalferth provides a rather unique definition of a 'post-secular' society. In his eyes, such a society is characterised neither by a resurgence of religion, nor by a stronger public presence of religion. Nor does he follow Habermas (see text no. 69) in arguing that secular people in a post-secular society should be prepared to recognise meaningful content in religious utterances, which can be translated and introduced into a secular discourse. Rather, for Dalferth, the distinction between the religious and the secular becomes irrelevant to the self-identification of a post-secular society. Such a society is defined neither by being religious, nor by being secular.

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[. . .] Post-secular societies are not those in which everyone is free to inquire into religious or spiritual [p. 323/324] questions or refrain from it (for precisely this is a defining feature of secular societies) or in which religion plays an important role in the public sphere (for this is also characteristic of pre-secular societies), but rather those which define themselves no longer, not even implicitly, by reference to questions of religion or spirituality in whatever sense. If we understand "society" in Niklas Luhman's sense as the most encompassing social system (Luhmann 2006),[1] then a society is post-secular if reference to religion or spirituality is no longer of basic, principal, or indeed any importance at all for its self-understanding and self-definition. The modern differentiation of society into functional spheres or social sub-systems (Luhmann 1982, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008) is such that it embraces a plurality of publics (politics, economy, science, religion, law, art, the media, etc.), each of which is constituted by characteristic modes of interaction and communication (Dalferth 2000, 2001) without privileging any of them over the others or giving priority to the principle of differentiation of any particular sphere (e.g., religious vs. secular) to determine or define the character of society at large.

Thus, truly post-secular societies are neither religious nor secular. They do not prescribe or privilege a religion, but neither do they actively and intentionally refrain from doing so. They are neither for nor against religion(s), whether in the private lives of their citizens or in the public realms. Rather, they take no stand on this matter, because it is irrelevant for their self-understanding and without import for the communicative, civic, legal, political, or economic operations by and through which they define themselves. For them, religion has ceased to be something to which a society has to relate in embracing, rejecting, prescribing, negating, or allowing it. Religion in whatever form has become a matter of indifference. Recent empirical research has substantiated this "apatheism" (Rauch 2003) for considerable parts of East Germany, Slovenia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and other Middle, North, and East European countries (Pollack 1998, 2003, 2008; Pollack et al. 1998; Robbers 2005; Ferrari 2008; Motzkin and Fischer 2008).

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1 [note 1 in the original] If social systems are systems of communication, and society the most encompassing social system that includes all other systems of communication, then society tends toward a world society (cf. Angel et al. 2008). But while this is true of certain forms of communication today (World Wide Web), there are good reasons to continue to use the term in the plural to speak of historically, geographically, or culturally different societies.

People may or may not be religious–some states still are–but these societies are not, and hence there is no need for them to be secular. [p. 324–332. . .]

[T]he historical development of Western societies has to be described differently under the heading of the changing focus on the secular. On the one hand, there is an important differentiation to be acknowledged between *state* (political sphere) and *society* (the totality of socially differentiated spheres); on the other hand, the *state-church* or *state-religion* relationship cannot serve as a paradigm for the relationship of a society to religion. The former is a relationship between particular sub-spheres of society, the latter a relationship of the whole of society to one of its spheres. By not distinguishing between the political sphere (state) and the totality of social spheres (society), the arguments for the contemporary emergence of post-secular society confuse statements about changing relations between different spheres of society with statements about a society's relations to its spheres.

How important it is to distinguish these types of relations can be seen from four typical constellations of *state, society,* and *individual(s)* in what I shall call the *religious, tolerant, secular*, and *post-secular* types of state that can be identified in the political history of the West:

(1) *Religious states* prescribe which religion is to be practiced believed by their citizens. [. . . p. 332/333. . .]

(2) *Tolerant states* do not define which religion is to be practiced by their citizens, but assume every citizen to practice one religion or another, as was the case in many European nation states in the nineteenth century (cf. Dalferth and Famos 2004; Classen 2006). [. . .]

(3) *Secular states* (as opposed to anti-religious states that prescribe atheism or ban particular religions) leave it to their citizens to choose between religious or non-religious ways of life, they stop [p. 333/334] themselves by law from interfering with the religious or non-religious orientations and practices of their citizens, and they take explicitly and in a legally binding way a neutral stance toward all questions of religion. Secular states neither prescribe a religion nor merely tolerate different religions, but accept the *fundamental right* of every citizen to live the life he or she wants to live (cf. Classen 2006; Germann 2008), whether or not they also insist on the duty of their citizens to pursue public justification for the views on which they base their support of coercive laws (cf. Eberle 2002). That is to say, secular states are neutral not only with respect to which religion their citizens practice but even with respect to whether they practice a religion at all, or no religion, or live an anti-religious life. In such a state, neither religious nor non-religious views and ways of life are prescribed to anyone but everyone is entitled to decide for the sort of life he or she wants to live: *one state, many religions and non-religion(s).*

    (a) Thus the state is not merely tolerant but defines itself as *neutral* with respect to the option between religious and non-religious ways of life: it restricts itself by law to pass or accept any pro- or anti-religious law, and it systematically distinguishes the self-description of religious groups and traditions in their

own imagery, conceptuality, or semantics (Christian faith; church; Christmas; Easter) from its own "neutral" legal terminology for these social realities (religions; religious organizations; festivity season; spring break).

(b) In doing so, society becomes ever better distinguished from the state and other social spheres (law, economy, science, religion, media, private life, etc.).

(c) *Individuals* are not merely tolerated to practice the religion they want (or no religion at all) but are legally entitled to do so.

(4) *Post-secular states* differ from secular states, in that they cease to define themselves as neutral vis-à-vis religion or non-religion. They do not take a stance toward the religion or non-religion of their citizens or the religious or anti-religious organizations in society, but they also refrain from professing to be neutral and from explicitly *not* taking a stance with respect to religious matters. To relate to questions of religion has become irrelevant to their self-understanding. This does not imply that religions are assumed to be unimportant, or ignored, suppressed, attacked, or regarded with more suspicion than any other sphere, organization, or activity in society. Rather, the state, when defining its relations to society at large or to particular spheres of society, no longer privileges religion [p. 334/335] from other spheres by insisting on being "neutral" or "secular" regards religion.

This post-secular indifference is only possible under two conditions: first, the political system (i.e., the state) has learned to distinguish between its relations to society as a whole, to social spheres such as economy, science, religion, family, everyday life, etc., and to individual citizens and their practices, world-views and life-styles; second, it no longer privileges its relation to religion over its relations to other spheres of society, but takes that sphere to be one among many others. This has nothing to do with rationalization and privatization, that is, with views about rational or moral defensibility or indefensibility of religious convictions, or with assigning religions a place merely in the private life of individuals or also a public role. Whether religious or non-religious views can be rationally or morally justified is a question for individuals, not for the state; if a public role of religions is acknowledged, then it is a role *in society*, not in the state, and it is a consequence of the differentiation not only of social spheres but also of the different sorts of "publics" that go with them.

(a) Thus, a post-secular *state* is *indifferent* to questions of religion or non-religion, and not merely neutral: There may be *many religions and non-religions in society but the state does not bother to define its relations to them in a particular way*. There is no more need for a law that there shall be no law for or against a religion as there is need for a law that there shall be no law for or against sports or farming or musical entertainment. If need arises, problems can be dealt with in the various sub-systems of society, including the legal and the political system. But the state no longer privileges its (non-)relation to religion as a characteristic or defining feature of its role and function in society.

(b) Therefore, a post-secular *society* is the one in which religion may or may not be present and practiced, but in which this fact is of no particular importance to the political or any other (non-religious) sub-system of society (economy, law, education, etc.).[2]
(c) Hence *individuals* may or may not be religious in post-secular societies; there also may or may not be religions as a particular [p. 335/336] sub-sphere of social life with the specific publics that go with it; but none of the non-religious sub-spheres defines its relations to others in religious terms or by explicitly refraining from doing so. If there is religion, it is a fact of life. But it is nothing that requires society at large, or any social sub-sphere, to take a particular positive, or negative, or neutral stance to it.

Thus, the picture that emerges when we place these four types of states and societies under the heading of the religious/secular distinction in a temporal order differs according to the level of description.

At the level of the *state* or *political sphere*, the development is from *religious* through *tolerant* and *secular* to *post-secular* states, but the important change is from the religious to the secular state, whereas the tolerant state is only an intermediary and there is no significant difference for the individual citizen who lives in a secular or post-secular state.

At the level of *individuals*, on the other hand, the decisive step takes place with the change from a *tolerant* to a *secular* state in which persons with diverging religious or non-religious views are not merely tolerated but legally entitled to hold, confess, and, within the boundaries of law, practice their religious or non-religious convictions. The further change from secular to post-secular society, on the other hand, does not make much difference at the level of individuals, at least not in principle, and therefore there is no clear distinction between the life of a secular and a post-secular individual, even though the concrete historical circumstances and legal structures of a society may make a considerable difference to the actual religious or non-religious life of a person. There is nothing the post-secular individual can do that the secular could not have done, at least not in principle. Each can practice a religion, or refrain from doing so.

At the level of *society*, finally, there is a development from a (relatively) undifferentiated society that does not, or only institutionally within a stratified society, distinguish between political and religious spheres to a society that is clearly distinct from any of its sub-spheres and does not privilege any of its sub-spheres over against the others. This is only the case in *post-secular society* in which the political system has stopped to define itself in religious as well as in non-religious terms that still implicitly refer to religious

2 [note 2 in the original] One could even distinguish between post-secular societies of different degrees depending on how many of its sub-systems relate to religion in a positive or negative way that is of importance to the respective sub-system.

convictions and practices. As long as a state sees a need to describe itself as secular, it rejects a religious self-definition, but still accepts *the negation or rejection of a religious determination as an intrinsic feature of its own self-understanding*. It is one thing not to identify with a religion; it is another to reject any such [p. 336/337] identification; and it is a third to have no need explicitly to reject an identification or to profess to be neutral with respect to religious, non-religious, or anti-religious matters. Only the last one is not a secular but a post-secular society.

Accordingly, whereas it makes little sense to speak of post-secular individuals beyond those who confess to be "apatheists" in a secular society, it does make sense to speak of post-secular states and societies. But post-secular societies are not those in which the tide of secularism has been stopped, so that individuals can at last practice whatever religion they want. They are rather those societies in which states longer define themselves as secular. Hence the real locus for the term "post-secular" is not at the level of society at large or life but at the level of the state or the political sphere or system. *States* may be secular or non-secular (pre- or post-secular); *societies* are post-secular only insofar as the political system has become politically indifferent with respect to questions of religion or non-religion; and in *individual life* there is no real difference marked by this distinction since everything that safeguards religious freedom and enables spiritual inquiry can be found in secular states and societies already – the distinction between "religious" and "secular" is understood in the light of *social differentiation* and not meshed up with issues of privatization or rationalization.

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71 Nilüfer Göle: *Manifestations of the Religious-Secular Divide: Self, State, and the Public Sphere* (2010)

Introduced by Monika Wohlrab-Sahr

Introduction

Nilüfer Göle (b. 1953, Ankara) is a professor of sociology and Directrice d'études at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Centre d'Analyse et d'Intervention Sociologiques (CADIS), in Paris. Göle completed her secondary education at Ankara College, and then studied sociology at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. From there, she went to Paris, and received her PhD from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in 1982, under the supervision of Alain Touraine. From 1986 to 2001, she taught sociology at Boğaziçi Üniversitesi in Istanbul, where she completed her post-doctoral 'Habilitation' qualification in 1988. From there, she returned to Paris, to work at EHESS. Göle has held guest professorships and fellowships at the University of Michigan, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the New School for Social Research in New York, the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center, Bellagio, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. In 2012, she received an honorary doctorate from Leuphana University Lüneburg.

Coming from a feminist standpoint, her works deal critically with the impact of Atatürk's Turkish modernisation and secularisation project, and its civilizing mission, and with the Islamic counter-movement, especially among young women. The issue of veiling plays an important role in her work, for example in *The Forbidden Modern*. Göle considers Islamist movements to be part of a Turkish modernisation process that runs counter to Atatürk's elitist modernisation, which was decoupled from the religiosity of the people. She has been heavily criticized by some Turkish intellectuals and scholars, who argue that she has paved the way for the present Islamist government.

Göle also deals with the visibility of Islam in the European public sphere, and the reactions to it. The revival of religion, she argues, reflects the loss of hegemony of the secular, at the levels of the state, the public, and self-governance.

In the text presented here, Göle argues that the plurality of secularisms in the world needs to be acknowledged as not simply adoptions of a seemingly universal Western model, but creative reinterpretations based on inter-civilisational encounters.

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My aim in this chapter is to present a succinct mental mapping of the changes, shifts, and displacements that are currently taking place in our ways of approaching the secular-religious divide. I propose an analysis and selective reassessment of the changes that have occurred during the last three decades in our approaches to secularism. Due to our ongoing conversations across cultures and disciplines, there is an increasing awareness in the social sciences that there is not one ideal-model of secularism, whether it is defined by the Anglo-Saxon liberal model or by French political "laïcité". Rather there exists a plurality of secularisms in different national, cultural, and religious contexts, including non-Western secularisms, as, for example, in India and Turkey. The point of departure [. . .] is the necessity of decoupling secularism and Western experience and acknowledging the plurality of secularisms. It aims to foster a comparative gaze between different genealogies, historical trajectories, cultural habitations, and political formations of the secular. Not only the plurality of secularisms that supposes distinct national formations but also the cultural crossings and the interconnected histories of secularism need to be highlighted to understand today's religious-secular formations and their confrontations.

It is therefore not sufficient to open our readings of secularism to its multiple configurations in distinct national formations as if they were independent from each other. The formations of the secular follow different historical trajectories and have different religious genealogies in different places, yet they are closely interconnected with hegemonic impositions of Western modernity and colonialism. The revival of religious movements, conservative values, various fundamentalisms, and in particular Islamist movements challenges the authoritarian modes of secularism that exclude religion from public life and from definitions of the modern self. New modes of confrontation are taking place between [p. 41/42] the secular and the religious not only within national formations, but also across cultures and civilisations.

Coupling the incomparable, namely the French and Turkish examples, despite their differences, can help us understand the intercivilizational encounter of the secular. The two different historical experiences, European and non-European, with two different religious genealogies, Christian and Muslim, following two different trajectories of nation state building, democratic and authoritarian, are historically connected to

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each other by the principle of “laicite”. Both countries cherish Republican secularism and idealize a public life exempt from religious signs, yet both have witnessed in the last thirty years the rise of Islamic visibility in public life and a destabilization of the established boundaries between the secular and the religious, leading to a process of confrontation, rivalry, and mimicry between the two. If Turkish secularism, “laiklik,” is derived from French “laïcité” and from dialogical encounter with Western civilisation, today debates on French secularism are engaged in relation to Islamic presence in Europe. The Islamic head scarf issue crystallizes, both in France and in Turkey, the debates on the presence of religious visibility in public life, the civilizational aspect of the confrontation, and the enforcement of Republican secularism by legal rulings or the support of the army.

The first point that needs to be emphasized is that the Western master narrative of secularism undergoes a radical change as it shifts from an “indigenous” debate that is shaped by exchanges with Christian religion to that of confrontation with Islam.

The second shift concerns the acknowledgment of the plurality of secularisms and a growing interest in depicting and understanding non-Western forms of secularity. The master narrative of Western secularity has imposed a sociological gaze that has evaluated non-European experiences with an established set of criteria and measured the inconsistencies or deficiencies in respect to a model that is supposed to be universal. However studies of the secular have introduced the idea that secularity is a *longue-duree* history of reforms that initially had their loci within religion itself and have deconstructed religious-free approaches to secularism. Marcel Gauchet, whose work elucidates the particular role that Christianity played in the process of secularity (Christianity as “the religion of the end of religion”), is a pioneer in rearticulating the secular with the religious.[1] In his recent work *A Secular Age,* Charles Taylor critiques the narrative of secularism that dismisses the changes that have occurred in the religious and spiritual realm and argues against what he calls “subtraction theories” that define secularity as simply the elimination of religion, telling the story of a secular age as it develops within and out of Latin Christianity.[2] [p. 42/43]

Such approaches shift attention to the religious context in which secularism evolves and thereby lead to an unpacking of secularity as a religious-free, neutral, and universal development of European modernity. Revealing the particularity of secularism and its intrinsic relation to Christianity goes hand in hand with a critique of the universalist claims of the Western model of secular modernity. These criticisms have an impact on the way we decenter the European gaze of secularism and open our readings to the multiplicity of secularisms. They can lead to two different attitudes in studying secularism in non-Western contexts. Either we postulate that secularism is the product of

1 [note 1 in original] Marcel Gauchet, La religion dans la démocretie, Parcours de la la’icité (Paris Gallimard, 1998).
2 [note 2 in original] Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). See especially pages 22 and 530–535.

Western history, intrinsic to Latin Christendom and consequently an alien ideology for the non-Western civilizations (as Bernard Lewis argues for Islamic civilization). Or, on the contrary, we can decouple the secular and the Western and study the multiple formations and manifestations of the secular in different historical and religious contexts.

However both of these positions are problematic insofar as they ignore the influence of Western secular modernity. They ignore the way in which it travels to different contexts, through different political forms of interaction, such as colonialism or modernism, evident for example in Indian and Turkish secularism. The latter illustrate the manifold manifestations of secularism in relation to two different nation-building processes – the former shaped by postcolonial and the latter by post-Empire context – and in relation to Hindu and Muslim religious genealogies. These multiple forms of secularism are shaped, on the one hand, by the formations of the national and, on the other, by the dialogical relations with the religious and the modern. In our readings of multiple secularisms in non-Western contexts, we cannot ignore the way secularity is transmitted as a vector of Western ways of life, as a way of self and public governance. Although one cannot dismiss the imprint of colonialism and modernism in shaping these formations of the secular, neither can one reduce them to mere copies of Western secularism.

To depict and translate the particularity of Muslim (or Hindu) habitations of the secular, we need to give up "deficiency theory" that presupposes that non-Western experiences are lagging behind, incomplete and noncontemporaneous with the West. Secularism in non-Western contexts is often conceptualized as a second-rank imitation of the Western original. Turkish secularism is often studied as an authoritarian derivative of French "laïcité", measured in terms of its gaps, inconsistencies, and deficiencies regarding the French ideal-model. However each time a notion travels, and is repeated, it is never exactly the same because in the process of repeating a term or a concept, we never simply produce a replica of the original usage; every reiteration transforms the original meaning, adding new meanings to it.[3] The French notion "laïcité" is readopted to [p. 43/44] Turkish language as "laiklik" and thereby becomes part of daily political usage and the collective imaginary. The use of the same notion with a slight change of the accent points to a process of iteration in which the workings of secular power go beyond being a mere second-rank copy, with new meanings, discourses, images, and practices. Instead of reading secularity in the mirror of an ideal-Western model and measuring its gaps and deficiencies, we need to depict the ways secularism is semantically adopted, politically reinvented, collectively imagined, and legally institutionalized.

Overall, we are witnessing the weakening of the secular not only as a master narrative in the social sciences and as an ideology of Western modernity, but also as a collective imaginary that regulates the daily social lives of individuals. The decline of the

3 [note 3 in original] Seyla Benhabib, "Democratic Iterations: The Local, the National, and the Global," in *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty and Democratic Iterations,* ed. Robert Post (London: Oxford University Press, 2006).

power of the secular signifies that the old hierarchical boundaries with the religious are unsettled and have become more porous. Rather than capturing the relation between the two in consecutive terms, as religion alternating with the secular, and pointing to a *"post"* secular era, we need to understand the ways religion becomes contemporaneous of the secular modern.[4] We can hitherto speak of the recompositions of the religious-secular divide as well as new confrontations, rivalry, and mimicry between the two. The religious-secular divide manifests and competes, as I argue in this chapter, at three levels, namely the state, public sphere, and self. The battleground between the religious and the secular concerns foremost the formation of the state, the governance of the public sphere, and the ethics of the self. [. . . p. 44/50. . .]

Secular Public Spaces and Religious Visibilities

The claims of religious visibility in public and the controversies they provoke reveal the unspoken secular rules and norms of the public sphere in European countries. There are different levels of state control of religious presence in public life, ranging from active and aggressive to more pluralistic conceptions of secularism depending on the national politics of secularism.[5] However the question of religion in the public sphere cannot be reduced to choices of liberal versus authoritarian politics of secularism. French and Turkish policies that ban the Islamic headscarf in the public schools (France) and in the universities (Turkey) can be considered exclusionary and active, if not an authoritarian interpretation of "laicite". However the two countries are not "exceptional" in debating and attempting to restrain Islamic presence in the public sphere. In Germany and ltaly, where the presence of religion is not as unwanted as in France, the polarizing debates on the construction of mosques, the height of the minarets, and the shape of the donnes, reveal the disturbing irruption of Islamic visibility in the public landscape.[6] The question of religious difference cannot be framed solely in terms of abstract principles [p. 50/51] of toleration and recognition of the plurality of faiths. It appears in a materialized form and in a given physical space. The incursion of religious signs, symbols, and

4 [note 4 in original] For the ways Islam becomes contemporaneous of Europe, see Nilüfer Göle, *Interpénétrations: L'lslam et l'Europe* (Paris: Galaade Editions, 2004).

5 [note 16 in original] Ahmet Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

6 [note 17 in original] For the public debate on the construction of a new mosque in Cologne, Germany, see Patrick Haenni and Stéphane Lathion, eds., *Les minarets de la discorde. Éclairages sur un débat suisse et européen* (Fribourg: Religioscope, 2009); and these two articles, "Cologne affronte samedi un 'congrès anti-islamisatiori'," September 18, 2008, http://www.7sur7.be/7s7/fr/1731/Islam/article/detail/420197/2008/09/18/Cologne-affronte-samedi-un-congres-anti-islamisation.dhtml (accessed August 15, 2019) ; and "Le génocide des Arméniens évoque lors de la construction de la mosquée de Cologne," August 20, 2007, http://armenews.com/article.php3?id_ artic1e=34011 (accessed August 15, 2009).

behavior (headscarf, minarets, segregation of sexes) disturbs the European public eye and collective consciousness to the extent that these are considered not to be in conformity with unspoken secular norms of public life. The spaces in which Muslims make their religious difference visible are subject to public controversy: schools, cities, swimming pools, hospitals, cemeteries all become public spaces in which the religious-secular divide becomes problematic and subject to recomposition.

With migratory dynamics and global technologies of communication, the public sphere escapes the grip of nation-states and becomes a site of transnational flows of communication, bringing into close interaction different cultures and civilizations. The public sphere that was conceptualized in relation to the European historical development of the nation-state, as a mononational and monolinguistic entity, becomes a site of migration, religious pluralism, and civilizational encounter. How can we rethink the public sphere without reducing the public to a mononational community and its legislative confinement to the nation-state?

The weakening of the hegemony of the national-secular calls for a new conceptualization of commonness without the vertical hierarchy of the nation-state as a prerequisite of the public sphere. The notion of space needs to be at the forefront of our analyses depicting the recompositions between the secular and the religious. The notion of space does not refer to an empty space but to a space of production of social relations, defining boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, of acceptable and forbidden. A space is always regulated by certain norms, whether religious or secular. These norms are not only dictated by state law, but also shared values by those who inhabit and utilize those spaces. These unspoken norms are revealed once they are challenged by the intrusion of newcomers, foreigners, and by all of those who are not supposed to be present in those spaces. The Islamic intrusion, in failing to conform to European norms of publicness, provokes controversy and confrontation by means of which the "secular" and "civilizational" norms of public life are disclosed. However, these confrontations also create a new public; they bring together, in unintended and unpredictable ways, dissonant, competing persons, cultures, foreigners in proximity, in assembly. They create a new space, an interstice that affects the meanings of the religious and secular modern. The wall of separation between the two becomes porous and religious-secular distinctions become fuzzy in the course of common and confrontational public experience.

At the level of everyday life practices, individuals appropriate new ways of combining secular and religious norms as they choose among [p. 51/52] spiritual experiences and convert to other religions or compose different religiosities, thereby producing new forms of syncretism. Buddhist Catholics and Yogi Muslims are among such nascent examples. The spatial proximity among cultures and religions not only creates anxiety confusion of boundaries, and sporadic violence. It also opens up possibilities for new ways of connecting between cultures and religions once the hegemony of particular definitions of religious and secular distinctions, and civilized and uncivilized taxonomies, decline.

Nationalism, the public sphere, and definitions of the self have been conceptualized principally within the secular paradigm. I have argued that the revival of religion reflects the loss of hegemony of the secular at these three levels of social organization: state, public, and self-governance. Consequently the secular-religious divide is unsettled, leading to mirroring and rivalry between the two for the orientation of the norms of disciplinary practices of the self, the state, and public life. Rather than sequential replacement of one with another, of the secular with the religious, and the assertion of some kind of categorical identity, we need to think in terms of confrontations as well as recompositions between the two. Only such a paradigmatic shift can open the possibility of addressing normative questions of modernity from an intercultural perspective in which the notions of secular and religious distinctions are not derived exclusively from Western experience.

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72 Aamir R. Mufti: *Why I Am Not a Postsecularist* (2013)

Introduced by Johannes Duschka

Introduction

Aamir Rashid Mufti (b. 1959) is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and the Ralph S. and Becky G. O'Connor Professor at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.[I] Mufti was born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan. He received multidisciplinary training in literary studies and anthropology, as well as South Asian, Middle Eastern, North African, and Jewish studies. He abstained from following a graduate career in anthropology, instead starting a PhD in comparative literature at Columbia University with Edward Said in the late 1980s. Mufti's research interests cover British and French colonialism and their aftermaths, decolonisation, and the postcolonial world; in his work, he attempts to rethink fundamental concepts and categories of the humanities. More recently, he has turned his gaze to the conflict over historical Palestine, supporting the (highly controversial) calls for a broad academic boycott of Israeli scholars and institutions.

His first book *The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*[II] deals with principal questions of minority experience in (colonial) modernity and the role of the (post)colonial nation state in its formation, in particular he addresses the crisis of Muslim identity in modern India. His second book *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures*[III] examines the linkages between the concept of 'World Literature' and Orientalism through the dominance of the globalised English language and the reduction and 'vernacularisation' of other diverse cultural contexts to 'ethno-national spheres.' In his current book project 'Strangers in Europa,' Mufti analyses the impact

I For biographical information on Aamir R. Mufti see "Aamir R. Mufti," UCLA Department of Comparative Literature, accessed 25 June, 2024, https://complit.ucla.edu/person/aamir-r-mufti/; "Aaamir R. Mufti," Johans Hopkins Krieger School of Arts & Scceinces, Department of English, accessed 25 June, 2024, https://english.jhu.edu/directory/aamir-mufti/; Aamir R. Mufti, "Qadri and I: A Personal Remembrance," June 29, 2021, b2o, accessed 25 June, 2024, https://www.boundary2.org/2021/06/aamir-mufti-qadri-and-i-a-personal-remembrance/.

II *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

III *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

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of immigration and the figure of the (Muslim) migrant on the project of European unification.[IV]

Here, we present an excerpt from his article *Why I am not a Postsecularist*, in which he challenges the "emergent orthodoxy" of postsecular thinking (see Connolly, text no. 65, Kyrlezhev, text no. 67, Dalferth, text no. 70), especially for its erecting a straw man by reducing secularisation theories to mere narratives of religious decline. Mufti polemically engages with the positions of Habermas (see text no. 72), Taylor (see text no. 40 in section 2), Saba Mahmood (see text no. 64), and Talal Asad (see text no. 56) – whose work, he claims, shows a surprising affinity with theories of functional differentiation (see Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, text no. 42). According to Mufti, the September 11 attacks and, connected with them, imaginaries of contemporary Islam are central reference points for the debates around postsecularism. In this context, he is particularly critical of attempts to contrast secular modernity with notions of an unalienated, authentic religious tradition, which he attributes to some anthropological representations of contemporary Islam (see al-Azmeh, text no. 20 for a similar critique). Instead, he calls for a "dialectical" understanding of contemporary developments, by viewing the Islamic revival not as a return to religion, but "rather its historical transformation under the conditions of late, postcolonial capitalism."

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IV See Greer Ingoe-Gerney, "Aamir Mufti speaks on identity of Muslim immigrants in Europe," *The Williams Record*, November 10, 2021, accessed 25 June, 2024, https://williamsrecord.com/458400/news/aamir-mufti-speaks-on-identity-of-muslim-immigrants-in-europe/.

Part 1: Why I Am Not a Postsecularist

1

Self-described postsecular ways of thinking are fast acquiring a sort of orthodox status across the humanistic disciplines in the United States. I consider this constellation an emergent orthodoxy because even where it is not explicitly avowed it seems nevertheless to be unopposed and thus accepted in an unstated, commonsense manner, as a description of our times. The notion of the postsecular that is authorizing this discourse takes as its vaguely formulated object of critique a version of the secularization thesis, more Weber than Marx, Nietzsche, or Freud, and perhaps closer to the Parsonian vulgarization of Weber. It is at bottom positivistic in nature, confronting this vulgarized account of secularization with the "fact" of the continued, widespread existence of communities of the faithful across the world, whose disappearance it attributes that account with having predicted. This setting up of what is essentially a straw man seems to be the method of a number of divergent intellectual formations today and provides the means of their mutual approach to, and collaboration with, each other. [p. 7/8] And they draw upon a range of influential sources – the work of Jürgen Habermas in the post-2001 phase, Charles Taylor's neo-Catholic philosophy of "authenticity," more or less Schmittian political theologies, and the new anthropology of Islam associated with the influence of Talal Asad.[1]

[. . . p. 8/9. . .]

I am not a postsecularist because the concept is an internally incoherent one, evasive about the transition it supposedly marks and confusing different levels of analysis. Does the *post* in *postsecular* mark a transition in the world at large, in intellectual practices concerned with understanding the world, or some combination of both? None of this terrain seems very clear from the ways in which the term is commonly deployed and appears sometimes to be purposefully obfuscated. At the same time as this evasive and allusive evocation of the passing of secularity into obsolescence extends its hold over the humanities, the reorganization of social imaginaries worldwide around various notions and practices of calculability – a hallmark of the secularization thesis in many of its forms, above all the Weberian, but we may also recall *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – appears to continue apace, including in the very social formations most often cited as signs of the return of religion, such as "globalized" Islam.[2] I agree with Taylor that processes of secularization cannot be understood simply within the terms of "subtraction stories," accounts of the emergence of modernity-secularity as merely the falling away of extraneous elements, leaving a core of foundational human experience and its

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1 [note 1 in the original] I return to the latter below. A discussion of the other two lines of thinking must be postponed for another occasion.

2 [note 4 in the original] See, for instance, Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

self-understanding.[3] And Asad's work has been instrumental in clarifying the ways in which the very category of religious experience as a distinct and delimited domain of social and cultural life emerges out of transitions to modernity.[4] But the implicit ascription of "subtraction stories" to all earlier forms of understanding secularization seems hardly plausible, given the rich tradition of thinking to the contrary – Mendelssohn in Jerusalem, Heine in "Concerning the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany," and especially the Marx of "On the Jewish Question," for example, to name some fairly obvious instances. [p. 9/10] And is it not possible to argue that what Asad gives us in his account of the emergence of "religion" as a distinct category of experience is a sort of strong version of the notion of functional differentiation that is standard in post-Parsonian positivist sociology? Neither as an account of social transformation nor as a description of intellectual developments, therefore, can the concept of postsecular quite sustain the aura of novelty, innovation, and departure that it seeks to put in place.

2

The question of the secular in all its forms now constitutes a broad debate in our times within and between societies on a global scale. It has been entered anew in Europe and America in the years since 2001, with all parties to the argument – liberal constitutionalists, social democrats, Evangelical Christian conservatives, secular American neoconservatives, European neofascists, newly vocal and visible "Western Muslims," Hindu nationalists in India and the diaspora, liberal or "moderate" Muslims, the Catholic hierarchy, varieties of orthodox Muslims, and the so-called new atheists – finding confirming evidence for their respective positions and arguments in the September 11 attacks and their global aftermath. This great public clamor reveals what is surely a defining set of fissures in our world in these times, and there is no doubt that it must be carefully attended to by the humanities and subjected to detailed analysis.

It also seems self-evident that in this contemporary global crisis about the conflict between religious sensibilities and the secular imagination something that all sides refer to as "Islam" plays a central and unique role. It is hard to raise questions about the mutual relations of religious and secular beliefs and practices in transnational terms without reference to Muslims and Islam. And a wide range of commentators today, from the new atheists to some of the important and influential anthropological scholarship on Islam, seem to be in agreement in one important respect about what this term signifies: they tend to view varieties of contemporary political Islam as representative of

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3 [note 5 in the original] See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

4 [note 6 in the original] See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

the (Sunni) Islamic "tradition" as such. The assumption appears to be that as a spiritual, intellectual, and political culture, Islamism marks a "return" of Islam, either uncontaminated by, or having shaken itself free of, the liberal thought and practice of the modern West. Behind this equation of Islamism with Islam is a larger set of assumptions about the contemporary crisis of the postcolonial world more broadly, understood in terms of the loss and attempted recuperation of past social and cultural [p. 10/11] forms – in the terms, in other words, of a "jargon of authenticity," as I called it over a decade ago, borrowing a term used by both Theodor Adorno and Aziz al-Azmeh in related but different ways and in reference to different contexts.[5]

This form of thinking now seems to have achieved a certain preeminence, if not dominance, within at least some areas in the larger space of humanistic studies. It is becoming increasingly difficult – but also more necessary – to stake out a set of critical positions that neither replicate the instrumental universalism of the new atheists in their function as apologists for the geopolitics of the dominant Western powers nor succumb to this language of authenticity. Within this emergent "postsecular" common sense in the humanistic disciplines, Islamist practices are understood, explicitly or implicitly, as an expression of religious consciousness directed against the inroads of secularism, which itself is viewed simply as an ideological impulse of the ongoing projects of Western imperialism. I am not a postsecularist because the view of contemporary Islam evinced here is highly misleading and functions as an attempt to close off prematurely the possibility of a materialist and historical understanding of the present in the Islamic world and a critical engagement with it.

The new anthropology of Islam performs a conjuring trick in which the overwhelming number of lived forms of Islamic religiosity, and above all forms associated in numerous Islamic societies with women's religious lives, are made to disappear from view altogether, leaving only the configuration of contemporary political Islam, theologically diverse but nevertheless Salafi-revivalist in its constitutive gestures, available to the effort to conceptualize the interaction of secular and religious imaginations and spaces in modern Muslim societies. Furthermore, the idea that the elaboration of these religiopolitical practices – by an intelligentsia consisting largely of middle-class professionals with (very often) a scientific or technical education – in postcolonial societies whose economies have undergone the most violent neoliberal restructuring in recent decades, is somehow taking place in a space that is outside the contradictory logic of Enlightenment is, to say the least, baffling. Enlightenment is an encompassing logic of bourgeois modernity, within and against which different social groups struggle in widely different ways, and not something to be selected or rejected at [p. 11/12] the great salad bar of modern life. In this sense, the new ethnography of Islam – and Saba

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5 [note 7 in the original] See Aamir R. Mufti, "The Aura of Authenticity," *Social Text* 18, no. 3 64 (Fall 2000): 88–102; Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973); and Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 2009), 97–116.

Mahmood's *The Politics of Piety* is now hugely influential and even canonical in this regard – is in *active* agreement with Islamism itself when the latter thinks of itself in revivalist terms as a return to the true tradition of Islam.

It is part of the critical task today to question this voluntarist assumption and to seek to replace it with the dialectical perception that revivalist claims of religious authenticity are undeniable products of the very cultural logics they disavow and disown.[6] Islamist thought and practice cannot sustain their claim to be uncontaminated by the modern imperial process. The modern Islamic juridico-theological synthesis – the *neo-orthodoxy* of colonial and postcolonial Islam – cannot be understood in any other way than as inflected through the regimes of colonial law. The distinctness of Islamic modernity lies in the reinscription of these efforts themselves in the universalizing logic of capitalism. This is the modernity of the discourses and practices of *sharīʿa*, their historical amnesia about their own refunctionalization in the colonial era. Legalistic "piety" has never existed in any Islamic society in isolation from, and unchallenged by, a host of other psychological orientations and bodily practices that we might designate as "devotion." Precolonial poetic traditions in the Persianate sphere, for instance, have traditionally staged this complexity as the tension and rivalry between the mystic and the *muftī*. The constitutive tension between institutions, practices, and social roles and personnel tied to these rival orientations was tilted massively under colonial conditions in favor of the Law, that is, *sharīʿa*, transforming the latter entirely in the process of codifying it according to the logics of the colonial state. The colonial moment thus marks the victory of the theologico-juridical in Sunni Islam and the very establishment of Sunnism as orthodoxy against a range of now externalized practices, such as Shiʿ ism, some with a centuries-long history of regional or local preeminence. In this (colonial) reliance on the authority of law, Salafism ties itself to the modalities (and the fortunes) of the colonial and postcolonial state. Islamic neo-orthodoxy could thus be viewed as a majoritarian doctrine of the modern state, and contemporary Islamism thus marks not a return of religion ("Islam") but rather its historical transformation under the conditions of late, postcolonial capitalism. [p. 12–17. . .]

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[. . . p. 17/18. . .] The secular imagination has developed in much of the postcolonial world, and in modern Muslim societies in particular, with a very different kind of relation of proximity to the religious and theological than has been the norm in the West.[7]

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6 [note 8 in the original] See, for instance, the study by Humeira Iqtidar, *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaʿat-e-Islami and Jamaʿat-ud-Daʿwa in Urban Pakistan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2011).
7 [note 19 in the original] On the "semi-sacred and secular" nature of musical culture in north India, for instance, see Janaki Bakhle, "Music as the Sound of the Secular," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50, no. 1 (January 2008): 259.

The case here has rarely been a disavowal and critique of the religious as such and has often implied the activation of religious vocabulary itself for the purpose of elaborating a notion of the social that is not consumed in the theological as a series of its effects or applications. Modernization theorists in the 1950s and 1960s viewed this situa-[p. 18/19] tion as one of incomplete and ongoing secularization, the implicit or explicit assumption being that these societies undergoing a sort of late modernization would more or less travel along the normative path. But no serious thinker or writer in these societies associated with the secular imagination – in the Indian subcontinent, for instance – has ever proceeded so blithely. Even so positivistic a thinker as Jawaharlal Nehru, the bête noire of Indian postsecularists like Ashis Nandy, could not suppress a sense of pathos about the durability of religious imaginaries in Indian society, putting a question mark over any strong version of the secularization thesis with which he may have, at various points, come to identify.[8] I am not a postsecularist because postsecularism typically maps the secular-religious antagonisms of the history of the West onto postcolonial spaces in general and Muslim societies and communities in particular. Here too the claim to being a new departure and to rejection of broadly speaking liberal ways of thinking about Islam cannot quite be sustained.

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8 [note 20 in the original] I have worked at some length on the elaboration of this relationship between religious and secular imaginaries in the writing of three South Asian Muslim thinkers and writers – namely, Abulkalam Azad, Saadat Hasan Manto, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz – in Aamir R. Mufti, Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

73 Sherman A. Jackson: *The Islamic Secular* (2017)

Introduced by Florian Zemmin

Introduction

Sherman Jackson (b. 1955) is the King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture at the University of Southern California. He completed his PhD in Oriental studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1990. While his first two books fall within the fields of Islamic jurisprudence and theology, he has devoted more recent publications to current political questions, primarily questions of Islam and Blackness in America. His recent project on *The Islamic Secular* in a sense combines his historical expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and theology with pressing contemporary sociopolitical issues. An extensive monograph on *The Islamic Secular* is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. Below, we reprint excerpts from Jackson's programmatic article with the same title.

The choice of title, *The Islamic Secular*, is interesting, as it conceptualises that which is often perceived to be a contradiction, namely a decidedly Islamic version of the secular. Jackson's reasoning behind this seems to be the following: If the secular is unavoidable and here to stay, one might as well aim to shape it according to one's own perspective and interests, as trying to avoid it will ultimately prove impossible anyway, and eventually result in leaving said shaping to others. Three points of interest are worth highlighting in this regard. Firstly, Jackson terminologically pinpoints, and thereby explicates, a conceptualisation of the secular from an Islamic perspective that can be traced back to at least the turn of the twentieth century (see vol. 2). Secondly, the article exemplifies the necessarily selective resort to historical examples as a primary mode of underpinning a present argument. Thirdly, this present argument is explicitly formulated with a vision for the future in mind: Muslims ought to embrace the Islamic secular, which is never fully detached from the religious, to avoid ending up siding with the Western secular, which is arguably devoid of any reference to God.

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Introduction

Few contemporary constructs generate the definitional ambiguity evoked by the term *secular.* Such definitional vagueness notwithstanding, *secular* almost invariably implies an antagonistic relationship with *religion*.[1] This illocutionary effect accrued to the term as a product and co-producer of an emergent Western modernity.[2] And this hostility to *religion* is routinely abstracted out of that context and assumed to inform the way that *all* religions engage (or perhaps should engage) the world, especially the modern world. Of course, as José Casanova points out, "religions that have always been 'worldly' and 'lay' do not need to undergo a process of secularization. To secularize – that is, 'to make worldly' . . . is a process that does not make much sense in such a civilizational context."[3]

This insight, however, as keen as it is, does not appear to go very far when the topic under consideration is Islam. Instead, its worldliness notwithstanding, the antagonism between "secular" and "religious" is assumed to be all the more acute in Islam, as the latter is understood to defy the distinction between sacred and profane, and modern Muslim movements seem bent on sustaining the non-existence of this boundary in favor of the religious. The result is a dichotomous bifurcation between the "Islamic" and the "secular," according to which an act, idea, or institution can be described either as Islamic *or* secular, but never both. This perpetuates in the minds of many the presumed necessity of having to choose between the two.

In this paper, I shall propose a reading of Islam that suggests a different understanding of its relationship with the secular. This relationship is both uncovered and mediated through a more careful reading of Sharia that imputes jurisdictional boundaries to the latter, thereby challenging the notion of it being coterminous with Islam

1 [note 1 in the original] Of course, "religion" also generates its share of definitional ambiguity. See, for example, R. T. McCutcheon, "The Category 'Religion' in Recent Publications: A Critical Survey," *Numen* 42, no. 3 (October 1995): 284–309; J. Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998), 269–84.

2 [note 2 in the original] According to T. N. Madan, "the word 'secularization' was first used in 1648, at the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe, to refer to the transfer of church properties to the exclusive control of the princes." See his "Secularism in Its Place," *Secularism and Its Critics,* ed. R Bhargava, 6th ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 297. According to Madan, the Englishman George Jacob Holyoake coined this term in 1851. See Madan, "Secularism," 298. According to Ashis Nandy, Holyoake coined it in 1850, a time when it was still "accommodative of religion." See his "The Politics of Secularism and the Re-covery of Religious Tolerance," in *Secularism and Its Critics,* 327. The Thirty Years' War was a devastating religious conflict, ostensibly between Protestants and Catholics, that claimed several million lives and ended with the Peace of Westphalia. I note for the record the dissenting view of W. Cavanaugh regarding the significance of Europe's wars of religion. See his *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 123–80.

3 [note 3 in the original] J. Casanova, "Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad," *Powers of the Modem Secular: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,* ed. D. Scott and C. Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 19–20. Casanova mentions, incidentally, Confucianism and Taoism as examples in this regard.

as religion. Ultimately, it is the space *between* the bounded Sharia as a concrete code of conduct and the unbounded purview of Islam as religion, that is to say, life lived under the conscious presumption of an adjudicative divine gaze, that constitutes the realm of "the Islamic secular." This domain is *secular* inasmuch as it remains, to borrow Max Weber's term, *differentiated,* meaning that it is neither governed nor adjudicated through the concrete indicants of revelation or their extension as recognized in Islamic legal methodology *(uṣūl al-fiqh).* It remains Islamic, however, in its imperviousness to the impulse, first articulated by Hugo Grotius in the seventeenth century, to proceed "as if God did not exist" *(etsi Deus non daretur).*[4] On this reading, while the secular and the religious both intermingle and remain distinguishable from each other, they are not, as with the Western secular, effective rivals; nor is the secular relied upon or primarily valued for its ability to police [p. 2/3] or domesticate religion. The Islamic secular is not forced upon Islam (or Islamic law) from without but emerges as a result of the Sharia's own voluntarily self-imposed jurisdictional limits.

Numerous implications as well as challenges attach to this reading, the most salient of which I will engage over the course of my discussion. As a final preliminary, however, I would like to spell out more clearly, in an effort to avoid confusion, the nature and degree of overlap and divergence I see between the Western and Islamic seculars. This will enable us to discern more readily an important aspect of my thesis, namely, that the most operative distinction between the Islamic and Western seculars resides not so much in their *substance* as in their *function.* This difference is indebted to different historical realities confronting (Western) Christianity and Islam, as well as to differences in their structure and ethos. Reference has been made to the religio-political challenges reflected in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48).[5] According to Jonathan Israel, this also birthed the emergence of a radical fringe of dissenters and republicans who conceived that "there might be a purely secular, philosophical rationale for dismantling ecclesiastical authority, [promoting] freedom of thought, and independence of individual conscience."[6] This was the beginning of the Early Enlightenment, at the heart of which lay theological debate and the specter of overturning "all forms of authority and tradition, even Scripture and Man's essentially theological view of the universe."[7]

Prior to this, a more quotidian sense of crisis had already set in. According to Nomi Stolzenberg, a major impetus behind the emergence of the Western secular was "an acceptance of the fact that the divine law and sacred ideals of justice have to be violated in the temporal world."[8] This generated fears that religion and religious institutions

4 [note 4 in the original] Cited in C. Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," *Secularism and Its Critics,* 34.
5 [note 5 in the original] See note 2.
6 [note 6 in the original] J. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64.
7 [note 7 in the original] Israel, *Enlightenment Contested,* 65.
8 [note 8 in the original] N. Stolzenberg, "The Profanity of the Law," *Law and the Sacred,* ed. A. Sarat, L. Douglas, and M. M. Umphrey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 34.

might be corrupted and their authority undermined by what would eventually amount to normalized violations. The response, particularly within Protestantism, was to create an alternative realm presided over by non-religious values, authorities, and expertise, the flouting of which would not connote inadequacy, irrelevance, or corruption on the part of religion or its institutions. This was not a mere exercise in religious navel-gazing or kicking the institutional can down the road; there was a genuine concern for the practical needs and aspirations of the day. As Sheldon Wolin summarizes the fears of Martin Luther, "the world would be reduced to chaos if men tried to govern by the Gospel."[9] The Western secular, then, initially arose in an effort to protect both religion and society. The way it came to operate subsequently need not be assumed to be a function of its essential meaning or to go back to its origins. [p. 3/4]

By contrast, at any rate, pre-modern Islam did not replicate the Thirty Years' War (1618–48). Not even the Ottoman-Safavid conflict took on quite the same religious tone or implications, and Muslims did not birth anything comparable to the Enlightenment. In fact, faced with the challenges of quotidian reality, Muslim jurists sought to *expand* the scope of the religious law through analogy *(qiyās),* equity *(istiḥsān),* public utility *(maṣlaḥah mursalah),* blocking the means *(sadd al-dharāʾiʿ*), adaptive legal precepts *(qawāʿid fiqhīyah*), and even inductive readings of scripture *(istiqrāʾ*). The aim of all of this, as with the early Western secular, was both to secure the interests of society and preserve the sovereignty of the sacred law. And on this approach, obedience to the religious law became an increasingly more protean construct. For example, while the Hanafi school condemned "provisional sales" *(bayʿ al-wafāʾ*) for centuries, they would later confer legal sanction upon them, as dictated by need, all the while declaring their new position to be firmly within the law.[10] Such examples could be multiplied.[11] And on this combined tendency toward expansion and recognizing obedience as a mutable construct, there was never a perceived need or effort among the jurists to create a formally recognized separate realm over which explicitly non-religious deliberation reigned as an alternative to, or check on, religion.[12]

9 [note 9 in the original] S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Politics and Change in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 147.

10 [note 10 in the original] See, for example, M. Zurqa, *Fatāwā Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1420/1999), 405.

11 [note 11 in the original] For example, while Ibn Rushd cites unanimous consensus on the ban on Muslims inheriting from non-Muslims, the Hanbalis Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah incline toward allowing converts to inherit from their non-Muslim relatives, partly in light of their recognition that this ban was functioning as a bar to Islam. See Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 2:264; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Aḥkām Ahl al-Dhimmah,* 3 vols., ed. A. al-Bakri and A. al-ʿAruri (Dammam: al-Ramadi li al-Nashr, 1418/1998), 2:853–72, esp. 2:253–58.

12 [note 12 in the original] One might make a case for the *maẓālim* courts as a formally recognized, secular forum. But they were more an alternative régime of enforcement, not an alternative regime of law per se. This is certainly the impression one gets from such authoritative descriptions as that of al-Mawardi. See Abu al-Hasan Ali b. Muhammad al-Mawardi, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānīyah wa al-Wilāyāt*

Meanwhile, the divine origins of the religious law retained universal recognition, and this, in tandem with Islam's understanding of monotheism *(tawḥīd),* generally implied that only what God dictated or intended as religious law could be rightfully recognized as such. The battle cry of the early Khariji movement, "There is no rule but God's" *(lā ḥukm illā li-llāh)* may have been an exaggeration in the eyes of the majority, but it was neither fundamentally wrong nor off track.[13] Indeed, the nerve it struck continued to pulsate through the rise of Muʿtazilism in the second/eighth century, when the question of the *scope* of God's specifically legal address became a topic of debate. Ultimately, the Islamic secular would emerge (eventually more explicitly) out of what was seen as being at stake in these deliberations. But it emerged as a more or less "innocent" by-product, not as a rival or a competitor with religion or the religious law. Again, while its substance bare much in common with that of the Western secular, namely, its dependence upon sources and authorities outside the parameters of religion's concrete (in Islam's case *sharʿī)* indicants, its function was patently different from the role the category "secular" came to play in the West.

A common feature of depictions of the Western secular is its essentially regulatory function vis-á-vis religion. In his seminal work *Formations of the Secular,* Talal Asad points out that part of the very meaning of the (Western) [p. 4/5] secular resides in the perpetual dislocation it visits upon religion through the generation and deployment of an evolving series of cognitive oppositions (reason/myth, public/private, autonomy/submission), all of which are designed and normatively function to establish and reinforce the primacy of the secular *over* the religious.[14] The secular, in other words, not only contrasts with but is expected to control the religious. We see a similar recognition in the description of Casanova, who locates the secular precisely in the moment when people transcend the secular/religious divide. "Secular," he writes, "stands for self-sufficient and exclusive secularity, when people are not simply religiously 'unmusical,' but closed to any form of transcendence beyond the purely secular immanent frame."[15]

Drawing on the insights of Weber, Casanova identifies the secular with the rise and proliferation of non-religious fields of inquiry and expertise as eventually breaking down the monastic wall that once defended religion's primacy and separated it from the worldly realm. The crumbling of this wall eventually laid bare the entire terrestrial order as a field of secular conquest, where religion would ultimately end up struggling

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al-Dīnīyah, ed. A. al-Baghdadi (Kuwait: Maktabat Dar Ibn Qutaybah, 1409/1989), 102–26. On page 15, for example, he explicitly states: "*Maẓālim* jurisdiction does not recognize rulings disallowed by the religious law" *(naẓar al-maẓālim lā yubīḥ min al-aḥkām mā ḥaẓarahu al sharʿ).*

13 [note 13 in the original] For example, the modern jurist Muhammad Abu Zahrah insists that "there is unanimous consensus to the effect that the *ḥākim* in Islam is God the Exalted and that there is no religious law *(lā sharʿ)* except from God." See his *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, n.d.), 63.

14 [note 14 in the original] T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 21–66.

15 [note 15 in the original] J. Casanova, "The Secular and Secularisms," *Social Research* 17, no. 4 (2009): 1052.

to find – and vindicate – its place.[16] Once again, the hierarchal, "paternalistic" relationship between the secular and the religious is confirmed. Of course, Casanova's reference to an "immanent frame" implicates the work of Charles Taylor. In his massive *A Secular Age,* Taylor, like Asad, identifies the boundary between the secular and the religious as porous.[17] But the secular constitutes the super-context, the "immanent frame," that circumscribes and increasingly exerts "pressure" on the much smaller sphere of religious influence. This pressure progressively squeezes God's presence out of public life, contributes to a general falling away from religious sensibilities and practices, and ultimately makes it difficult to maintain belief in God.[18] The secular increasingly functions, in sum, as the primary, active force in life, while religion is gradually reduced to a passive, reactionary role.

Alternative notions of the (Western) secular include variations on French laïcité,[19] or the attitude that opposes living life "in a way that puts God first."[20] Others equate it, following the American model, with "state neutrality,"[21] where the (secular) state domesticates religion and legitimizes itself via the implicit promise to protect society from it. Still other descriptions include "the fashioning of religion as an object of continual management and intervention, and of shaping religious life and sensibility to fit the presuppositions and ongoing requirements of liberal governance."[22] Again, in all of these depictions, the (Western) secular essentially arrives on the scene as the new sheriff in town to define and police the proper boundaries of religion. By contrast, the [p. 5/6] Islamic secular assumes neither the urgent need nor authority to define or police the religious. Rather, it is merely the result of the religious law's own efforts to define and impose boundaries upon itself. Again, on my reading, the boundaries of Sharia are self-imposed, not a retreat or diminution in the face of some independent, external authority called "the secular."

Of course, placing Islamic *law* at the center of a discussion of the secular would seem to require some vindication. After all, law in the West is an emphatically secular, profane institution from which there would seem to be no point in drawing any contrast

16 [note 16 in the original] J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15; see also the discussion at 20–25.

17 [note 17 in the original] C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 594.

18 [note 18 in the original] Ibid., 2–3.

19 [note 19 in the original] See O. Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam,* trans. G. Holoch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), xii–xiii, 7–8, 59 and passim.

20 [note 20 in the original] S. L. Carter, *God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 4.

21 [note 21 in the original] See, for example, A. March, "Are Secularism and Neutrality Attractive to Religious Minorities: Islamic Discussions of Western Secularism in the 'Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities' *(Fiqh al-Aqallīyāt)* Discourse," *Cardoza Law Review* 30, no. 6 (2009): 2821–54; A. An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shariʿa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.

22 [note 22 in the original] See H.A. Agrama, *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 24.

with the secular. But comparative examination of the traditional dichotomy between the sacred and profane might point us in the direction of relief. In his discussion of the sacred and profane, Talal Asad points out,

> attempts to introduce a unified concept of "the sacred" into non-European languages have met with revealing problems of translation. Thus although the Arabic word *qadāsa* is usually glossed as "sacredness" in English, it remains the case that it will not do in all the contexts where the English term is now used. Translation of "the sacred" calls for a variety of words *(muharram, mutahhar, mukhtass bi-l-ʿibāda,* and so on), each of which connects with different kinds of behavior.[23]

It does not take much to recognize that all of these candidates for "sacred" come under the gaze and authority of Islamic law, as Sharia (or *sharʿī* discourse) is the basis upon which the applicability of all of these adjectives is determined. In this regard, Sharia can be seen as upholding or mediating a boundary of sorts. Whether, however, this boundary divides the world, to use Durkheim's notion, into "two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane,"[24] or simply restricts the validity of viewing the world, even as a single domain, through a *sharʿī* lens is a separate (though deeply relevant) question. Earlier in bis discussion, Asad had noted: "In the Latin Roman Republic the word *sacer* referred to anything that was owned by a deity, having been 'taken out of the region of the profanum by the action of the State,' and passed on into that of the *sacrum.*"[25]

By contrast, Islam insisted, of course, that God ultimately owned everything. In fact, the theologian al-Bayhaqi (d. 458/1065) cites an early linguistic opinion to the effect that the name *Allāh* was derived from the phrase "*la hu,*" namely, "it is his/its," "it belongs to him/it." The Arabs added the definite article along with a medial *alif* (*ā*) for emphasis (in accordance with linguistic convention), yielding the proper name for God, *Allāh,* as Owner of everything in the universe.[26] Sharia functions in this context, not as did the Roman State, [p. 6/7] to assign or transfer ownership, but to identify that area of what God owns that is the object of God's direct, concrete address aimed at regulating normative human behavior.

In this process, again, given God's summary ownership of everything in the universe, separating the sacred from the profane in the Western sense alluded to by Asad will prove problematic. But the parameters of lslam's *sharʿī* discourse can be clearly distinguished from those of the *non-sharʿī.* And it is the *sharʿī* alone that represents God's *concrete divine address* that aims at regulating human behavior. It is in this sense that Islamic law plays the definitive role I have assigned to it in establishing and sustaining the category of the Islamic secular. [. . . p. 7–9. . .]

23 [note 23 in the original] Asad, *Formations,* 36–37, nt. 41.

24 [note 24 in the original] Ibid., 31, nt. 24.

25 [note 25 in the original] Ibid., 30.

26 [note 26 in the original] See Abu Bakr Ahmad b. al-Husayn b. Ali b. Abd Allah b. Musa al-Bayhaqi, *Kitāb al-Asmāʾ wa al-Ṣifāt* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, n.d.), 35.

The Islamic Secular: *Sharʿī* versus Non-*Sharʿī*

Much of my work on Islamic law has revolved around the thought of the great Egyptian Maliki jurist Shihab al-Din al-Qarafi (d. 684/1285). Elsewhere, I have shown that he was quite direct and unequivocal in imputing jurisdictional limits to Sharia.[27] This sustained focus on al-Qarafi might give the impression that he was alone or unique in this regard. But this is demonstrably not the case. And while space will not allow for a full accounting here, the following should suffice to make the point.

Going all the way back to the Prophet, we find indications to this effect. Standard books on the Prophet's biography *(sīrah)* report that when he issued instructions to the Muslim forces at Badr, the Companion al-Hubab b. al-Mundhir asked if this was revelation or simply the Prophet's considered opinion. The Prophet responded that it was the latter, at which time al-Hubab offered his own plan, which the Prophet accepted.[28] In the "canonical" hadith literature, we read that when a group of farmers whom the Prophet had advised on pollinating their trees complained that the trees died (or failed), he responded: "Do not hold me accountable for mere (non-revelational) ideas. But when I inform [p. 9/10] you of something on the authority of God, take it, for I will never invent lies against God."[29] In this same section, Muslim reports that the Prophet stated: "You are more knowledgeable (than I am) regarding your secular affairs" *(antum aʿlam bi amr dunyākum*).[30] These references clearly reflect an understanding that the divine address was limited in terms of the range of issues regarding which it could be taken to bind Muslims to a concrete legal injunction.

In the generations after the Prophet, we see a subtle blurring of the boundary between the concretely legal (*sharʿī*) and the non-legal (*non-sharʿī*). At least as early as Malik (d. 179/795), factual determinations, such as details of the kinds and quantities of food due a wife as part of her maintenance (*nafaqah*), are clothed with legal authority despite not being based on scriptural sources.[31] We see it as well in the writings of al-Shafiʿi (d. 204/819)[32] and his early followers on such factual matters as determining the prayer-direction, the uprightness of witnesses, and the like. As Ahmad El Shamsy notes: "Although the determination of the *qiblah* represents an empirical matter while

27 [note 40 in the original] This goes back as far as my doctoral dissertation, "In Defense of Two-Tiered Orthodoxy: A Study of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī's *Kitāb al-Iḥkām fī Tamyīz al-Fatāwā ʿan al-Aḥkām wa Taṣarrufāt al-Qāḍī wa al-Imām*" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1991).

28 [note 41 in the original] See, for example, Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah,* ed. M. al-Saqa, I. al-Abyari, and A. Shalabi (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1426/2005), 523.

29 [note 42 in the original] See Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim,* 5 vols. (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 1416/1995), 4:1464.

30 [note 43 in the original] Ibid.

31 [note 44 in the original] See, for example, Jamal al-Din b. Umar b. al-Hajib, *Jāmiʿ al-Ummahāt,* ed. A. al-Akhdari (Damascus: al-Yamamah li al-Tibaʿah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawziʿ, 1421/2000), 331ff.

32 [note 45 in the original] See, for example*, Al-Risālah,* ed. A. M. Shakir (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1358/1939), 487–503 on *ijtihād.*

legal theory involves interpretive judgments, at least in the early centuries Shafi'i jurists do not seem to have drawn any distinction between the two."[33] But already with Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241/855) in the first half of the third/ninth century, a more explicit recognition of scripture's jurisdictional boundaries appears to be in evidence. In his account of the famous Inquisition *(miḥnah)* over the Qurʾan's createdness, al-Tabari (d. 310/923) reports that Ibn Hanbal's initial response was: "It is the speech of God; I have nothing to add beyond that" *(huwa kalām Allāh lā azīdu ʿalayhā)*,[34] clearly suggesting that the question of its createdness or uncreatedness, or perhaps his understanding of the issue at the time, fell outside the scope of what Ibn Hanbal deemed scripture to have concretely addressed.

Later, the distinction between *sharʿī* and non-*sharʿī* becomes more concrete. Al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111), for example, rebukes those he terms "ignorant friends of Islam" who condemn non-Muslim natural sciences as contravening Sharia. Against this view, he insists that "the religious law has nothing to say about these sciences, either positively or negatively" (*wa laysa fī al-sharʿ taʿarruḍ li hādhi al-ʿulūm bi al-nafy wa al-ithbāt)*.[35] With al-Qarafi, of course, we get perhaps the most explicit articulation.[36] He cites as examples of non-*sharʿī* sciences mathematics, geometry, sense perception, knowing the identity of prevailing customs, bounteous things, and the like: "Knowledge of none of these things reverts to scriptural sources *(sharāʾiʿ)*."[37]

This basic recognition of *sharʿī* limits did not stop with al-Qarafi. Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) routinely cites instances where the *sharʿī* tradition neither confirms nor negates *(lā nafy^{an} wa lā ithbāt^{an})* an imported concept or [p. 10/11] technical term.[38] He

33 [note 46 in the original] A. El-Shamsy, "Rethinking *Taqlīd* in the Early Shafiʿi School," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 1 (2008): 14–15. Emphasis mine.

34 [note 47 in the original] See Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī,* 6 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1433/2012), 5:190.

35 [note 48 in the original] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl wa al-Muwaṣṣil ilā Dhī al-ʿIzzah wa al Jalāl,* ed. J. Saliba and K. ʿAyyad (Beirut: Dar al-Andalus, n.d.), 102. Of course, al-Ghazali did not always speak with complete consistency in this regard. In *Al-Mustaṣfā* 1:3, for example, he places among the three genres of knowledge, "the purely rational (*ʿaqlī maḥḍ*) which the religious law neither encourages nor applauds, such as statistics, geometry, astronomy and the like, all of which amount either to false suppositions. . .or valid knowledge that is of no benefit." His Maliki commentator, Ibn Rashiq (d. 632/1235) criticizes this view, insisting that these sciences cannot be categorically dismissed as being of no benefit. See al-Husayn b. Rashiq, *Lubāb al-Maḥṣūl fī fī ʿIm al-Uṣūl,* 2 vols., ed. M. Jabi (Dubai: Dar al-Buhuth li al-Dirasat al-Islamiyyah wa Ihyaʾ al-Turath, 1422/2001), 1:189. Of course, both of them are speaking in a specific historical context regarding the degree to which non-Muslim science in general may or may not touch upon issues of relevance or potential harm to religion.

36 [note 49 in the original] See my *Islamic Law and the State: The Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 113–41.

37 [note 50 in the original] Al-Qarāfī, *Sharḥ; Tanqīḥ al-Fuṣūl fī Ikhtiṣār al-Maḥṣūl fī al-Uṣūl,* ed. A.F. al-Mazidi (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2007), 109.

38 [note 51 in the original] See, for example, his *Dar ʾTaʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa al-Naql,* 11 vols., ed. M. R. Salim (Riyadh: Matbaʿat al-Imam Muhammad b. Saʿud, 1399/1979), 4:146.

also insists that purely rational claims (e.g., the validity of Greek logic) cannot be judged on the basis of scripture alone, but must be examined on the basis of reason.[39] In their commentary on al-Baydawi's (d. 685/1286) *Minhāj al-Wuṣūl ilā ʿIlm al-Uṣūl,* the Shafi'i father and son, Taqi al-Din (d. 756/1355) and Taj al-Din (d. 771/69) al-Subki, confirm the distinction between knowledge that is contingent upon the divine address *(sharʿī)* and knowledge that is not,[40] everything that could be considered knowledge, in other words, not falling within the boundaries of the *sharʿ*.

Early modern jurists continue along these lines. Ibn Abidin (d. 1258/1842), for example, notes that the knowledge that fire burns or that grammatical subjects are in the nominative case falls entirely outside the parameters of the religious law. In fact, in words reminiscent of al-Qarafi, he states that "what is meant by *sharʿī*. . . is that which would remain unknowable absent an address from the Divine Lawgiver."[41] Clearly, on these articulations, the idea that Sharia and its relative adjective *sharʿī* is bounded as opposed to unbounded was not unique to al-Qarafi, but was a widely recognized feature of pre-modern Muslim juridical thought that made its way down to modern times.[42]

This restrictive understanding of the category *sharʿī* lays the foundation for my working definition of the Islamic secular: "*that for concrete knowledge of which one can rely neither upon the scriptural sources of Sharia nor their proper extension via the tools enshrined by Islamic legal methodology* (uṣūl al-fiqh)." At first blush, this might appear to be a rather strained use of the term *secular,* given the latter's entrenched association with indifference, if not hostility, toward religion. But Sharia is *the* medium through which God's will is made known in concrete, objectively verifiable terms (objective in the sense of existing in the public domain, where everyone has equal access to them). And to the extent that Sharia does *not* concretely address every issue, it does acknowledge the existence of other bases and norms of assessment. This corresponds, in the main, to the "differentiation" that Casanova identified as a central feature of the sec-

39 [note 52 in the original] See, for example, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Juhd al-Qarīḥah fī Tajrīd al-Naṣīḥah* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAsriyyah, 1430/2009), 91–92 (an abridgment of lbn Taymiya's *Naṣīḥah Ahl al-Imān fī al-Radd ʿalā Manṭiq al-Yūnān*). This is not to say that scripture would necessarily have nothing to say about the religious status of a particular rational claim. The point is simply that the claim itself would have to be rationally examined to determine its actual substance before a *sharʿī* ruling could be reached. On another note, I obviously cannot concur with the view of my former colleague John Walbridge when he writes: "The great fourteenth-century fundamentalist reformer Ibn Taymīya hated reason wherever it expressed itself in Islamic intellectual life." See his *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

40 [note 53 in the original] See *Al-Ibhāj fī Sharḥ; al-Minhāj,* 3 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1424/ 2004), 1:30.

41 [note 54 in the original] *Radd al-Muḥtār ʿalā al-Durr al-Mukhtār Sharḥ; Tanwīr al-Abṣār,* 12 vols., ed. A. Abd al-Mawjud and A. Muawwad (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1415/ 1994), 1:118.

42 [note 55 in the original] The late Muhammad al-Khidr Husayn wrote: "Whoever looks carefully will see the difference clearly between what the religion provides guidance on and what it leaves to the tried and tested experience of society." See his *Dirāsāt fī al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmīyah* (UAE: Maktabat Dar al-Farabi, 1326/ 2005), 13.

ular.[43] At the heart of differentiation is specialization in distinct fields of concern – religious, economic, political, and so forth. And while Islam may not insist on such an explicit, formal division of knowledge, the distinction between the *sharʿī* and the *non-sharʿī* is, in fact, an expression of specialization. The secular is simply differentiated from *religion* in Casanova's depiction, whereas it is differentiated from the *sharʿī* in my working definition of the Islamic secular.

This basic understanding and valuation of "differentiation" is not the preserve of Casanova alone. Asad essentially recognizes its role and centrality when he writes: "It is when something is described as belonging to 'religion' [p. 11/12] and it can be claimed that it does not that the secular emerges most clearly."[44] And Taylor speaks of an "independent political ethic" free of confessional allegiance as part of his understanding of the secular.[45] Of course, given its juristic thrust, my concept of the Islamic secular will fall dumb before any number of the brilliant sociological and anthropological insights of these (and other) treatments of the secular. But with differentiation as a point of departure, the idea that Islam's religious law is not the only forum for negotiating the value of human acts should go a long way in demonstrating a point of convergence with established discourses on the secular and in vindicating my use of the term. [. . . p. 12–20. . .]

Concluding Thoughts

My attempts at carefulness and circumspection notwithstanding, these articulations may still inspire in many the suspicion that the concept of the "Islamic secular" can only put Muslims on a slippery slope toward secularization in the modern, Western sense of the word. Bit by bit, and under the pressure of the West's dominant cultural and intellectual hegemony, they may sense that such a construct will merely prompt Muslims to interpret away as much of the Sharia's authority as they can in order to justify expanding the realm in which such secular instruments as reason, science, public [p. 20/21] opinion, custom, experience, cultural imagination, and the like can be legitimately invoked.

This is a serious challenge. Yet, it may go some way in vindicating my project to call to mind that a major effect of neglecting the Islamic secular is to burden Sharia with the responsibility for speaking effectively to all and sundry matters. When this fails, as it surely must (i.e., how can Sharia or the jurists know what will make one's spouse feel cherished or maximize personal or communal wealth), the frustration that sets in can only strengthen the allure of secularism in the modern, Western sense. In short, its

43 [note 56 in the original] Casanova, *Public Religions*, 21–25.
44 [note 57 in the original] Asad, *Formations*, 237.
45 [note 58 in the original] C. Taylor, "Secular Imperative," 32–33.

undeniable liabilities notwithstanding, we are simply faced with an inescapable choice: either the Islamic secular or Western secualrism [sic].

Still, it would be remiss to ignore Montesquieu's ever-so-cunning words: "A more certain way to attack religion is by favor, by the comforts of life, by the hope of fortune, by what makes one forget it; not by what makes one indignant, but by what leads one to indifference when other passions act on our souls and when those that religion inspires are silent."[46] The greater the area of the *non-sharʿī* Islamic secular, in other words, the greater will be the area in which Sharia waxes mute (or may be called upon by its opponents to do so), quietly leading to more and more indifference toward what is perceived as an increasingly silent religion. And, of course, the greatest threat to religion is almost never persecution but the apathy born of its own irrelevance.

There are two considerations, however, that I hope would be taken seriously in the face of this challenge. First, the advocates of *ijtihād* are relentless in pointing to the deleterious effects of *taqlīd* (fixed readings[47]). Of course, *taqlīd* is assumed to imply a reading not of the sources, but of the precedents upheld by the schools of law *(madhhab*s), which are themselves assumed to have executed a proper reading of the sources. This is what confers such an immoveable authority upon these fixed readings. While the bulk of attention, however, is directed toward "legal *taqlīd,*" the effects and logic of this phenomenon extend to the socio-cultural, economic, and political realms as well. Just as modern Muslims labor under the constraints of pre-modern legal and para-legal deductions that have been infused with pre-modern facts, sensibilities, and presuppositions, they labor perhaps even more so under the authority and influence of pre-modern socio-cultural and political norms, whose presumptive status is underwritten by a vague association with scriptural texts that are assumed (or occasionally claimed) to be the basis of their authority. In this capacity, the effects of "secular *taqlīd*" are often far more difficult to overcome than are those of legal *taqlīd,* because the former is less recognizable and thus less susceptible to critical analysis.[48] [p. 21/22]

Meanwhile, paying more careful attention to the Islamic secular could alert us to the fact that much of what is upheld as "Islamic" is not a function of textual interpretation or even reliance upon *madhhab* precedent, but of the exercise by pre-modern jurists (and others) of their own reason, imagination, cultural literacy, and other facul-

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46 [note 80 in the original] Cited in J. J. Owen, "Church and State in Stanley Fish's Antiliberalism," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (1999): 922.

47 [note 81 in the original] Ramadan, *Radical Reform*, 22.

48 [note 82 in the original] This is not to suggest that every secular conclusion institutionalized by pre-modern Muslims was wrong, illegitimate, or treacherous. It is simply to point out that no society will be able to rely entirely upon law in the strict sense even for its legal institutions. As such, society will have to draw upon any number of extra-scriptural norms and presuppositions. Extra-scriptural, however, does not necessarily mean wrong or illegitimate. Indeed, the Qur'an directs the Prophet and his followers to draw upon any number of pre-Islamic Arabia's *maʿrūf* (prevailing notions of good and wholesome). The problem, of course, comes with imputing to such conventions an authority that is greater or longer lasting than what they should properly enjoy.

ties en route to discretionary and other non-*sharʿī* conclusions deemed appropriate to their own context. By recognizing this, contemporary Muslims could free themselves from the would-be authority of any number of bygone conventions, vogues, preferences, insights, biases, assumptions, and the like. For inasmuch as these did not concretely recline upon direct scriptural or *sharʿī* authority, the most they could amount to would be practical discretionary choices that even pre-modern jurists would deem open to ongoing critique and revision.

By recognizing and engaging the Islamic secular, then, we would free the rational, cultural and imaginative powers of contemporary Muslims – from all walks and disciplines – from the undue constraints of an over-inclusive understanding of Islamic law and history. And in so doing, we may actually render them *more*, rather than less, likely to avoid secularization both by sparing Sharia the responsibility for inadequately addressing issues it was never calibrated to address and by opening the way for present-day Muslims, including, or perhaps especially, those outside the clerical class, to deploy their talents to the end of (re)acquiring the kind of cultural and intellectual authority via which Muslims can (re)construct an appropriate and functionally effective plausibility structure for Islam in the modern world.

Second, and finally, as I have repeated several times over the course of this essay, the *sharʿī* and the religious are *not* synonymous. Whereas the *sharʿī* necessarily implies the religious, the religious does not necessarily entail the *sharʿī*. Thus, even if our engagements with the Islamic secular lead us to greater comfort, hope, and fortune above and beyond the strictly *sharʿī*, this need not imply, *pace* Montesquieu, the irrelevance of Islam as religion. After all, between one supremely reasonable economic policy, drug-treatment program, or speed limit and another, something other than reason will have to guide us to a final decision.

Islam, in this context (i.e., as religion and the fount of trans-rational direction, insight, virtue, and guidance), remains thus inextricably relevant to the Islamic secular realm. The Islamic secular, in other words, is entirely and permanently deaf to Grotius's suggestion to proceed "as if God did not exist." This is the most important substantive difference between it and the Western secular. And this binds the Muslim to perpetual, conscientious engagement with Islam as religion, even in the most secular of endeavors. In the end, there[p. 22/23]fore, as I have noted elsewhere, it may be far less the notion that Sharia is limited in scope that opens the path to Western-style secularization than it is the sense or belief among Muslims that, by relying on a purely intellectual engagement of "Islam" or Sharia or the Islamic secular, they can so perfectly master the art of living that they have no need to seek supra-worldly guidance directly from God.[49]

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49 [note 83 in the original] See, for example, my "Islamic Law, Muslims and American Politics," *Islamic Law and Society* 22 (2015): 289.

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