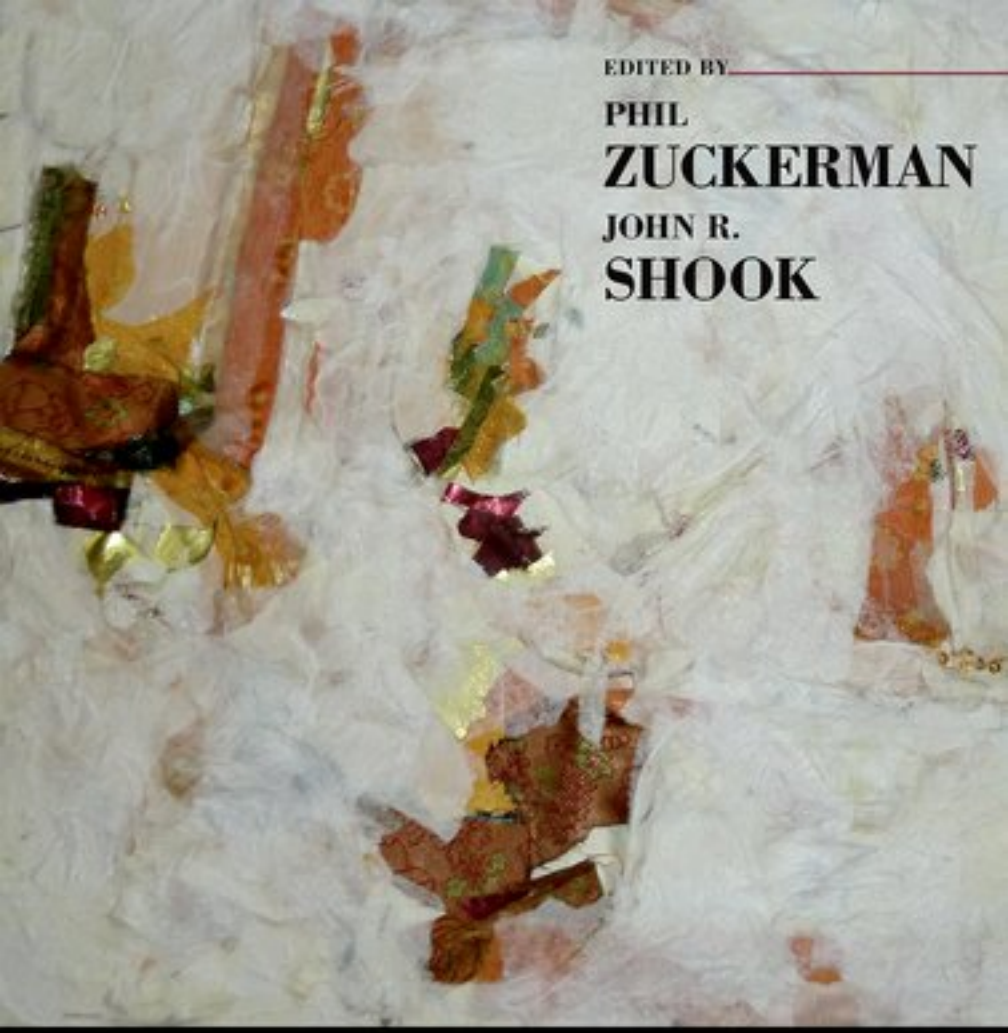

EDITED BY

PHIL ZUCKERMAN

JOHN R. SHOOK

# The Oxford Handbook *of* SECULARISM

# The Oxford Handbook of Secularism

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion Online Publication Date: Jan 2017



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Zuckerman, Phil, editor. | Shook, John R., editor.
Title: The Oxford handbook of secularism /
edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook.
Description: New York : Oxford University Press, 2017. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016023456 | ISBN 9780199988457 (cloth : alk. paper) |
ISBN 9780190628307 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Secularism.
Classification: LCC BL2747.8 .O94 2017 | DDC 211/.6—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016023456

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2
Printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America

## List of Contributors

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion Online Publication Date: Jan 2017


# (p. ix) List of Contributors

**James Arthur** is Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Staffing and Professor of Education and Civic Engagement at the University of Birmingham, UK. He is Director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at Birmingham and Honorary Secretary of the Society for Educational Studies. He coedited the *Routledge International Handbook of Education, Religion and Values*.

**Veit Bader** is Emeritus Professor of Sociology and of Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He was part of two European FP7 projects, one on Religious Diversity and Models of Secularism in Europe and one on Tolerance, Pluralism, and Cohesion. He authored *Democracy or Secularism? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*.

**Amélie Barras** is Assistant Professor in the Law and Society Program, Department of Social Science at York University, Canada. She also teaches in the Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Program and is a member of the Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. She recently authored *Refashioning Secularisms in France and Turkey: The Case of the Headscarf Ban*.

**Guy Ben-Porat** is Associate Professor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. He has authored *Global Liberalism, Local Populism: Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland*.

His most recent book is *Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of Contemporary Israel*.

**Jacques Berlinerblau** is Professor and Director of the Center for Jewish Civilization in the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He frequently comments on secularism, politics, and higher education in popular media. He is the author of *The Secular Bible: Why Nonbelievers Must Take Religion Seriously* and *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom*.

**Joseph Blankholm** is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on secularism and atheism, primarily in the United States. He has published chapters and articles on secularist lobbying, religious indifference, and nonbeliever communities, and he is currently at work on a monograph about American secular activism.

**Steve Bruce** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and a Fellow of the British Academy. He has authored numerous works on social and political theory. Among his books relating to secularism, he published *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West; Politics and Religion in the United Kingdom*; and *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*.

(p. x) **Paul Cliteur** is a Dutch jurist and philosopher. He presently is Professor of Jurisprudence in the Law School of Leiden University in The Netherlands, where he directed the Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Law for several years. He was previously a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Delft. He is the author of *The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism*.

**Thomas J. Coleman III** is a research psychology doctoral student in the Brain, Belief and Behaviour research group at Coventry University in the United Kingdom. He is an assistant editor for the journal *Secularism & Nonreligion* and a managing editor for The Religious Studies Project.

## List of Contributors

**Caroline Mala Corbin** is Professor of Law in the School of Law at the University of Miami, Florida. She litigated cases with the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project. Her scholarship in numerous law reviews focuses on the First Amendment's speech and establishment clauses and religious liberty. Her article "Nonbelievers and Government Religious Speech" was published in the *Iowa Law Review*.

**Kaleda K. Denton** is currently in the Ecology, Behavior and Evolution program at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has published encyclopedia entries on group selection, mutualism, and the Prisoner's Dilemma as well as an article entitled "Rational and Emotional Sources of Moral Decision-Making: An Evolutionary-Developmental Account" in *Evolutionary Psychological Science*.

**Shadia B. Drury** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her books include *Leo Strauss and the American Right, Terror and Civilization: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche*, and *Aquinas and Modernity: The Lost Promise of Natural Law*.

**Joachim Duyndam** is Professor of Humanism and Philosophy at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He chairs the university's research program on Humanist Traditions, Meaning in Life, and Aging Well. His publications are, from humanistic and philosophical perspectives, on themes such as mimesis, empathy, resilience, and humanistic values.

**Jack David Eller** teaches Anthropology at the Community College of Denver in Colorado. He has published *Introducing Anthropology of Religion; Social Science and Historical Perspectives: Society, Science, and Ways of Knowing*; and *Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence: Religious Violence across Culture and History*.

**Jonathan Fox** is Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. He is the Director of the Religion and State Project. Recent books include *Political Secularism, Religion and the State; Religion in International Relations Theory; The Unfree Exercise of Religion*; and *A World Survey of Religion and the State*.

**Robert Fuller** is Professor of Religious Studies at Bradley University in Illinois. He has authored more than a dozen books on psychology and religion, religious history, and religion in the United States, including *Religious Revolutionaries: The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion* and *Spiritual, But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*.

**Luke W. Galen** is Associate Professor of Psychology at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. His main areas of research are psychology of religion and the secularity of (p. xi) nonreligious people. He coauthored *The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies* with Phil Zuckerman and Frank Pasquale.

**Will M. Gervais** is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Kentucky, where he is Director of the Beliefs and Morality Lab. He investigates cognitive, evolutionary, and cultural forces facilitating beliefs about the supernatural. His publications also examine public attitudes toward the nonreligious and modes of cognition associated with nonbelief.

**Jacob L. Goodson** is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Southwestern College in Kansas. He is the General Editor for *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*. He coedited *Rorty and the Religious: Christian Engagements with a Secular Philosopher*, and authored *Narrative Theology and the Hermeneutical Virtues: Humility, Patience, Prudence*.

**Ralph W. Hood Jr** is Professor of Psychology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is a past president of Division 36 (Psychology of Religion) of the American Psychological Association. He has been an editor of *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, the *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, and the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*. He has published numerous books dealing with the psychology of religion.

**Sikivu Hutchinson** is Senior Intergroup Specialist for the Human Relations Commission of Los Angeles County, California. She is a founder of the Women's Leadership Project and the Black Skeptics Los Angeles organization. She is the author of *Moral Combat: Black Atheists, Gender Politics, and the Values Wars* and *Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels*.

**Jonathan Iwry** is a research assistant in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Besides his academic research, he is an online contributor to About.com on public policy topics, and he writes a weekly column for *The Daily Pennsylvanian* on topics at the intersection of religion, politics, and public thought in American life.

**Yolande Jansen** is Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Amsterdam Center for Globalization Studies of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is also the Socrates Professor of Humanism in Relation to Religion and Secularity at VU University Amsterdam. Her recent book is titled *Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: French Modernist Legacies*.

**Mark Juergensmeyer** is Professor of Sociology and Global Studies, Affiliate Professor of Religious Studies, and founding Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He coedited *Rethinking Secularism* and *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*. He coauthored *God in the Tumult of the Global Square* and authored *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*.

**Ariela Keysar** is Research Professor of Public Policy and Law and Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College in Connecticut. She led the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, and coedited *Secularism, Women & The State; Secularism & Science in the 21st Century* and *Secularism & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*.

**Dennis L. Krebs** is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. He has been a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and Fellow of

Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He coedited *Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology* with Charles Crawford and authored *The Origins of Morality: An Evolutionary Account*.

(p. xii) **Cheng-tian Kuo** is Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Joint Professor of the Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan. He was a Chair Professor at the International Institute for Asian Studies in The Netherlands. Among his books is *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan*.

**Cristina Lafont** is Professor of Philosophy at Northwestern University in Illinois, where she is Director of the Program in Critical Theory and codirector of the Research Group on Global Capitalism and Law. A recent book is *Global Governance and Human Rights*, and coeditor of *The Future of Critical Theory: Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order*.

**Sonja Luehrmann** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. She has published two books on Soviet atheism and its effects on post-Soviet religion and historical memory: *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic* and *Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge*.

**Tariq Modood** is Professor of Sociology, Politics, and Public Policy at the University of Bristol, UK. He is the founding Director of the Bristol University Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship. He has published many books on multiculturalism, religion, and citizenship and authored *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain* and *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*.

**Maxine B. Najle** is a doctoral student in Experimental Psychology at the University of Kentucky, where she participates in research conducted by the Beliefs and Morality Lab. A recent journal article is "Learned Faith: The Influences of Evolved Cultural Learning Mechanisms on Belief in Gods" with coauthor Will Gervais published in *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*.

**Juhem Navarro-Rivera** holds a doctorate in political science and works in Washington, DC. He was a researcher with the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey and continues as a Research Associate of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. His current research explores the viability of the American secular movement as a political movement.

**David Niose** is an attorney who has litigated numerous constitutional cases. He is past President of the American Humanist Association and the Secular Coalition for America. His bestselling books are titled *Fighting Back the Right: Reclaiming America from the Attack on Reason* and *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans*.

**James O. Pawelski** is Director of Education and Senior Scholar in the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, where he leads the Master of Applied Positive Psychology program. He is executive director of the International Positive Psychology Association. He authored *The Dynamic Individualism of William James* and coedited *The Eudaimonic Turn* and *On Human Flourishing*.

**John Perry** is Senior Lecturer in Theological Ethics at St. Mary's College of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He formerly was McDonald Fellow for Christian Ethics and Public Life at Christ Church, Oxford. He edited *God, the Good, and Utilitarianism*, and authored *The Pretenses of Loyalty: Locke, Liberal Theory, and American Political Theology*.

(p. xiii) **Johannes Quack** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. He directed the Emmy Neother Research Group on The Diversity of Non-Religion. His recent book is *Disenchanting India: Organized Rationalism and Criticism of Religion in India*.

## List of Contributors

**Niamh Reilly** is Established Professor in Political Science and Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Galway. For many years she has consulted on deliberations of the United Nations and Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs. She coedited *Religion, Gender and the Public Sphere* and authored *Women's Human Rights: Seeking Gender Justice in a Globalizing Age*.

**Abdullah Saeed** is the Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia. He is Director of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies at the University of Melbourne. His books include *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam; Islamic Thought: An Introduction*; and *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach*.

**Kenan Sevinc** is Assistant Professor of Psychology of Religion at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey. He is an assistant editor for the *Journal of Intercultural and Religious Studies*, the *Turkish Journal of Religious Education Studies*, and *Journal of Divinity Faculty of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University*.

**John R. Shook** is Research Associate in Philosophy and Instructor of Science Education at the University at Buffalo, New York. He has been Director of Education for two American secular organizations, the Center for Inquiry and the American Humanist Association. His recent book is *The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists and Believers (and Everyone in Between)*.

**Emily Esfahani Smith** holds a master's degree in applied positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. She resides in Washington, DC., where she writes about culture, relationships, and psychology for *The Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, The New York Times*, and other publications. She is the author of *The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life That Matters*.

**Jesse M. Smith** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Western Michigan University. His research investigations concern self and identity, social theory, sociology of religion and irreligion, and social movement. A recent article is "Creating a Godless

Community: The Collective Identity Work of Contemporary American Atheists” in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

**Baffour K. Takyi** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Akron in Ohio. His research and publications concentrate on demographics of developing African nations, health outcomes in Africa, religion and the family, gender and reproductive behavior, the intersection of gender and power on fertility decisions, and the experiences of Africans and other black immigrants in the United States.

**Sor-hoon Tan** is Associate Professor of Philosophy at National University of Singapore. Her books include *Challenging Citizenship: Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age; The Moral Circle and the Self: Chinese and Western Perspectives*; and *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction of Confucianism*.

(p. xiv) **John Teehan** is Professor of Religion at Hofstra University in New York. He studies the intersection of cognitive–evolutionary theories, philosophy of religion, and issues of religious morality and belief. His recent book is *In the Name of God: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence*.

**Yazmín A. García Trejo** is a research scholar at El Instituto: Institute of Latino, Caribbean and Latin American Studies at the University of Connecticut. She holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Connecticut. Her academic interests focus on the differences in the growth of secularism in Latin American countries.

**Roger Trigg** is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Warwick, and a Senior Research Fellow of the Ian Ramsey Centre. He also is Associate Scholar with the Religious Freedom Project of Georgetown University’s Berkley Center. His recent books are *Equality, Freedom and Religion; Religion in Public Life; Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions*; and *Beyond Matter: Why Science Needs Metaphysics.*

## List of Contributors

**Bryan S. Turner** is Presidential Professor of Sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he directs the Committee for the Study of Religion. He is the founding editor of the journals *Body & Society, Citizenship Studies*, and *Journal of Classical Sociology*. Recent books include *The Religious and the Political: A Comparative Sociology of Religion* and *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State.*

**Vidhu Verma** is a Professor in the Centre for Political Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. She has been a Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. She is director of a project on Changing Conceptions of Legal Justice in India. She edited *Unequal Worlds. Discrimination and Social Inequality in Modern India* and recently authored *Non-Discrimination and Equality in India: Contesting Boundaries of Social Justice*.

**Erik J. Wielenberg** is Professor of Philosophy at DePauw University in Indiana. He has been a Fellow at the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs, University of St. Andrews. He coedited *New Waves in Philosophy of Religion*, and his books include *God and the Reach of Reason: C. S. Lewis, David Hume, and Bertrand Russell* and *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe*.

**Marlene Winell** is a psychologist and holds a doctorate in Human Development and Family Studies. She is a consultant, educator, and writer in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her clinical expertise on psychological trauma from religion can be accessed at JourneyFree.com. She is the author of *Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving Their Religion*.

**David Yaden** is a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. He works in the Positive Psychology Center, the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, and he participates in research on the psychology and neuroscience of self-transcendent experiences. He also serves as a Humanist Chaplain at Rutgers University.

**Phil Zuckerman** is Professor of Sociology and Secular Studies at Pitzer College, where he founded the first program for secular studies in the United States. His authored *Living the Secular Life* and *Society Without God*, and he edited the two-volume work *Atheism and Secularity*. He recently coauthored *The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies*.

# Introduction: The Study of Secularism

Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.1

## Abstract and Keywords

The Oxford Companion to Secularism provides a timely overview of the new multidisciplinary field of secular studies. This field involves philosophy, the humanities, intellectual history, political theory, law, international studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, religious studies, and additional disciplines, all showing an increasing interest in the multifaceted phenomenon known as secularism. As the history of the term “secularism” shows, it has long been entangled with many related issues, such as unorthodoxy, blasphemy, apostasy, irreligion, religious criticism, agnosticism, atheism, naturalism, earth-centered -isms, humanism (and trans- and posthumanisms), rationalism, skepticism, scientism, modernism, human rights causes, liberalism, and various kinds of church–state separation all around the world. Secularism’s relevance also continues to grow due to the dramatic rise of irreligion and secularity in most regions of the world. These trends are leading more and more scholars from a variety of disciplines to investigate secular life and culture in all its varied forms.

Keywords: secular, secularity, secularism, secular studies, atheism, freethought, liberalism, church–state separation, religious studies

ON 13 July 2010, France’s parliament voted—nearly unanimously—to ban the wearing of veils that cover the face in public places, a vote seen as targeted specifically at Muslim women who wear veils as a religious obligation. On 8 January 2011, Leo Igwe, an outspoken secular humanist, was imprisoned and beaten by the police in Uyo Akwa state in southern Nigeria for attempting to rescue two children who had been accused of witchcraft and subsequently abandoned by their families. On 14 November 2012, Jamaica’s public transport authorities banned lay preaching and commuter evangelizing on all public buses. On 27 June 2013, Julia Gillard ended her three-year term as the twenty-seventh Prime Minister of Australia; in addition to being the first woman in that office, she was also an out atheist, publicly open about her lack of belief in God and nonreligious identity. On 12 March 2014, the Supreme Court of Israel voted to end military exemptions for thousands of ultra-Orthodox young men in religious seminaries. On 13 November 2014, the Pew Research Center released the results of a survey on religion in Latin America, re-

porting that 37 percent of Uruguayans, 16 percent of Chileans, 9 percent of Costa Ricans, 8 percent of Brazilians, and 4 percent of Peruvians are atheist, agnostic, or "of no particular religion." On 9 January 2015, Raif Badawi was escorted out of his prison cell and tied up in front of a mosque in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where a throng of spectators watched as he received fifty lashes by a government whip, the first fifty lashes of one thousand lashes that he is sentenced to receive while incarcerated for the next decade. His crime? He wrote some skeptical blog posts critical of religion. On 5 May 2014, the United States Supreme Court ruled that it is constitutionally legal for city council meetings to begin with sectarian prayers. On 5 August 2015, Hindu activists took to the streets of Katmandu, Nepal, protesting against the inclusion of the word "secular" in the nation's first post-monarchy constitution. Many politicians in Nepal regard the constitutional designation of their nation as a secular state as a safeguard for religious freedom and tolerance, but others—particularly the protestors—worry that it will corrode Nepal's Hindu culture.

While these events chosen from headlines of the previous decade are certainly disparate, they do have one thing in common: they all concern various forms, manifestations, or aspects of contemporary secularism. They also provide compelling evidence that secularism is a significant factor in societies and cultures the world over, and one that (p. 2) increasingly demands attention and analysis. It is with this conviction that this volume has been published: an assemblage of essays from leading scholars across philosophy, the humanities, intellectual history, political theory, law, international studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, religious studies, and additional disciplines, all showing an increasing interest in the multifaceted phenomenon known as secularism. This handbook on secularism is, we hope, a timely overview and helpful contribution to the new multidisciplinary field of secular studies. The chapters that follow offer definitions and data, discussions and controversies, and typologies and theories, as well as detailed case studies, that are all relevant—indeed, essential—for as thorough an understanding of the secular and secularism as is currently possible.

# Secularism: Definitional Approaches

We did not burden any contributor with defining the secular or secularism for the whole volume, nor did we impose any definitions upon contributors, leaving authors to explain key terms from their own perspective and use them for their own purposes. Having liberated the chapters from any imposition, the introduction of core concepts is a task remaining for us as editors, although the chapters by Quack, Keysar, Bruce, and Berlinerblau in the first section analyze essential aspects of secularity, secularization, personal secularism, and political secularism.

While one can find numerous formulations, articulations, and examples of ideas that could be fairly classified with secularism amidst the assertions of various ancient Indian, Greek, Chinese, and Roman philosophers (Larue 1996; Hecht 2003), the term itself came into its own in the mid-nineteenth century in England. It was the English schoolteacher, lecturer, writer, editor, and founder of the British Secular Union, George Jacob Holyoake

(1817–1906), who brought “secularism” into wide usage in 1851. The word had appeared in print before then, but Holyoake connected it to an affirmative ethical and civic agenda. Those earlier appearances of “secularism” retained the term’s indication of a contrast with churchly or spiritual matters, or even a degradation to worldly and materialistic ways. For example, in 1829 the word “secularism” appeared in a book authored by Noel Thomas Ellison, a fellow and tutor at Balliol College, Oxford. His book *Protestant Errors and Roman Catholic Truths* (1829) sought the reunion of these two Christian denominations, but each would have to admit its faults; the question is raised whether the Church of England is vulnerable to “the charge of secularism and worldly-mindedness” (204–205) raised against it. The next notable instance of the use of “secularism” is in the pages of *The Quarterly Review* of December 1842, where an article catalogues anti-Catholic criticisms, such as “its pretensions to exclusive spirituality, and its gross and materializing secularism” and similar disparagements (Anon. 1842: 239).

As for Holyoake, his story about his own first use of “secularism” placed it in his magazine, *The Reasoner*. In his book *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* (1896), Holyoake says that the issue dated 10 December 1851 was where he first mentions the word “secularism.” His memory, or his scanning of back issues, had failed him. In fact, his first use in print of “secularism” was in an earlier issue of *The Reasoner* dated 25 June 1851 where Holyoake says that he prefers “secularism” as a better label for the worldview he advocates instead of “atheism.”[1] This (p. 3) occurs in his reply to a letter to the editor by a certain Edward Search—the pseudonym of an ally in radical politics, W. H. Ashurst, who used “Edward Search” to insert useful letters for stimulating Holyoake’s wise responses. “Edward” had written to ask for a label to Holyoake’s stance besides “atheist” and suggests “secularist” instead. Holyoake’s reply agrees that “secularist” seems applicable, and then he says, “*Secularism* is peculiarly the work we have always had in hand,” which is “larger than Atheism, and includes it.”[2] Holyoake adds that his coming lectures about the “Martineau and Atkinson Letters” will enlarge on these terms. By May 1851 Holyoake had not yet published those lectures, but in an issue from that month he gave his answer to the question of whether Harriet Martineau was an atheist: she was not. Holyoake seemed determined to enlist Martineau in his own secularist ranks, pointing out how she nowhere denied God’s existence. The *Letters On the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development* by Harriet Martineau and Henry George Atkinson had appeared in that year, scandalizing the literary world. Both writers stated views that evidently sympathized with materialism and unbelief in the course of criticizing religion thoroughly. Martineau was already known for her alliance with Auguste Comte, the advocate of irreligious positivism and materialism in France; she published a translation of Comte’s *Positive Philosophy* in 1853.

Readers, then and now, would be understandably confused at this point—if secularism includes atheism, as Holyoake had said, why would it be important to distance those affirming atheism from secularism? Who are secularists, if not atheists? The partial overlap between secularity and atheism allows each to influence the other, but that degree of commonality also opens opportunities for each to attempt to manipulate the other (see Blankholm’s chapter in this volume). Explorations into atheism and secularity can never be exhaustive, but they are highly suggestive (Antony 2007; Zuckerman 2010; Levine

2011; Bullivant and Ruse 2013). The type of freethought proceeding all the way to skepticism about God's existence (Martin 2007; Shook 2010) has had a powerful effect on the course of social history and politics, far out of proportion to the limited numbers of people avowing unbelief or atheism (Harrington 1985; Taylor 2007; Turner 2011; Watson 2014).

The vernacular word "atheist" goes back to the early 1500s and "secular" was visible soon after, but locating incidences of the word "secularist" before the 1840s is very difficult. Rare appearances at least indicate that the word had some small degree of common usage. It appears as early as 1799 in a novel titled *Battleridge: An Historical Tale, Founded on Facts* (London, 1799), in which one of the characters exclaims, "I am no secularist" in renouncing all temptation to assist greedy and unworthy protagonists (54). By the 1840s, the word occasionally appears in print as a synonym for "materialist" and the like, in the context of referring to deviations from orthodox thinking. Holyoake was thoroughly familiar with materialism, having advocated that worldview from his early days as a freethinker. As his reminiscences in *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* state, his 1843 prospectus advertising his newspaper *The Movement* declared that "Materialism will be advanced as the only sound basis of rational thought and practice" (1896: 46). In regards to practice, Holyoake was quite clear about his civic values. The first issue of *The Reasoner* in 1846 announced that it shall be "Communistic in Social Economy–Utilitarian in Morals–Republican in Politics–and Anti-Theological in Religion." Issues of *The Reasoner* from 1852 onwards associate secularism with those agendas. Martineau herself promptly allied with secularism; her 1853 letter in the *Boston Liberator* was oft-quoted by Holyoake because it captured his intentions. For example, she wrote, "The adoption of the term Secularism is justified by its including a large number of persons who are not Atheists, and uniting them for action which has Secularism (p. 4) for its object, not Atheism. On this ground, and because, by the adoption of a new term, a vast amount of impediment from prejudice is got rid of, the use of the name Secularism is found advantageous."[3]

Robert Cooper, another popular freethinker and atheist in England at that time, attached himself to the label of "secularist" soon after Holyoake employed it in 1851, and many others applied that label to themselves, to Holyoake's satisfaction. However, Cooper soon turned against Holyoake. Holyoake had always repudiated the term "atheist" because it carried the negative connotation of abandoning morality along with religion, and it offered no affirmative social agenda besides a combative stance against religion. Holyoake's allegiance to rationalism prevented him from knowing whether God exists, a stance he later called "agnosticism" following Thomas Henry Huxley, lending little incentive to argue for atheism or disparage humble religiosity. By guiding his version of secularism away from unanswerable religious questions and unnecessary atheist proselytizing, he constructed a nontheist alternative to the strategy of aggressive atheism. That combative strategy was already taken up by self-proclaimed atheist and leading organizer Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), causing a significant rift dividing the British secularist movement (Royle 1974; Mullen 1987).

Holyoake never deviated from his original plan for secularism. The third edition of his *Principles of Secularism* stated that secularism is "the study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule, and making the service of others a duty of life" (1871: 11) In that year the "Articles of Secular Belief," endorsed by the London Secular Council but substantially composed by Holyoake, appeared in *The Reasoner*.[4] His 1896 book *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* stated similar principles:

> Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) The improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good. (41)[5]

In the hands of Holyoake, secularism was a worldly approach to life, and life's opportunities and challenges, unencumbered by anything religious. Despite his continual efforts, however, it remained entangled with materialism and egoism on the one side and atheism and anticlericalism on the other. Those entanglements were not going to be papered over, by Holyoake or anyone else—they were built into the way that Christendom had defined "secular."

# Defining the Secular

The origin of the word "secular" is Latin: *saeculum* typically meant a fixed period of time, an age, one hundred years or so (Feeney 2008: 145). The *saeculum* was not defined in contrast to any sacred concerns, and had a freestanding usage in Latin. In Christian Latin of medieval times, *saeculum* was a useful term for distinguishing this temporal age of the world from the eternal realm of God. This term was borrowed by the Romance languages and easily entered (p. 5) Middle English. Basically, something "secular" has more to do with worldly affairs rather than with religious affairs. Secular princes exercised their civil authority (piously, the people hoped), while secular monks provided their priestly services among the people (reverently, the church hierarchy hoped).

One of the earliest large English dictionaries, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum: Or, A General English Dictionary* (London, 1708) by John Kersey, gave these three definitions:

> Secular, belonging to the space of 100 years; also relating to this world, or Life. Also that is convenient in the World, without being engaged in a Monastick Life.
>
> Secularity, the Condition of a Secular Person, a Secular Life.
>
> To Secularize, to make Secular.

Nathan Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (enlarged second edition, London, 1731) does not list "secular" but it does include "secular games" ("once in an age or an hundred years"), "secularization" ("converting a regular person, place, or benefice to a secular one"), and "secularness":

> Secularness [*secularis*, L.] worldliness, addictedness to the things of this world.

Samuel Johnson's famous *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) gave these definitions:

> Secular, adj. [*secularis*, Latin; *seculier*, French] 1. Not spiritual; relating to the affairs of the present world; not holy; worldly. 2. [In the church of Rome.] not bound by monastic rules. 3. [*Seculaire*, Fr.] Happening or coming once in a *secle* or century.
>
> Secularity, n. s. [from *secular*.] Worldliness; attention to the things of the present life.

English dictionaries after Johnson's typically repeated his definitions. The *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (London, 1773) included "secular" as "something that is temporal; in which sense, the word stands opposed to ecclesiastical." Thomas Sheridan's *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1780) restates Johnson's definitions for "secular" and "secularity." The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED,* 1880s) followed the earlier dictionaries and currently provides those two primary meanings for "secular":

> Of or belonging to the present or visible world as distinguished from the eternal or spiritual world; temporal, worldly.
>
> Belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal. Chiefly used as a negative term, with the meaning non-ecclesiastical, non-religious, or non-sacred.

The *OED*, like earlier dictionaries, supplies the primary meaning of "secular" in two concepts—the temporal and worldly—and both of those concepts can be accurately defined without reference to anything religious. All the same, the secular does make sense as the contrary of the religious and the alternative to religious ways of life. Correspondingly, two meanings for "secularization" are primary in the *OED*:

> The giving of a secular or non-sacred character or direction to (art, studies, etc.); the placing (of morals) on a secular basis; the restricting (of education) to secular subjects.
>
> The conversion of an ecclesiastical or religious institution or its property to secular possession and use; the conversion of an ecclesiastical state or sovereignty to a lay one.

(p. 6) The first definition for secularization highlights how a secular standpoint does not regard any religious standpoint (however religion or the religious may be characterized) as necessary for expressive or intellectual activities, moral conduct, or learning in general. Without waiting for religion to congeal or define itself (and pessimism about that is warranted), secularization would guide humanity in a manner very different from that presumed by religions, unable to see why human culture and human achievement must be forever incomplete without the guidance offered by a religious standpoint about otherworldly or nonnatural matters and values.

"Secularization" refers to some sort of process or set of processes that, if meaningful for those who live through it, could at most serve as a means, not as an end in itself. The prior questions must be asked and answered: Why should religious conviction relax its grip on the mentalities of people, and why should religious institutions surrender control over the workings of society? Those are precisely the questions taken up by secularism. If there are reasonable answers, secularism must provide them, and the destiny of the secular may depend on its success.

Due to Christendom's cultural, intellectual, and political dominion over Europe for so long, distinct agendas raising rivals to that multidimensional hegemony were inevitable. And any other civilization's experiences with a more complex and pluralistic religious history would naturally witness even greater variability to nonreligious agendas. Is secularism one or many? Perhaps we can see one-in-many. If those distinct agendas each claim to represent the secular and fulfill secularism, that only displays their family resemblance. If any of these secularisms claim exclusivity and dismisses the rest as subsidiary or counterproductive, that preeminence similarly reveals a shared heritage. So it was before Holyoake attempted their cohesion, and so it remains today.

For example, Jacques Berlinerblau defines secularism as "a political philosophy, which, at its core, is preoccupied with, and often deeply suspicious of, any and all relations between government and religion" (2012: xvi). According to Barry Kosmin, secularism "involves organizations and legal constructs that reflect the institutional expressions of the secular in a nation's political realm and public life" (2007: 1). Joseph Baker and Buster Smith define secularism as a "cosmic belief system that is explicitly nonreligious in orientation" (2015: 8). For Philip Kitcher, secularism "claims that there are no supernatural entities" and it entails the expression of doubt in the existence of "deities, divinities, spirits ghosts, and ancestors … and the supernatural forces to which the world's various religions, past and present, make their varied appeals" (2011: 24).

A considerable amount of definitional disparity is evident. More and more leading scholars are publishing a book with "secularism" in the title, but unless its author is leading a particular secular approach, it seems harder to find a clear definition of the term within those books' pages (see, e.g., Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008; Calhoun et al. 2011). The lack of consensus over the meaning or purpose of secularism should no longer be any surprise, given its multiform history and multipurpose potential. Most words, terms, and labels that seek to capture something that is simultaneously social, philosophical, legal, de-

mographic, historical, and cultural are typically difficult to adequately define. After all, consider how difficult it is to define “family,” “religion,” “environmentalism,” “art,” or “fundamentalism” in a way satisfactory to all interested parties.

Our considered view, shared by most of the contributors to this volume, judges that it is best to conceive of secularism as multipronged and multifaceted. And its meaning surely (p. 7) varies for different societies the world over. To collect a limited but robust set of chapters, purporting some degree of adequate coverage to this topic, surely requires more preparation that the ritual acknowledgments of secularism’s multiplicity. The next section explains how the secular has become a legitimate object of objective research, bringing into view expansive fields and enticing questions sufficient to compel further academic exploration. The final section delineates our chosen design for the initial cartography across such broad secular expanses.

# Secularism Surging

Obviously, no volume of this kind comes into being out of thin air. Its conception and development—and the fact that we have been able to recruit the work of forty-three scholars inquiring into so many aspects of secularism—speaks to the emergent and enlarging interest in all things related to secularism: unorthodoxy, blasphemy, apostasy, irreligion, religious criticism, agnosticism, atheism, naturalism, earth-centered -isms, humanism (and trans- and posthumanisms), rationalism, skepticism, scientism, modernism, human rights causes, and separations of church and state the world over.

This expanding interest has been increasingly accessible to both public and scholarly audiences. The public front has been especially dynamic, as shown by the unprecedented success of international bestsellers critical of religion by the likes of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, as well as by the scale of reactions against New Atheism (Amarasingam 2010). A dramatic increase in the size and number of secularist groups and communities in the United States has also received much attention. Over two thousand local groups and meetups now dot practically every county of every state, and national-level associations such as the Secular Coalition and the Student Secular Alliance have joined older thriving organizations such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association. And we have observed the emergence of secular organizations seeking to mimic religious congregations; the Sunday Assembly movement is currently the prominent example of so-called atheist churches that have sprouted up in cities all over the world.

The most important component to secularism’s growing significance in the public sphere has been the dramatic increase of nonreligious people. The voice of religion could not be expected to fall silent around the world (Berger 1999), but the voices of nonreligious people are undeniably more numerous than ever before. For example, the percentage of Americans who claim “none” when asked what their religion is has grown from 8 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2007 and to somewhere between 23 percent and 30 percent today. And among those between the ages of 18 and 24, 36 percent have no religion. Ac-

cording to the latest 2015 General Social Survey, 7.5 million Americans have joined the ranks of the nonreligious since 2012.[6]

America is no longer looking so different from other regions of the world that are already quite nonreligious. Whereas only 2 percent Canadians were nonreligious one hundred years ago, nearly 30 percent of Canadians are nonreligious today (Bruce 2011: 14; Csillag 2013). One hundred years ago, less than 1 percent of Australians were nonreligious, but today about 20 percent are (Bruce 2011). Surging rates of secularity are even more dramatic in Europe. (p. 8) A century ago in Holland, around 10 percent of the population claimed to be religiously unaffiliated; today, it is over 40 percent (Bruce 2011: 10; Halman 2010). And for the first time in Dutch history, there are now more atheists and agnostics in the Netherlands than believers in God (Savela 2015). Back in the 1950s, only 2 percent of British adults said that they did not believe in God, but today over 40 percent of British adults say that they either do not believe in God or take an agnostic viewpoint, claiming that God's existence is impossible to make judgments about, one way or the other. And nearly half of British adults now claim no religious identity at all (Crockett and Voas 2006; Bagg and Voas 2010: 97). Seventy-six percent of Swedish adults claim to be either atheists or not religious, with citizens of the Czech Republic and Spain not far behind; about half the population of Western Europe describe themselves as either not religious or convinced atheists (WIN/Gallup International 2015). And recent survey information from Japan illustrates extensive secularization over the course of the last century: sixty years ago, about 70 percent of the Japanese claimed to hold personal religious beliefs, but today, that figure is down to only about 20 percent (Reader 2012). Such global levels of irreligion are historically unprecedented.

In response to the dramatic rise of irreligion noted here, more and more scholars from a variety of disciplines have started to train their lenses on secular life and culture. The past decade has seen a true explosion of scholarly interest in matters pertaining to secularism in all its varied forms. In 2005, the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture was founded at Trinity College, established to advance the understanding of the role of secular values and the process of secularization in contemporary society and culture. In 2008, the Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network was founded by scholars at Cambridge University and Oxford University, in an attempt to create an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers who are focused on the topic of nonreligion and secularity. In 2011, a department of secular studies was established at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Also in 2011, the peer-reviewed academic journal *Secularism and Nonreligion* was launched; an open access, interdisciplinary journal, it is published with the aim of advancing research on various aspects of the secular. In 2012, the Anthropology Department of the London School of Economics launched a Programme for the Study of Religion and Non-Religion, with the aim of fostering discussion and research relating to issues "relevant to religion, atheism, secularism, humanism and post-humanism."

If books are a sound measure of productive scholarship, the secular has reached academic respectability, as the bibliographic effort to keep up with works relating to secularity, secularization, and secularism is by now nearly unmanageable. The catalogues of every major publisher and most small presses do not disappoint. New York University Press recently launched a Secular Studies series, meant to provide “a home for works in the emerging field of secular studies,” with published works “rooted in a social science perspective, exploring and illuminating various aspects of secular life, ranging from how secular people live their lives and how they construct their identities to the activities of secular social movements, from the demographics of secularism to the ways in which secularity intersects with other social processes, identities, patterns, and issues.” Also in 2012, Palgrave Macmillan launched a new book series on “Histories of the Sacred and the Secular, 1700–2000,” welcoming “book proposals on the history of Atheism, Secularism, Humanism and unbelief/secularity and to encourage research agendas in this area alongside those in religious belief.” In 2014, De Gruyter also launched a new book series, “Religion and Its Others: Studies in Religion, Nonreligion, and Secularity,” which “explores nonreligious or ‘irreligious’ phenomena.”

(p. 9) Additionally, numerous academic conferences have been held around the world with a focus on the secular, such as “Secularism and Religious Diversity in Europe: Opportunities and Perspectives” at Leuven University, Belgium, in 2012, “Secularism on the Edge: United States, France, and Israel” at Georgetown University, in 2013, “Religion and State: From Theocracy to Secularism, and in Between” at Bethlehem University in Palestine in 2013, “Global Secularisms” at New York University in 2013, “Explaining Nonreligion and Secularity in the U.S. and Beyond” at Pitzer College in 2014, and “Women’s Religious Agency: Negotiating Secularism and Multiculturalism in Everyday Life,” at Uppsala University, Sweden, in 2015. Attendees at the annual conferences held by the Secularity and Nonreligion Network, the American Academy of Religion, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion are seeing more and more papers and panels about secularism each year.

It is from within this surging wave of interest in secularism that this volume has come into being. We hope to further and shape this surging growing interest in secularism by providing in-depth analyses of its many manifestations and implications.

# Organizing the Study of Secularism

Admitting how secularism is not easily defined in theory and rarely organized in practice cannot be avoided by any scholar serious about the subject. Still, that admission is no excuse for complacency toward the study of secularism lapsing into disarray. Editors of even a modestly comprehensive volume about secularism cannot avoid their duty to lend some organization to the ventures of academic inquiry. Fortunately, the root meanings of both “secular” and “secularity” have been relatively stable for several centuries, and the “secular” lends its meaning to all of its cognates. To seek what is secular is to observe the

signs of secularity, and the capacity to identify secularity in turn permits the objective study of any of its manifestations.

The nonobsolete meanings of “secularity” are these, according to the *OED*:

> The condition or quality of being secular. (a) Occupation with secular affairs (on the part of clergymen); secular spirit or behavior. Also occas. in wider application: Worldliness, absence of religious principle or feeling. (b) Lay character (of persons claiming to be in holy orders). (c) Secular or non-sacred character; absence of connection with religion.

Setting aside the two specific references to the character or conduct of religious clergy mentioned in (a) and (b), we are left with these two primary meanings for “secularity”:

> Worldliness, absence of religious principle or feeling.
>
> Secular or nonsacred character; absence of connection with religion.

A secular person, social activity, or cultural institution is worldly, concerned for matters of daily life. To study the secular and secularity is to study the temporal and worldly. From the concept of the secular itself, five additional broad topics emerge, each dependent upon prior concepts higher on the list, amounting to six foundational concepts:

> The Secular: features of personal and social matters concerning the mundane temporal world and one’s daily life.
>
> (p. 10) Social Secularity: observing and explaining how social/political/economic (etc.) norms, structures, and institutions have primarily secular functions and aims.
>
> Secularization: measuring, analyzing, and explaining any growth trends in social secularity discerned in countries around the world; and studying correlations between secularization and other socio/cultural features.
>
> Personal Secularity: studying and explaining trends in the numbers and types of secular people, their degrees of secularity, the correlations with social secularity and secularization, and the ways that secular people avoid, enter, or cease religious participation.
>
> Secular Living: inquiring into how people understand their lives and seek meanings and values in worldly ways, along with the study of contrasts between secular and religious living, and ways secular people interact with religious features of their society.
>
> Secularism: explanatory justifications for secularization in society and personal secularity for individuals, and the promotion and improvement of partially or fully secular living.

The last topic of secularism is here defined schematically, reliant on more basic secular concepts yet open to various justifications for any sort of enhancement of secularization or degree of personal secularity, and undefined with regard to what type(s) of secular living may be promoted and to what extent. Conceptions of secularism utilized by our contributors are less schematic and more concrete in order to play useful roles in research and theorizing from discipline to discipline.

"Secularism" is also listed last rather than first because secularism functions as an "-ism" or viewpoint—a view of things with some point to it, which is more about recommending answers to contentious questions than about asking questions answerable with confirmable facts. The first five topical areas are views upon specified matters that can be roughly understood through the basic concept of the "secular" and objectively described wherever found by whoever takes the trouble to do it with some scientific care. Particular devotion to some specific kind of secularism can shape what one sees, yet such partiality need not doom the academic study of secular matters to subjectivity or relativism, or to ideology. Furthermore, no preference or commitment to secularism is needed, by the observer or the observed. One can live a secular life and participate in secular folkways and institutions without thinking of oneself as secular, adhering to secularism, or undertaking secularist action. Being secular is more like being a pedestrian than a podiatrist. If you are observed taking advantage of public walkways, you are a pedestrian no matter whether you would care to tell anyone that you are a pedestrian. On the other hand, if you are not familiar with what being a podiatrist is like, you are not a podiatrist. Secular people, in other words, do not have to know how to be a "secularist," and no endorsement of secularism is required. As for scholars, they can theorize accounts of secularity and secularization for due consideration by scholarly communities quite independently of whether they personally approve or whether they can sympathize with any of secularism's agendas.

By contrast, secularism is the sort of thing that typically finds its advancement and advocates in secularists. There is no single type of secularist to be identified, and secularist attitudes can be found in unlikely places. Religious people may endorse one or another agenda of secularism, such as funding public education or separating church from state, and to that limited extent they could be tagged with holding a "secularist" stance. Like religious allies, secularists will pick and choose their own priorities, and any such advocacy occurs within the particular local context where one resides and expresses one's views. What is manifested as secularism and secularist activism on the ground will vary greatly from one country to (p. 11) another, and even from one small territory to another. Secularism in a Buddhist society may have little in common with secularism in a Christian society. Islamic culture is hardly the same in every Muslim country, so secularisms in those countries will correspondingly look different. Any kind of secularism offers a characteristic view with a point that makes sense in its proper context, but no formulaic method to advancing secularism should be abstractly sought in advance.

As some chapters expressly warn, secularism is distinct from secularization. seculari-za-tion can occur in the course of human history without any explicit or organized efforts to justify or advance it. Secularization does not require lots of secular people, any work of secularists, or the public promotion of secularism, because secular dimensions to social institutions and cultural practices can emerge and develop from the ordinary activities of people in large groups, even large religious groups. Over long periods of time, religious societies have developed vast secular dimensions, such as educational, economic, or polit-ical institutions, in the absence of any deliberate attempt to promote secularity or secu-larization, simply because modified social conditions turned out to arouse and develop those secular features. Governments refraining from requiring a single religion or pro-moting any religion, for example, emerged occasionally in the course of civilizations and empires, without any political secularists involved at all. It is actually an unusual feature of modern Western civilization and its inheritance from the Greco-Roman civilization that intellectuals have formulated secular justifications for governments and established somewhat secular governments.

Although secularism involves the advocacy for and advancement of secularization in some form or another, secularism is not reducible to a judgment that “nonbelief is growing,” “secularization is expanding,” “secularization follows modernization,” “secularization fol-lows science,” or “secularization is inevitable.” Religion’s admirers can admit some validi-ty to such judgments, if genuinely confirmable, without feeling that they are thereby en-dorsing secularism. And secularism can be vibrant where nonbelief and secularization is declining, no modernization or science is around, or even where religiosity’s expansion seems inevitable. Secularism may (unjustly) gain comfort from sociological or political predictions, but disappointed predictions cannot touch secularism’s point.

Because secularists agree in their secularity but do not necessarily agree about why reli-gion should be avoided or about specific agendas for resisting religion, the phenomenon of “polysecularity” has to be recognized. As some chapters explore in more detail, the emergence of secularity in the form of open opposition to religion lacks a uniform mani-festation. Across human history and cultures, there have been many phases and modes of secularism operating in resistance to religious ideas and institutions. Historians of nar-row scope assume that secularism and modernism are twins born of the same western European mother, but intellectual resistance to religion was not an uncommon struggle across the ancient world and the history of Eastern thought.

Six major modes of modern secularism stand out to our Western eyes: political secular-ism, economic secularism, educational secularism, ethical secularism, scientific secular-ism, and religious criticism.

> Political Secularism: defenses of the secular functions of government, the constitu-tional secularity of government, and the promotion of governments showing legal neutrality toward, and relative independence from, religions.

(p. 12) Economic Secularism: the promotion of material values and economic progress by economic systems relatively free from religious control, along with scrutiny of proposed measures of secular well-being. Because economic secularity may require some government scrutiny, advocacy of political secularism may be involved.

Educational Secularism: advocacy of the widespread availability of primary and secondary education that is not infused with religious indoctrination or denominational proselytizing. Because this may require supervision over private schools and/or government-supported public schools, advocacy of political secularism can be involved.

Ethical Secularism: scientific explanations for human morality, philosophical justifications for morality's validity and authority, and promotion of kinds of ethical systems having only naturalistic bases and secular aims, such as human excellence and happiness.

Scientific Secularism: studying the development and promotion of the sciences and their methodologies, scientific and naturalistic worldviews, and the virtues/ideals that scientific research and scientific communities exemplify. The scientific study of religion and religious experience explaining them in natural terms, is included here.

Religious Criticism: criticizing religion and justifying nonbelief, by applying rhetorical, polemical, and logical means of persuasion. Increasing personal secularity in society is a major goal, along with decreasing religious influence in society. Intellectual arguments against religion proceed into the area of atheology and its defense of atheism.

Political secularism is often regarded as vital or even essential to any mode of secularism, since its absence practically forbids the effective pursuit of the rest. Religious criticism is always on call in support of all modes of secularism as needed, and it gains effectiveness as other modes of secularism become robust.

This short list could easily be subdivided or extended, and no claims for exhaustiveness are implied. It also bears repeating that different societies will witness their own characteristic patterns of active secularisms. Perhaps economic and political secularisms happen to be most dynamic for a time, followed by educational and ethical secularisms at another time, or any other combinations, including their decay, decline, or even disappearance. They certainly cannot be expected to march together or necessarily proceed at the same paces.

# Overview of Contents

The sections to this volume offer coverage of the six foundational secular topics, and the chapters taken together include discussions relating to each of the six major modes of secularism, at least a cursory extent.

Part One, “Identifying the Secular, Secularity, Secularization, and Secularism,” provides orientations and overviews to these concepts, their applications, and their interrelationships. Johannes Quack distinguishes what he calls worldview secularism from political secularism, pointing out their intertwined histories and contemporary engagements. Ariela Keysar compares the beliefs of atheists, the nonreligious, and religious people and specifically analyzes their different attitudes about the question of science conflicting with religion. Steve Bruce traces the relationship between modernism and secularization trends and judges that conditions remain favorable for further secularization in the West. Mark Juergensmeyer ponders how the traditional narrative that secularism must conflict with religion presumes (p. 13) unnecessary dichotomies and encourages extremism on both sides. Jacques Berlinerblau examines the principles of political secularism and liberalism during their historical emergence in Europe, which now inform distinctive approaches to secularism today. Jonathan Fox surveys that contemporary political scene in order to see which types of political secularism are actually guiding democracies around the world.

Part Two, “Secular Governments,” provides in-depth examinations of selected countries and regions where secularization and secularism have had significant yet highly variable impacts. On Western models of government, there are chapters by John Perry (on England and America); Amélie Barras (on France): Kenan Sevinc, Ralph W. Hood Jr., and Thomas Coleman (on Turkey); and Guy Ben-Porat (on Israel). For Middle Eastern, African, and South Asia regions, there are chapters by Abdullah Saeed (on Islam); Baffour Takyi (on sub-Saharan Africa); and Vidhu Verma (on India). Additional chapters are by Sonja Luehrmann (the Soviet Union and then Russia) and Cheng-tian Kuo (comparing China and Taiwan).

Part Three, “Contesting Political Secularism,” offers political and philosophical debates over the particular significance of experiments with secularisms and their relative merits and problems. The contentious status of liberalism’s theoretical proposal to erode or erase religion from the public sphere is the main focus of chapters by Cristina Lafont, Shadia Drury, and Roger Trigg. As those chapters intimate, despite their disagreements with each other, what religious conviction and religious community can practically contribute to public life and representative government should be taken into account. Jacob Goodson contributes an overview of Jürgen Habermas’s evolving position on secularism, multifaith societies, and postsecularism. With the issue of multiculturalism and respect for religious diversity taking center stage, Veit Bader recommends a liberal-democratic constitutionalism able to handle the nuances and trade-offs needed for any implementation of a secularism. Tariq Modood also seeks a flexible and pluralistic compromise, involving robust state–religion relationships that allow the multi-establishment of religions.

Like some other contributors in this section, Yolande Jansen questions any simplistic opposition between religion and secularism, urging that the political, socioeconomic, cultural-historical, religious, and ideological features particular to a country receive full consideration.

Part Four, “Politics of Church and State,” delves into specific points of controversy and conflict animating church–state relations today. Perhaps not all of the contributors to this section would label themselves as secularists, but typical secularist agendas are amply heard. Paul Cliteur explains how arguments against religion’s influence over politics are developed from the entirely secular position that ethics and human rights should be autonomous from religion. James Arthur addresses ongoing legal conflicts in the area of education and religion, discussing some recent Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights decisions in this arena. Niamh Reilly describes the major developments to debates about religion and secularism in public and political life where they especially concern the role of women and the critiques of feminism. Juhem Navarro-Rivera and Yazmín García Trejo report on the growing racial diversity of secularism in America, showing why this trend correlates with the exodus of secular Americans away from the Republican Party. Sikivu Hutchinson focuses on African Americans, who are not as secular as other cultural groups, yet secular humanist and atheist traditions in African American thought have counterbalanced black religious orthodoxy. Caroline Mala Corbin surveys religion jurisprudence in the United States, where the free exercise clause has become more potent in Supreme Court decisions, shifting constitutional jurisprudence from “separationism” toward “neutrality” and diminishing the (p. 14) role of the establishment clause. David Niose represents recent and ongoing judicial cases as cautionary illustrations of church–state issues involving the ongoing culture wars that show little sign of subsiding.

Part Five, “Secularity and Society,” returns to the level of personal secularity, bringing into better view the real lives of nonreligious people as they experience the transitions and disruptions of today’s world. Insights into African, Japanese, Jewish, Muslim, and American secular experiences illustrate that diversity. David Eller anthropologically deconstructs the category “secular” to expose the rich diversity observable in secular living and suggests that the categories of “the religious” and “the secular” may not last as easy contraries for much longer. Jesse Smith adds his sociological insights into that same vast diversity, with additional concrete examples of how the secular involves many paths, has many meanings, and is expressed and experienced in different ways. Luke Galen agrees that the religious interfuses with the secular, including where claimed effects of religiosity are in reality attributable to secular mechanisms, so that religiosity cannot claim any special unworldly benefits. David Yaden, Jonathan Iwry, Emily Esfahani Smith, and James Pawelski utilize positive psychology’s scientific findings, and its shift toward a meaning-oriented and humanistic view of well-being, to help fill in supposed gaps to secular living. Robert Fuller exposes how secularity is interfusing with spirituality for many religiously unaffiliated people, who seek such things as self-growth, openness to wonder, authenticity, metaphysical explanations, and communal and ecological morality. Will Gervais and Maxine Najle turn to lingering prejudices harbored against nonreligious people, inquiring into causes behind discrimination against the nonreligious and the impact of vocal atheist

movements. Marlene Winell discusses the difficult transitions that many formerly religious people experience as they undergo cultural readaptations and psychological healings needed after abandoning religious indoctrination.

Part Six, “Morality and Secular Ethics,” collects chapters that offer various ways to present naturalistic accounts of morality and justify secular approaches to ethics. Erik Wielenberg considers the problem of whether the freedom, agency, and responsibility expected from moral behavior can be accommodated within the natural world. Dennis Krebs and Kaleda Denton recount the current scientific thinking on the long evolution of human sociality, morality, and altruism. John Teehan delineates the major differences and disagreements between secular ethics and religious ethics. Sor-hoon Tan recounts how secular ethics was not limited to any single civilization, as Aristotle’s philosophy and Confucianism require no otherworldly religious beliefs, and a Confucian secular ethics can be fused with John Dewey’s reconstruction of the religious. Joseph Blankholm surveys nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations of organized secularism and humanism, illuminating tensions still animating struggles over the point of secularism. Looking forward, Joachim Duyndam articulates a positive humanism upholding liberty, responsibility, justice, solidarity, pluralism, the art of living, and sustainability. Finally, gazing even farther into the future, Bryan Turner ponders a paradigmatic secular quest for life extension and living forever, and confronts the choice awaiting us between posthumanism and transhumanism.

Not surprisingly, given the times in which we are living, political secularism, democratic governing, and church–state relations in America, Europe, and around the world have the place of prominence at the core of this volume. That worldliness and timeliness seems in keeping with the spirit of secularism.

## Bibliography

Amarasingam, A. (ed.). 2010. *Religion and the New Atheism: A Critical Appraisal*. Leiden: Brill.

Anon. 1842. “Art. VI. Discourses on the Prophecies relating to Antichrist.” *The Quarterly Review* 71 (December), 197–243.

Antony, L. (ed.). 2007. *Philosophers without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bagg, S., and D. Voas. 2010. “The Triumph of Indifference: Irreligion in British Society.” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by P. Zuckerman, vol. 2, 91–111. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Baker, J., and B. Smith. 2015. *American Secularism: Cultural Contours and Nonreligious Beliefs Systems*. New York: New York University Press.

Berger, P. 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Berlinerblau, J. 2012. *How to Be Secular*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bruce, S. 2011. *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bullivant, S., and M. Ruse (eds.). 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cady, L., and E. Hurd (eds.). 2010. *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Calhoun, C., M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen (eds.). 2011. *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crockett, A., and D. Voas. 2006. "Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th-Century Britain." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45(5), 567–584.

Csillag, R. 2013. "'No Religion' Is Increasingly Popular For Canadians: Report." *Huffington Post* (May 15). **http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/15/no-religion-is-increasingly-popular-for-canadians-report_n_3283268.html?utm_hp_ref=religion**.

Ellison, N. 1929. *Protestant Errors and Roman Catholic Truths*. London: Printed for C. J. G. and F. Rivington.

Feeney, D. 2008. *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Grossman, C. 2012. "Survey Finds 19% without Religious Affiliation". *USA Today* (20 July). **http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/story/2012-07-19/no-religion-affiliation/56344976/1**.

Halman, L. 2010. "Atheism and Secularity in the Netherlands." In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by P. Zuckerman, 155–175. Santa Barbara, Cal.: Praeger.

(p. 16) Harrington, M. 1985. *The Politics at God's Funeral: The Spiritual Crisis of Western Civilization*. New York: Penguin.

Hecht, J. 2003. *Doubt: A History*. San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco.

Holyoake, G. 1859. *Principles of Secularism Briefly Explained*. London: Holyoake and Co.

Holyoake, G. 1871. *Principles of Secularism Illustrated*, 3rd ed. London: Book Store.

Holyoake, G. 1896. *The Origin and Nature of Secularism.* London: Watts

Jakobsen, J., and A. Pellegrini (eds.). 2008. *Secularisms*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Kitcher, P. 2011. "Challenges for Secularism." In *The Joys of Secularism*, edited by G. Levine, 24–56. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Kosmin, B. 2007. “Contemporary Secularity and Secularism.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*, edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 1–13. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Kosmin, B., and A. Keysar. 2009. *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008) Summary Report.* Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. **http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf**.

Larue, G. 1996. *Freethought across the Centuries: Toward a New Age of Enlightenment*. Washington, D.C.: American Humanist Association.

Levine, G. (ed.). 2011. *The Joy of Secularism: 11 Essays for How We Live Now*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Martin, M. (ed.). 2007. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Merino, S. 2012. “Irreligious Socialization? The Adult Religious Preferences of Individuals Raised with No Religion.” *Secularism and Nonreligion* 1(1), 1–16.

Mullen, S. 1987. *Organized Freethought: The Religion of Unbelief in Victorian England*. New York: Garland.

Pew Research Center. 2012. “‘Nones’ on the Rise.” **http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx**.

Pew Research Center. 2015. “America’s Changing Religious Landscape.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/**.

Putnam, R., and D. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Reader, I. 2012. “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(1), 7–36.

Royle, E. 1974. *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791–1866*. Manchester, U.K.: University of Manchester Press.

Savela, T. 2015. “More Atheists than Believers, But 60 Pct on the Fence.” *NL Times* (16 January). **http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/01/16/atheists-believers-60-pct-fence/**.

Shook, J. 2010. *The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists, Believers (and Everyone in Between).* Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Smith, G. 2008. *A Short History of Secularism*. New York: I. B. Taurus.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Turner, B. S. 2011. *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*. Cambridge, U.K,: Cambridge University Press.

Watson, P. 2014. *The Age of Atheists: How We Have Sought to Live Since the Death of God*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

WIN/Gallup International. 2012. *Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism*. Zurich: WIN-Gallup International. **http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf**.

(p. 17) WIN/Gallup International. 2015. "Losing our Religion? Two Thirds of People Still Claim to Be Religious." **http://www.wingia.com/en/news/losing_our_religion_two_thirds_of_people_still_claim_to_be_religious/290/**.

Zuckerman, P. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment*. New York: New York University Press.

Zuckerman, P. (ed.). 2010. *Atheism and Secularity*, 2 vols. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.
(p. 18)

## Notes:

(1.) *The Reasoner* 11, no. 6 (25 June 1851): 88.

(2.) Ibid. On Search's identity, see Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (1974, 155).

(3.) Quoted in Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism Briefly Explained* (1859, 3).

(4.) *The Reasoner* 30, no. 10 (October 1871): 145.

(5.) The same book was published simultaneously in America with the title *English Secularism*.

(6.) Consult polling by the American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin and Keysar 2009), WIN/Gallup International (2012), and the Pew Research Center (2012, 2015). See also Merino (2012), Putnam and Campbell (2010), and Grossman (2012).

**Phil Zuckerman**

Phil Zuckerman is professor of sociology and secular studies at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. He is the author of several books, including Faith No More (OUP, 2011) and Society Without God (NYU, 2008), and the editor of several volumes, including Atheism and Secularity (Praeger, 2010) and The Social Theory of W.E.B. Du Bois (Pine Forge, 2004).

**John R. Shook**

John R. Shook is Research Associate in Philosophy and Instructor of Science Education at the University at Buffalo, New York. He has been Director of Education for two American secular organizations, the Center for Inquiry and the American Hu-

manist Association. His recent book is The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists and Believers (and Everyone in Between).

# Identifying (with) the Secular: Description and Genealogy

Johannes Quack

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.2

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses two academic strands with respect to scholarly attempts to identify the secular. Based on a review of criticism brought forward against the classical secularization thesis, it outlines, on one hand, what consequences have been drawn by descriptive and explanatory social scientists and how they apply notions such as secularity, secularism, and secularization today, and, on the other, examines the conceptual histories as well as distinct genealogical studies of "the secular" to explore the ways in which attempts to identify the secular may also imply an identification with or against the secular. Here, recent arguments concerning the importance of researching how worldview secularism and political secularism are both to be differentiated as well as historically intertwined are taken up. Finally, the chapter attempts to determine whether and how both academic strands can be brought together in research on the heterogeneity of religious–secular entanglements in the contemporary world.

Keywords: secular, secularity, secularism, nonreligion, worldview, political secularism, genealogy

WHILE working on this chapter with the stipulated title "identifying the secular," discussions about "the secular" were constantly in the news. Out of many examples, the most obvious surrounded the brutal attack on the satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo* on 7 January 2015. To restate a treacherous question much discussed in the aftermath: Was this a religious attack opposed to secular values? While this question ignores the synchronized anti-Semitic Porte de Vincennes siege at a kosher store, this event seems to ask for descriptive accounts in the social sciences to answer the question "How can we identify the secular?" and for explanations that make sense of the role and fate of religion in modernity. In contrast to such concerns, conceptual histories and genealogical accounts question where the interest in an identification of the secular is located in society and history (Lübbe 2003: xi), how far such identification is also always an implicit identification with "modernity as a project" (Asad 2003: 13), and the degree to which the respective explanations and descriptions turn out to be prescriptions.

This drastic example from France was chosen because it highlights general problems and challenges to any attempt to identify the secular in the contemporary world. Indeed, in the volume *Is Critique Secular?*, Wendy Brown goes as far as to say that "today the secular derives much of its meaning from an imagined opposite in Islam" (2009: 10). Be this as it may, any academic attempt to identify the secular has to acknowledge that contemporary issues of blasphemy, injury, and free speech are only the most dramatic and visible examples of the larger discursive and political context within which the respective discussions take place. As this chapter argues, this context is constituted by a history that continues to shape our public discourse as well as academic debates.

The necessary selectiveness of this chapter's compass partly results from this history. The notions and conceptual approaches under question have been both highly contested and widely applied ever since they gained prominence within academia roughly one century ago, particularly due to the influence of a controversial set of historical and sociological arguments often labeled as secularization theory, secularization paradigm, or secularization thesis. A further challenge arises from the fact that a diverse set of academic disciplines have (p. 22) developed their own approaches and ways of identifying the secular. The respective proliferation of debates led to a range of definitions, applications, contestations, and transformations, many of which are mentioned in this volume but only some of which can be discussed in detail here. A third problem is the double prominence of these terms in academic as well as popular discourse, as indicated earlier and outlined in this chapter. Modern self-understandings are based on notions such as the secular, leading to debates, for example, about whether some degree of secularity is a necessary precondition for a democratic and liberal nation-state, or whether "being modern" in general is dependent on a secular mind set while the influence of religion(s) is limited to certain realms of social life.

Therefore, this chapter's ambition is not to provide yet another overview, defense, or criticism of secularization theory in particular or the larger debates in general (see summaries by Ebaugh 2002; Gorski and Altınordu 2008; Pollack 2013). The aim is to introduce two important and overarching lines of argumentation within the cultural and social sciences and to highlight in this context that worldview secularism (e.g., the attempt to establish a comprehensive nonreligious alternative to religious ways of life) and political secularism (e.g., the attempt to separate religion and politics on the basis of the secularization thesis and the respective modernizing ideologies) have to be conceptualized as both distinct and intertwined (Lee 2012: 135; Quack 2014: 443-444; Weir 2015).[1]

# Description, Explanation, Conceptual History, and Genealogy

This chapter reflects on the descriptive and explanatory applications of "the secular" as well as the derived notions of secularity, secularism, and secularization, so they can be contrasted and complemented with their conceptual histories and specific genealogical accounts.[2] Although "the secular" and its cognate notions are polysemous (e.g., see

Blankholm 2014), most of their applications in the social sciences share a couple of characteristics. First, they start with the assumption that religion constitutes a differentiated social sphere based on a constitutive binary: the secular opposed to the religious. Second, they address the lines and kinds of separation of religion from its "other" in order to describe the space allegedly attributed to or provided for religion within the respective society. Finally, they use the notion of secularization as an analytical lens to research whether this religious space is growing, shrinking, or otherwise transformed. All in all, they are particularly concerned with the fate of religion in the modern world, its history, contemporary status, and its future. Such approaches may be labeled "subtraction theories" (Taylor 2007) or "negative" because their focus lies on the apparent decline of religion and the secular merely denotes the alleged absence of religion (celebrated as liberation by one and deplored as loss by the other side).

The later academic stance comprises more conventional conceptual histories or histories of ideas, represented here by Lübbe (2003) as well as Foucaultian "histories of the present" represented by Asad (2003). In these distinct but interrelated approaches, the secular can be understood as a powerfully and "positive" cultural formation in its own right—not merely as an absence of religion—a cultural formation that is not in itself neutral (Calhoun (p. 23) et al. 2011: 11). This forms the basis of studying how the religious and the secular are to be seen as mutually constitutive aspects of "modernity as a project." In order to do so, genealogical approaches turn descriptive approaches into their research objects. They question their self-image as merely descriptive and therefore neutral thereby aiming at uncovering their meta-theoretical preconceptions as well as their political consequences. Objectifying such genealogical arguments in turn enables a view of their own political implications and conceptual limitations. On this basis, it is argued that such approaches ignore the internal diversity of secular formations due to an a priori conceptualization of the secular as a single epistemic category, as a single "secular grammar," and as a distinct dispositif that forms living in the present. However, rather than going astray in a spiraling of meta-conceptualizations, this chapter ends with a discussion on whether and how these two stances could be seen as partly complementary. In other words, by discussing descriptive and genealogical arguments, this chapter addresses three questions at once: What were influential attempts to identify the secular? To what degree does an identification of the secular go along with an identification with the secular? What are the consequences for the study of religious–secular entanglements in the contemporary world?

# Conceptual History: From Theology via "Culture Wars" to the Social Sciences?

The Latin and pre-Christian roots of the term *saeculum* referred to a generation, line of succession, or period of time. In its Christian application it was used in reference to the time spans of this world, ending with death for us humans, as opposed to the otherworldly eternity where God exists outside or beyond human and worldly notions of time. Re-

search on this conceptual history, including the work by Asad (2003) and Lübbe (2003) permits highlighting three aspects in particular. First, a temporal use of the secular was complemented with a spatial dimension. Second, a dichotomous use of the terms "secular" and "religious" were implemented, thereby extracting the notion from its theological context and increasingly placing it in opposition to the religious realm. Third, the assumption that anything located in time and space can be transferred or transformed from being religious to being secular gained prominence. On this basis, and only since the nineteenth century, such processes of transformation were coupled with the assumption that religion in general is gradually declining due to processes of modernization.

The first argument is that the notion *saeculum* acquired a spatial connotation in addition to its temporal dimension (worldly time contrasting Godly time) throughout the Middle Ages. Such a spatial dimension was particularly present in the contrast between Christian monastic life for monks and abbots and the regular clergy who were not members of a specific order or religious institution. This amounted to early attempts to differentiate societal spaces, albeit not (yet) on the basis of a secular–religious binary but between two realms of theological activity. Concerning this second point, Casanova and others argue that the binary opposition between the religious and the secular came about as a result of the transformations of late post-Imperial Christianity and of Medieval Christendom resulting in a dyad "which served to structure the entire spatial and temporal reality of Medieval Christendom into a (p. 24) binary system of classification separating two worlds, the religious-spiritual-sacred world of salvation and the secular-temporal-profane world" (Casanova 2013: 23–24). Concerning the third argument, it is commonly but falsely (Lübbe 2003: 136) asserted that the word "secularization" was established as a legal category in the treaties of the Peace of Westphalia 1648. Irrespective of the exact roots, the notion of secularization eventually came to be used for the legitimate or illegitimate transference of churchly into profane possession. It was later extended to a more general transference of something that belonged to the church to the realm of rulers not associated with religion.

On this basis, and primarily in nineteenth-century Europe (entangled histories notwithstanding), the meanings of "the secular" and its derivate terms were further differentiated and proliferated by different social groups: while one side came to see the apparent decline of religious influence as liberating the society from its unjust and irrational religious domination, for the other, this marked decay and a loss of morals and values. Both positions drew on the initial legal connotation of the term and asked whether religious disempowerment had to be seen as legitimate or illegitimate (Blumenberg 1996). Both sides were part of larger debates between different sociopolitical camps that came to be known as "culture wars" (*Kulturkampf*) within which the binary between the secular and the religious became highly politicized. At its core, different political camps, schematically summarized under the headings "liberals" and "conservatives," fought over the proper relationship between church and state (see Borutta 2010, 350; Weir 2015: 8). While liberals in several European countries campaigned for civil marriage and public schools, the conservatives saw religion as being over and above the state, politics, and science. The very same topics were later reformulated and "sociologized" under the labels of differen-

tiation, privatization, and disenchantment through the lens of the secularization thesis (Borutta 2010: 11). Accordingly, Hunter argues that the notion of secularization emerged in the nineteenth century as a "combat concept" for an array of rival religious, philosophical, and political factions whose descendants "continue to do battle today" over secularization (2015: 1).

Such a development of the secular—from theology via culture wars to the social sciences—is not, however, as linear and homogeneous as it is often depicted. Scholars such as the historian Todd Weir stress instead the need to differentiate between worldview secularism and political secularism.[3] The former was used by 1851 as a worldview alternative to, in competition with, and superior to (while not necessarily in denial of) Christianity in particular or religion in general. The political use of secularism gained prominence much later and was fully established as a category in the social sciences in the early 1960s to describe the ascribed status of religion in the modernistic ideologies of nation-states such as Turkey and India. Weir argues that closer attention to the role and position of worldview secularism with respect to liberal and colonial projects disrupts the binaries with which the histories of the culture wars in particular and genealogies of the secular in general have been written. Instead, he suggests that both concepts should be understood as complementary and to research the ways in which worldview and political secularism are both to be differentiated as well as historically intertwined (Weir 2015: 8). In order to further build on these arguments, the following section discusses the differences and interrelatedness between the positions of British worldview secularist as exemplified by George Jacob Holyoake as well as the emergence of political secularism in relation to the rise and the fall of the classical secularization thesis in academia.

## (p. 25) Neutralized Description: Between Worldview Secularism and Political Secularism?

The British "secularist" George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) began using the term "secularism" by 1851 and defended it against the criticism of religious representatives as well as the atheist activist and politician Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891). Holyoake attempted to establish a social, political, and ethical position in distance from both religious as well as the aggressive and unapologetic atheistic or antitheistic positions, as exemplified by people like Bradlaugh (Budd 1977; Royle 1974). His understanding of "secularism" was that of a third space not between but beyond the oppositions of religion and atheism.[4] Under this label, liberal believers would join hands with liberal nonbelievers, emphasizing shared (but always "worldly") concerns rather than possible differences with respect to religious matters. To Bradlaugh, by contrast, a position independent of religious matters, a space without any reference or relationship to religion, was necessarily antireligious. While he argued that to ignore religion is to deny religion, Holyoake insisted that secularism is an independent and neutral position that does not necessarily entail atheism (see Quack 2011).

Essentially, these two Victorian gentlemen discussed whether the religious–secular binary is to be understood as a mutually exclusive, zero-sum-game (one is either part of the problem or part of the solution) or whether an independent (albeit secular) third space or meta-space is possible. Their general disagreements should, on the one hand, not be overestimated. While Bradlaugh served as the president of the National Secular Society and Holyoake held the position of vice president, both joined hands in their fight against what they considered religious superstitions by spreading rationality and science as well as their concerns for free press, the rights of women, and many other issues. Their disagreement about the possibility of a neutral space beyond religion and antireligion, on the other hand, is significant. At the end of the nineteenth century, the emerging social sciences started to negotiate their position between these two perspectives. They gradually moved away from moral philosophy and religion and began to increasingly understand themselves as providing a neutral description and explanation of social conflicts and developments related to religion. Indeed, without wanting to jump ahead in the chronological order of this chapter, it is important to note that later discussions in the secular study of religion about the possibility of "neutrality" reformulate the debate between Holyoake and Bradlaugh to some degree. Until today scholars debate whether "methodological agnosticism" or "methodological atheism" establishes such a neutral third space, neither religious nor antireligious, and neither apologetic nor critical of religious beliefs and practices; while others argue that such neutrality is impossible (e.g. see McCutcheon 1999: 215-286; Quack 2011).

At the turn of the century, many scholars, famously including Max Weber and Ernst Tröltsch, reflected upon longer historical processes related to the apparent "emancipation" of social life from the influence of organized Christianity. From its early inception on, the goal of social sciences was at large to grasp specific constellations of religious transformation and decline on the levels of languages, mentalities, cognitive structures, and differentiated social fields and institutions. The conceptual history of Lübbe shows that two conditions led to the (p. 26) respective enlargement of the meaning of "secularization" from the legal expropriation of church property to the secularization of social life in general. First (against Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel), modernity and religion (mainly used synonymously with Christianity) had come to be seen as mutually exclusive. Second (against Karl Marx), this came to be seen increasingly as an intellectual fight (Lübbe 2003: 34). Lübbe further shows that many of the intellectuals involved in this conceptual transformation happened to be part of those who celebrated the prior legal liquidation and expropriation of clerical goods. In analogy, they demanded the expropriation of education and culture from the church, and they therefore must be seen as agents of secularization processes, as secularizers or secularists. They assumed and proposed an inherent (or at least "elective") affinity between secularization, disenchantment, privatization, and social differentiation that culminated in a particular self-understanding of the modern age. Lübbe further notes, for example, that leading philosophers like Friedrich Jodl and influential sociologists like Ferdinand Tönnies were members of the *Deutschen Gesellschaft für Ethische Kultur* and thereby not only related to the German Freethinkers (*Deutscher Freidenkerverbund*) but also to the Secular Societies of Great Brittan and the

activism of Holyoake and Bradlaugh (see Lübbe 2003: 40-44). Another well-known example is the attempt of Auguste Comte to establish the “positive” phase of mankind, superseding its religious and metaphysical phase. Considering this background, scholars like Lübbe, Borutta, and Hunter argue that “secularization” became a master narrative for modernity in continuation of the culture wars by other means and with a less obvious but still implicit partisanship (Hunter 2015: 10).

We will return to this point later, as well as the question of whether these developments led to a “neutralization” of the respective terms by disentangling them from clerical and anticlerical arguments and the underlying culture wars and *Kulturkritik*. At this point, it suffices to highlight two points. First, by asking whether academia in general and sociology in particular managed to establish neutral (albeit secular) descriptions of secularization processes, we are dealing with an implicit continuation of the debate between Holyoake and Bradlaugh. Second, it is important to observe the entanglements of the secularization thesis and political secularism, particularly in cases where description also means prescription.

In its most often absorbed form, the secularization thesis resulted not only in the claim that functional spheres get differentiated in the modern age, that religion has been confined to only one of them, and that this sphere as well as its influence on other spheres are constantly shrinking. At its core was also the universalistic and evolutionistic assumption that processes of modernity necessarily led to the respective decline of religion according to the European model all over the world. This idea was so powerful that some scholars assumed that the study of contemporary religious expressions was obsolete and that the topic of religion was to be left to historians. The section for the “sociology of religion” was dissolved from the German Sociological Association, for example, in the early 1970s and was only re-established in the 1990s. At the same time, beyond academia, several newly emerging nation-states developed a self-understanding that drew upon and yet also differed from the European model and secularist assumptions concerning the relationship between religion and modernization (see Bhargava 2006; Calhoun et al. 2011: 6). Different nation-states implemented various forms of political secularisms in their constitutions and policies, and these developments were in turn reflected in the social sciences, thereby partly “confirming” assumptions and expectations concerning processes they themselves co-constituted and were entangled with. None of the different European models, however, were merely (p. 27) replicated in other countries. Moreover, the underlying modernistic, universalistic, evolutionistic, deterministic, irreversible, and hierarchical concept of secularization was increasingly questioned. Empirical and comparative studies have led to severe criticisms of political applications of secularist ideologies, as exemplified by a series of arguments made by Indian academics as they questioned its conceptual and normative nature (Nandy 1998; Madan 1997, 2004).

The Weberian dichotomy between *Sein* and *Sollen*, the relationship between description and prescription within the social sciences, is a matter of constant debate. While political secularism still looms large in the political and public discourse around the world, none of the leading social sciences scholars accepts a simple and linear concept of secularization

and modernization that is based on binary asymmetries and a naive belief in progress. Such a crude characterization is still used, however, as a straw-man to discredit more refined and modified secularization arguments. For contemporary proponents of the secularization thesis, nevertheless, the idea still persists that processes of modernization challenge and erode the endurance and influence of established religious traditions on all levels from the social and the institutional to the personal. On this basis, there are scholars who addressed some of the points brought forward against the secularization thesis and reflected about ways that older assumptions can be refined and rectified. The next sections introduce both the points of criticism as well as the consequences drawn by scholars who want to uphold at least some aspects of the classical secularization thesis and discusses how the respective concepts are used today.

# Challenged Explanations: Revitalizations of the Secularization Thesis?

With the publication of *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (1967), Peter Berger emerged as one of the main representatives of the sociological secularization thesis in the middle of the twentieth century. The strength of objections to the thesis, however, led him to change his position from an advocate to a detractor of the sociological secularization thesis, emphasizing instead *The Desecularization of the World* (1999). What would lead one of the most famous sociologists of religion to turn the argument with which he established his fame partly on its head? The first part of this section summarizes the criticism of the secularization thesis that resulted in the announcement, *Secularization, R.I.P.* (Stark 1999); the second part outlines the ways in which contemporary scholars not only write books like *Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Bruce 2011) but also try to advance and thereby to revitalize it.

The most obvious point of criticism holds that the secularization thesis is empirically false. Concerning contemporary societies, this argument was put forward in two ways: either religion never vanished but transformed, or religion had returned. Luckmann (1967) argues that religion had not disappeared but had moved to other social spheres such as individual projects of self-fulfillment, spirituality, esotericism, or new age. In this perspective, religion had become privatized and thereby “invisible” to mainstream ways of researching religion in academia (Luckmann 1967).[5] Those who argue for the return of religion mainly point to the (p. 28) impacts of migration processes on Western societies, the rise of “religious fundamentalism,” and, the growth of Pentecostalism in the global south as key indicators for the continuing importance of religion today (Riesebrodt 2001).[6]

The validity of the secularization argument was further questioned by scholars who drew attention to the ahistorical assumptions underlying many of its arguments. The high religiosity in larger parts of Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century should not be taken as being representative of a notoriously religious past (Campbell 1971; Lübbe 2003: 147). Martin warned against secularists (and for him this might just as well apply to proponents of secularization theory too) taking “Catholic laments about the period

when men were truly religious" too seriously (1978: 30). The diagnosis of secularization in the present wrongly presupposes the existence of a former "Golden Age of Faith," a highly sacralized past.

The second major line of criticism tackled the pretentious scope and ambitions of the "paradigm." This is connected to outdated ideas of an evolutionistic and linear development of all societies across the globe following the lead of Europe. Such a universalistic application was shown to be Eurocentric, particularly and not surprisingly from the side of social/cultural anthropology, and, if contrasted with other parts of the world, the argument could be turned around, as, for example, Grace Davie did in her book tellingly titled *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (2002).[7] Further cross-cultural comparison confirmed the argument that comprehensive secularization is not necessarily a by-product of modernization. The United States, as the main counterexample, was complemented by studies from other parts of the world. Once scholars began to look for meaningful cross-cultural comparisons across the globe, the resulting differentiations did not merely place Europe in opposition to the rest of the world; they also revealed singular path dependencies based on distinct historical patterns of church–state or religion–nation relationships (Ingelhart and Baker 2000). A group of recently published articles, books, and edited volumes indicate an important way in which secularization theory had been reassessed and reapplied in consequence. They particularly undertake cross-cultural comparisons against the background of arguments for "alternative modernities" (Gaonkar 2001) or "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt 2003). Accordingly, they do not conceptualize secularism or secularity in the singular but instead document the ways in which different cultural and historical conditions produced different kinds of secularities and secularisms.[8]

Against the backdrop of criticism and the resulting modifications to the secularization thesis, it can be concluded that different usages of the respective terms as well as different theoretical paradigms and approaches are still alive. We can closely follow Pollack (2013: 19), who distinguishes four sets of arguments and approaches to secularity and secularization, even if several overlap and merge together. The first set consists of modernization approaches, which relate processes of secularization to urbanization, industrialization, greater mobility, and growing levels of literacy and education (Parsons 1963, 1966; Norris and Ingelhart 2004). Second are scholars who, through the labels of rationalization and disenchantment, focus on the tensions between scientific and religious knowledge, rationality, and magic (to some degree Weber 1920; Durkheim [1912] 1995; Wilson 1982). Third, there is a rather large group of scholars who focus on the differentiation of social or value spheres out of which religion is only one, presumably with shrinking influence (Luhmann 2002; Wilson 1982). Fourth, the focus on pluralization suggests that religious options are just one among an increasing set of secular alternatives, and therefore religion gradually loses its influence (Berger 1967; Bruce 2002; Stolz 2009).

(p. 29) Cutting across these differences, a family-resemblance summary of the most common usages of the respective terms can be provided. The simplest and probably the most widespread use of the notion of secular in both everyday as well as academic language is with reference to something that is not (primarily) religious. It is usually based on the ob-

servation or assumption of differentiated social spheres, so that the secular sphere, the aspects of social life that are not religious, is opposed to the religious sphere.[9] In this manner, for example, clerics and other religious authorities may be distinguished from secular authorities, sacred music is differentiated from secular music, and religious schools are opposed to secular or state schools. The most prominent of these oppositions is that between the church and secular state in particular or between various religious traditions and the secular political field in general. As argued earlier, the separation of religion from other social spheres is itself both a product of as well as an antecedent to secularization processes.

The use of "secularization" in public discourse today generally refers to the decline of religion without further specification of what is declining, where, and how. When scholars speak of processes of secularization they try to differentiate. For example, one influential analytic distinction between three aspects of the secularization paradigm was given by Casanova (2006): (a) a decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies; (b) the privatization of religion, often understood as a precondition for modern liberal democratic politics and the differentiation of the secular spheres; and (c) a secularization process as the differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), which is typically understood as an "emancipation" from religious institutions and norms. Casanova argued that such an analytical distinction allows for "the examination of the validity of the three propositions independently of each other and thus refocus the often fruitless secularization debate into comparative historical analysis that could account for different patterns of secularization" (2006: 8). Although the respective transitions and transformations may take place in different parts of society,[10] the general impetus of research on secularization has yet to confirm whether religion is growing, is shrinking, or is otherwise transformed, as those concerned with processes of secularization continue to focus on the fate of religion in the modern world.

In contemporary academic discourse, the notion of secularity (and to some degree that of "secularism," as discussed later) commonly denotes the ways in which the religious and the secular are (attempting to be) separated. Along these lines, scholars address the trends and types of separation of religion from its contrary "other" in order to describe the space attributed to or provided for religion within a particular society. They inquire in specific case studies where the line of separation is drawn, how is it institutionalized, when is it contested, and why is it drawn differently in different societies. This investigation is undertaken in the aforementioned approaches that try to capture the varieties or multiplicities of secularities and secularisms (such as Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr 2015), whereby the plural of "secularities" and "secularisms" generally refers to different kinds and cases of separation and not to the diversity of religion's other(s) in one particular case (as discussed later). In particular, the notion of secularity is polyvalent and often overlaps with secularism and secularization, as indicated by the distinctions Charles Taylor (2007) makes between three different usages of "secularity" in his opus magnum, *A Secular Age*. The first understanding of secularity is in terms of public spaces, holding that they "have been allegedly emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality" (2). The second understanding (p. 30) of secularity focuses on beliefs and practices of

individuals and consists of “a falling off of religious belief and practices, in people turning away from God and no longer going to Church” (2). However, Taylor holds that these two notions of secularity cannot capture and explain the transition from living in a society where religious belief is largely unchallenged and unproblematic to one in which religious belief is but one (controversial) option among others. In order to do so, he formulates a third understanding of secularity in which he describes and theorizes the “conditions of belief” today. Secularity in this sense is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our religious as well as nonreligious life takes place.

Additionally, diverse and overlapping usages can be detected with respect to the notion of secularism, primarily the distinction between references to a worldview, to a separation of social spheres, and to (attempted) neutrality in religious matters (see Blankholm’s chapter in this volume). As outlined earlier, Holyoake coined the term to label a space more or less independent of religious matters. More often, the term is used, however, in reference to an aim or doctrine, according to which government institutions and their representatives should remain separate from religion, and to indicate that politics should not be based on religious positions or arguments. Such a political position was and is usually taken by modern nation-states and its elites who often understand themselves—somewhat similar to Holyoake—as denoting a position of neutrality with respect to matters related to religion. Scholars analyzing these kinds of secularisms, however, often highlight how political secularism actively influences the fate of the respective religious traditions, regulates religion, draws and defends lines of separation, and delineates and defines the religious as opposed to the secular. Accordingly, some conceptualize “secularism” as ideological legitimation of certain political formations (e.g., Bubandt and van Beek 2012: 2). Others stress that a secular state should not be netural towards religion but towards its citizens. Be that as it may, such observations bridge this section with the following genealogical argument that “the secular” and its derived notions are to be understood as products of contingent historical developments and that the secularization thesis itself should be made an object of inquiry. This includes researching the conditions that enabled the secularization thesis to emerge and thereby to see how the religious–secular binary is part of the “background” against which modern living, including the contemporary social sciences, is required to take place (see Asad 2003: 14).

# Political Genealogies: Ignoring Diversity within the Secular?

In addition to researching the semantic or conceptual history of a term, genealogy, in the tradition of Friedrich Nietzsche, was popularized most effectively by Michel Foucault in the social sciences by focusing on the lasting influence of certain institutional productions of “knowledges.” This understanding of genealogy aims at a “history of the present,” as it tries to reveal the lasting effects that historical concepts and practices have on the contemporary world. The aim is not, in the words of the anthropologist Talal Asad, to merely “highlight the normative dispositions that have entered into evaluative

frameworks but to examine what (p. 31) the concepts exclude and suppress, how they obscure their own indeterminacy and acquire their vitality" (2009: 138).

Asad is the most influential advocate of a genealogical approach with respect to "the secular" by emphasizing its (meta-)conceptual and political implications. His object of identification is not the secular as something "out there" in the world but the ways in which the understandings and applications of the secular have shaped our living in the world. According to Asad, the conceptual and practical separation of religion from the secular and thereby from (political) power "is a modern Western norm, the product of a unique post-Reformation history" (1993: 28). He thereby draws attention to the "ideological inversion" in the history of the term where the secular was extracted from a theological discourse and applied to its "other." This opposition is crucial for the construction of "religion" as a universal concept as opposed to the apparently secular realms of political power and rational science (Asad 2003: 192).

Asad's approach is political in the sense that it understands academic perspectives on religion as part and parcel of "liberal" political projects, such as the demand to keep religion separate from politics, law, and sciences, that is, from those spaces "in which varieties of power and reason articulate our distinctly modern life" (Asad 1993: 28). It highlights that the contemporary concept of the secular transports a range of antecedent political implications that can themselves become the object of research, including the conditions that made such an opposition possible. Asad's genealogical approach thereby is (meta-)conceptual, because it tries to explore how the conceptual identifications of "religion" and "the secular" we inherited determine the "kinds of questions we think are askable and worth asking" (1986: 12). A particularly obvious example where the political and conceptual come together is when both notions, religion and the secular, are employed as normalizing concepts when translated to social formations beyond those from which they emerged (Asad 1993). A well-documented and controversial case in this respect is India (Bhargava 2004).

It is important to emphasize that such inquiries take place on a "fundamental" level of social theory. Genealogical approaches focus on the discursive conditions for the possibility of contemporary social formations. They try to show that the opposition such as that between the public and the private or the signifier and the signified constitute the fundamentals of a distinctively modern way of being in the world. To give an example, in her contribution to *Is Critique Secular?*, Saba Mahmood (2009) analyzes the Danish cartoon controversy to argue that an understanding of the controversy as a clash between the principles of blasphemy and freedom of speech presuppose a particular modern and protestant semiotic ideology in which signifiers are arbitrarily linked to the signified.[11] This distinct semiotic ideology is manifested in and constituted by modern or Western modes of governance and exemplified by the "normative understanding of religion internal to liberalism" (Mahmood 2009: 74). In order to comprehend what the controversy is actually about, as Mahmood's argument goes, we first have to understand the fundamental differences between two ways of being in the world, one represented by modern liberalism and the other represented by some of the Muslims who felt offended by the car-

toons. A genealogical approach draws attention to the secular's entanglements with understandings of modernity and rationality, the opposition between public and private, signifier and signified, and many other aspects. The aim is to thereby show how the use of a secular "grammar" is structuring and is structured by modern behaviors, sensibilities, and forms of knowledge production. This underlying grammar is constitutive of modern ways of being in the world, (p. 32) including contemporary modes of religiosities and nonreligiosity; the modern and secular separation of public life from private belief concerns both religious belief as well as unbelief. Accordingly, the modern use of the notion of religion and the resulting practices understood to be religious can only be adequately understood by also looking at religion's other, the secular.

However, with respect to these arguments, caveats offered by Weir and others must be reiterated, namely that worldview secularism and political secularism are both to be differentiated as well as historically intertwined. Weir accordingly takes issue with the genealogical "narrative produced by the assumption that national and imperial projects of secularization were consolidated by 1850 and extended globally thereafter under the auspices of liberalism and the modern state" (2015: 10). Rather than conceptualizing different forms of worldview secularisms as mere instances of a larger and singular project of liberal and secular modernity, Weir points to considerable conflicts "over political practices and epistemological assumptions" between the respective positions (2015: 8). Such conflicts are easily overlooked when the focus is on a unified secular "other" in the singular (Asad 2003, 22) rather than acknowledging religion's "others" in the plural (see the book series "Religion and Its Others" published by De Gruyter). Finally, this argument indicates why the research on political secularism is fruitfully complemented by work on worldview secularism, as for example institutionalized in the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (www.nsrn.net). Under the label of "nonreligion," scholars have begun to focus on the diversity of those people and populations identified as secular or "nones," as well as atheist, secular humanist, and rationalist groups that represent organized nonreligion, along with other social formations identified as religion's others.

# Description and Genealogy: Conclusion Rather than Synthesis

This chapter introduced attempts to establish descriptive and explanatory usages of "the secular" and its cognate concepts, as well as genealogical challenges to them. On the one hand, we seem to be confronted with two poles: the descriptive and the genealogical approaches. Descriptive approaches seek to rethink and modify the secularization paradigm because aspects of it are considered empirically valid. Genealogical approaches not only question the descriptive and explanatory approaches as normative and Eurocentric (as other critics of the secularization thesis have done) but also try to address the ways in which they suppress more fruitful and politically less problematic ways of conceptualization. It may be asked, on the other hand, whether these two approaches are necessarily mutually exclusive. By asking this question, the aim is not to combine a descriptive syn-

thesis and a genealogical antithesis in a sublime synthesis. Attempts to consolidate descriptive usages of the secular and derived notions are for some genealogists part of the problem, and therefore they cannot be also part of the solution. Bradlaugh argued against Holyoake that any attempt to ignore religion means to deny religion since no third space beyond religion and atheism is possible; one is either part of the problem or the solution (Quack 2011). Comparably, some scholars of religion argued that attempts to establish "neutrality" via methodological agnosticism/ (p. 33) atheism merely reveals the inherent normativity of the secular social sciences (McCutcheon 1999: 215–286). Having said this, given that proponents of these two approaches ask different questions in the first place, and that any genealogy is based itself on descriptive accounts, the attempt to establish a genealogically informed use of descriptive and explanatory terms, or to provide less contentious descriptions, is not an inherent problem as such. After all, conceptual histories and genealogies necessarily end in the past, unable to describe the present situation and many conflict-centered approaches draw on descriptive and genealogical work.

A genealogically informed attempt to identify the secular has to consider the roots of the classical secularization paradigm, which can be found in the social and intellectual history of the nineteenth-century, and the related sociohistorical interpretations of modernity. The respective questions, concerns, and conceptual differentiations gained prominence more by provoking ideological-political fronts than by their epistemological and analytical power (see Lübbe 2003: 22). Forms of political secularisms indeed served as tools to unify or divide nations, as can be seen from the respective debates in India (Bhargava 2004) or contemporary Turkey (Käufeler 2002). The consequence is that scholars should not take the apparently naturalized "immanent frame" within which they argue for granted, but instead reflect on their entanglement with implementations of both worldview and political secularisms. This requires acknowledging that the common discursive oppositions between secularism, reason, tolerance, and freedom on the one hand and religiosity, fundamentalism, intolerance, and submission on the other are indeed highly problematic ways to assert a secular or "modern" identity and superiority, as Asad (2003, 2009) pointedly asserts. This raises the general question how and when the scientific endeavor of identifying the secular is caught up with partisanship. How and when accompany and inform partisan debates over the definition of secularism the history of the word secular also in its recent academic guise?

While the histories of political secularism and worldview secularism are to be brought together, there should be room to acknowledge "the gulf between their respective definitions and agents" (Weir 2015: 16). Indeed, the genealogical critiques of an underlying normativity and of suppressive conceptualizations are themselves not immune to the challenges they pose to others. The genealogical focus on a single secular other threatens to reproduce exactly the problem that Foucault perceived in mainstream historical approaches: assuming a linear and unified history that suppresses internal discontinuities and interruptions. Furthermore, the strong criticism of descriptive attempts to identify the secular today appears at times as yet another "mirroring" of a fragile and disillusioned relationship with the modern world. As Samuli Schielke argues, to some degree we are dealing with an all too sweeping "equation of the secular with the liberal and the

nation state" instead of acknowledging and studying different "life worlds, experiences and trajectories of being secular" (2010: 9; see also Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr 2013: 882; Quack 2014).

Asad is well aware that there is no homogeneous secular and liberal Europe. He acknowledges that part of the problem involved with speaking of "modernity" is deciding whether it "is a single tradition, a singular structure, or an integrated set of practical knowledges" (1996: para. 3) as well as of the descriptive and prescriptive implications of such assumptions. In the end, for him it is a "tactical matter" whether one argues in some cases "that there are multiple forms of modernity rather than contrasting modernity itself with something else" (1996: para. 3). The latter choice enables him to focus on the discursive fundamentals of Western modernity, especially its secular grammar, to scrutinize the degree to which a homogenous liberal European modernity became hegemonic in other parts of the world as (p. 34) well. The danger of this choice, however, is to ignore the degree to which "we have never been modern" (Latour 1991) as well as to reproduce orientalist oppositions between a single Western and a paradigmatic "other" way of being in the world, based amongst other things on two unified and distinct semiotic ideologies (Mahmood 2009: 71–73).

With this we can come back to Wendy Brown, the co-editor of *Is Critique Secular?* (2009), which focuses on questions of blasphemy, injury, and free speech and to which both Asad and Mahmood contributed. This work was cited earlier with the observation that the secular nowadays derives much of its meaning from an imagined opposite in Islam. Brown further holds that we are at a historical political juncture when intellectuals face a choice between complicity with imperial and unreflexive Western civilizational discourses of rationality and secularism on the one hand, and on the other, an opportunity to challenge Western presumptions monopolizing the meaning and content of secularism, rationalism, freedom, and even democracy (2009: 13). Such an either/or logic, however, easily overlooks the differences, fractions, and contradictions on both sides and may itself suppress more fruitful and nuanced conceptualizations of the diversity within the "Western civilizational discourses of rationality and secularism" (Brown 2009: 7) as well as within the discourses non-Western "others." Groups within the Indian rationalist, freethinking, and atheist movement, for example, draw on both the European Enlightenment tradition and nineteenth- and twentieth-century secularist groups (as represented by Holyoake, Bradlaugh, and others) as well as premodern Indian schools of thought and worldviews, such as *Chārvāka/Lokāyata* and the *bhakti* tradition, to highlight their independence from Western discourses (Quack 2012a, 2012b, 2013). How are we to deal with their contemporary interpretations of *Chārvāka/Lokāyata* and the *bhakti* tradition, given that these are surely not representative of a monolithic secular liberalism?

Returning to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris, there was no distinct and homogenous reaction from so-called secular people. An overwhelming crowd wore *Je Suis Charlie* buttons or stickers in France (and in other countries), yet they did so for different reasons, and many did not, again for different reasons. Based on long-term field work in the *banlieues* and French prisons, the anthropologist Didier Fassin (2015) tries to render au-

dible and intelligible some of those who did not participate. He judges that the values of the Republic—equality, fraternity, and liberty—have often been merely proclaimed rather than truly respected. At this particular moment, many of those self-labeled "Charlies" emphasized liberty and deduced *laïcité* from that. However, Fassin points out that a continuous neglect of equality and fraternity is visible in the long-lasting discrimination against the Muslim population in France. Furthermore, Fassin holds that the reasons for this discrimination are not only to be discussed with reference to religion—although "the religious dimension of discrimination has progressively surfaced" in recent years (2015: 6)—but should also include historical, colonial, social, political, and racial dimensions. As Asad and others have long argued, a simplified, distinctive, and homogenous conceptualization of religion would be treacherous, but so would be a unified and singular conceptualization of its secular other (Quack 2014: 442).

Against this background, genealogically informed identifications of the secular will benefit from addressing the heterogeneity of religious–secular entanglements and reflect on their own entanglements with such formations and identifications. Those entanglements result in the large diversity to both allegedly religious and allegedly secular concepts, institutions, positions, and ways of being in the contemporary world.

## Bibliography

Abeysekara, Ananda. 2008. *The Politics of Postsecular Religion: Mourning Secular Futures*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*. Occasional Papers series. Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Asad, Talal. 1996. "Interview with Talal Asad: Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions." *SEHR: Contested Polities* 5(1). **http://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/asad.html**.

Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Asad, Talal. 2009. "Reply to Judith Butler." In *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech,* edited by T. Asad, W. Brown, J. Butler, and S. Mahmood, 137–145. Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California.

Asad, Talal, W. Brown, J. Butler, and S. Mahmood. (eds.). 2009. *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*. Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California.

Bellah, Robert N. 2005. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 134(4), 40–55.

Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Berger, Peter L. (ed.). 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Bhargava, Rajeev (ed.). 2004. *Secularism and Its Critics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Blankholm, Joseph. 2014. "The Political Advantages of a Polysemous Secular." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(4), 775–790.

Blumenberg, Hans. 1996. *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Borutta, Manuel. 2010. "Genealogie der Säkularisierungstheorie. Zur Historisierung einer großen Erzählung der Moderne." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 36(3), 347–376.

Brown, Wendy. 2009. "Introduction." In *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, edited by T. Asad, W. Brown, J. Butler, and S. Mahmood, 7–19. Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California.

Bruce, Steve. 1999. *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bruce, Steve. 2011. *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(p. 37) Bubandt, Nils, and M. van Beek (eds.). 2012. *Varieties of Secularism in Asia: Anthropological Explorations of Religion, Politics and the Spiritual*. London and New York: Routledge.

Budd, Susan. 1977. *Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850–1960*. London: Heinemann.

Burchardt, M., and M. Wohlrab-Sahr. 2013. "Multiple Secularities: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age." *International Sociology* 28(6), 605–696.

Burchardt, Marian, M. Wohlrab-Sahr, and M. Middell. (eds.). 2015. *Multiple Secularities beyond the West: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Cady, Linell E., and E. Shakman Hurd (eds.). 2010. *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Calhoun, Craig, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen. 2011. "Introduction: Rethinking Secularism." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 3–30. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, Colin. 1971. *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion*. London and New York: Macmillan.

Casanova, José. 2006. “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective.” *The Hedgehog Review* 8(1–2), 7–22.

Casanova, José. 2013. “The Two Dimensions, Temporal and Spatial, of the Secular: Comparative Reflections on the Nordic Protestant and Southern Catholic Patterns from a Global Perspective.” In *Secular and Sacred. The Scandinavian Case of Religion in Human Rights, Law, and Public Space*. Edited by T. Wyller, R. van den Breemer and J. Casanova, 22–35. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Davie, Grace. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Durkheim, Emile. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Ebaugh, Helen R. 2002. “Return of the Sacred: Reintegrating Religion in the Social Sciences.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(3), 385–395.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. 2003. *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*. Leiden: Brill.

Fassin, Didier. 2015. “In the Name of the Republic: Untimely Meditations on the Aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo Attack.” *Anthropology Today* 31(2), 3–7.

Gaonkar, Dilip P. 2001. *Alternative Modernities*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Gorski, Philip S., and Ates Altınordu. 2008. “After Secularization?” *Annual Review of Sociology* 34, 55–85.

Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 2004. “Religion und Sozialer Zusammenhalt in Europa.” *Transit: Europäische Revue* 26, 101–119.

Hunter, Ian. 2015. “Secularization: The Birth of a Modern Combat Concept.” *Modern Intellectual History* 12(1), 1–32.

Inglehart, R., and W. Baker. 2000. “Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values.” *American Sociological Review* 65(1), 19–51.

Jaeschke, Walter. 2002. “Säkularisierung.” In *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, edited by H. Cancik, B. Gladigow, and M. Laubscher, vol. 5, 9–20. Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer.

Jakobsen, Janet, and A. Pellegrini. (eds.). 2008. *Secularisms*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Käufeler, Heinz. 2002. *Das anatolische Dilemma: weltliche und religiöse Kräfte in der modernen Türkei*. Zurich: Chronos.

(p. 38) Knoblauch, Hubert. 1991. “Die Verflüchtigung der Religion ins Religiöse.” In *Die Unsichtbare Religion*, edited by T. Luckmann, 7–41. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Lee, Lois. 2012. “Talking about a Revolution: Terminology for the New Field of Non-Religion Studies.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27(1), 129–139.

Lee, Lois. 2015. *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lübbe, Hermann. 2003. *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs*. Freiburg and Munich, Germany: Karl Alber.

Luckmann, Thomas. 1967. *Die unsichtbare Religion*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Luhmann, Niklas. 2002. *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Madan, Triloki N. 1997. *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Madan, Triloki N. 2004. “Secularism in Its Place.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by R. Bhargava, 297–320. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2009. “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An Incommensurable Divide?” In *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, edited by T. Asad, W. Brown, J. Butler, and S. Mahmood, 64–100. Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California.

Martin, David. 1978. *A General Theory of Secularization*. Oxford: Blackwell.

McCutcheon, R. (ed.). 1999. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London: Cassell.

Nandy, Ashis. 1998. “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by R. Bhargava, 321–344. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Norris, Pippa, and R. Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Parsons, Talcott. 1963. “Christianity and Modern Industrial Society.” In *Sociological Theory, Values, and Sociocultural Change: Essays in Honor of Pitirim A. Sorokin*, edited by E. A. Tiryakian, 33–70. New York: Harper & Row.

Parsons, Talcott. 1966. “Religion in a Modern Pluralistic Society.” *Review of Religious Research* 7(3), 125–146.

Pollack, Detlef. 2011. “Historische Analyse statt Ideologiekritik. Eine historisch kritische Diskussion über die Gültigkeit der Säkularisierungstheorie.” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37(4), 482–522.

Pollack, Detlef. 2013. “Secularization.” *Oxford Bibliographies.* **http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0073.xml**.

Quack, Johannes. 2011. “Is to Ignore to Deny? Säkularisierung, Säkularität und Säkularismus in Indien.” In *Religionspolitik—Öffentlichkeit—Wisenschaft: Studien zur Neuformierung von Religion in der Gegenwart*, edited by M. Bauman and F. Neubert, 291–317. Zurich: PANO-Verlag.

Quack, Johannes. 2012a. *Disenchanting India: Organized Rationalism and Criticism of Religion in India*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Quack, Johannes. 2012b. “Hinduism, Atheism, and Rationalism.” In *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, edited by K. Jacobsen, vol. 4, 626–632. Leiden: Brill.

(p. 39) Quack, Johannes. 2013. “India.” In *Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by S. Bullivant and M. Ruse, 651–663. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Quack, Johannes. 2014. “Outline of a Relational Approach to ‘Nonreligion.’” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 26(4–5), 439–469.

Rectenwald, Michael, R. Almeida, and G. Levine. (eds.). 2015. *Global Secularisms in a Post-Secular Age*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Riesebrodt, Martin. 2001. *Die Rückkehr der Religionen: Fundamentalismus und der “Kampf der Kulturen.”* Munich, Germany: Beck.

Royle, Edward. 1974. *Victorian Infidels: The Origin of the British Secularist Movement 1791–1866*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press.

Schielke, Samuli. 2010. *Second Thoughts about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Schemes in Everyday Life*. Working Papers No. 2. Berlin: ZMO. **https://www.zmo.de/publikationen/workingpapers/schielke_2010.pdf**.

Smart, J. J. C. 2013. “Atheism and Agnosticism.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2013 Edition, edited by E. Zalta. **http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/atheism-agnosticism/**.

Stark, Rodney. 1999. “Secularization, R.I.P.” *Sociology of Religion* 60(3), 249–274.

Stark, Rodney, and R. Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stark, Rodney, and L. R. Iannaccone. 1994. “A Supply-Side Reinterpretation of the ‘Secularization’ of Europe.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33(3), 230–252.

Stolz, Jörg. 2009. “A Silent Battle: Churches and Their Secular Competitors.” *Review of Religious Research* 51(3), 253–276.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *The Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Warner, Michael, J. Vanantwerpen, and C. Calhoun (eds.). 2010. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Weber, Max. 1920. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr.

Weir, Todd H. 2015. “Germany and the New Global History of Secularism: Questioning the Postcolonial Genealogy.” *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 90(1), 6–20.

Wilson, Bryan R. 1982. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, and Marian Burchardt. 2012. “Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities.” *Comparative Sociology* 11(6), 875–909.

## Notes:

(1.) For a criticism of distinctions such as a “philosophical secularism,” “personal secularism,” or “political secularism,” see Lee (2015, 44–45), whose work focuses on the more or less political features of nonreligious existential cultures.

(2.) The sociologist Detlef Pollack opposed descriptive to genealogical usages of the terms. In his perspective, descriptive approaches are best exemplified by quantitative studies, while he describes genealogical approaches as studying transformations “of what the respective terms referred to.” On this basis, he advocates making a sharp distinction between the context in which a term was created and the contemporary grounds for its validity (Pollack 2011, 486). I argue here that genealogical accounts often aim at much more than a semantic or conceptual history. In general I agree with Lübbe that the apparent separation between the objective neutrality of an analytical term and its normative connotations is to be questioned rather than strengthened (Lübbe 2003, 11).

(3.) The distinction between philosophical and political secularism had been made by Francis Ellingwood Abbot in 1872 (Blankholm 2014, 780). On contemporary academic debates, see Lee (2015, 44–45).

(4.) This understanding was more encompassing than Thomas Henry Huxley's attempt to establish "agnosticism" as less controversial and less presumptive than "atheism". However, such "ontological" differences were only part of larger political aims and strategies (Smart 2013).

(5.) Consider Grace Davie's (1994) concept of "believing without belonging" and other theories of individualized religiosity that claim that spirituality persists outside institutionalized churches (Knoblauch 1991). Danièle Hervieu-Léger describes the situation in Europe more as "belonging without believing" (2004: 104).

(6.) Another influential argument points to a "civil religion" of national institutions, representative people, and symbols that have been "sacralised" (Bellah 1967).

(7.) These debates are also based on theoretical differences. While some hold that religious pluralism undermines the influence and importance of religion (Berger 1967), scholars from the United States in particular have argued the opposite, that competition is good for business. The so-called market or rational choice theorists of religion hold that the diverse kinds of religious demands characteristic for complex societies are best satisfied by religious pluralism (see Stark and Iannaccone 1994; Stark and Finke 2000; and criticism by Bruce 1999).

(8.) Examples include *Secularisms* (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008); *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (Cady and Hurd 2010); *Varieties of Secularism in Asia* (Bubandt and van Beek 2011); *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Warner et al. 2010); *Multiple Secularities beyond the West: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age* (Burchard and Wohlrab-Sahr 2015); and *Global Secularisms in a Post-Secular Age* (Rectenwald et al. 2015).

(9.) This usage of "secular" must not be confused with the notion "nonreligion" (see Lee 2015; Quack 2014).

(10.) Examples include government authorities taking over churchly possessions, people preferring to spend their Sunday morning outside the church, morals associated with religious traditions losing their binding character, functions fulfilled by religious authorities being taken over by other experts and institutions (e.g., the shift from pastoral to psychological care or social welfare programs transitioned from religious to secular institutions), and religious terms altering their meaning to apply to worldly topics and themes (Jaeschke 2002, 17–18).

(11.) To put it simply, the early Protestant theologian Ulrich Zwingli argued that Jesus Christ is not really present in the bread and wine at the Holy Communion. Instead, these and other religious symbols "only stand in for the divine through an act of human encoding and interpretation" (Mahmood 2009, 73).

**Johannes Quack**

Johannes Quack is currently Director of the ‘Diversity of Non-Religiosity’ research group at the Goethe Universität-Frankfurt, an codirects the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (www.nsrn.net). He is the author of Disenchanting India: Organized Rationalism and Criticism of Religion in India (Oxford University Press, 2012), and coedited Religion und Kritik in der Moderne (LIT Verlag, 2012).

# Religious/Nonreligious Demography and Religion versus Science: A Global Perspective

Ariela Keysar

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.3

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides sociodemographic profiles (by gender, age, and education) of a full spectrum of people around the world. People who call themselves "not religious" are compared with those who define themselves as "atheist" and also with those who say that they are "religious." The beliefs of these distinct three groups are explored, particularly regarding their worldviews and the battle between religion and science, an issue that is at the heart of critical and enduring debates and has public policy implications. Finally, a multivariate analysis on the global conflict between science and religion is presented, examining the effects of various factors, such as demographics, religiosity, and culture.

Keywords: nonreligious demographics, religious demographics, atheists, science, religion-science conflict

# Introduction

THE meaning of "secularism" varies by culture and context. In India, for instance, it mainly means tolerance (Keysar and Kosmin 2008); in France it is associated with *laïcité*, that is, the absence of religion from the public sphere (Caron 2007; Bauberot 2014); and in the United States it refers to the separation of church and state (Berlinerblau 2012). The concept is inextricably linked to language in culture.[1] Surveys in some countries find self-described atheists affirming belief in God, a foreign concept to most Westerners. Because there is no shared understanding of the terms "secular" and "secularism," there is no unambiguous way to measure the size or demographics of the world's secular population

This is a knotty problem. The approach of this chapter is to allow people to identify themselves using their personal definitions of secularism, religiosity, and atheism. To accomplish standardization, the main data source for this chapter is the *World Values Survey* (WVS; 2014), Wave 6, which collected information from 2010 to 2014 in more than 50 countries around the world, including the two most populous, China and India, and interviewed over 85,000 adult respondents. The survey represents approximately two-thirds of

the world's adult population. The largest missing nations are Indonesia and Bangladesh. The data were weighted by each country's population size as well as by the internal national distribution of key demographic variables of survey respondents.

The goal of the analysis is threefold. First, we provide sociodemographic profiles (by gender, age, and education) of a full spectrum of people around the world. We compare people who call themselves "not religious" with those who define themselves as "atheist" and also with those who say that they are "religious." Second, we explore the beliefs of these distinct three groups. In particular, we look at their worldviews, focusing primarily on the battle between religion and science, an issue that is at the heart of critical and enduring debates and (p. 41) has public policy implications. Finally, we attempt a multivariate analysis on the global conflict between science and religion, examining the effects of various factors, such as demographics, religiosity, and culture.

# Global Findings

To distinguish between the religious and the secular, we begin by looking at how people around the world classify themselves on the religious and nonreligious spectrum. First an aside on terminology: the WVS gives people three choices: "a religious person," "not a religious person," and "an atheist." The "not a religious person" label is a bit squishy but realistically reflects the worldview of those who are not completely comfortable with religion but resist being identified with the seemingly extreme position of atheism.

When asked in the WVS, "Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, are you a religious person, not a religious person, or an atheist?" religious and nonreligious adults are almost evenly split worldwide with 53 percent defining themselves as religious, 33 percent as nonreligious, and 11 percent as atheists (an additional 3.1 percent did not provide an answer; see Fig. 2.1a). However, if we look at the religious composition of countries around the world without China, which dominates with its sheer population size and large nonreligious segment, the religious population rises remarkably to 71 percent while the share of nonreligious drops to 22 percent and atheists are estimated as only 4.2 percent (Fig. 2.1b).

In most countries around the globe, an atheist would be considered as someone who is not religious (Keysar 2015). This is not the case in Hong Kong, with a majority (55 percent) of atheists and a minority (25 percent) who define themselves as not religious. In fact, Hong Kong stands out globally with its majority of adults who identify as atheists. They are followed by South Korea, with 30 percent of adults declaring themselves as atheists, and China, with 28 percent atheists, according to the WVS in 2010–2014 (Fig. 2.2).

The share of atheists is far smaller than the share of not religious in most countries. In South Korea, Slovenia, and Poland, the two groups are similar in size. China and Taiwan are interesting cases with the share of atheists almost half of the share of the not reli-

gious segment (28 percent versus 59 percent in China and 18 percent versus 37 percent in Taiwan, respectively).

The meanings of “an atheist” and “not a religious person” vary by culture and by country. Two examples best illustrate potential discrepancies, Azerbaijan and Thailand. They are ranked at the top of countries in the WVS with the largest share of adults declaring themselves as “not religious” yet with a very small fraction (less than 1 percent) who are declared atheists. This could reflect the limitations of global surveys challenged with translation of questions and with understanding of concepts that apparently are not clear and well defined. To further complicate these extreme examples, 99.7 percent of adults in Azerbaijan but only 27 percent of adults in Thailand believe in God (Keysar 2015). Thus, the inclination to link religious identity with belief is problematic. In various cultures “not a religious person” could mean rejecting the country’s religious authority and does not necessarily mean being a “nonbeliever.”[2] (p. 42)

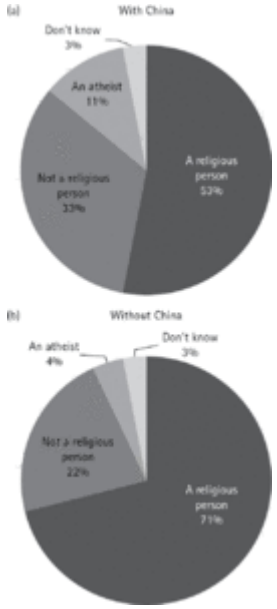


*Figure 2.1* Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are … a religious person, not a religious person, an atheist, or…?

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size.

# Demographics

Demographic factors are often the best predictors of religious and secularity patterns. Gender, age and educational attainment, in particular, are determinants of religious and non-religious self-identification (Keysar 2007).

## Gender

Women are generally more religious than men (Beit-Hallahmi 2007, 2014), as shown by the WVS around the world. Females are more likely than males to say that they are religious (p. 43) and less likely to self-identify as atheists (Fig. 2.3a). Gender gaps in religiosity produce opposite male to female ratios within the religious (47 percent male versus 53 female) and the nonreligious (53 percent male versus 47 percent female) groupings worldwide. Atheists exhibit the largest gender gap (Fig. 2.3b).

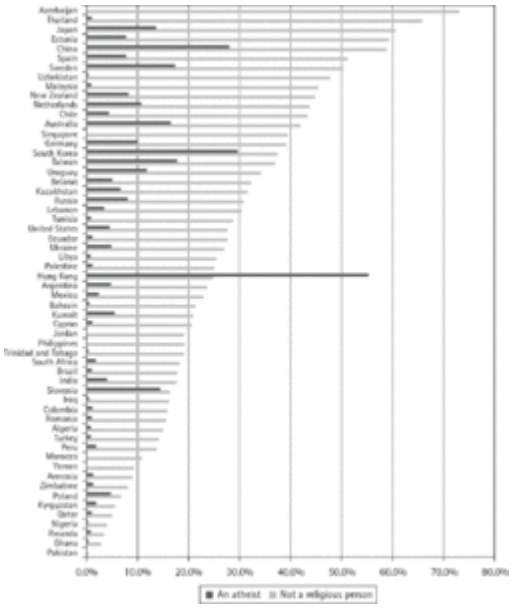

*Figure 2.2* Adult Nonreligious and Atheists by Country

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014).

## Age

The age distributions of people who are not religious and declared atheists worldwide are quite similar: over one-third are under age 35, one-half are middle-aged, and 8 to 10 percent (p. 44) are age 65 and over (Fig. 2.4). The religious group exhibits a different age composition and is surprisingly younger. This differs by society. For example in the United States, atheists are typically young (Keysar and Navarro-Rivera 2013; Cragun et al. 2013).

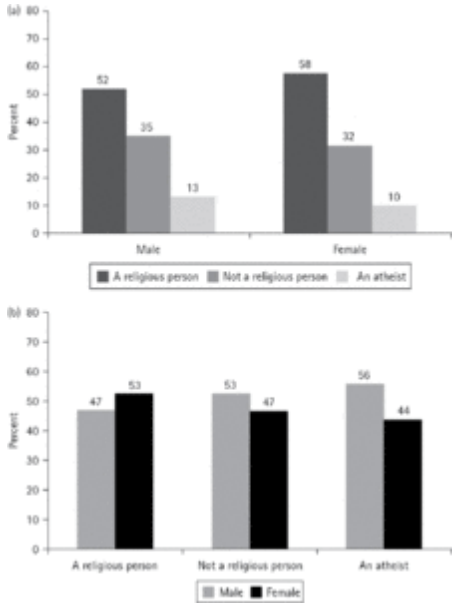


*Figure 2.3* (a) Religious Composition of Male and Female Worldwide. (b) Gender Composition of Religious, Not Religious, and Atheists Worldwide.

*Source*: *World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

## Education

Education level and religiosity are negatively correlated. First we look at the religious composition of the various educational levels. While religious people dominate (77 percent) the lowest educational attainment—those with no formal education— atheists are only a small minority (5 percent) within the lowest educational level. Atheists are most likely to be (p. 45) found at the highest educational level—among people with a university degree and those with vocational schooling (Fig. 2.5a).

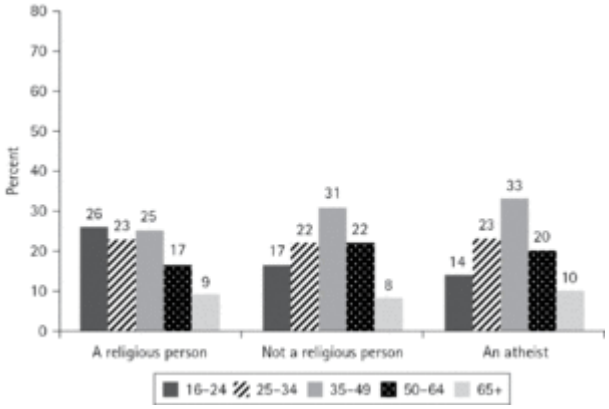


*Figure 2.4* Age Composition of Religious, Not Religious, and Atheists Worldwide.

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

Another way to explore the relationship between religion and education is to compare educational levels of the religious, the nonreligious, and atheists. Similar to age compositions, nonreligious and atheists are similar in their educational compositions and are quite apart from the religious. Noticeably there are educational gaps at the extreme. Religious people are more than twice as likely as nonreligious and atheists to have no formal education and almost twice less likely as atheists to have a university degree (Fig. 2.5b).

# Worldviews

A worldview, or world outlook, consists of an individual's values, perceptions about life and death and beliefs in the supernatural, all related to the construction of a religious versus non-religious identity.

## Belief in God and in Hell

When asked about the importance of God is in their lives, 43 percent of people who define themselves as religious said "very important" compared with 11 percent of people who are not religious and only 2 percent of atheists. Consistently, almost a majority (49 percent) of atheists said God is "not at all important" in their life, compared with 22 percent of nonreligious and only 4 percent of religious people.

A majority (75 percent) of religious people believes in hell compared with a minority (32 percent) of those who say they are not religious. Only 10 percent of atheists believe in hell. (p. 46) Atheism and belief in hell might seem incompatible, but it could reflect both cultural understanding or translation effects of the global spread of the WVS.

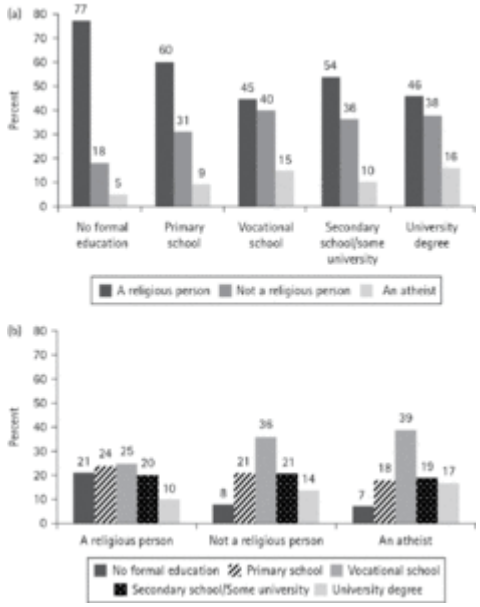


*Figure 2.5* (a) Religious Composition of Educational Groups Worldwide. (b) Educational Level of Religious, Not Religious, and Atheists Worldwide

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

## Meaning of Religion

The meaning of religion and the discord between life after death and this world vary by level of religiosity. The more religious a person is, the more likely he or she is to think that religion's purpose is "to make sense of life after death." In contrast, 76 percent of atheists and only 61 percent of religious people think that the meaning of religion is "to make sense of life in this world" (Fig. 2.6a).

Religious and nonreligious also disagree on the importance of religious rituals and norms versus the need to pursue social justice in the name of religion. A great majority (p. 47) (78 percent) of atheists think that the meaning of religion is "to do good to other people" compared with only 63 percent of religious people. Alternatively, 37 percent of religious people believe that the meaning of religion is to "follow religious norms and ceremonies" compared with 22 percent of atheists (Fig. 2.6b). It is noteworthy that respondents in all three groups did not choose the option "neither of them" or offer other functions of religion. The linear patterns persist whereby those who define themselves as "not a religious person" consistently fall between "an atheist" and "a religious person" in their views on the meaning of religion.

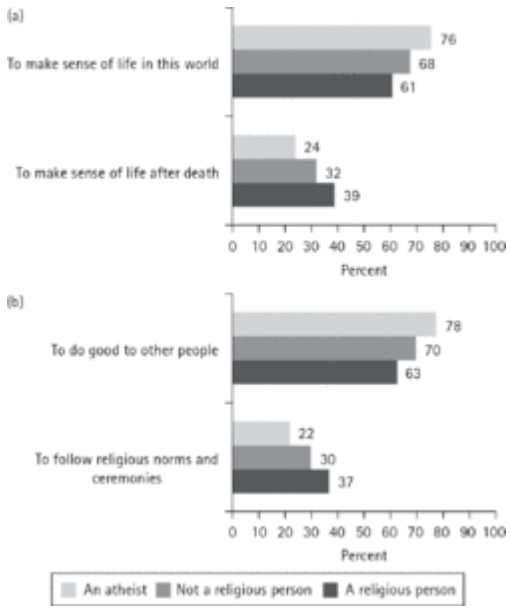


*Figure 2.6(a) and (b)* What Is the Meaning of Religion?

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

## Science versus Religion

On the broader conflict between science and religion, the world seems to be divided between religious and nonreligious people. The nonreligious flatly disagree that “religion is always right.” Atheists overwhelmingly disagree, while a majority of religious people believes that “religion is always right” (Fig. 2.7).

The consequences of such disagreements in worldviews are cultural wars (Hunter 1991). The disagreements develop potential conflicts between people who say they are religious (p. 48) and those who call themselves nonreligious, specifically on issues where religion and science clash, for example, on beliefs in the theory of evolution versus belief in creationism (Miller et al. 2006; Blackburn 2008), on science education (Cobern 2008), and even the debate over global warming (Mooney 2005; Gore 2007).

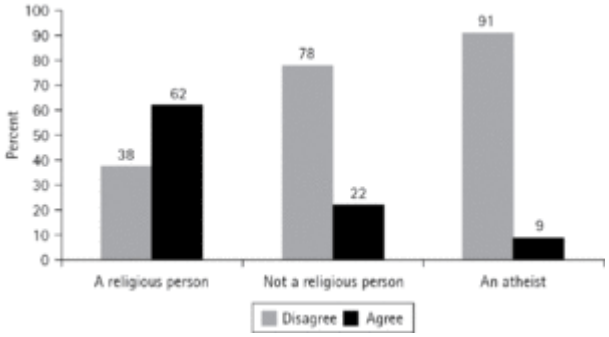


*Figure 2.7* "Whenever science and religion conflict, religion is always right."

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

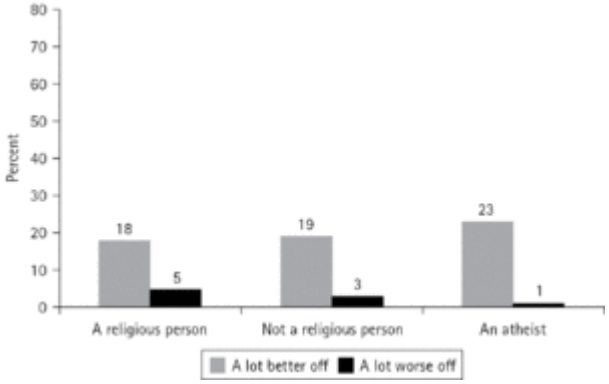


*Figure 2.8* "The world is better off, or worse off, because of science and technology."

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

On the role of science and technology in making the world a better place, we focus on the two extreme points of views: Is the world is "a lot better off" or "a lot worse off" because of science and technology? All groups tilt toward approval of science and technology. Religious people are five times as likely to express extreme negative views toward science and technology while nonreligious hold the middle ground. Almost one-quarter of atheists believe that the world is "a lot better off" because of science and technology (Fig. 2.8). **(p. 49)**

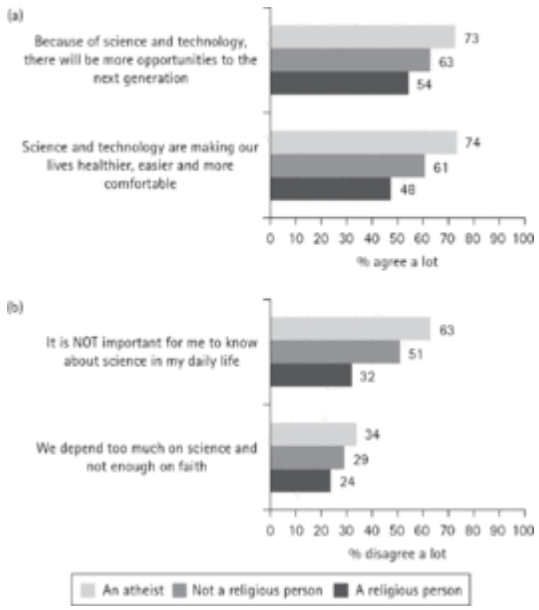


*Figure 2.9* The Clash between Science and Faith.

Chart (a): On a scale from 1–10, whereby 1 is "completely disagree" and 10 is "completely agree," these bar charts present adults choosing 8, 9, or 10.

Chart (b): On a scale from 1–10, whereby 1 is "completely disagree" and 10 is "completely agree," these bar charts present adults choosing 1, 2, or 3.

*Source: World Values Survey* (2010–2014); weighted by population size and internal national distribution of respondents.

Atheists hold stronger views on the critical and significant roles of science in society. Atheists around the globe are more likely to strongly believe that because of science and technology there will be more opportunities to the next generation and that science and technology are making people's lives healthier, easier, and more comfortable (Fig. 2.9a). Atheists are the most likely to be very interested in engaging with science in their daily lives (double the likelihood of religious people). Interestingly, all three groups share a similar opinion in disagreeing with the notion "We depend too much on science and not enough on faith." (Fig. 2.9b).

## Creating a Science versus Religion Scale

To dig further into the factors contributing to the science versus religion debate, a scale was developed that combines a series of items. The items included were (a) "Whenever science (p. 50) and religion conflict, religion is always right" (adults who disagreed were assigned 1 and those who agreed were assigned zero). (b) "The world is better off, or worse off, because of science and technology" (adults who chose "better off" were assigned 1 and other options were assigned 0). A similar score was used for four other factors: (c) "Because of science and technology there will be more opportunities to the next generation," (d) "Science and technology are making people's lives healthier, easier, and

more comfortable," (e) "It is *not* important for me to know about science in my daily life," and (f) "We depend too much on science and not enough on faith."

The 7-point scale ranged from 0 representing adults who opted on the side of religion on all items, 1 representing adults who preferred science in *one* of the items, 2 in two of the items, and so on all the way to 6 representing adults who opted on the side of science on all the items. In countries around the globe, about one-third (33 percent) of adults scored 0. Those are totally religion supporters. At the same time, only a fraction (1.1 percent) scored 6. Those are totally science supporters. Once China was excluded, the total religion support (0) climbed to 38 percent, and the score 1, representing little science support, was estimated at 30 percent and 2 at 13 percent. Greater support of science dropped steadily, reaching the total support of 6, at below 1 percent.

What are the factors that explain the science–religion divide? A linear regression analysis looking at both demographics (gender, age, education) and religiosity reveals that educational level and the religiosity triad—religious, nonreligious, and atheist—are the most important factors. The higher the educational level, the greater likelihood that a person totally supports science over religion. Similarly, atheists around the globe are more likely to support science compared with nonreligious people and even more so compared with religious people.

# Multivariate Analysis

The multivariate analysis on the conflict between science and religion adds a global perspective. It examines the effects of various factors, such as demographics, religiosity, and the role of culture in almost 50 countries.

## Binary Logistic Regression

In a polarized world, divided between two choices, science and religion, the scale could be transformed into a binary dimension. We develop a logistic regression analysis, which helps determine the net effect of each variable when all other variables are kept constant. The dependent variable is a binary religion–science scale with a 0 score for respondents who opted on the side of religion on all six items mentioned and a 1 score for all others, who preferred science on one or more items.

The various explanatory variables were introduced in stages. Three models were used to predict support for science versus religion among adults around the world. The first model introduces demographic variables: gender, age group, and educational level. The second model adds religiosity (religious/non-religious/an atheist), while the third model adds the religious identification of the respondent and the culture of his or her country, measured by its major religious denomination. The relationship between the explanatory variables and the level of (p. 51) support of science are presented in Table 2.1 as odds ratios, which express the relative odds of an occurrence of the event (support of science) compared to the reference category. The base (reference) categories are male, age 16 to 24,

university education with a degree, an atheist, professing no religion (None), living in a country with a majority of people who are None.

Table 2.1 Religion versus Science: Logistic Regression (Odds Ratios)

| **Predictors** | **Model 1** | **Model 2** | **Model 3** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographics** | | | |
| Gender (female) | 0.90*** | 0.95** | 0.92*** |
| Age (25–34) | 0.95* | 0.96 | 0.93* |
| Age (35–49) | 1.09*** | 1.10*** | 1.02 |
| Age (50–64) | 1.17*** | 1.17*** | 1.04 |
| Age (65+) | 1.17*** | 1.18*** | 0.93* |
| No formal education | 0.35*** | 0.40*** | 0.45*** |
| Primary school | 0.41*** | 0.44*** | 0.48*** |
| Vocational school | 0.54*** | 0.55*** | 0.58*** |
| Secondary school/some university | 0.58*** | 0.59*** | 0.64*** |
| **Religiosity** | | | |
| Religious person | | 0.31*** | 0.50*** |
| Not a religious person | | 0.56*** | 0.76*** |
| **Religious Identification** | | | |
| Christian | | | 0.38*** |
| Protestant | | | 0.57*** |
| Catholic | | | 0.73*** |
| Orthodox | | | 0.82*** |
| Pentecostal | | | 0.76*** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Buddhist/Hindu | | | 0.80*** |
| Muslim | | | 0.89** |
| Jewish | | | 1.42* |
| Other | | | 0.50*** |
| **Country's Major Religion** | | | |
| Muslim | | | 0.61*** |
| Orthodox | | | 0.86** |
| Roman Catholic | | | 0.88** |
| Christian | | | 0.49*** |
| Buddhist/Hindu | | | 0.45*** |
| None/Christian | | | 1.73*** |
| None/Buddhist | | | 0.80*** |
| **Constant** | 4.11*** | 10.14*** | 11.94*** |
| $R^2$ | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.10 |

*Note:* $N$ = 75,389. The reference categories are for gender: male; for age: 16–24; for educational level: university education with a degree; for religiosity: an atheist; for religious identification: professing no religion (i.e., a None); for country's major religion: a majority of people who are Nones.

(*) $p < .05$

(**) $p < .01$

(***) $p < .001$.

*Source*: *World Values Survey* (2010–2014), unweighted.

(p. 52) Model 1 shows that all three demographic factors are significant. The strongest factor is educational level. The odds of supporting science among adults with no formal education are only 0.35 of those holding a university degree. (An odds ratio of 1 indicates

no differences between a subgroup and the base category.) The odds ratio increases with an increase in educational level. Still, the odds are 0.58 among adults who have some university education but no degree as compared with those with a university degree. Model 2, adding religiosity, doubles the statistical power, showing that self-identifying atheists are more than three times as likely as people self-identifying as religious to support science (odds ratio = 0.31) and almost double those self-identifying as not religious (odds ratio = 0.56).

Model 3 adds the respondent's religious identification and the majority religion in the country. These factors further elevate the power of the analysis, although it is not high; $R^2$= 0.10. The differences between the various age groups and somewhat between males and females diminish once the religiosity factors are included in the model. This implies that there is an interaction effect: because males tend to be less religious, it is difficult to say whether their stronger embrace of science comes from being male, from being less religious, or from some other unmeasured factor. Educational level remains an important factor as well as atheists versus religious people. Those who self-identified with Christian groups are less likely to support science compared with Nones (odds ratio = 0.38) while Jews are more likely to support science (odds ratio = 1.42). The attitudinal gaps between atheists, nonreligious, and religious also diminish once the religiosity factors are included in the model. Again, this could imply an interaction effect between the various dimensions of religiosity. To illustrate, a Muslim or a Christian who calls him or herself religious might hold a different position on the science–religion debate compared with a religious Jew.

The contextual variable, measured by the country's major religion, serves as a proxy for the cultural environment. It is found to be the most important determinant of adults' support of science versus religion. In other words, *where* one is an atheist matters as much as *whether* one is an atheist. Countries with both Nones and Christians—Sweden, for example—show the strongest support for science. In these countries adults exhibit higher odds of supporting science (odds ratio = 1.73) versus the reference group, which is countries comprising only Nones as the majority. The odds of supporting science are lower in Muslim majority countries (odds ratio = 0.61) and in Buddhist/Hindu majority countries (such as India) (odds ratio = 0.45). In the case of the Swedens of the world, we may be seeing the effect of an unmeasured variable, namely national income. Countries with both Christians and Nones tend to be richer and more technologically advanced than countries comprising only Nones.

# Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that much can be learned by simply asking people about themselves and taking their answers at face value versus attempting to categorize them by a theoretically derived standard. The WVS points up vast differences in the way people in different countries perceive themselves and how they understand key concepts such as (p. 53) religiosity, secularism, and atheism. This alone is a valuable contribution to the lit-

erature on secularism, however frustrating it might be to philosophers who prefer to deal in rigorously defined terminology.

A second finding is how much one single nation—China—skews the demographics of secularism. Excluding China, 71 percent of the WVS sample identifies as religious. With China the ratio drops to 53 percent. The lesson is that one cannot discuss global patterns in religion and secularism without specifying whether the data include or exclude China. Additionally, regression analysis shows that despite globalization and open communication, there remain conceptual differences in the understanding of secularism stemming from culture and language.

The demographics of secularism in the rest of the world are broadly similar to those in the closely studied nations of North America and Western Europe, but there are noticeable differences. Finally, the conflict between science and religion plays itself out in much the same way around the world. Atheists are the most open to science and religious are the least open to science, with "not religious" occupying the middle ground.

# Bibliography

Bauberot, Jean. 2014. "Laïcité and Freedom of Conscience in Pluricultural France." In *Secularism on the Edge: Rethinking Church–State Relations in the United States, France, and Israel,* edited by Jacques Berlinerblau, Sarah Fainberg, and Aurora Nou, 103–111. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin. 2007. "Atheists: A Psychological Profile." In *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, edited by Michael Martin, 300–318. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin. 2014. *Psychological Perspectives on Religion and Religiosity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Berlinerblau, Jacque. 2012. *How to be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Blackburn, Daniel G. 2008. "The Creationist Attack on Science and Secular Society." In *Secularism & Science in the 21st Century,* edited by Ariela Keysar and Barry A. Kosmin, 33–51. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Caron, Nathalie. 2007. "Laïcité and Secular Attitudes in France." In *Secularism & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*, edited by Barry A. Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, 113–124. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

(p. 54) Cobern, William. 2008. "The Competing Influence of Secularism and Religion on Science Education in a Secular Society." In *Secularism & Science in the 21st Century*,

edited by Ariela Keysar and Barry A. Kosmin, 89–103. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Cragun, Ryan T., Joseph H. Hammer, and Jesse M. Smith. 2013. “North America.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 553–586. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gore, Al. 2007. *The Assault on Reason*. New York: Penguin.

Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books.

Keysar, Ariela. 2007. “Who are America’s Atheists and Agnostics?” In *Secularism & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives*, edited by Barry A. Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar, 33–39. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Keysar, Ariela. 2015. “The International Demography of Atheists.” In *Yearbook of International Religious Demography,* edited by Brian J. Grim and Gina Zurlo, 136–153. Leiden: Brill.

Keysar, Ariela, and Barry A. Kosmin. 2008. *Worldviews and Opinions of Scientists: India 2007–08, Summary Report*. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Keysar, Ariela, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. 2013. “A World of Atheism: Global Demographics.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 553–586. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kosmin, Barry A., and Ariela Keysar. 2006. *Religion in a Free Market, Religious and Non-Religious Americans: Who, What, Why, Where*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Paramount Market.

Kosmin, Barry A., and Ariela Keysar. 2009. *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008) Summary Report*. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Miller, Jon D., E. Scott, and S. Okamoto. 2006. “Public Acceptance of Evolution.” *Science* 313(5788), 765–766.

Mooney, Chris. 2005. *The Republican War on Science*. New York: Basic Books.

*World Values Survey*. 2014. Stockholm: World Values Survey Association. **http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp**.

## Notes:

(1.) The 2001 *American Religious Identification Survey* attempted to ask in the United States: “When it comes to your outlook, do you regard yourself as religious, somewhat religious, somewhat secular, or secular?” (Kosmin and Keysar, 2006).

(2.) Globally, nonbelievers outnumber those who declare themselves atheists: 31 percent versus 11 percent of adults, respectively. Excluding China reduces levels, yet the disparities remain: 15 percent adult nonbelievers versus 4 percent self-identified adult atheists (Keysar 2015).

**Ariela Keysar**

Ariela Keysar is Associate Research Professor in Public Policy and Law and the Associate Director of the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College, Connecticut. She is a Principal Investigator of the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), and is the coauthor American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population (Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, 2008) and the coeditor of Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives (ISSSC, 2007).

# Secularization and Its Consequences

Steve Bruce

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.4

## Abstract and Keywords

The secularization paradigm argues that the decline of religion in the West is an unintended consequence of a variety of complex social changes known as modernization. Without a dramatic reversal of the increasing cultural autonomy of the individual, secularization is irreversible. In the stable affluent democracies of the West, the individual asserts the rights of the sovereign autonomous consumer. In the absence of social forces eroding that freedom, creation of a detailed ideological consensus is not possible, and no amount of vague spiritual yearning will generate a shared belief system. This diversity and its consequences is explored in this chapter.

Keywords: secularization, secularization paradigm, individual, diversity, religious decline

THE peoples of preindustrial Europe were deeply religious. To what extent they were orthodox Christians varied, but most saw the world through basically Christian lenses. They knew the Lord’s Prayer and the Hail Mary and could make the sign of the Cross. They knew the Ten Commandments, the four cardinal virtues, the seven deadly sins, and the seven works of mercy. They paid tithes. They brought to church babies for baptism, spouses for weddings, and corpses for burial. They believed sufficiently in hell and in the status of Holy Writ for swearing oaths on the Bible to be a means of social control. They avoided blaspheming. They paid large sums for priests to say mass on their behalf postmortem. Most knew they had to make reparation to God for their sins, in this life or in the next. When the clergy complained of irreligion it was not because their people were secular but because they persisted in pre-Christian superstitions and used the Church’s rituals in an instrumental magical manner.

As societies industrialized, their people divided. Some became well-informed “true believers”; others fell away. The once-pervasive religious worldview gave way to an increasingly secular public culture. By the middle of the nineteenth century, religion had become so distinct a sphere of life that we could count its adherents, and the introduction of social surveys in the twentieth century allowed us to assess the nature and popularity of religious beliefs. Whether we count membership, church attendance, religious ceremonies to

mark rites of passage, or indices of belief, we find that across the industrial world there has been a major decline in all religious indices (Bruce 2011).

# Understanding Secularization

Explaining the decline in the power, prestige, and popularity of religion has exercised such a large number of scholars that we can represent their work as a "secularization paradigm." Many of the scholars cited would disagree about some matters, but there is enough common ground for a general synthesis, which is summarized in Figure 3.1. (p. 56)


*Figure 3.1* The Secularization Paradigm.

Because the failure to understand this synthesis causes much pointless argument, it is important, before we work through the elements of Figure 3.1, to make a general observation about the nature of sociological explanation.

Popular explanations tend to favor an active agent: if something happens, it must be the work of a person, group, or organization that wishes that outcome. Much sociological explanation rests on the unintended consequence and the unanticipated outcome. Because we lack perfect knowledge, cannot entirely control the responses of others, and cannot prevent complex interactions, we often intend to do one thing and end up producing something entirely different. Max Weber's explanation of how the avowedly religious reforms of the Reformation accidentally boosted the growth of modern capitalism (see later discussion) is a fine example of a consequence very far from what was intended. As will be seen, the sociological explanation of secularization has little place for rationalists, (p. 57) humanists, or secularists; their main role is to elaborate justifications for changes that have already occurred. Nor for reasons discussed at length elsewhere (Bruce 2011) does it accept the argument, first presented by Michel Foucault and elaborated by Talal

Asad (1993, 2003), that the modern nation-state deliberately marginalized religion in order to make governing easier. What follows is an account of changes so unintended that they can only be identified retrospectively.

## Monotheism (R1)

Following Max Weber, Peter Berger (1969) argues that the monotheism of Judaism and Christianity contributed to the rationalization of the West. The Egyptian, Greek, and Roman worlds were embedded in cosmic orders with no sharp distinction between the human and the nonhuman. Replacing a pantheon by a single God immediately had a rationalizing effect in that people were no longer confronted with the problem that what pleased one divine being might offend another. And the Jewish God was remote. He created the world and he would end it, but during its existence, the world could be seen as possessing its own structure and logic. He was not capricious; he made consistent ethical demands. He was beyond magical manipulation; we could learn his laws and obey them but we could not bribe, cajole, or trick him. As the Christian Church evolved, the cosmos was remythologized with angels and semidivine saints. The idea that God could be manipulated through ritual, confession, and penance undermined the tendency to regulate behavior with a standardized ethical code. However, this trend was reversed as the Protestant Reformation again demythologized the world, eliminated the ritual and sacramental manipulation of God, and restored the process of ethical rationalization.

Making formal what pleased God made it possible for ethics to become detached from beliefs about the supernatural. Codes could be followed for their own sake and could even attract alternative justifications. In that sense, the rationalizing tendency of Christianity created space for secular alternatives.

## The Protestant Ethic (E1)

Weber argues that the Reformation inadvertently created new attitudes to work and capital accumulation (Weber 1976; Marshall 1982). Previously especially pious people displayed “other-worldly asceticism”: avoiding the temptations of the flesh by cutting themselves off from the world in monasteries and hermitages. Martin Luther secularized the idea of vocation by arguing that any legitimate occupation, performed diligently, glorified God. By arguing against confession, penance, and absolution, the Reformers deprived people of a way of periodically wiping away their sins. They thus increased the strain of trying to live a Christian life and made it all the more important to avoid temptation, hence the additional premium on work. With other changes, the result was Weber’s “this-worldly asceticism,” an attitude well-suited to the rise of rational capitalism. The link E2 to E3 represents the fact that those countries that first adopted industrial capitalism prospered ahead of their rivals, and, as we will see, prosperity itself weakens religious commitments.

## (p. 58) Structural Differentiation (S2)

Modernization entails structural (or functional) differentiation: the lifeworld fragments as specialized roles and institutions are created to handle specific features or functions previously embodied in one role or institution (Parsons 1964). The family was once a unit of production as well as the institution through which society was reproduced. With industrialization, economic activity became divorced from the home. It also became increasingly informed by its own values (i.e., there is a link from R2 to S2). At work we are supposed to be rational, instrumental, and pragmatic. We are also supposed to be universalistic: to treat customers alike, paying attention only to the matter in hand. The private sphere, by contrast, is taken to be expressive, indulgent, and emotional: an antidote to the public world.

Structural differentiation is secularizing because religious influence on important spheres (such as the economy and the polity) is reduced. And increased specialization directly secularizes many social services—education, health care, welfare, and social control—which were once provided by the church. If nothing else, this results in most people having less contact with religious officials, activities, and beliefs than was formerly the case.

## Social Differentiation (S1)

As society fragments, so do the people. Economic growth creates an ever-greater range of occupation and life situation that, because it is accompanied by growing egalitarianism, leads to class avoidance. This may seem paradoxical, but in feudal societies, masters and servants could live cheek-by-jowl precisely because the gentry had no fear that the lower orders would get ideas above their station. As the social structure became more fluid, those who could afford to do so replaced the previously effective social distance with literal space.

The plausibility of a single moral universe in which all people have a place depends on the social structure being stable. With new social roles and increasing social mobility, communal conceptions of the moral and supernatural order fragmented. As classes became more distinctive they created salvational systems better suited to their interests. The great pyramid of pope, bishops, priests, and laity reflected the social pyramid of king, nobles, gentry, and peasants. Independent small farmers or the rising business class preferred a more democratic religion, hence their attraction to such Protestant sects as the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers. Modernization was not simply a matter of religion responding to social, economic and political changes. Religion itself had a considerable effect on social and cultural diversity (S3). To explain this I must go back a stage to the link between the Reformation, the rise of individualism and schism.

## Individualism (RO1)

David Martin noted a major effect of the Reformation when he wrote that “The logic of Protestantism is clearly in favor of the voluntary principle, to a degree that eventually makes it sociologically unrealistic” (1978: 9). Belief systems differ greatly in their propen-

sity to fragment. The Catholic Church claims that Christ's authority was passed to Peter and then fixed in the office of Pope. It claims the right to settle disputes about God's will. If those claims (p. 59) are accepted, the Church is relatively immune to fission. As to depart from Rome goes to the heart of what one believes as a Catholic, such departures are difficult and are associated with extreme upheavals, such as the French Revolution. Thus as Catholic countries modernize they split into the religious and the secular: so in the twentieth century Italy, Spain, and France had a conservative Catholic bloc and powerful Communist parties.

Protestantism is vulnerable to schism because it rejects institutional mechanisms to settle disputes. Asserting that all can equally well discern God's will invites schism. Tradition, habit, respect for learning, or admiration for piety might restrain but cannot prevent division. The Reformation produced not one church purified and strengthened but competing sects.

We might add a secular version of RO1. Individualism gradually developed an autonomous dynamic as the egalitarianism located in the Figure 3.1 as S4. It is placed there to stress that individualism and the closely associated social reality of diversity (S3) can only develop in propitious circumstances, and those are provided by structural differentiation (S2) and economic growth (E3).

The link between modernization and inequality is paradoxical. Industrialization produced both greater social distance and a basic egalitarianism (S4). The Reformers were not democrats, but they inadvertently caused a major change in the relative importance of community and individual. By removing the special status of the priesthood and the possibility that religious merit could be transferred (e.g., by saying masses for the souls of the dead), they reasserted what was implicit in early Christianity: that we are all equal in the eyes of God. That equality initially lay in our sinfulness, but the idea could not indefinitely be confined to duty. Equal obligations eventually became equal rights.

The growth of egalitarianism was made possible by changes in the economy (Gellner 1983, 1991). Economic development brought change and the expectation of further change. And it brought occupational mobility. As it became more common for people to better themselves, it also become more common for them to think better of themselves. However badly paid, the industrial worker was not a serf. The serf occupied just one role in an all-embracing hierarchy, and that role shaped his or her entire life. A tin miner in Cornwall in 1800 might be oppressed at work, but in the late evening and on Sunday he could change clothes and persona to become a Baptist preacher: a man of prestige. Such alternation marks a crucial change. Once social status became task-specific, people could occupy different positions in different hierarchies. That makes it possible to distinguish between the role and the person who plays it. Roles can still be ranked and accorded very different degrees of power or status, but the people behind the roles could be viewed as having some sense of equal worth.

## Societalization

“Societalization” is the term Bryan Wilson gives to the way in which “life is increasingly enmeshed and organized, not locally but societally (that society being most evidently, but not uniquely, the nation state)” (1982: 154). If social differentiation (S1) and individualism (RO1) are blows to small-scale communities from below, societalization is the attack from above. Close-knit, integrated communities gradually lost power and presence to large-scale industrial and commercial enterprises; to modern states coordinated through massive, impersonal bureaucracies; and to cities. This is the classic community-to-society transition delineated by Ferdinand Tönnies (1955).

(p. 60) Following Emile Durkheim, Wilson (1982) argues that religion is strongest when it is embedded in the small community of like-situated people who think alike. As the society rather than the community becomes the locus of the individual’s life, so religion loses the roots that replenish it. The church of the Middle Ages baptized, christened, married, and buried. Its calendar of services mapped on to the seasons. It celebrated and legitimated local life. In turn it drew strength from being frequently reaffirmed by the local people. In 1914 almost everyone in my village celebrated the harvest by bringing tokens of their produce to the church. In 2014, a very small number of people in my village (only one of them a farmer) celebrated by bringing to the church vegetables and tinned goods (many of foreign provenance) bought in a supermarket owned by a multinational chain. Instead of celebrating the harvest, the service thanked God for all his creation. Broadening the symbolism solved the problem of relevance but lost direct contact with the lives of those involved. When the all-embracing community of like-situated people working and playing together gives way to the dormitory town or suburb, there is little left in common to celebrate.

Differentiation and societalization reduce the plausibility of any single overarching moral and religious system and thus allow competing religions. While these may have much to say to private experience, they can have little connection to the performance of social roles or the operation of social systems because they are not widely shared, let alone society-wide. Religion retains subjective plausibility for some but loses its objective taken-for-grantedness. It became a preference rather than a necessity.

Again it is worth stressing the interaction of social and cultural forces. The Reformation’s fragmentation of the religious tradition (RO3) hastened the development of the religiously neutral state (P1). A successful economy requires a high degree of integration: effective communication, a shared legal code to enforce contracts, a climate of trust, and so on (Gellner 1991). This requires an integrated national culture. Where there is consensus, a national “high culture” can be provided through the dominant religious tradition. The clergy can continue to be the schoolteachers, historians, propagandists, public administrators, and military strategists (though they will increasingly be bound by secular rational norms). Where there is little consensus, the state is forced to make secular provision.

## Schism and Sect Formation (RO3)

The Reformation stimulated literacy (S5). With everyone required to answer to God individually, lay people needed the resources to meet that new responsibility, hence the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, the rapid advance in printing, the spread of literacy, and the start of mass education. Competition between sects was a further spur. And as Gellner and others argue, the spread of education was both essential to, and a consequence of, economic growth. The sectarian competitive spirit of the RO line interacted with the requirements of the E and S line to produce a literate and educated laity, which in turn encouraged the general emphasis on the importance and rights of the individual and the growth of egalitarianism (S4) and liberal democracy (P1).

Protestant sects also had a direct influence on P1 by providing a new model for social organization. Reformed religion was individualistic but it encouraged individuals to band together for encouragement, edification, evangelism and social control. As an alternative to the organic community in which position was inherited and ascribed, the sectarians (p. 61) established the voluntary association of like-minded individuals coming together to pursue common goals.

## Social and Cultural Diversity (S3)

The creation of the secular state was encouraged by diversity. Modernization brought with it increased cultural diversity in three ways. Peoples moved and brought their language, religion, and social mores into a new setting. Second, the expansive nation-state encompassed new peoples. Third, especially common in Protestant settings, economic modernization created classes, which created competing sects. Hence the paradox in reformed Protestant societies: at the same time as the nation-state was trying to create a unified national culture out of thousands of small communities, it was having to come to terms with increasing religious diversity. The solution was an increasingly neutral state. Religious establishments were abandoned altogether (the United States) or were neutered (Britain). Being freed from entanglements with secular power allowed churches to become more clearly “spiritual,” but their removal from the center of public life reduced their contact with, and relevance for, the general population (P2 and P3).

Separation of church and state was one consequence of diversity. Another was the growing breach between a community and its religious worldview. In sixteenth-century England, every significant event in the life cycle of the individual and the community was celebrated in church and given a religious gloss. The church’s techniques were used to bless the sick, sweeten the soil, and increase animal productivity. Testimonies, contracts, and promises were reinforced by oaths sworn on the Bible and before God. But beyond the special events that saw the parish troop into the church, a huge amount of credibility was given to the religious worldview simply through everyday interaction and conversation. People commented on the weather by saying “God be praised” and on parting wished each other “Godspeed” or “Goodbye” (an abbreviation for “God be with ye”).

Diversity also has an important social psychological consequence: it calls into question the certainty that believers can accord their faith (Berger 1980). Ideas are most convincing when they are universally shared. The elaboration of alternatives provides a profound challenge. Believers need not fall on their swords when they find that others disagree with them. Where clashes of ideologies occur in the context of social conflict or when alternatives are promoted by people who need not be seriously entertained, the cognitive challenge can be dismissed (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 133). Nonetheless, proliferating alternatives make it clear that we choose God rather than the other way round and, to the extent that people of different churches, sects, and denominations enjoy positive interaction, it breaks the claimed ties between religious identity and virtue. That some of "them" are good people makes it harder to believe that one's own religion has a monopoly of what is good in this life, which in turn weakens the claim to unique access to the next life.

## Compartmentalization and Privatization (S5)

Believers may respond to the fact of variety by supposing that all religions are, in some sense, the same (RO5). Another possibility (and they are not incompatible) is to confine one's faith (p. 62) to a particular compartment of social life (S5). With compartmentalization comes privatization: the sense that the reach of religion is shortened to just those who accept the teachings of this or that faith. As Luckmann puts it:

> This development reflects the dissolution of *one* hierarchy of significance in the world view. Based on the complex institutional structure and social stratification of industrial societies different "versions" of the world view emerge. … With the pervasiveness of the consumer orientation and the sense of autonomy, the individual is more likely to confront the culture and the sacred cosmos as a "buyer." Once religion is defined as a "private affair," the individual may choose from the assortment of "ultimate" meanings as he sees fit. (1970: 98–99)

Casanova (1994) argues that differentiation need not result in privatization. The major churches, having now accepted the rules of liberal democracy, can regain a public role. They achieve this not by the old model of a mutually supportive and exclusive compact between a dominant church and the state, but by acting as pressure groups in civil society. This is true, but it misses the point that churches can no longer play the God trump card. If they wish to be heard, religious interest groups are now forced to present their case in secular terms. For example, the Christian Right in the United States opposes abortion not as unbiblical but as infringing the universal human right to life. Darwinian evolution is not un-Godly; it is bad science. Homosexuality is not offensive to God; it is socially dysfunctional. And so on.

## The Secular State and Liberal Democracy (P1)

Social innovations, once established, can have an appeal that goes far beyond the initial motive to innovate. In Britain, Holland, the American colonies, and the reformed Protestant parts of Germany, secular liberal democracy evolved as a necessary response to the

egalitarianism (S4) made possible by structural differentiation (S2) and to the social and cultural diversity (S3) created by a combination of the fissiparousness of Protestantism (RO2) and social differentiation (S1). But, combined with the inheritance of the French Revolution, it became attractive in its own right, and in the late nineteenth century societies that had no great need for them introduced the same principles as part of wider political reforms. Despite dissent being largely contained within the Lutheran tradition, the introduction of representative democracy and the weakening of the monarchy (or Grand Duchy) in the Nordic countries was accompanied by a weakening of the Church (which largely retained its diverse social functions by presenting them as secular social services available to all citizens).

## The Moderation of Sects and Churches (RO5)

H. Richard Niebuhr (1962) elaborates a small but important element of the paradigm in his extension of Troeltsch's comments on the evolution of sects. Niebuhr notes that time and again radical sects (e.g., the Quakers or the Methodists) became comfortable denominations, on easy terms with the world. First, commitment is inevitably reduced when (p. 63) inheritance replaces personal choice. Second, most sectarians prospered ahead of the average, partly for the "Protestant Ethic" reasons elaborated by Weber (E1) and partly because their asceticism made them widely trusted. It is no accident that most of the British banking system developed from family firms run by Quakers: the Barclays, Backhouses, Trittons, and Gurneys. Growing wealth (and the social status and public acceptance that could come with it) raised the price of asceticism, and most sectarians could not resist the increasing benefits of moderation.

Robert Michels (1962) identifies a further source of moderation in his study of oligarchy in left-wing trade unions and political parties. Most sects began as primitive democracies, with little formal organization, but gradually acquired a professional leadership. Especially after the founder died, there was a need to educate and train the preachers and teachers who would sustain the movement. If successful, there was a need to coordinate a growing organization. There were assets to be safeguarded and books to be published and distributed. With organization came paid officials who had a vested interest in reducing tension between the sect and the wider society. They could also compare themselves to the clergy of the established church and (initially for the status of their faith rather than their own reward) desire the same levels of training, remuneration, and social status.

If the sect can isolate itself from the wider society so that its own culture provides everything for life, then it can sustain itself. Communitarian sects such as the Amish, Hutterites, and Doukobhors provide examples. But in most cases the sect is only slightly insulated and cannot avoid the social psychological effects of diversity described here. Having failed to win over the bulk of the people and having to come to terms with being only a "saved remnant," the sect finds good reasons to moderate its claims and comes to see it-

self not as the sole embodiment of God's will but as one expression of what is pleasing to God.

The moderation of sects is mirrored in the moderation of churches. Faced with widespread defection and the loss of authority, most churches reduced their claims and came to view themselves as just one among others. The change was not always made willingly, but by the start of the twentieth century most state churches were cooperating with other Christian organizations. By the end of it, most were presenting themselves as the senior spokesperson for all religions against a largely secular climate.

## Economic Growth (E3)

The effect of prosperity on Protestants sects can be generalized. Increasing affluence reduces religious fervor and traditionalism (Inglehart 1990, 1997). Religion often provides solace for the dispossessed by contrasting their piety with the laxity of the wealthy and presenting the next life as a reversal of this one: the meek shall inherit the earth. From the 1920s to the 1960s, American Pentecostalists prided themselves on their distinctly ascetic lifestyles. That they could not afford them (or their consequences) made it easy to denounce pre- and extramarital sex, divorce, flashy clothes, makeup, Hollywood movies, social dancing, and television. When they could afford them, their mores changed. Many charismatic and neopentecostalists congregations are socially indistinguishable from mainstream congregations. This does not mean that they are no longer religious, but the erosion of distinctive ways of life does make it more difficult to maintain distinctive beliefs (Shibley 1996).

## (p. 64) Science (R3) and Technology (R4)

Critics of the secularization paradigm misrepresent it by elevating science to a central position: "it is science that has the most deadly implications for religion" (Stark and Finke 2000: 61). A zero-sum notion of knowledge, with rational thought and science conquering territory from superstition, was carried into sociology by Auguste Comte and Karl Marx, but it is not part of the modern secularization paradigm. We recognize that modern people are quite capable of believing untruths and hence that decreasing plausibility cannot be explained simply by the presence of some (to us) more plausible ideas. The crucial connections are more subtle and complex than those implied in a science versus religion battle and rest on nebulous consequences of assumptions about the orderliness of the world and our mastery over it.

More important than scientific discovery was the development of effective technology. Religion seemed practical: holy water cured ailments and prayers improved crop quality. As technological advances provided effective solutions to an ever-increasing range of life's problems, so the occasions on which people called on religion were reduced. Where the people of the Middle Ages were often driven to religious recourse because they had no better solution, modern people are more likely to have confidence in scientific research and technological advance. This is an often-used example, but it is apposite. The response

of the Christian Church to the Black Death of the fourteenth century was to call for divine help through special prayers and periods of fasting. The response of the Church of England to the “gay plague” (as the AIDs epidemic of the 1980s was initially dubbed) was to call for increased government funding of medical research. And, as even committed Christians would admit, the second response was more effective than the first.

More generally, as Martin puts it, with the growth of science and technology “the general sense of human power is increased, the play of contingency is restricted, and the overwhelming sense of divine limits which afflicted previous generations is much diminished” (1969: 116). This does not mean the end of religion, but it does mean that traditional religions, with insignificant humankind worshipping an all-powerful creator God, fit less well the general cultural climate. Increasingly believers feel they have the right to decide to which bits of their religion’s teaching they will attend. Religion becomes less the master of culture and more its servant.

## Technology and Consciousness (CS1)

In exploring the psychology of modern work, Berger and colleagues (1974) argue that, even if we are unaware of it, modern technology brings with it a technological consciousness that is difficult to reconcile with a sense of the sacred. One element of this is componentiality. Modern work assumes that the most complex entities can be broken down into parts that are infinitely replaceable. Likewise actions can be reduced to elements that can be indefinitely repeated. This pragmatic attitude is carried over from manufacture to the management of workers (a style known after its heroic promoter as “Fordism”) and then to bureaucracy generally. While there is no obvious clash between the assumptions embedded in technological consciousness and the teachings of most religions, (p. 65) there are serious incompatibilities of approach. There is little space for the eruption of the divine.

To summarize the R line, the effects of science and technology on the plausibility of religious belief are often misunderstood. Their direct clash is less significant than the subtle impact of naturalistic ways of thinking. Science and technology have not made us atheists, but the underlying rationality makes us less likely than our forebears to entertain the notion of the divine.

## Relativism (CS2)

Finally we come to the bottom line. The Christian Church of the Middle Ages was firmly authoritarian and exclusive in its attitude to knowledge. There was a single truth, and it knew what it was. Increasingly social and cultural diversity combines with egalitarianism to undermine all claims to authoritative knowledge. While compartmentalization can serve as a holding operation, it is difficult to live in a world that treats as equally valid a large number of incompatible beliefs and that shies away from authoritative assertions without coming to suppose that there is no one truth. We may continue to prefer our worldview, but we find it hard to insist that what is true for us must also be true for every-

one else. The tolerance that is necessary for harmony in diverse egalitarian societies weakens religion by forcing us to live as if we could not be sure of God's will. The consequence, visible over the twentieth century in liberal democracies, was a decline in first the commitment of, and then in the number of, church adherents. Relativism debilitates faith by removing the best reason to ensure one's children are socialized in the faith. If all faiths (and none) offer a road to God, if there is no hell to which heretics get sent, then there is no need to ensure the transmission of orthodoxy.

# Retarding Tendencies

The secularization paradigm suggests that social and structural differentiation, societalization, rationalization, individualism, egalitarianism, and increasing social and cultural diversity undermine religion. However, most proponents would add an important qualification: "except where religion finds or retains work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural." The many and varied instances of that work can be summarized under the headings of cultural transition and cultural defense.

## Cultural Transition

Where social identity is threatened in the course of major social transitions, religion may help negotiate such changes or assert a new claim to a sense of worth. Religioethnic groups can ease the move between homeland and new world. The church offers a supportive group that speaks one's language and shares one's values but also has contacts with the new social milieu.

(p. 66) There is another manifestation of the tendency for religion to retain significance, even temporarily to grow in significance, and that is in the course of modernization itself. Modernization disrupted communities, traditional employment patterns, and status hierarchies. By extending the range of communication, it made the social peripheries and hinterlands more aware of the manners and mores of the center and vice versa. Those at the center of the society were motivated to missionize the rest, seeking to assimilate them by socializing them in "respectable" beliefs and practices. Sectors of the social periphery in turn were motivated to embrace the models of respectable performance offered to them, especially when they were already in the process of upward mobility and self-improvement (Brown 1987). Industrialization and urbanization gave rise to revival and reform movements.

## Cultural Defense

Religion often acts as guarantor of group identity. Where culture, identity, and sense of worth are challenged by a source promoting either an alien religion or secularism and that source is negatively valued, secularization will be inhibited. Religion can provide resources for the defense of a national, local, ethnic, or status group culture. The role of

Catholicism in the Polish national resistance to Soviet communism is a good example (Szajkowski 1983).

In the process of functional differentiation, the first sphere to become freed of cultural encumbrances is the economy, but religioethnic identity can constrain economic rationality. Employers often hire “their own,” and even in consumption religion may override rationality. Northern Ireland’s small towns often have a Protestant butcher and a Catholic butcher where the market can profitably sustain only one. At times of heightened tension, Protestants and Catholics boycott each other’s businesses and travel considerable distances to engage in commerce with their own sort.

Cultural defense also inhibits “societalization.” A beleaguered minority may try to prevent the erosion of the community. Those who order their lives in the societal rather than the community mode may be regarded as treacherous and punished accordingly. In ethnic conflicts (e.g., Bosnia or Northern Ireland) those who marry across the divide are frequent targets for vigilantes.

Finally, religioethnic conflict mutes the cognitive consequences of pluralism because the prevalence of invidious stereotypes allows a much more thorough stigmatizing of alternative cultures. The shift to relativism as a way of accommodating those with whom we differ depends on us taking those people seriously. Where religious differences are strongly embedded in ethnic identities, the cognitive threat of the others is relatively weak. Scottish Protestants in the nineteenth century deployed caricatures of the social vices of the immigrant Irish Catholics as a way of avoiding having to consider them as Christian.

# Secularity

It is no part of the secularization paradigm that organized religion will completely die out any time soon (though some once-large denominations may well vanish: the Methodist (p. 67) Church in the UK is an example). Nor does it assume that religious commitment will be replaced by self-conscious atheism or that religious sentiment will entirely disappear. If the UK is at all typical, the consequences of secularization will be as follows.

In the early stages of secularization, most of the population retain some acquaintance with and involvement in organized religion. In the later stages, there is a radical divide between the religious and the religiously indifferent. Time use diaries (which, because respondents simply note down what they are doing at regular intervals, suffer less than surveys from compliance effects) show that, in 2001, only 8 percent of the UK population engaged in any religious activity in a typical week. With few exceptions, schools no longer teach religion; they teach about religions in a relativistic fashion, and those classes are the least popular and prestigious part of the curriculum. Major broadcasters (including state-run ones) treat all religions as equally plausible. The consequence of these features is that the common stock of religious knowledge is extremely low. Most British people have no idea at all about even the most basic Christian ideas.

That organized religion is now alien to most people in largely secular societies is reinforced by the fact that most of the remaining carriers of religion are themselves literally alien. In the case of Muslims and West African Pentecostalists, they are migrants or the offspring of migrants raised in relatively closed communities. In the case of Gaelic speakers in the Outer Hebrides and Welsh speakers in North Wales, they are geographically concentrated and remote. In the case of the elderly women who predominate in church congregations, they are demographically narrow. For most British people under the age of 65, religion is something that is done by other people. This is not metaphorical. The small numbers of committed believers and their physical concentration means that most British people will never have any enduring positive social interaction with a religious person.

Nonetheless, attitudes toward religion in the abstract are generally positive. It supposedly teaches morals (which is a good thing) and provides comfort for the bereaved and distressed. However, even if it is not articulated in these terms, there is a clear commitment to the principles of differentiation and privatization outlined earlier. Because they are articulate and disinterested, the diminishing number of clergy may occasionally be called on to perform such secular roles as acting as community spokespersons. But any sign of partisanship (as when Pope Benedict XVI politely pointed out that most of the flummery associated with Christmas was not actually Christian) is frowned upon, and there is no enthusiasm at all for the return of religion to the public square (Bruce and Glendinning 2011).

There is also little fondness for the seriously religious. The 2008 British Social Attitudes survey added “the deeply religious” and the “nonreligious” to a list of Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Jew, and Buddhist in a “feelings toward” thermometer. Where 50 is the neutral midpoint, scores ranged from a high (or positive) of 62.6 for Protestant people to a low (or negative) of 46.8 for Muslims. The second least popular group were the deeply religious. Not surprisingly, firm believers liked the pious: they scored them at 56.71. Equally predictably, atheists disliked them: they scored them at 41.43. The crucial observation is that the casually religious and the religiously indifferent middling group—with a score of 45.60—also disliked the deeply religious (Clements 2012).

In brief, religion is popular in the abstract but alien in the particular. The vast majority of the population has no knowledge of or interest in it. One might imagine that the decline of Christianity would prompt the growth of alternatives, but the numbers of the religiously (p. 68) indifferent who are recruited to any of the immigrant religions is trivial, and the number who join the religious movements that were new in the 1970s is so small that one has to wonder at the sociological interest they generated. What is called “New Age,” contemporary, alternative, or holistic spirituality is sometimes presented as the form in which religion will survive and revive in secular society, but the numbers involved are far too low to make that case: less than 2 percent of the population on the most generous estimates (Heelas and Woodhead 2004). And most of those people are doing yoga and medi-

tating: activities that they see as contributing to health and psychological well-being rather than to spiritual development.

# Conclusion

Shared belief systems require consensus, which is not naturally occurring but requires coercion. The survival and revival of religion requires that individuals be subordinated to the community. In some settings (e.g., religioethnic conflicts), individual autonomy is constrained by shared identities. In the stable affluent democracies of the West, the individual asserts the rights of the sovereign autonomous consumer. We choose our electrical goods; we choose our gods. Unless we can imagine some social forces that will lead us to give up that freedom, we cannot imagine the creation of detailed ideological consensus. It is not enough to suggest that some calamity may disrupt our complacency. Without a preexisting common culture, large numbers will not interpret a disaster in the same way and hence will not respond collectively. When the common culture of a society consists of operating principles that allow the individual to choose, no amount of vague spiritual yearning will generate a shared belief system.

To conclude, the secularization paradigm argues that the decline of religion in the West is not an accident but is an unintended consequence of a variety of complex social changes that for brevity we call modernization. It is not inevitable. But unless we can imagine a reversal of the increasing cultural autonomy of the individual, secularization must be seen as irreversible.

## Bibliography

Asad, T. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular Modern*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Berger, P. L. 1969. *The Social Reality of Religion*. London: Faber and Faber.

Berger, P. L. 1980. *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*. London: Collins.

Berger, P. L., B. Berger, and H. Kellner. 1974. *The Homeless Mind*. Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin.

Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann. 1966. “Secularization and Pluralism.” *International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion* 2, 73–84.

Brown, C. 1987. *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*. London: Methuen.

(p. 69) Brown, C., and M. Snape. (eds.). 2009. *Secularisation in the Christian World*. Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate.

Bruce, S. 1996. *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, S. 2002. *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, S. 2011. *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, S., and A. Glendinning. 2011. "Privatization and De-Privatization." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50(3), 503–516.

Casanova, J. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clements, B. 2012. "The Sources of Public Feelings towards Religious Groups in Britain: The Role of Social Factors, Religious Characteristics and Political Attitudes." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27(3), 419–434.

Dobbelaere, K. 2002. *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*. Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang.

Field. C. D. 2001. "'The Haemorrhage of Faith'? Opinion Polls as Sources for Religious Practices, Beliefs and Attitudes in Scotland since the 1970s." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16(2), 157–176.

Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gellner, E. 1991. *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History*. London: Paladin.

Gellner, E. 1994. "From Kinship to Ethnicity." In *Encounters with Nationalism*, edited by E. Gellner, 34–46. Oxford: Blackwell.

Heelas, P., and L. Woodhead. 2004. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Inglehart, R. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Societies*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, R. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Political and Economic Change in 43 Societies.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Luckmann, T. 1970. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.

Marshall, G. 1982. *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Hutchinson.

Martin, D. 1969. *The Religious and the Secular*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Martin, D. 1978. *The Dilemmas of Contemporary Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Michels, R. 1962. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: Free Press.

Niebuhr, H. R. 1962. *The Social Sources of Denominationalism.* New York: Meridian.

Norman, E. 2002. *Secularisation*. London and New York: Continuum.

Norris, P., and R. Inglehart. 2011. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Parsons, T. 1964. "Evolutionary Universals in Society." *American Journal of Sociology* 29(3), 339–357.

Pasquale, F., and B. Kosmin. 2015. "Atheism and the Secularization Thesis." In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by S. Bullivant and M. Ruse, 451–467. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shibley, M 1996. *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United State: Mapping Cultural Change since 1970.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Stark, R., and R. Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(p. 70) Szajkowski, B. 1983. *Next to God … Poland: Politics and Religion in Contemporary Poland*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Tönnies, F. 1955. *Community and Association*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Warner, R. 2010. *Secularization and Its Discontents*. London and New York: Continuum.

Wilson, B. R. 1982. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weber, M. 1976. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Allen & Unwin.

**Steve Bruce**

Steve Bruce has been Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen since 1991. He was born in Edinburgh in 1954 and schooled at the Queen Victoria School Dunblane, Perthshire. He studied sociology and religious studies at the University of Stirling (M.A. 1976; Ph.D. 1980) and taught at the Queen's University, Belfast, from 1978 to 1991. He was elected a fellow of the British Academy in 2003 and a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2005. He has written extensively on the nature of religion in the modern world and on the links between religion and politics. His most recent work, Paisley: Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland, was published by Oxford University Press in 2007, and he is currently preparing a second edition of his Fundamentalism for Polity.

# The Imagined War between Secularism and Religion

Mark Juergensmeyer

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.5

## Abstract and Keywords

The case of the 2015 attack on the offices of the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine in Paris illustrates the imagined war between secularism and religion that is in the background of many incidents of violence at the turn of the twenty-first century. The Enlightenment idea that there are two different worldviews—two distinctly different spheres of understanding about reality, one of them secular and the other religious—is inherently problematic. This dichotomy creates an arena of discord that is easily exploited by people who feel isolated and marginalized for whatever reason and look for someone to blame and some battle to join. It is a false conflict that extremists on both sides, religious and secular, have exacerbated.

Keywords: religious violence, terrorism, secularism, Enlightenment, religion, war

"SECULARISM is the enemy of Islam," I was told by a Muslim militant who was implicated in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City. He attributed the adverse political and economic policies of the West to the fact that without religion it had "no morals," and he described those without religion as people who are "just walking around like dead bodies."[1]

This disdain for secularism—and the fear of it—is a common refrain; I have heard it in scores of interviews with religious activists around the world (many of them are in Juergensmeyer 2003 and 2008). Regardless of whether they are Muslim jihadi militants, Jewish anti-Arab activists, or members of Christian militia in Maryland, these activists perceive the world to be vulnerable to a dominant secular mindset that is intent on obliterating their fragile religious cultures. A Lutheran pastor who was implicated in firebombing attacks on clinics on the US East Coast where abortions were performed told me that an attack such as his were simply salvos on "the war against secularism." In his mind the "culture war" between secular and religious society in the United States was more than a metaphor. It was a real war.

That is the perception. The fears may be largely exaggerations, but there are many examples in popular culture in which expressions of religion are marginalized or disrespected and which make some religious people feel that their culture is under assault. The French attempt to ban headscarves, for instance, while based on the notion of social equality, was widely interpreted by the Algerian Muslim immigrant community in France as an attack on their religion in general and on their Algerian immigrant culture in particular. The cases of the portrayal of the Prophet Mohammad in cartoon form have led to tragic, explosive encounters in Copenhagen and in Paris.

# The *Charlie Hebdo* Attack

The attack on the headquarters of the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, in Paris on January 7, 2015, is an interesting example. On one level it was simply a case of lost angry (p. 72) young men taking out their hatred of society on a symbolic target. But behind the simple facts of the case was a larger narrative about the alienation of the Algerian Muslim community in France and its perception that French secularism was being interpreted in a way that was meant to specifically humiliate and disenfranchise them. As the young Muslim men who perpetrated the military-style assault raced from the scene of their massacre, they shouted that this was in revenge for the insults levied by the cartoon portrayals of the Prophet Muhammad.

This was not a case of Islamic terrorism, pure and simple, despite what many politicians and journalists said at the time. Senator Lindsey Graham, for instance, said that the Paris attacks prove that the West is “in a religious war” with radical Islam. The respected journalist George Packer hurriedly posted an opinion piece on the website of *The New Yorker*, proclaiming that this act had nothing to do with the ethnic tensions in France and it was simply a calculated attack on behalf of “Islamist ideology.” Twitter and Facebook were full of accusations that once again Islamic religion had propelled its faithful into violence.

Religion was part of the equation, to be sure. But exactly how it entered the picture is more complicated than the simple assertion that “Islamist ideology” had struck again. We knew enough about the people involved to know how their life stories intersected with extremist religious ideology. In some ways, their situation was similar to many of the other lone wolf terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States in recent years. Before Paris, there was the 2013 Tsarnaev brothers’ attack on the Boston Marathon, the deadly assault on a Norwegian youth camp by Christian extremist Anders Breivik in 2011, the August 2012 attack on the Milwaukee Sikh Gurdwara by Wade Michael Page, and, before that, the 2010 Times Square bombing attempt by Faisal Shahzad and the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Park by Eric Robert Rudolph, who was related to the Christian Identity movement. These lone wolf events are different from other instances in recent years where organized radical groups with religion as part of their ideology, such ISIS or the Christian militia, plotted attacks and recruited participants to be involved in them. In the lone wolf cases, religious ideas, when they appeared at all, were more of an excuse than a reason for the violence. In the case of the Paris incident, at least one of the brothers may have had ties to

the Yemeni al Qaeda, but there is no evidence that they were sent by some higher authority in the organization to commit this crime. In fact, religion seemed to be a minor aspect of their motivations.

The brothers Said and Chérif Kouachi were hardly saints. They were raised in a secular household, and their youth was filled with petty theft and brawls. Neither held a solid job, though Chérif occasionally delivered pizzas. The lure of the jihadi ideology seemed primarily to be the call to warfare, coupled with a sense of bringing honor to their communities and to themselves, a dishonor they had earned through their vagabond lifestyles. According to *The New York Times*, Chérif Kouachi liked to smoke marijuana and listen to rap music; he described himself as "an occasional Muslim." Neither brother seems to have had a very sophisticated notion of their faith nor of Islamic jihadi ideology. They simply wanted to join a fight.

The fight they chose, however, was the war against secularism. The targets of their angry, vicious attack were the secular satirists who had portrayed the Prophet Mohammad in cartoons. This is the kind of insult to religion that would offend all Muslims, not just the angry ones like the Kouachi brothers. It is one thing to make fun of politicians and public figures but quite another to belittle someone's culture. The cartoons in the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine are analogous to the ethnic cartoons of Jews in Nazi Germany or the bespeckled, (p. 73) buck-toothed drawings of Japanese in American World War II posters. These kind of images demean a whole race or culture.

Algerian Muslims in France already felt demeaned, and for many those cartoons were the last straw. This raises an issue that Packer, in his *New Yorker* essay, specifically said that we should ignore: the multicultural tensions of contemporary French society. If one is looking for a link that connects a couple of individuals' personal sense of anger and alienation to a public demonstration of how the immigrant community of which they are a part (Algerian Muslims) are angry and alienated in contemporary France, the cartoon issue is a perfect connection. Moreover, there is a prevailing radical Islamic ideology that presents an image of cosmic war between Islam and secular society that allows these individual angry frustrations to be vented. Hence Packer's identification of the jihadi ideology as a factor is relevant, but the evidence does not indicate that it is the sole cause of the attack; rather it is the vehicle through which a personal and ethnic anger is expressed.

For the deadbeat, dead-end Kouachi brothers, the notion of being a part of a great battle between secularism and religion may have seemed appealing for many reasons. For such people, real wars are exciting, and the imagined wars of great religious conflict are more than exhilarating. They also offer the promise of opportunity, of playing an ennobling role within that cosmic war. Perhaps most directly, such imagined wars provide a justification for doing something destructive to the very society that they think has shunned them and their community. Hence the defense of religion provides a cover for violence. It gives moral license to something horrible that the perpetrators may have longed to do, to show

the world how powerful they and their community really could be, and to demonstrate their importance in one terminal moment of violent glory.

In other cases as well the imagined war between secularism and religion have given angry young men (and they are invariably men) the opportunity to display their masculine protectiveness by acts of violence against symbols of secularism and multicultural tolerance. In the case of the Norwegian youth camp murderer, Anders Breivik, Atlanta Olympic Park bomber Eric Robert Rudolph, and the Sikh Gurdwara attacker, Wade Michael Page, their motivations appear to have included an imagined defense of Christian society. Times Square attempted bomber Faisal Shahzad and Boston bombers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev justified their acts of rage as defending Islamic society, as did the Paris attackers, Said and Chérif Kouachi. The issues that have animated these activists are not, in a narrow sense, religious. They have to do with the ethnic and cultural alienation and the fears of ethnic integration in a multicultural society. They combine personal loss with the sense of humiliation suffered in times of social transformation, and these understandable human emotions could be expressed in many ways. But here they are expressed in a hatred of secular institutions and an imagined view of secularism and religion locked in a kind of cosmic war. Why is this the case?

One answer to this question is that religion is at fault. By exaggerating the dangers of science and a rational order bereft of religion, it creates an extreme response and an imagined enemy. This explains the phenomenon of fundamentalism, a movement that developed in Protestant Christianity in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century and has become a general label to demarcate any kind of antimodernist religious conservativism around the world.[2] The other answer is that secularism is the problem. By creating societies that are barren of any form of religious culture, they deny religious people the expressions of what is for them an essential part of their identities—hence the backlash against the French (p. 74) ban on headscarves and the religious support for political movements in Turkey that reverse the extreme anti-Muslim policies of Kamel Ataturk and allow for the expression of marks of religious identity in public.

There is some merit in both of these positions; the extreme forms of both religion and secularism are problematic. In this chapter, however, I want to focus on a different aspect of the situation: the relation of secularism and religion to each other. The very idea that there are two different worldviews—two distinctly different spheres of understanding about reality, one of them secular and the other religious—is inherently problematic. This dichotomy creates an arena of discord that is easily exploited by people who feel isolated and marginalized for whatever reason and look for someone to blame and some battle to join, such as the war between secularism and religion. How did this dichotomy come about?

# The Invention of Secularism and Religion

Though its origins are fairly well known, it is not entirely clear how this imagined bifurcation between the secular and religious world persisted and why it has reemerged in the contemporary world. It is often described as being an invention of the European Enlightenment, though there were precedents, depending on what one means by “secular” and “secularism.” The definitions of the terms are not as obvious as one might think. A task force of the Social Science Research Council in New York convened a multiyear project on “rethinking secularism,” which I chaired, and we agreed that secularism is a complicated notion, or rather a set of notions that are seen differently in different cultures (Calhoun et al. 2011; Asad 2003). In many of its forms, secularism is itself something—not just the absence of religion. It is a worldview laden with value assumptions about the nature of the self and its relationship to society.

According to the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, in his magisterial book on the rise of secularism in the West *A Secular Age* (2007), there are three ways of thinking about secularism. One is the separation of church and state—keeping religious authorities and political authorities separate. This has been a part of most religious traditions from biblical times—enunciated by the saying attributed to Jesus when responding whether the faithful should pay the Roman tax: “render under Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and under God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). The second kind of secularism is the removal of religious elements from public life and creating a kind of public culture to replace it. And the third kind of secularism is the emergence of the secular person—people who think of their own core values and identities as having nothing to do with those traditionally expressed through religion.

It is these latter two kinds of secularism—secular public culture and the secular person—that are relatively new in human history. They are emblematic of the European and American West from the eighteenth century to the present, beginning with the Enlightenment, which ushered in a new way of thinking about religion. This notion of religion was one that provided a narrow definition. Rather than seeing religion as a repository of cultural symbols, communal identity, and a set of social values, it defined religion in terms of ecclesiastical institutions and dogmatic beliefs. It was this kind of religion that was regarded as problematic and conceptually separate from the rest of social life. What many people in Europe were (p. 75) afraid of at the time was the economic and political power of the Roman Catholic clergy and the fanaticism associated with the terrible wars of religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These would be controlled in a society in which these things, now defined as “religion” had its limitations within a nonreligious society.

The term “secularism” came into use later. It was used by the agnostic British writer George Jacob Holyoake in 1851 to describe the kind of public culture that he would like to see replacing religion (Holyoake 1896). But its roots in the Enlightenment are earlier, when the term for Enlightenment—*lumières* in French, *Aufklärung* in German—became a term for modern secular values, and “reason” was regarded as the antithesis of what the

Enlightenment thinkers disdained about religious dogmatism. Hence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, secular reason was thought to be an ideology of order that would replace religion as the central force in organizing society. Instead of religion informing public values and ideals, rational thought would be the only true measure of the value of social goals. In France, abandoned churches were turned into “temples of reason” to celebrate this transformation.

This marginalization of religion never worked perfectly in the West. Religious societies embracing religious values in public life cropped up in such small religious communities as the New Harmony colony in nineteenth-century Indiana and the large Mormon community that developed in Utah and spread throughout the western United States. Elsewhere in the world as well, the secularization that came with European colonialization was never completely integrated in societies for which religious traditions were essential parts of their identities. For most of the world, religious culture *was* the culture of society, and art, literature, and intellectual life would be unthinkable without it.

Before the rise of the European Enlightenment, religion (in the sense of religious history, ideas, and symbols) was seamlessly a part of the larger culture of societies in Europe and in most regions around the world. In each of these locales typically there would be only one culture, one morality, and one set of public virtues; religious ideas and traditions were part of them. Thus ideas—even the most novel and transformative ideas—would be expressed in religious terms or from a basis in religious history, ethics, and theology. Hence the nineteenth-century economist Adam Smith was trained as a theologian as well as a moral philosopher. The biologist Charles Darwin also had a background in theology. As the historian of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) pointed out, the very term “religion” was seldom used in the pre-Enlightenment era since there was nothing to contrast it with. Prior to the common usage of the word “religion” to demarcate a separate sphere of activity and ideas, terms such as tradition, faith, and belief were used instead. It was not that “religion” did not exist, in our sense of that term: there were churches, ritual, doctrines, and such. But they were seamlessly part of culture; there was no concept of a separate worldview that needed a name. There was no need for the word “religion.”

Enlightenment thinking provided a different way of viewing the situation. The public life of societies was essentially one that was untouched by the beliefs, traditions, rituals, and clerical power associated with religious institutions. A whole new concept was created—our notion of “religion”—which was what one could do privately, on one’s day off. It was the flip side of that other way of being in the world, the Enlightenment notion of rational society, which we have come to think of as “secularism.” These were thought to demarcate two spheres of being. When people were in public life, voting and arguing and creating rules for society, they were secular. When they were at home or in church, they could turn to religion—or choose not to. It was something private and personal. As the nineteenth-century (p. 76) rationalist and psychologist of religion William James once put it, religion was something that humans do “in their solitude” ([1902] 1982: 31).

In post-Enlightenment societies, therefore, the task of providing for social morality and communal cohesion was transferred from religious culture to secular society. It has been a heavy weight to bear. A group of French intellectuals in the nineteenth century called themselves the *ideologues,* "the idea people," and invented a concept they called "ideology," by which they meant a system of secular ideas and values that would replace the social morality of religion. According to one of the *idéologues*, Destutt de Tracy, whose book *Elements of Ideology* introduced the term to the world, logic was to be the sole basis of "the moral and political sciences" (quoted in Cox 1969: 17).

Eventually this sense of social cohesion that religious culture had provided was replaced by secular nationalism, an idea that emerged in the eighteenth century and swept the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The French social analyst Alexis de Tocqueville regarded nationalist fervor as having many of the aspects of a religious revolution (1955: 11; see also McManners 1969). Leaders of the American Revolution also saw their new secular society as replacing one based on religion. Many of the American founding fathers including Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin had been influenced by eighteenth-century deism, a religion of science and natural law that was "devoted to exposing [church] religion to the light of knowledge" (Cassirer 1955: 171). As in France, American nationalism replaced religious culture with a secular nationalism that had its own religious characteristics, blending the ideals of nationalism and the symbols of Christianity into what has been called "civil religion" (Bellah 1967). The extreme forms of nationalism did indeed take on an aura of sacredness that commanded exclusive allegiance and challenged any other forms of voluntary association, including religious ones. During the mid-twentieth century, nationalist ideologies, linked with Italian fascism, German national-socialism, and Stalin's narrow view of state socialism in the Communist Social Union, were enemies of both religion and the moderate nationalism of most nation-states.

In most other parts of the world where the idea of the secular nation-state took hold, a fairly comfortable relationship developed between secular politics and organized religion. Secular leaders did not have to worry about whether they were in conformity with religious teachings and values since they were divorced from them; and religious leaders did not have to take responsibility for maintaining social order and giving moral direction to public life since that was not their business but the job of secular politicians. Both sides seemed to have learned to live with the dichotomy between religion and secularism, and to benefit from it.

Even in the non-Western parts of the world that were not direct inheritors of the Enlightenment's dichotomous secular-religious way of thinking, a form of secularism took root. In India, the idea of secularism was not a separation of religion from public life but an equality of access to it by all religious groups; the Indian state provided a neutral governance structure over a society deeply divided along the lines of religious communities. In India, therefore, major religious groups—Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians—could be assured that their central government favored no one religious group over any other. In countries like Turkey, Egypt, and prerevolution Iran, however, political leaders embraced a philosophy of secularism that was different: religion was kept out of public

life. In these countries it was the job of government not only to keep a distance among quarrelling religious camps but also to replace its influence on society. Leaders such as Turkey's Attaturk and Egypt's Nassar thought that the secular worldview was the modern one, the (p. 77) wave of the future, and they were eager to put their societies on the path of the secular future rather than the religious past. Secularity did not mean, as in the Indian case, equal support of all religions. It rather meant the subordinate status of all religions to the program of modernization.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the fulfillment of de Tocqueville's prophecy that the "strange religion" of secular nationalism would "like Islam, overrun the whole world with its apostles, militants, and martyrs" (1955: 13). It spread throughout the world with an almost missionary zeal and was shipped to the newly colonized areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as part of the ideological freight of colonialism. It became the ideological partner of what came to be known as nation-building. This meant, on a social level, believing that secular nationalism could triumph over parochial religious identities, which were often seen as enemies of the emerging nationalism. In India, for example, political identity based on religious affiliation was termed communalism—something that needed to be banished in the new nation. In the view of Jawaharlal Nehru and other secular leaders of India, religion was the chief competitor of an even higher object of loyalty: secular India. Nehru implored his country to get rid of what he called "that narrowing religious outlook" and to adopt a modern, nationalist viewpoint (1980: 519).

# The Challenge to Secularism and the Rise of Radical Religion

In the twenty-first century, religion has returned to public life with a vengeance. In some cases religion plays a positive role by supporting voices of tolerance in multicultural societies. But in many other instances, religious voices are harsh and angry and sometimes lead to violence (Juergensmeyer et al. 2015). In both cases, the public role of religion has defied the nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers who anticipated that religion would "fade away," as Karl Marx put it, or retreat to the private precincts of one's "solitude," as William James imagined.

What happened? What is there about the character of society around the world that has produced a nearly global phenomenon of the rise of religious activism and a strident sentiment of antisecularism? It is unlikely to be sheer coincidence that new religious activists have emerged all about the same time—in the latter decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first—in such disparate places as Buddhist Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Japan, the Muslim and Jewish Middle East, Hindu and Sikh South Asia, Muslim and Christian Africa, and the Christian nations of Europe and the Americas. Something is going on, something of a virtually global nature that affects most cultures and areas of the planet.

The word “global” is a clue to what this might be. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, signaling the end of the Cold War, a new era had already begun, the era of globalization. Some observers at the time thought that this meant that the West had won the Cold War and that ideological conflicts such as the confrontation between socialism and capitalism were a thing of the past. According to Francis Fukuyama (1992), the world was witnessing “the end of history.” What was actually happening, however, was the ending of one kind of global ideological confrontation and the beginning of another, one linked with secularism and (p. 78) religion. This new ideological confrontation was a response to globalization in several of the following ways.

One response was a loss of faith in secular nationalism. By the middle of the twentieth century the idea of the nation-state had reigned supreme. By then most European countries had shed their colonial control and great empires like the Ottoman had been redrawn (often carelessly) into new national boundaries. In 1945 the formation of the United Nations as a representative body was the expression of the widely held sentiment that the world now entirely consisted of self-governing nation-states. These were also almost entirely secular nation-states, based on the idea that legitimacy was conferred only by what the Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau had called the “social contract” among citizens residing in a region.

Yet by the end of the century the rise of globalization had eroded much of the authority of the nation-state, weakening national identities and local forms of control. Transnational economic production, distribution, and financing were all conducted outside the scope of national authorities. National economies were seamlessly a part of global economic entities eager to exploit cheap labor in some regions and find new markets in others. Currencies were replaced by digital financial transactions, and national armies were essentially border patrols, incapable of challenging the military might of the United States, which remained the only superpower on the planet. Simultaneously, global forms of communication and transportation put everyone in contact with everyone. New forms of digital social media and the global transmission of media meant that increasingly all forms of popular culture were part of a homogenous global culture.

Perhaps just as significant was the disillusionment that set in when the high expectations of democratic secular nationalism crumbled in the rise of autocratic dictatorships and greedy corrupt political machines in many parts of the world. Jürgen Habermas (1975) has described this rejection of the optimistic premises of secular politics in the contemporary era as the “crisis of legitimation.” The secular entities of the nation-state were not always able to live up to their own materialistic expectations of wealth and progress. More disturbing, they did not seem capable of stopping the greed and corruption of individual attempts to gain from the system. They seemed to be entities without a moral compass, something religion had provided in the past.

In short, in the era of globalization the world has experienced a “loss of faith” in secular nationalism (Juergensmeyer 2008: chap. 1). It is a loss of *faith,* since nationalism, even secular nationalism, is an imagined community, as political scientist Benedict Anderson

once described it, requiring a belief in its legitimacy and a commitment to its possibilities in order for it to work. When that faith evaporates, an angry citizenry can lash out at the secular assumptions that undergirded it in the first place, and the failure of the secular state began to be attributed to secularism itself. It is understandable that many would then turn to other forms of identity and community that seem more time-tested and morally secure. They often turned to religion.

In many parts of the world the terms “secular” and “secularism” have a sinister connotation. As we observed earlier in this chapter, the idea of a dichotomy between religion and secularism is a fairly new invention, a legacy of the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment. The words “secularism” and “religion” as two ways of thinking about social reality were crafted from terms used for clerical roles in the Middle Ages: secular clergy (from *secularis*, “worldly”) were those who worked in the world as parish priests, (p. 79) and religious clergy (from *religare,* “to bind”) were those who took vows of discipline that confined them to monasteries. This made sense in English and other European languages. But in other parts of the world finding terms for “secular”—and for “religion,” for that matter—proved difficult. In my own experience doing field work in India, I floundered to find a term that was equivalent to the English term “religion,” often ending up with the word the Christian missionaries used, *dharma,* which is better translated as “natural law” or “moral order.” There was no simple term for religion.

The term “secular” is even more difficult to translate. In the Sanskrit-based languages of north India, sometimes the term *adharma* was used, but that really means the “absence of law or moral order,” something akin to anarchy. Other terms also relate to the absence of religion in the sense of moral order. In Arabic, secularism is sometimes translated as *ilmaniya,* which means scientific thinking, and sometimes as *almaniya,* meaning worldliness. But since worldliness can also mean crass materialism, the term in Arabic, as in Hindi, has a negative connotation. Moreover, the cultures of South Asia and the Middle East are ones where religious images and ideas are so firmly a part of the public culture that it is unthinkable that one could have any form of cultural expression without them. It is likely for this reason that the notion of secularism in India is one of equality, public support for all religions, rather than an opposition to religious culture and an attempt to replace it as one finds in France or in Ataturk’s Turkey.

Since the translated versions of the word “secularism” have negative connotations in South Asia and the Middle East, the establishment of new nationalisms in those regions on the basis of the secular notion of the nation-state was thought to be problematic. It is not surprising that, when the going got rough and secular authorities were seen as ineffective or corrupt, criticism would be leveled at the secular basis for this authority. It is also understandable that there would be a rise of new religious politics that provided a religious rather than a secular legitimization for political power. Most religious traditions provide the historical resources for thinking of religion in political terms. The Davidic kingship in ancient Israel, the papal power in Christian history, and the caliphs that ruled over Muslim empires are all testimony to the close interaction between religious and worldly power in the histories of the West. This is also true of Eastern traditions, includ-

ing Hinduism, where *rajdharma* was the moral authority that legitimized rulers, and Sikhism, where many of the leaders in the founding lineage of *gurus* had to take up arms to defend the growing Sikh community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Perhaps surprisingly, politics is also associated with Buddhism; this is surprising since this is a tradition associated with nonviolence and an alleged disinterest in worldly power. But in Theravada Buddhist societies in particular—in the countries of Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar (Burma)—Buddhism has been closely related to political power and to rebellious challenges against secular authorities. In Thailand, the tradition specifies that the king must be a monk before assuming political power—he must be a "world renouncer" before he can become a "world conqueror," as Stanley Tambiah (1976) has put it. In recent years, Buddhist monks in southern Thailand have worked with the Thai military in confrontations with rebellious Muslims. Some monks even conceal weapons beneath their robes (Jerryson 2011). In both Myanmar and Sri Lanka, raucous political movements have been led by angry Buddhist monks, one of whom assassinated a prime minister in Sri Lanka. In both of these Theravada Buddhist societies, there has been a history of Buddhist politics that has been related to nationalist movements for decades. Soon after Burma became independent, its (p. 80) leaders established a Buddhist socialism, guided by a curious syncretic mix of Marxist and Buddhist ideas (Smith 1965; Sarkisyanz 1965), so it should not be a surprise that many of the protests against military rule in the country and the current attempts to discredit the Burmese legitimacy of Muslims in the country have been led by Buddhist monks. Thus in Burma (now Myanmar), as in many traditional religious societies, "religion," as the political scientist Donald Smith has put it, "answers the question of political legitimacy" (1971: 11).

The religious challenge to secular nationalism has also risen in Europe and the United States (Capps 1990; Balmer 1989; Lawrence 1989). While European nations were founded on Enlightenment principles that excluded religion, in the anti-immigrant climate of modern Europe many nationalists claim their countries as Christian and are inherently hostile to non-Christian foreigners. In the United States, a nation of immigrants, a similar xenophobia has emerged. And although the founding fathers of the United States were almost all secularists and admirers of deism (a nonsectarian belief in the natural order of the world), some conservative Americans insist that the country was in fact founded on Christianity and the Bible. When I interviewed a Christian militant in Maryland who had been convicted of bombing clinics that provided abortion services, he said that he dreamed of an America that would rely not on the secular constitution but on the Bible.[3] In contemporary America, as well as in countries around the world, secularism is seen as religion's competition.

# The Perception that Secularism Buttresses Western Global Power

Secularism is also perceived as something that is not universal but an ideology that is distinctively European and American. As a Western ideology it is also therefore seen as an agent of Western domination in all of its aspects: cultural, economic, political, and military. The cultural aspect of Western secular ideology is regarded as particularly insidious because it often seems so appealing, especially to young people. In many parts of the Middle East the most popular television program in recent years has not been one of the programs in the Al Jazeera's news network or any of the Muslim televangelists who have cropped up increasingly in the region. Instead, the most popular program has been an Arabic-dubbed rerun of the American sitcom *Friends*. The television program is innocuous in the eyes of most Americans and Europeans, but its display of easy sexuality and light-hearted interactions between the sexes is offensive to many traditional religious leaders in the Middle East. They see it as somewhat sinful at best, and at worst it is perceived conspiratorially as a sinister device of Western powers to manipulate youth around the world into the value system of their common global society.

Perhaps one of globalization's greatest achievements, if that is the right word to use, is the creation of a global popular culture. Many of the images of this popular culture, however, are not that global. They are distinctively American, and more specifically related to the sunny moral freedom of Southern California. This breezy attitude toward traditional morality is seen as alarming in more traditional societies of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The common youth culture that it invites is seen as having a political motivation behind it, another aspect of the West's global control. When Osama bin Laden issued a fatwa of war against the United (p. 81) States in 1996, he listed several grievances against the West, including its economic oppression of exploiting oil resources from the Middle East, its political oppression of propping up Middle Eastern dictators, its military oppression of locating US military bases in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the region, and its (equally oppressive) cultural domination through media images. The power of global media has only increased in the years since then with the rise of social networks such as Twitter and Facebook that allow for easy communication among all people but also allow for a global transmission of homogeneous cultural values.

The values inherent in secular global culture are often regarded as being aimed at eroding traditional religious cultural values. In a project on religion in global civil society in which I recently served as director, we found that many tradition religious leaders from Africa to Russia were convinced that the secular support for gay rights was a device intended to undermine traditional culture. They dismissed the argument for human rights since from their point of view rights could not possibility be extended to people involved in what from their perspective were clear acts of immorality. Our attempts to make the moral argument created some of the more tense encounters in the global project, as we report in our book *God in the Tumult of the Global Square* (Juergensmeyer et al. 2015).

Secularism is seen as a way of also furthering US economic interests. When I interviewed Sunni mullahs in Iraq in 2004 after the US invasion and occupation of their country, I was surprised to discover how many of them were convinced that the politics of the region were being manipulated by the United States for economic profit. Some thought that oil was behind everything. Others thought that the United States was trying to create a world order that it could easily control for the benefit of large corporations.

Others saw the United States supporting secular politics for a larger political agenda: the global domination of political systems throughout the world. One of the mullahs, a leader in the Association of Muslim Clerics in al Anbar region of the Sunni-dominated western Iraq provinces, told me that they were convinced that the US military invaded and occupied Iraq for the sole purpose of keeping an Islamic revolution from overtaking the country. These mullahs thought that the United States was trying to impose a secular government because it was the enemy of Islam. What was striking to me about this comparison is that they were equating the two, and they perceived that a secular state was in competition with what we regard as only a religion. They disliked Saddam Hussein's Baath party socialism because it was secular and thought that the American occupation was trying to replace Saddam's inept secular rule with a more potent American secular rule because the United States saw Saddam as vulnerable to an Islamic revolt. Interestingly, some of those Sunni Muslim leaders now support ISIS in their area of Western Iraq, so they now have the Islamic revolution that they once wanted, though perhaps not in the form that they might have desired.

These religious activists see secularism as part of a global contest between the West and traditional religious societies. It is a vision of global politics not unlike that presented by the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996). Huntington viewed European and American civilization as under siege, a notion later adopted by the neoconservative policy makers in the post-9/11 government of US President George W. Bush, many of whom, in turn, had been influenced by the ideas of the University of Chicago philosopher Leo Strauss. Secularism, in this frame of reference, was part of Western civilization, so it was understandable that it would be rejected and challenged by the religion-based cultures of hostile civilizations, and primarily Islam. Though this thesis was widely rejected by most scholars in the academic community, it was a major theme during the Bush (p. 82) administration and widely accepted in conservative political circles in the West for many years thereafter, contributing to the Islamophobia of European and American societies.

Part of the reason religious convictions are marshalled in response to secularism and secular-based institutions is the perception that secularism is not a neutral matter due to its religious character. This is implicit in Huntington's (1996) clash of civilizations thesis that combines Western Christianity and secularism, and it explains why many non-Western critics often regard secularism as a religious project. Benedict Anderson, observing the ease with which such secular ideologies are able to justify mass killings, from Hitler's National Socialism to Pol Pot's Cambodian Socialism, finds a strong affinity between "nationalist imagining" and "religious imagining." The rise of secular nationalism in world histo-

ry, as he recounts, has been an extension of “the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being” (1983: 18). Secular nationalism often evokes an almost religious response, and it frequently appears as a kind of “cultural nationalism” in the way that Howard Wriggins once described Sinhalese national sentiments (1960: 169). It not only encompasses the shared cultural values of people within existing, or potentially existing, national boundaries but also evokes a cultural response of its own.

Even in the United States, secularism is often regarded in conservative religious communities as being suspect. Among American religious extremists, secularism is regarded not so much as an agent of Western imperialism but the forebear of a new kind of global imperialism, one fashioned by what is often called “the new world order.” This new transnational power is one that American secular politicians, particularly those on the left, have willingly supported. It is also one that promotes multiculturalism as a device allegedly for undermining the strength and purity of traditional religious societies.

This conspiracy theory about the role of secularism and multiculturalism in promoting the new world order has been a part of the reasoning of some of the most savage acts of Christian terrorism in recent years. The bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal building by Timothy McVeigh in 1995 and the attack on the Norwegian youth camp by Andres Breivik in 2011 were conducted for remarkably similar reasons: a perception that their Christian nations were under attack by secular notions of multiculturalism. The title of Breivik’s manifesto is *2083*, a date that Breivik thinks will be the culmination of his actions and the anniversary of the year 1683, when at the Battle of Vienna the Ottoman Empire military was defeated in a protracted struggle, thereby ensuring that most of Europe would not become part of the Muslim empire. In Breivik’s mind he was recreating the historic efforts to save Europe from what he imagined to be the evils of Islamic civilization.

Timothy McVeigh was not a writer; he copied and quoted from his favorite book, the novel *The Turner Diaries* written by neo-Nazi William Pierce under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald. The novel McVeigh loved explains his motives in a manner eerily similar to the writings of Breivik in his book, *2083*. McVeigh, like Breivik, thought that liberal politicians had given in to the forces of secular multiculturalism and that the “mudpeople” who were nonwhite, non-Christian, nonheterosexual, nonpatriarchal males were trying to take over the country. To save the country for Christendom, the righteous white, straight, nonfeminist Christian males had to be shocked into reality by the force of an explosion that would signal to them that the war had begun. These were McVeigh’s ideas from *The Turner Diaries*, but they were also Breivik’s. Thus, in a curious way, the trope of global domination excites fears among some extreme religious conservatives in the West as well as in regions of the former Western colonies.

# (p. 83) Conclusion: The Imagined War

The discussion of the Christian terrorists Timothy McVeigh and Anders Breivik bring us back to the issue of violence in the imagined confrontation between secularism and religion. These are instances when the imagined war becomes a real war, at least in the implementation of violent acts meant to assault the public consciousness and evoke images of warfare that the perpetrators think are emblematic of real struggles in the world. The similarity that Benedict Anderson describes between secular and religious imaginings supports the idea that many present-day religious activists have asserted: that religion can provide a justification for the power, based on violence, at the foundation of modern politics. If secularism, as an imagined concept of social order, is capable of providing the ideological legitimacy for modern political communities, this same legitimizing function may be extended to secularism's twin concept, the idea of religion. The religious activists of today are unwittingly modern, therefore, because they accept the same Enlightenment notion that there is a fundamental distinction between secular and religious realms. Religious activists think they are simply reclaiming the political power of the state in the name of religion. It might be a workable arrangement in a premodern world where religious sensibilities are intertwined with a broad sense of moral order, and where a religion-based polity could embrace a varied and pluralistic society. Alas, in the twenty-first century this notion of religion is increasingly outdated.

The irony is therefore that the conception of religion increasingly accepted around the world is in line with the Enlightenment notion that religion is only a matter of particular sets of doctrines limited to particular confessional communities. It is this narrow, fundamentalist notion of religion that now asserts itself with political power from ISIS to the militant Christian right. The Frankenstein of religion created in the Enlightenment imagination has risen up to claim the Enlightenment's proudest achievement, the nation-state. The tragedy is that the challenge to the secular order that emerges from this kind of religious nationalism shakes the foundations of political power in ways that are often strident and violent.

## Bibliography

Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

(p. 84) Balmer, R. 1989. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bellah, R. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 96(1), 1–22.

Calhoun, C., Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.). 2011. *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Capps, W. 1990. *The New Religious Right: Piety, Patriotism, and Politics*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.

Cassirer, E. 1955. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Cavanaugh, W. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cox, R. (ed.). 1969. *Ideology, Politics, and Political Theory*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.

de Tocqueville, A. 1955. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Translated by S. Gilbert. New York: Doubleday.

Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press.

Habermas, J. 1975. *Legitimation Crisis.* Translated by T. McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.

Holyoake, G. 1896. *The Origin and Nature of Secularism*. London: Watts.

Huntington, S. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

James, W. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Repr. New York: Penguin, 1982.

Jerryson, M. 2011. *Buddhist Fury: Religion and Violence in Southern Thailand.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Juergensmeyer, M. 2003. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Juergensmeyer, M. 2008. *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Juergensmeyer, M., Dinah Griego, and John Soboslai. 2015. *God in the Tumult of the Global Square: Religion in Global Civil Society.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lawrence, B. 1989. *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*. New York: Harper & Row.

McManners, J. 1969. *The French Revolution and the Church*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Murphy, A. (ed.). 2011. *The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Nehru, J. 1980. *The Discovery of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Omer, A., R. Appleby, and D. Little (eds.). 2015. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sarkisyanz, E. 1965. *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Smith, D. (ed.). 1965. *Religion and Politics in Burma*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Smith, D. (ed.). 1971. *Religion, Politics, and Social Change in the Third World: A Sourcebook*. New York: Free Press.

Smith, W. 1963. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: Macmillan.

Tambiah, S. 1976. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wriggins, W. 1960. *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) Author’s interview with Mahmud Abouhalima at Lompoc Federal Penitentiary in California, 19 August 1997.

(2.) See, for example, the books in The Fundamentalism Project edited by Martin Marty and Scott Appelby and published by the University of Chicago Press.

(3.) Author’s interview with Rev. Michael Bray in Bowie, Maryland, 20 March 1998.

**Mark Juergensmeyer**

Mark Juergensmeyer, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

# Political Secularism

Jacques Berlinerblau

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society, Religion and Politics
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.6

## Abstract and Keywords

The term “secularism” stands as one of the most multivalent phrases in the contemporary global political lexicon. Mutually irreconcilable definitions of the term exist side by side in popular, journalistic, and even scholarly discourse. In an effort to reduce the confusion, this chapter suggests that the term “political secularism” be employed in contradistinction to “secularity,” “secular humanism,” or usages that equate secularism with atheism. It is argued that the fundamental principles that undergird political secularism have a lengthy and complex genealogy in Christian political philosophy, be it of the Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, or Reformation periods. These ideational taproots inform and tincture the modern political concept of secularism in a variety of intriguing ways. They have also resulted in contemporary political secular projects that are at once divergent from one another, in flux, and constantly evolving.

Keywords: political secularism, atheism, Marsilius of Padua, Martin Luther, John Locke, separation of church and state, secular humanism

THROUGHOUT its clangorous history the term “secularism” has been understood to mean many different things. The term came into broad usage in 1851 when George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) suffixed an “-ism” onto an ancient stem.[1] Elaborating upon his neologism in *The Principles of Secularism* (1871), the British freethinker defined it as “making the service of others a duty of life” (11), positivism (11), utilitarianism (11), naturalism (33), materialism (11, 33), free thought (9, 10, 38), and sincerity (12, 31), to name but a few. Multivalent at birth, secularism has bloomed into an unruly concept. Nowadays, consensus about its meaning evades scholars, politicians, and laypersons alike.

Atheism was not among the definitions enumerated. As far as Holyoake was concerned, nonbelief “may be a personal tenet, but it cannot be a Secularist tenet, from which it is wholly disconnected” (1871: 11; 1896a: 61, 60). This exclusion exasperated many of his fellow Victorian Infidels. “I hold,” thundered Holyoake’s rival, Charles Bradlaugh, “that the logical consequence of Secularism is the denial, the absolute denial of a Providence” (Holyoake and Bradlaugh 1870: 29).

The subject of secularism brims with ambiguities, ironies, paradoxes, and peculiarities. What is peculiar about Bradlaugh's definition and Holyoake's definitions is this: few of their ideas had much in common with the 1,500 years of running speculation about the secular that preceded them. Since the final frame of Antiquity, the concept of the secular usually figured in *political* discussions rooted in Christian theology and the vicissitudes of western European history. It was only after 1851 that matters secular became correlated with the *ethical* concerns that engrossed Holyoake (e.g., "justifying morality by considerations which pertain to this life alone"; 1896b: 50) or the stout atheism and antitheism of Bradlaugh.[2]

We use the term "political secularism" (also see Bhargava 1994, 1998, 2006). It signals our desire to chart the genealogy of secularism through, and then beyond, its Christian, pre-Holyoakeian, heritage. Ideally, this will help distinguish our approach from those that equate secularism with atheism, "secularity" (Taylor 2007), "secularization," or "secular humanism."[3] There are, naturally, elective affinities and imbrications between these and political secularism. Yet political secularism occupies a distinct conceptual space and deserves its own specialized inquiry. As Emmet Kennedy observes, there is "no general history of secularism that reaches back to the origins of Western civilization and forward to our time" (2006: 9; also see Molnar 1984) or even its development in America (Berlinerblau 2013). This (p. 86) dearth of historical scholarship has led to widespread errors. Many depict secularism as an antireligious project, originating in the Enlightenment and achieving a sinister hegemony in Modernity.

We see it quite differently. Built upon a vague clue in the New Testament and a refinement by Augustine in Late Antiquity, political secularism has absorbed ideas from Medieval, Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment thought. Old as it might be, political secularism is an evolving and mostly unrealized philosophy about governance, one that is far less coherent, tested, and pervasive than its countless critics allege.

# The Binary

The necessary, but not sufficient, condition for political secularism is the real or perceived existence of a twofold division within the structure of a social body. This binary has been designated by various formulae, such as "papacy and emperor," "cross and crown," "*Sacerdotium* and *Regnum*," "spiritual rule and temporal rule," "ecclesiastical and civil authority," "church and state," "religion and government," among others. We are not asserting that wherever this dualism is identified there is secularism. Our claim is that political secularism is difficult to conceptualize outside of this framework—a framework that gives rise to antisecular formulations as well.

These pairs, with their various Latin and sacerdotal inflections, draw attention to a well-known fact: secularism's history is inextricably bound with that of Western Christendom (Taylor 1998: 31; Seligman 2009: 95). No other religion posited this division as early in its own history and as explicitly. Intellectuals in no other tradition were as captivated by the

dilemma of how these two structural levels should properly interact. And no other faith spilled so much ink and blood in its quest for the answer.

This binary is first intimated in the New Testament's sparse and ambiguous reflections on politics (Morris 1967: 173). Consider the famous passage in Matthew 22:21 (and Mark 12:17) about "rendering unto Caesar." The verse affords many "possibilities of meaning" (Berlinerblau 2005: 48–50) but has been plausibly interpreted as saying that certain prerogatives, such as taxation, belong to the ruler. A Christian submits to governance insofar as he or she is an obedient subject who accepts "the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors" (1 Peter 2:13–14, also see Romans 13:1–3; 1 Timothy 2:1).

The verse's hermeneutic charm, however, lies in its tacit lack of enthusiasm for the very leaders whose dictates it urges Christians to obey. One submits to political authority, albeit dispassionately. Max Weber observed that for Christians politics is "an inevitable concession to the sinfulness of the world; the believer should resign himself to political power, but he should avoid contact with it as much as possible" (1978: 1163). The entire history of secularism is tinctured by this ambivalence, this affirmation that one can be "in," but not "of," the world (John 18:36; 1 John 2:15).

The willingness of Christ's followers to submit to Caesar is a function of the belief that this world was "doomed to pass away in their own lifetime" (Morris 1967: 177). Given that The End was near, fealty to a king—even an unjust king—was but a minor inconvenience. The (p. 87) anticipated end of times, however, did not arrive. Early Christians thus found themselves rather marooned "in" this world. Their intellectuals were forced to pose questions about this transient secular domain. Ought a Christian engage in politics? Contest tyrannical political power? *Be* the political power?

These are difficult questions for adherents of any faith to answer. Christian thinkers had the added burden of straining their responses through the aforementioned dualistic framework. Within early Christian thought we discern what T. N. Madan labels "two domains of action" (2009:7). The first is the present sinful, doomed, and temporary world through which we all pass. The second is the anticipated next world, endowed with "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

In the aftermath of Constantine's conversion to Christianity (312 CE), the problematic acquired a new dimension (Morris 1967: 191; Tierney 1987: 167). It suddenly seemed "that Caesar could do something for the Church as well as for the world, that the *Saeculum* of Rome might have some connection with the Kingdom of God and not necessarily that of Antichrist" (Morris 1967: 205). This raised a quandary for intellectuals in Late Antiquity: How could a once powerless faith so focused on the next world make sense of its newfound power in the here and now (Tellenbach 1991: 31)?

The master theorist of this dilemma is Saint Augustine. Robert Markus refers to him as "the principal Christian thinker to defend a place for the secular within a religious, Christian interpretation of the world and of history" (2006: 10, also see Brown 1965; Kennedy 2006). The Bishop of Hippo grounds, as it were, the aforementioned binary on earthly soil. For right here in the *Saeculum* there exist two cities "created by two kinds of love" (*Concerning the City of God*, Book XIV 28: 593). The Earthly City evinces "self-love reaching the point of contempt for God" (593). Its opposite, "the Heavenly City" is characterized by "the love of God carried as far as contempt of self" (593). The former, naturally, was "doomed to undergo eternal punishment" (Book XV 1: 595).

Yet Augustine begrudgingly acknowledged that the earthly city had some redeeming features: "both cities alike enjoy the good things, or are afflicted with the adversities of this temporal state, but with a different faith, a different expectation, a different love, until they are separated by the final judgment" (Book XVIII 54: 842). The inferior city, in spite of its fallen and doomed nature (Markus 2006: 58), "aims at an earthly peace, and it limits the harmonious agreement of citizens concerning the giving and obeying of orders to the establishment of a kind of compromise between human wills about the things relevant to mortal life" (Book XIX 17: 877). The heavenly city "makes use of the earthly peace and defends and seeks the compromise between human wills in respect of the provisions relevant to the mortal nature of man" (878).

In his own withholding manner, Augustine sanctifies the political sphere as legitimate and endowed, temporarily, with value (Markus 2006: 45; Tellenbach 1991: 30). Augustine's lengthy and sometimes convoluted (Morris 1967: 224) reflections about the *Saeculum* need not detain us. What is important for our purposes is the rich dualism he bequeathed to posterity.

An important reworking of this dualism appears in the late fifth century. Pope Gelasius, in a letter to emperor Anastasius I, conceptualized Augustine's binary in ways that greatly influenced subsequent discussions in the Middle Ages (Tellenbach 1991: 33). For Gelasius there existed two authorities. These "comprised a duality, divinely ordained to govern the (p. 88) world side by side" (Robinson 1988: 289). Yet Gelasius would tilt the balance of power to the spiritual arm:

> There are two things, most august emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled: the sacred authority of the priesthood and the royal power. Of these two, the priests carry the greater weight, because they will have to render account in the divine judgment even for the kings of men.
>
> (quoted in Tellenbach 1991: 33)

We refer to this as an antisecular or hierocratic formulation (see Weber 1978: 1159–1160). It would soon be coupled with an aggressive papal ideology of *plenitudo potestatis*, or the idea that all power belonged to the pope (Black 1992: 50; Robinson 1988: 252).[4] Historians of the Middle Ages encounter no shortage of church authorities who affirm pa-

pal supremacy vis-à-vis the temporal authorities.[5] This hierocratic interpretation of the binary would soon trigger a secularizing backlash.

# Proto-Political Secularism

Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, opponents of the papacy reversed the hierocratic formula. Sometimes these proto-secularists spoke of the spiritual and secular arms as being equal in all matters but *not* in the realm of politics and statecraft. Here the temporal sword was, to varying degrees, autonomous and in charge. This sort of "equality" had the practical effect of subordinating the *Sacerdotium* to the *Regnum*. For others, the ecclesiastical authorities were categorically subservient to those worldly powers entrusted with governing a Christian society.

The "investiture conflict" of 1076–1122 presages forthcoming anti-hierocratic readings of the binary. This refers to a series of complicated international tussles between the papacy and the German Empire (Lerner 1985: 498–499; Hicks 1973). The most famous occurred between Gregory VII (1073–1085) and Henry IV (1056–1106)—a showdown decades in the making that convulsed western Europe. Pope Gregory was adamant that the spiritual arm should reign supreme. After deposing Henry and eliciting a humbling apology from him at Canossa (1077), the pontiff trumpeted the old hierocratic verities (Morrall 1958: 31).

Lest there be any ambiguity about Gregory's position, we should recall that he composed a letter titled "Against those who stupidly affirm that the Emperor can not be excommunicated by the Roman Pontiff" (Ehler and Morrall 1954: 29). The missive proclaims that Jesus "despised a secular kingship, with which the sons of this world are so puffed up" (33; also see 43–44).

Henry would eventually regroup and vanquish his papal foe. Those "high Gregorian claims of dominance over the secular power" (Healy 2006: 1403) were overcome, if only momentarily. Opinions differ as to the long-term impact of the investiture conflict and the Gregorian Reformation. Some see it as an assertion of papal power (Lerner 1985: 500; Hicks 1973). For others, it inaugurated "a new, grasping, penetrating, secularist spirit [that] came to dominate European political life" (Cantor 1960: 67, also see Fregosi 1989: 20; Watt 1988: 372).

That (proto-)secularist spirit resurfaces in the early fourteenth century, stimulated in part by the secularizing influence of Aristotelian philosophy (Renna 1978). Proto-secular themes are articulated in the work of the Dominican Jean Quidort (d. 1306). John of Paris, as he (p. 89) was known, lived in a contentious age where increasingly strident claims about the supremacy of either sword were routinely made. John was trying to achieve *une position moyenne* as regards competing assertions of superiority (Leclercq 1942: 162). He conceived of the two domains as a unity needing to collaborate for the greater good of a Christian society (Coleman 1985: 80).

Secular sympathies, however, can be detected in John's reasoned defense of the king's legitimacy (Renna 1978: 320). For him, royal power did not "come from the pope but from God and the people who choose a king" (John of Paris 1971: 124; Tierney 1987: 169). "There is nothing in Scripture," he observes, "to say that the pope has both swords" (John of Paris 1971: 219). In so doing, John endowed the "separation between the two powers [with] a metaphysical basis" (Black 1992: 54). Another work of the period, *Rex pacificus* (sometimes attributed to John), is "one of the first systematic attempts to free the secular power from tutelage and bondage" (Ullmann 1946: 201).[6]

Better-known figures such as William of Ockham (1288–1347) and Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275–1342) also articulated core elements of proto-political secularism (Molnar 1984: 44). Both assiduously contested hierocratic approaches. Thus William, "the sworn enemy of three popes" (McGrade 1974: 230), endeavored to create a theoretical justification for limiting papal power (Kilcullen 1999: 311).

Ockhamite political philosophy laid the groundwork to give "secular power a basis outside the church" (McGrade 1974: 96). "Just as spiritual matters are controlled by priests and ecclesiastics," commented Ockham, "so are temporal matters by secular rulers and laymen, as blessed Peter testifies" (1995: *A Dialogue*, Part III, Tract 2, Book I: 239; Black 1992: 74). Ockham warned against a pope "putting his sickle in another's harvest," an allusion to meddling in temporal affairs (1998: ch. 2: 78). The proper domain of papal action, he averred, "extends only to those things which are necessary for the salvation of souls" (ch. 7: 90, 98). It was the sheer immensity of papal power that concerned William. Roman pontiffs, he alleged, "have overstepped the ancient bounds and stretched out unholy hands for what belongs to others" (ch. 1: 74). Christ, he insisted, "assigned certain limits to … [the pope's] power" (ch. 1: 75).

Marsilius of Padua opens (and closes) his *Defensor Pacis* by emphasizing a theme not seen as frequently in Ockham's work: order (though see Ockham 1998: ch. 7: 89). "The benefits and fruits of the tranquility or peace of civil regimes," are for Marsilius, "the greatest good of man" (1980: Discourse 1, ch. I: 3). The opposite of this orderly state is "strife" and "unbearable evil[s]" (5). It is "the perverted desire for rulership" of the Roman bishops, which "produces the intranquility or discord of the city or state" (Discourse 1, ch. XIX: 95).

Marsilius thus equates unchecked religious rule with societal chaos—a crucial equation that is a central, albeit widely unrecognized, rudiment of the secular worldview (Berlinerblau 2012). Peace and tranquility, Marsilius cautions, can only be achieved when the spiritual arm is subordinated to the temporal authority (Discourse 2, ch. IV: 116).

For Marsilius, the right of maintaining order belongs to the secular ruler, not the Roman bishop. (Dicourse II, ch. III, 15: 112). As for the Pope, or what Marsilius caustically labels "the Roman Bishop called 'Pope,'" he has "no coercive jurisdiction over the property or person of any priest or bishop … and still less over any secular ruler or government, community, group, or individual" (Dicourse II, ch. I, 4: 100). Marsilius's objective was to justi-

fy “the destruction of the papacy’s pretension to *plenitudo potestatis*” (Canning 2006: 218).

As we decamp from the premodern period, a few observations are in order. Medieval conflicts, although pitched in terms of a simple binary, were exceedingly complex. For every (p. 90) hierocratic pope there could be a bishop siding with the local secular strongman. Kings, for their part, were not beyond referring to themselves as God-like or Christ-like (Kantorowicz 1957: 42–61, 87–97). Nor should we forget the hovering presence of emperors who often triangulated cross–crown conflicts in bewilderingly complicated ways. Further, each prong of our dualism was itself less homogenous than might be imagined. Many of these conflicts between the spiritual and temporal arms were actually “a series of civil wars within each of these two branches” (Morrall 1958: 35).

The binary that lies at secularism’s core *always* oversimplifies matters. Reality is much more complicated than can be encapsulated by reductive phrases like “spiritual and secular authorities.” Yet, *subjectively*, this binary is the prism through which situated actors think about politics. Any student of political secularism must be aware of the discrepancy between the category of, say, church and state, and the richer, messier circumstances of real life.

It must also be stressed that the proto-secularists just mentioned, like their ecclesiastical adversaries, were pious Christians. Ockham, for example, was a Franciscan monk whose “ultimate motive was religious” (McGrade 1974: 85). He and others were not protesting Christianity but rule by priests and popes. Worried of being too “in” the world, they created a theoretical space for a *religiously sanctified* rejection of church rule.

# The Early Modern Period: The Hub

“We have learnt,” wrote Martin Luther (1483–1546), “that there must be secular authority on this earth, and how a Christian and salutary use may be made of it” (2008: 22). With this counsel in 1523 the University of Wittenberg biblicist would trigger, somewhat inadvertently, proto-secularism’s most sustained growth spurt. An Augustinian monk himself, Luther theorized within the logic of our medieval binary. His reading of the dualism, however, was shot through with his radical individualism, his odd fealty to state power, and his boundless abhorrence of “popes and Romanists” (Luther 1974b: 39).

If we were to conceive of the history of secular speculation in Early Modernity as a sprawling rail network, then Luther’s *oeuvre* would be its historic Central Station (Gothic in style, thus reflecting its medieval influences). Its intellectual tracks would branch out in every imaginable direction. A scenic, and tragic, side route would lead to Anabaptist views on church and state. Some lines would flow through a switchback and trundle to perfect dead ends, such as John Calvin’s (2008) regressive theocratic reading of the secular. A cluster of arteries would feed to figures such as Thomas Erastus (1524–1583), Sa-

muel von Pufendorf (1634–1694), and William Penn (1644–1718) and events like the Treaty of Westphalia (1649). Researchers have yet to explore many of these connections.

Then there is the high-speed thought corridor, spanning from Luther to John Locke. The latter's 1689 *A Letter Concerning Toleration* is a hub in its own right—perhaps the starting point of modern political secularism. From there, another line accelerates forward to James Madison and Thomas Jefferson's thought. It is in Early Modernity, then, that political secularism comes around the bend and into plain sight.

Here, we see seven interrelated core secular ideas emerge, all but two of which are rooted in Luther's thought. We refer to these as (1) order, (2) freedom of conscience, (3) the belief/ (p. 91) acts dichotomy, and, (4) statism. The latter then divides into two discreet concepts. The first, following Ockham and Marsilius, stipulates that (5) the secular arm is supreme over the spiritual authority. With this Luther was in accord. The second is that (6) the state must be completely autonomous from any particularistic understanding of God. With this Luther most likely did not concur. Nor would he have fully assented to the principle of (7) the equality of all citizens. Only John Locke would intimate the last two advances and point forward to America's constitutional experiment.

A proper Christian polity for Luther—as for Marsilius—must be orderly and peaceful. This is best accomplished through the integrated operation of the two Swords (2008: 10–11). The temporal sword is "ordained of God" and its jurisdiction is the "whole body of Christendom without restriction … whether it affects pope, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, or anyone else" (1974b: 42). The superior temporal arm is entrusted with the crucial mission of holding in check the majority of citizens who are not in Luther's estimation "true Christians" (2008: 9).

This last point comprises a major difference between Luther and Locke. One of Luther's gloomiest obsessions concerns the sparseness of righteous people. "All the world is evil," sighs Luther, "scarcely one human being in a thousand is a true Christian" (10). If the temporal power were not to perform its order-maintaining duties, "People would devour each other and no one would be able to … serve God" (10). Not all citizens are created equal. The secular government's job is to hold "the Unchristian and wicked in check and [to force] them to keep the peace outwardly" (11).

The spiritual arm is tasked with "fashion[ing] true Christians and just persons through the Holy Spirit under Christ" (11). This division of labor corresponds with the dualism tracked earlier. Yet now Luther's distinct theology comes into play. Since medieval times the spiritual arm had been reckoned as the papacy and its appendages. Insofar as Luther believes that this institution "can never make a man into a Christian," he vitiates its function within the binary (Luther 1974b: 40). Luther, perhaps unintentionally, subordinates and collapses the spiritual authority *into* the temporal administration. This Reformation assault on papal legitimacy effectively granted tremendous, potentially absolutist, authority to the "national state" (Collins 1992: 175).

Colossal as Luther's national state might be, he does posit one major restriction on its privileges. "No one," declaims Luther, "can or should lay down commandments for the soul" (2008: 24). The soul is beyond the coercive control of *both* swords. Neither emperors nor priests can trespass upon this domain. Nonetheless, this leaves the temporal authority commanding the heights. Coercive state power—the power to tax, to punish, to wage war—is immense power.

States do not only control the apparatus of coercion. As Antonio Gramsci argued, states monopolize the ability to influence thought through mechanisms of *consent* as well (1987: 275; 80 fn. 49). Luther vehemently opposed this hegemonic impulse to change hearts and minds. He placed great emphasis on the psychic sovereignty of the individual. In the realm of faith no coercion of conscience is permitted, even to correct heresy. "Thought," he insisted, "is free" (2008: 26). However, Luther's actual practice with heretics, as is well known from his dealings with Anabaptists, differed from his theory (1974a: 85–88).

This emphasis on the inviolability of conscience courses throughout secular history. It is an axiom of political secularism *that state power has limits*. The idea resurfaces a century later in the writings of Roger Williams. The cantankerous Baptist intellectual fumed that it was "against the testimony of Christ Jesus for the civil state to impose upon the souls of the (p. 92) people a religion, a worship, a ministry" (2008: 257; also see Nussbaum 2008: 42). Samuel von Pufendorf in 1672 similarly averred that it is not "appropriate for a magistrate to apply force in enjoining a religion upon men" (1994: 74; also see Miller 2008). Madison held that "the religion of … every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man" (2004: 61).

A subject can think absolutely anything about God that he or she wants. But can a subject *do* anything he or she wants in living out those beliefs? "No," answers unreconstructed secularism. This belief/acts dichotomy, as it is called, is a central and controversial component of political secularism. While the latter grants almost unprecedented freedom of thought, it would not accord the same leeway to action. In secular theory there is no absolute right to act on one's religious beliefs.

This point emerged in the seventeenth century as events conspired to mesh secularism's order principle with its heavy statism. The post-Reformation era witnessed the proliferation of religious sects, as well as the violence and social disruption that attended to their enmity (Maclure and Taylor 2011: 22). The period's debilitating religious conflicts led secularists to conclude that the spiritual arm(s) needed to be monitored by its superior, the temporal authority. This is not new. That opinion was already being intimated during the investiture conflict. Yet another idea began to take hold, namely that the temporal authority—now emerging as the state—must itself be free of sectarian taint.

This *is* new. In the Augustinian tradition, of which Luther was an adept, "the state exists precisely in order to maintain specific values, to preserve the true ends and loves dictated by the Christian religion" (Brown 1965: 16). We suggest that the transition to full-blown political secularism occurs when theorists disarticulate the state from the values, true ends, and loves of the Christian religion. No thinker erects a better platform for this

logic than Locke. Luther spoke of “true Christians.” For Locke there is, politically speaking, no such thing. In fact, he rejects the impulse to fancy oneself a “true Christian.” God, for Locke, is unknowable; arguments about his designs are pointless (Kateb 2009: 1009). “Every one is Orthodox to himself,” he famously declared (1993: 23). Were the state to be seized by those who wish to extend their personal “orthodoxy” to others—Locke and Europe had some horrific memories here—all chaos would ensue.

Locke’s move to divest the ruling apparatus of fealty to any *particular* (Protestant) conception of God is the catalyst of modern political secularism. This does not necessarily mean that Locke’s secular state is atheistic. Rather, it *perceives* itself to be autonomous from any “one confession” (Hurd 2008: 41) and is thus wary of aligning itself with one specific (Protestant) church.

In secular thought the state is incalculably, frightfully powerful. Locke, as with Ockham, Marsilius, and Luther, subordinates ecclesiastical to civil authority. To the state alone belongs the prerogative of force (Locke 1993: 30), and all religious groups are subject to it. Critics, understandably, see in all of this the germ of statolatry.

Yet a few provisos about the ideal-typical secular state need be noted. First, it permits total freedom of thought—even an idolatrous church must be tolerated (Locke 1993: 42, 27). Second, it circumscribes its own power. Its authority is constrained to *unlawful* acts committed by religious actors. Third, the idea of a nonsectarian state is a boon to religious minorities who would otherwise be ruled by the religious majority. Finally, the ambition of the secular state is *a peace that ensures religious freedom for as many citizens as possible*; without order, as the war-torn seventeenth-century showed, no one gets to God.

## (p. 93) Modernity: The Illusion of Autonomy

In the 1864 *Syllabus of Errors*, Pope Pius IX condemned “most of the trends in the world since the Enlightenment” (Bailey 1974: 14). The document deemed false the proposition that “the ecclesiastical power should not exercise its authority without permission and assent of the civil government” (Maclear 1995: 164). It contested the notion that “the Church has no power of employing force” (164). Putting a fine point on it, *The Syllabus* lambasted the conceit that “the abrogation of that civil power which the Apostolic See possesses would conduce in the highest degree to the Church’s liberty and felicity” (167).

The Vatican, however, was heading directly into a ferocious secularizing squall. Since the Late Middle Ages, secular-minded lights had advocated for the subordination of the spiritual sword. Locke went further, hinting at the possibility of state autonomy from all sectaries. The French Revolution and the American Constitutional Convention had, each in its own imperfect way, test-run these premises. As the era of the nation-state progressed, the demand for state supremacy over, and autonomy from, religious authorities had made landfall. It was to the state that *plenitudo potestatis* now belonged.

There soon emerged a potpourri of "political secularisms." The term could describe both the capitalist United States and the "SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC" of India (Constitution of India 2011: Preamble; also see Rao 2006). France's sturdy model of *laïcité* can be considered secular (Gunn 2004), as could the deposed Kemalist *laiklik* of Turkey (Kuru 2009: 161–235) and Mexico, where liberalizing groups endeavored to pry the Catholic Church apart from the state during the period of 1857 to 1917 (Roman 1978; Bailey 1974: 3–26).

Nascent Pakistan momentarily flirted with secular principles in 1947 (Ahmed 2010). Nearby Bangladesh had a secular constitution from 1971 to 1988 (Tan 2010: 137). Various contemporary African nations are constitutionally secular, though very little scholarly literature has addressed this subject.[7] Rounding off this list of mostly unsuccessful or unfulfilled twentieth-century political secularisms, there is the "militant godlessness" of the defunct Soviet Union and its successor states (Peris 1998).

Often overlooked in secular theorizing are nonstate actors—organized groups within civil society who want their government to be secular, more secular, or secular in different ways. In 1872 the American Secular Union advocated for the "Nine Planks of Liberalism" (Cooke 2007; Wenger 2010). Its first plank called for "total separation of church and state" (Putnam 1894: 527). At roughly the same time, xenophobic, anti-Catholic secular activists were also lobbying for this issue (Hamburger 2002: 193–251). In today's France, a party unambiguously named *La droite forte* makes its case for *laïcité* by celebrating France's Judeo-Christian and Graeco-Latin roots.[8]

Political secularisms can be liberal or conservative, beastly or benign, religion-friendly or antitheistic, tolerant or repressive, dysfunctional or functional, real or imagined—or something in between. No two political secularisms are alike. No one political secularism remains unchanged across time. Critics often underestimate this diversity, assuming that one, "pure" form exists (see Maclure and Taylor 2011: 53).

Yet secularisms are not so diverse that they defy description, as some postcolonial researchers have alleged (Berlinerblau 2014). All secularisms posit the supremacy of the (p. 94) state. All insist upon their right to make legally binding decisions about religion. All do so because, following Marsilius and Locke, they construe religion's interaction with the government as potentially disorderly.

Some figures, such as James Madison, feared the damage that church–state entanglement may inflict upon society (1973: 311; 2004: 65). Given secularism's theological heritage, especially the influence of Luther and Williams, we should not be surprised that others have bemoaned the dangers this interaction presents to *religion*. The religiously based aversion to church–state entanglement—from the faithful in the majority or the minority—gains secularism many adherents.

Fear of entanglement compels all secularisms to pose the same question: How ought the state interact with the religious citizens and groups that it governs? Nearly all respond by speaking of the state's *autonomy* vis-à-vis religion/religions. Here, secular theory has un-

derperformed. “Autonomy” is a theoretical crux that secularism’s critics have thought about far more seriously than its advocates (see Hurd 2008: 37; Khair 2013). Political secularisms have rarely conceptualized the state’s relation to religion(s) accurately.

Separation of church and state is *one* imperfect, secular strategy for achieving autonomy from religion. Unfortunately, separationism has often become a virtual synonym for secularism itself. “Separation,” though, is a misnomer. The statist quality of secular thought *always* implies an asymmetric relation of power. It is more accurate to speak of “separation of the subordinate church and the superordinate state.”

Another difficulty with separation concerns the unlikelihood of completely partitioning government from religion. When Ferdinand Buisson defined *laïcité* in 1887 he maintained that “un Etat laïque” was an “Etat neutre entre tous les cultes, indépendant de tous les clergés, degagé de toute conception théologique.” Was the French state of the 1880s neutral? On the one hand, it had an exceedingly, and often understandably, antagonistic relation to the Church. On the other, Buisson’s France was roughly 98 percent Catholic, saturated in centuries of Catholic cultural mores (Poulat 1956). Could such circumstances yield neutrality? The same could be asked about the United States. It may represent the crowning jewel of political secularism, yet federal offices are still closed on Christmas, not Hanukkah or the Feast of Eid (Bhagwati 2008).

Actually, Separation in America has far less historical and legal precedent than oft alleged. The story of how Thomas Jefferson’s “wall of separation” (2004), posited in 1802, was first constitutionalized by the Warren Court in the *mid-twentieth century* has been told elsewhere (Feldman 2005). We simply stress that separationism is a late-blooming doctrine in America, and maybe a short-lived one at that; jurists contemplate its “lingering death” (Lupu 1994).

We might also wonder if separationism is the panacea it is made out to be. The presence of the phrase “separation of church and state” in a nation’s constitution does not assure secular deliverables (Smith 2005: 182). The Soviet Union provides a spectacular case study of a failed (and imagined) secular/separationist state. Claiming to separate church from state, it periodically tried to obliterate the Orthodox Church, among others, while establishing atheism as a state religion (Froese 2008: 40–71; Husband 1998; Peris 1998). Like all dysfunctional secularisms—one thinks of Baathist Syria—the USSR stressed order and statism to the exclusion of all else. Nor can it be alleged that nonseparationist states always lack secular virtues, as liberal democracies such as Anglican Britain or Finland attest (Smith 2005: 182; Seligman 2009: 93).

The groundbreaking law of 1905, having the formal name of *Loi du 9 décembre 1905 relative à la séparation des Églises et de l’État*, may lead to some to assume that France is separationist. (p. 95) But here again we encounter the illusion of state autonomy. Their secular model is better described as a Caesaro-papist one “where the sovereign intervenes in theological matters” (Roy 2007: 26). “Laïcité is,” writes Olivier Roy, “an obsession with religion, and it leads to the desire to legislate about religion instead of accepting true separation” (33; also see Bauberot 1998: 102). In *laïcité* the state controls reli-

gion (Bowen 2007: 11–33). Then again, *all* secular states control religion. What varies is *how* they exert control and whether they are as committed to the ideals of freedom and equality as they are to maintaining order.

Alongside separationism and *laïcité*, an Indian approach provides a possible third model of political secularism. For Jawaharlal Nehru, a secular state "is a state which honors all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities" (cited in Madan 2005: 311). Amartya Sen describes this arrangement as a "demand for symmetric political treatment of different religious communities" (1998: 484; also see Thapar 2008: 89; Smith 1998: 217; Madan 1998: 300). This model holds that the state is autonomous from any particular religion but not from all of its citizens' diverse religions that the government has an obligation, and interest, in supporting (Bhargava 2010).

We have referred to this elsewhere as "accommodationism" and expressed reservations about its secular status (Berlinerblau 2012). The approach is evident in the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives created by George W. Bush and enlarged by Barack Obama. In a shift away from separationism, the American government now partners with (i.e., accommodates) religious social-service agencies by providing them with federal funding. As with separationism and *laïcité*, the accommodationist state is anything but autonomous from religion. It is, however, troublingly autonomous from nonbelieving citizens, the implicit denigration of their equal standing as citizens being its fatal flaw (also see Beteille 1994: 566).

How then to define political secularism? There is much to recommend in the work of those who posit two opposed types. These have been parsed as "assertive" and "passive" (Kuru 2009), "positive" and "negative" (McClay 2003), "hard" and "soft" (Kosmin 2007), "strong" and "legal" (Feldman 2005). We imagine political secularisms as situated on a spectrum. Their relative positions on that continuum are keyed to how they mix and match the core—and sometimes clashing—secular ideas noted earlier (Bhargava 2008: 42). Different political secularisms emphasize the staples of order, state supremacy, freedom of conscience, equality, as well as others, *differently*. As for autonomy, all secularisms fancy themselves to be in some way apart from religion, but this needs to be strenuously rethought.

The ideal secular government performs a complex negotiation: it must balance a state's need for order with the citizenry's desire for robust freedom of religion (Berlinerblau 2012). A recent and equally valid demand must also be honored by the state: the citizen's right to freedom *from* religion. As secularisms try to adapt to this and other demands, they are confronted by formidable challenges.

We speak of the spectacular ascendance of political religions in the final decades of the twentieth century. Their rise stunted the development of secular forms of governance at precisely the moment that they were maturing, experimenting, refining their thought, and so on. Separationist secularism in America, for example, only became a judicial reality

starting in the 1940s. It encountered its own storm when the Christian Right emerged some thirty years later.

Some now speak of the "postsecular" era (Habermas 2008: 103, 104; 2009; King 2009). Antisecularists proclaim secularism either evil and/or dead (e.g., Nandy 1998; Nandy 2007; De Roover 2002; Keane 2000). These are hasty and harsh verdicts. Although secular (p. 96) political doctrines have been gestating for a millennia and a half, their features have been implemented (unevenly) only in recent decades, in relatively few nations, and often with less scruple than hoped for. To refer to secularism as "one of the most important organizing principles of modern politics" (Hurd 2008: 23) exaggerates its salience. Moreover, it underestimates the relentless, timeless nature of opposition to its existence.

Most countries today are not secular. Citizens in those countries may yearn for the amenities functioning secularisms offer; lack of religious strife, full equality for religious minorities, the guarantee of expressive liberties, freedom of conscience, the elimination of "heresy" as a judicial category, laws pertaining to sexual and reproductive rights independent of religious dogma, and so forth. When they work, political secularisms guarantee essential liberties—liberties that few other attempts to think through the ancient binary have been able to procure.

## Bibliography

Ahmed, I. 2010. "The Pakistan Islamic State Project: A Secular Critique." In *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia,* edited by Michael Heng Siam-Heng and Ten Chin Liew, 185–205. Singapore: World Scientific.

(p. 97) Augustine. 2003. *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. London: Penguin Books.

Bailey, D. 1974. *¡Viva Cristo Rey! The Cristero Rebellion and the Church–State Conflict in Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bauberot, J. 1998. "Two Thresholds of Laïcization." In *Secularism and Its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 94–136. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Berlinerblau, J. 2005. *The Secular Bible: Why Nonbelievers Must Take Religion Seriously*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Berlinerblau, J. 2012. *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Berlinerblau, J. 2013. "Let the Study of American Secularisms Begin!" *Critical Research on Religion* 1(2), 225–232.

Berlinerblau, J. 2014. "Introduction: Secularism and Its Confusions." In *Secularism on the Edge: Church and State in the United States, France and Israel*, edited by Jacques Berlinerblau, Sarah Fainberg, and Aurora Nou, 1–18. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bernard of Clairvaux. 1976. *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*. Translated by J. Anderson and E. Kennan. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications.

Beteille, A. 1994. “Secularism and Intellectuals.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29(10), 559–566.

Bhagwati, J. 2008. “Secularism in India: Why Is It Imperiled?” In *The Future of Secularism*, edited by T. N. Srinivasan, 11–19. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 1994. “Giving Secularism Its Due.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29(28), 1784–1791.

Bhargava, R. 1998. “What Is Secularism For?” In *Secularism and Its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 486–542. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2006. “Political Secularism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory,* edited by John Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips, 636–655. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2008. “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism.” In *The Future of Secularism*, edited by T. N. Srinivasan, 20–35. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2010 “The ‘Secular Ideal’ before Secularism: A Preliminary Sketch.” In *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, edited by Linell E. Cody and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 159–180. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Black, A. 1992. *Political Thought in Europe, 1250–1450*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Blaszak, B. 1988. *George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) and the Development of the British Cooperative Movement*. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press.

Bowen, J. 2007. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Brown, P. 1965. “Saint Augustine.” In *Trends in Medieval Thought*, edited by Beryl Smalley, 1–21. Oxford: Blackwell.

Buisson, F. 1887. “Laïcité.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*. Paris: Hachette, **http://www.inrp.fr/edition-electronique/lodel/dictionnaire-ferdinand-buisson/**.

Calvin, J. 2008. “On Civil Government [*Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Book IV, Chapter 20].” In *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority,* edited by Harro Höpfl, 47–86. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Canning, J. 2006. “Power and Powerlessness in the Political Thought of Marsilius of Padua.” In *The World of Marsilius of Padua*, edited by Gerson Moreno-Riaño, 211–225. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

(p. 98) Cantor, N. 1960. “The Crisis of Western Monasticism, 1050–1130.” *American Historical Review* 66(1), 47–67.

Chadwick, O. 1975. *The Secularisation of the European Mind*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Clairvaux, B. 1976. *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope.* Translated by John Anderson and Elizabeth Kennan. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications.

Cliteur, P. 2010. *The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism*. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Coleman, C. 1971. “The Donation of Constantine.” In *The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine: Text and Translation into English,* 11–19. New York: Russell & Russell.

Coleman, J. 1985. “*Dominium* in Thirteenth and Fourteenth-Century Political Thought and Its Seventeenth-Century Heirs: John of Paris and Locke.” *Political Studies* 33 (1), 73–100.

Collins, R. 1992. “The Rise and Fall of Modernism in Politics and Religion.” *Acta Sociologia* 35(3), 171–186.

Cooke, B. 2007. “American Secular Union.” In *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief,* edited by Tom Flynn, 52–53. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Crimmins, J. 1990. *Religion, Secularization and Political Thought: Thomas Hobbes to J. S. Mill*. London: Routledge.

Ehler, S., and J. Morrall. 1954. *Church and State through the Centuries: A Collection of Historic Documents with Commentaries*. London. Burns and Oates.

Feldman, N. 2005. *Divided by God: America’s Church-State Problem—And What We Should Do About It*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Fregosi, R. 1989. “From the Secular to the Poltico-Religious: Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*.” *Contemporary European Affairs* 4(4), 15–27.

Froese, P. 2008. *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

G.E.E. (as signed). 1853. *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 55(2), 272–273.

Gill, A. 2008. *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Gramsci, A. 1987. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* Edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Grugel, L. 1976. *George Jacob Holyoake: A Study in the Evolution of a Victorian Radical*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Porcupine Press.

Gunn, T. 2004. “Religious Freedom and Laïcité: A Comparison of the United States and France.” *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2004(2), 419–505.

Habermas, J. 2008. “Faith and Knowledge.” In *The Future of Human Nature*, 101–115. Malden, Mass.: Polity Press.

Habermas, J. 2009. “Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the ‘Public Use of Reason’ by Religion and Secular Citizens.” In *Between Naturalism and Religion,* translated by Ciaran Cronin, 114–147. Malden, Mass.: Polity Press.

Hamburger, P. 2002. *Separation of Church and State.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Healy, P. 2006. “A Supposed Letter of Archbishop Lanfranc: Concepts of the Universal Church in the Investiture Contest.” *English Historical Review* 121(494), 1385–1407.

Hicks, S. 1973. “The Investiture Controversy of the Middle Ages, 1075–1122: Agreement and Disagreement among Historians.” *Journal of Church and State* 15, 5–20.

(p. 99) Holyoake, G. 1871. *The Principles of Secularism,* 3rd ed. London: Austin & Co. (Originally published in 1859 as *The Principles of Secularism Briefly Explained*.)

Holyoake, G. 1896a. *English Secularism: A Confession of Belief.* Chicago: Open Court.

Holyoake, G. 1896b. *The Origin and Nature of Secularism*. London: Watts.

Holyoake, G., and C. Bradlaugh. 1870. *Secularism, Scepticism, and Atheism: Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of a Two Nights’ Public Debate between Messrs. G. J. Holyoake and C. Bradlaugh.* London: Austin.

Hurd, E. 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Husband, W. 1998. “Soviet Atheism and Russian Orthodox Strategies of Resistance, 1917–1932.” *Journal of Modern History* 70 (1): 74–107.

Jefferson, T. 2004. “A Wall of Separation.” In *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America’s Founders,* edited by Forrest Church, 124–130. Boston: Beacon Press.

John of Paris. 1971. *On Royal and Papal Power.* Translated by J. A. Watt. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.

John of Paris. 1999. *Quaestio De Potestate papae (Rex Pacificus)/An Enquiry Into the Power of the Pope: A Critical Edition and Translation.* Translated by R. W. Dyson. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press.

Kantorowicz, E. 1957. *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Kateb, G. 2009. "Locke and the Political Origins of Secularism." *Social Research* 76(4), 1001–1034.

Keane, J. 2000. "The Limits of Secularism." In *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East,* edited by John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamimi, 29–37. New York: New York University Press.

Kennedy, E. 2006. *Secularism and Its Opponents from Augustine to Solzhenitsyn*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Khair, T. 2013. "The Truth about Secularism." In *Making Sense of the Secular: Critical Perspectives from Europe to Asia,* edited by Ranjan Ghosh, 101–110. London and New York: Routledge.

Kilcullen, J. 1999. "The Political Writings." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham,* edited by Paul Spade, 302–325. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

King, M. 2009. *Postsecularism: The Hidden Challenge to Extremism.* Cambridge, U.K.: James Clark.

Kosmin, B. 2007. "Contemporary Secularity and Secularism." In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, 1–16. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Kuru, A. 2009. *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Leclercq, J. 1942. *Jean de Paris et L'Ecclésiologie du XIIIe Siècle*. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin.

Lerner, R. 1985. "Investiture and Investiture Conflict." In *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* edited by Joseph Strayer, vol. 6, 498–500. New York: Scribner's.

Locke, J. 1689. *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Edited by James Tulley. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983.

Lupu, Ira. 1994. "The Lingering Death of Separationism." *George Washington Law Review* 62(2), 230–279.

Luther, M. 1972. *Luther's Works,* Vol. 25: *Lectures on Roman, Glosses and Scholia.* Edited by Hilton Oswald. St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia.

(p. 100) Luther, M. 1974a. "The Freedom of a Christian." In *Luther: Selected Political Writings*, edited by J. M. Porter, 25–35. Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press.

Luther, M. 1974b. “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate.” In *Luther: Selected Political Writings.*, edited by J. M. Porter, 37–49. Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press.

Luther, M. 2008. “On Secular Authority: How Far Does the Obedience Owed to It Extend?” In *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority,* edited by Harro Höpfl, 3–43. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Maclear, J. (ed.). 1995. “Syllabus of Errors, 1864.” In *Church and State in the Modern Age: A Documentary History,* 163–167. New York: Oxford University Press.

Maclure, J., and C. Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Madan, T. 1998. “Secularism in Its Place.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 297–315. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Madan, T. 2009. *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, 2nd ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Madison, J. 1973. *The Complete Madison: His Basic Writings*. Edited by Saul Padover. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus.

Madison, J. 2004. “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments.” In *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America’s Founders,* edited by Forrest Church, 56–71. Boston: Beacon Press.

Markus, R. 2006. *Christianity and the Secular*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press.

Marsilius of Padua. 1980. *Defensor Pacis*. Translated by Alan Gewirth. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

McClay, W. 2003. “Two Concepts of Secularism.” In *Religion Returns to the Public Square: Faith and Policy in America,* edited by Hugh Heclo and Wilfred McClay, 31–61. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

McGrade, A. 1974. *The Political Thought of William of Ockham: Personal and Institutional Principles*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, N. 2008. “The Dawn of the Age of Toleration: Samuel Pufendorf and the Road Not Taken.” *Journal of Church and State* 50(2), 255–275.

Molnar, T. 1984. “The Medieval Beginnings of Political Secularization.” In *Essays on Christianity and Political Philosophy*, edited by George Carey and James Schall, 41–54. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

Momo, B. 1999. “La laïcité de l’Ètat dans l’espace camerounais.” *Les Cahiers de Droit* 40(4), 821–847.

Morrall, J. 1958. *Political Thought in Medieval Times*. London: Hutchinson.

Morris, C. 1967. *Western Political Thought,* Vol. 1: *Plato to Augustine*. New York: Basic Books.

Nadler, S. 2011. *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Nandy, A. 1998. "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance." In *Secularism and Its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 321–344. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nandy, A. 2007. "Closing the Debate on Secularism." In *The Crisis of Secularism in India,* edited by Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, 107–117. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Nussbaum, M. 2008. *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality.* New York: Basic Books.

(p. 101) Ockham, W. 1995. *A Letter to the Friars Minor and Other Writings.* Edited by Arthur McGrade and John Kilcullen. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Ockham, W. 1998. *On the Power of Emperors and Popes*. Translated by Annabel Brett. Bristol, U.K.: Thoemmes Press.

Peris, D. 1998. *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Poulat, E. 1956. "Les cultes dans les statistiques officielles en France au XIXè siècle." *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 2, 22–26.

Pufendorf, S. 1994. *The Political Writings of Samuel Pufendorf*. Edited by Craig Carr. Translated by Michael Seidler. New York: Oxford University Press.

Putnam, S. 1894. *400 Years of Freethought.* New York: Truth-Seeker Company.

Rectenwald, M. 2013. "Secularism and the Cultures of Nineteenth-Century Scientific Naturalism." *British Journal for the History of Science* 46(2), 231–254.

Rao, B. 2006. "The Variant Meanings of Secularism in India: Notes toward Conceptual Clarifications." *Journal of Church and State* 48(1), 47–81.

Renna, T. 1978. "Aristotle and the French Monarchy, 1260–1303." In *Viator*, Vol. 9, 309–324. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

Robinson, I. 1988. "Church and Papacy." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450,* edited by J. H. Burns, 252–305. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Roman, R. 1978. “Church–State Relations and the Mexican Constitutional Congress, 1916–1917.” *Journal of Church and State* 20, 73–80.

Roy, O. 2007. *Secularism Confronts Islam.* Translated by George Holoch. New York: Columbia University Press.

Royle, E. 1974. *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791–1866.* Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press.

Royle, E. 1980. *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866–1915*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press.

Roover, J. 2002. “The Vacuity of Secularism: On the Indian Debate and Its Western Origins.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 37(39), 4047–4053.

Saenger, P. 1981. “John of Paris, Principle Author of the *Quaestio de potestate papae (Rex Pacificus).*” *Speculum* 56(1), 41–55.

Seligman, A. 2009. “Secularism, Liberalism, and the Problem of Tolerance.” In *Religion, State, and Society: Jefferson’s Wall of Separation in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Robert Fatton and R. K. Ramazani, 93–108. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sen, A. 1998. “Secularism and Its Discontents.” In *Secularism and Its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 454–458. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Smith, D. 1998. “India as a Secular State.” In *Secularism and Its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 177–233. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tan, K. 2010. “Secularism and the Constitution: Striking the Right Balance.” In *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia,* edited by Michael Heng Siam-Heng and Ten Chin Liew, 137–153. Singapore: World Scientific.

Taylor, C. 1998. “Modes of Secularism.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 31–53. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tellenbach, G. 1991. *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*. Translated by R. F. Bennett. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

(p. 102) Thapar, R. 2008. “Is Secularism Alien to Indian Civilization?” In *The Future of Secularism,* edited by T. N. Srinivasan, 83–108. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tierney, B. 1987. “Religion and Rights: A Medieval Perspective.” *Journal of Law and Religion* 5(1), 163–175.

Ullmann, W. 1946. “A Medieval Document on Papal Theories of Government.” *The English Historical Review* 61(240), 180–201.

Watt, J. 1988. “Spiritual and Temporal Powers.” In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350–c. 1450,* edited by J. H. Burns, 367–423. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Weber, M. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* Vol. 2. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wenger, T. 2010. “The God-in-the-Constitution Controversy: American Secularisms in Historical Perspective.” In *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, edited by Linell E. Cody and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 87–106. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, R. 2008. “The Hireling Ministry None of Christ’s.” In *On Religious Liberty: Selections from the Work of Roger Williams,* edited by James Davis, 249–260. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) Confusion exists as to when the word first appeared. The date of 1851 was recalled by Holyoake in 1896 (1896a: 51–52). Royle cites an 1853 article in the *Reasoner* (1974: 150; and see Blaszak 1988: 20). Grugel suggests 1852 (1976: 43, but see 62); Feldman (2005: 13) identifies the 1840s though does not specify why. He cites G.E.E. (1853), but no reference to the 1840s is found there. Consult the Introduction to this volume.

(2.) The discrepancy is also noted by Royle (1980: xi), Rectenwald (2013: 232 fn.8), and Thapar (2008: 88).

(3.) The distinctions between these terms are explored in Berlinerblau (2012, 2013). Also see Cliteur (2010) and Thapar (2008: 83).

(4.) See, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux (1976: 68).

(5.) Papal overreach can be identified in the eighth-century forgery known as “The Donation of Constantine” (Coleman 1971: 17) and examples collected in Ehler and Morrall (1954: 73, 91).

(6.) On John’s presumed authorship of *Rex pacificus*, see Saenger (1981) and the contrary view of Dyson (1999).

(7.) Francophone nations that contain a reference to *laïcité* in their constitution include Benin (1990: Art. 5); Burkina Faso (1991: Art. 31); Cameroon (1996: Preamble and Art. 1; also see Momo 1999); Chad (1996: Art. 1); The Republic of the Congo (2002: Art.1); Guinea-Bissau (1984: Art.1); and Mali (1992: Preamble, Art. 25). Anglophone countries with the term “secular” in their constitutions include Namibia (1990: Preamble, Art. 1.1), Tanzania (2011: Constitutional Review), and Rwanda (2003: Art. 1).

(8.) “Theme n’3: Pour Une République Forte: Laïcité et Vivre Ensemble,” http://www.ladroiteforte.fr/les-idees-fortes/article/theme-no3-pour-une-republique. Accessed in 2016. Now archived at http://issuu.com/ladroiteforte/docs/droite_forte_th__me_laicit___/1.

**Jacques Berlinerblau**

Jacques Berlinerblau is Associate Professor and Director of the Program for Jewish Civilization in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. His most recent book is How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

# Political Secularism and Democracy in Theory and Practice

Jonathan Fox

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.7

## Abstract and Keywords

An overwhelming majority of democracies, no matter how the concept of democracy is defined, restrict the religious practices and institutions of minority religions, substantially support religion, and give de jure and de facto preferences to a single religion or a few religions. Since so few democracies meet any standard of political secularism, political secularism is either not essential to liberal democracy or these countries' status as liberal democracies must be questionable. Political secularism as an ideology is not as influential in the practical politics of democratic states as many believe. An important question is whether political secularism is the best model for democracy or whether the best models are those that integrate state support for religion with checks and balances that protect religious freedom.

Keywords: political secularism, democracy, liberalism, state-supported religion, official religion

MANY liberal Western thinkers assume and advocate that religion and state must be separate for democracy to flourish. This requirement is an example of political secularism, which I define as an ideology or set of beliefs that advocates that religion ought to be separate from all or some aspects of politics and/or public life. In this chapter I examine this link between political secularism and democracy in depth. First, I demonstrate that there are multiple trends within political secularism—that is, there is considerable disagreement on what it means for states to be secular. Second, I examine whether, in practice, democracies meet any of the standards set out in this literature. Using data from the Religion and State (RAS) dataset for 2008, I demonstrate that most democracies do not follow policies toward religion that can be considered consistent with any conception of political secularism.

# Political Secularism and Democracy in Theory

The nature of political secularism and its role in democracy is a contested topic. In this section I discuss the debate over defining political secularism and what manifestation of political secularism, if any, is most appropriate for democracy.

## Political Secularism and Its Critics

As noted, I define political secularism as an ideology or set of beliefs that advocates that religion ought to be separate from all or some aspects of politics and/or public life. This is a subset of secularism, which is an ideology or set of beliefs that advocates an absence of religion (p. 104) in a larger set of social, cultural, political, and economic milieu. The concept is inexorably linked to religion. Daniel Philpott (2009: 185–186) examines nine manifestations of the terms secular, secularism, and secularization in the academic literature and concludes that all of them define these terms as something that is specifically not religious or antireligious. Calhoun et al. (2012: 14) similarly argue that "in all cases, secularism is defined in tandem with its twin concept, religion." Thus, political secularism specifically relates to an absence of religion in government and politics in general.

While there are many past and current nondemocracies that have politically secular ideologies, the concept of political secularism, at least in the theoretical literature, is strongly linked to democracy. Or perhaps it is better to say that there is an expectation that democracies require politically secular policies in order to flourish. For example, Jose Casanova (2009: 1051) defines "secularism as a statecraft principle" as

> some principle of separation between religious and political authority, either for the sake of the neutrality of the state vis-a-vis each and all religions, or for the sake of protecting the freedom of conscience of each individual, or for the sake of facilitating the equal access of all citizens, religious as well as nonreligious, to democratic participation.

Thus, even in defining secularism, Casanova links the concept to democracy.

This is not surprising because the argument that democratic governments ought to be separate from religion is deeply entrenched in liberal democratic thought. For example, Alfred Stepan (2000: 39–40) in his classic study of religion and toleration describes this belief as follows:

> Democratic institutions must be free, within the bounds of the constitution and human rights, to generate policies. Religious institutions should not have constitutionally privileged prerogatives that allow them to mandate public policy to democratically elected governments. At the same time, individuals and religious communities … must have complete freedom to worship privately. In addition, as individuals and groups, they must be able to advance their values publicly in civil society and to sponsor organizations and movements in political society, as long as

> their actions do not impinge negatively on the liberties of other citizens or violate democracy and the law.

Rawls (1993: 151) similarly argues that we must "take the truths of religion off the political agenda." For additional versions of this argument see, among others, Demerath (2001: 2) and Shah (2000).

While it is likely that a majority of liberal thinkers who address the topic support political secularism, views on the issue are by no means unanimous. For example, de Tocqueville is interpreted as arguing that there is room for religion in democracy. Fradkin (2000: 90–91) interprets de Tocqueville as arguing that a "successful political democracy will inevitably require moral instruction grounded in religious faith." However, this does not mean that de Tocqueville advocates a religious state. Rather, "since it facilitates the use of freedom, [religion is] … 'indispensable to the maintenance of republican institutions.' And there is good reason for this, because 'despotism may govern without religion, but liberty cannot'" (Wach 1946: 90 with quotes from de Tocqueville).

Others argue that liberal democracy cannot afford to exclude religion because doing so would violate liberal values. Liberal democracy includes a concept of tolerance that needs to include a tolerance of the religious. To exclude religion from the public sphere would be a form of discrimination that runs counter to liberal values (Bader 1999; Greenawalt 1988 (p. 105) : 49, 55). Casanova (2009: 1057) similarly points out that secularism does not necessarily have to have a negative view of religion:

> political secularism per se does not need to share … negative assumptions about religion, nor assume any progressive historical development that will make religion increasingly irrelevant. It is actually compatible with a positive view of religion as a moral good, or as an ethical communitarian reservoir of human solidarity and republican virtue.

Thus, while few liberal thinkers advocate for an official religion, many believe religion should have a public role.

While few liberal thinkers claim that supporting a single religion is the most desirable religion policy in a democracy, several argue that doing so does not necessarily harm democracy. Mazie (2004, 2006) argues that some elements of religion are compatible with democracy while others are not. While supporting a religion does not need to be incompatible with democracy, making that religion mandatory will usually be incompatible. Essentially, for Mazie (2004, 2006) as long as religious minorities are free to practice their religion and not required to observe the majority religion, democracy remains intact. Driessen (2010) makes similar arguments with regard to the treatment of minority religions and adds that a government must have sufficient autonomy to make decisions independent of religion—without religious actors being able to overrule its decisions. Marquand and Nettler (2000) make similar arguments but emphasize the right of the nonreli-

gious to abide by their own values. Even Stepan (2012: 133) argues that states with established religions can still uphold liberal principles if they respect minority rights.

## Types of Political Secularism

Setting aside for the moment the debate over whether political secularism is really necessary for democracy, it is important to emphasize that beyond agreement over the proposition that government should not be in the business of religion, there are deep divisions among political secularists. I divide political secularism into three categories, though in practice each of these categories can be further divided. These three categories represent different answers to the following questions: (1) May the state support religion? (2) May the state restrict religion? (3) Is religious discourse and expression appropriate in the public sphere? I summarize the answers of these three conceptions of political secularism in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Models for Separation of Religion and State and for Acceptable Support for Religion in Democracies

| | **Secularism-Laicism** | **Absolute SRAS** | **Neutralism** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **State support for religion?** | No | No | Yes, if applied equally |
| **State restrictions on religion?** | Yes, in public sphere and if applied equally | No | Yes, if applied equally |
| **Restrictions on religion in public discourse and expression?** | Yes, if applied equally | No | Yes, if applied equally. |

*Note.* SRAS = separation of religion and state.

(p. 106)

The first of these three conceptions of political secularism is the *secularist-laicist* model. This model takes part of its name from the *laïcité* philosophy of France toward religion. Advocates of this model not only proscribe state support for any religion; they also believe that religion should not be present in any part of the public sphere. This means that not only are restrictions on religion in the public sphere allowed; they are mandated. This conception of political secularism casts religion as a wholly private matter. The state is expected to enforce this and ensure that religion does not intrude into public space. This

can result in restrictions on public religious activities and practices (Kuru 2007; Haynes 1997; Keane 2000; Stepan 2000; Durham 1996: 21–22; Esbeck 1988). These restrictions apply to all religions equally, including the majority religion. An excellent example of this type of policy is France's 2004 law banning any overt religious symbol in public schools, including the head coverings worn by Muslim women. While from another perspective this law might been seen as a restriction on religious liberty, from the *secularist-laicist* perspective wearing any ostentatious religious symbol in a public school constitutes an aggressive encroachment of religion—something that should be a private matter—on secular public space.

To be clear, the secularist-laicist model does not generally advocate restricting religion in private. In fact, it specifically relegates religion to the private sphere, which is considered the proper place for religion. It also does not advocate singling out minority religions for additional restrictions. The general rule of public secular space with religion being allowed in private space applies equally to all religions. To single out some religions for additional restrictions would either be allowing some religions a public presence or essentially supporting some religions by restricting their competition.

The second conception of political secularism is *absolute separation of religion and state (absolute SRAS)*. This model is based largely on the US model. The first amendment of the US Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Accordingly, this type of political secularism requires that the state neither support nor restrict any religion. While this model allows no government involvement or interference in religion at all, among advocates of the model opinions on the proper role of religion in civil society and political discourse differ (Esbeck 1988; Kuru 2007).

Esbeck (1988) identifies three trends within this tradition in US thought that mostly differ over the role of religion in public political discourse. *Strict separationists* argue that public policy should be decided on a secular basis and that religion should not be a standard by which a state is judged. This argument is attributed to, among others, Thomas Jefferson who advocated that there be a "wall" of separation between religion and state. Nevertheless, this school of thought does not prohibit the use of religious ideas and morality in public discourse. *Pluralist separationists* accept that "religion may influence issues of civic government" but maintains an aversion to "a religiously generated cultural mandate employing the offices of government to achieve religious ends" (Esbeck 1988: 45). Finally, *institutional separationists* permit religious moral traditions to influence political discussion and policy but oppose state support for religion and the use of government instruments to advantage a particular religion.

The final conception of political secularism is the *neutralist* model. This perspective posits that a government may favor no religion over others. Essentially it must be neutral on the issue. This means that public policy can support religion and restrict religion as long as it (p. 107) supports and/or restricts all religions equally. Roger Finke, (1990, 2012) calls this the level playing field argument. Religions compete for members and religions that have

state support have an advantage in this competition. Take, for example, government funding of religious institutions. The funded institutions become less expensive for their congregants, making the unfunded institutions more expensive relative to them. Religion is not free. Clergy, places of worship, and other religious materials all have material costs that must be borne by congregants when a religion is not funded by the state. Supporting some religions but not others has the same result as restricting some because those that are not supported are essentially disadvantaged from a zero-sum perspective (Finke 1990, 2013; Grim and Finke 2006, 2011; Toft et al. 2011; Stark and Finke 2000).

Madeley (2003: 5–6) identifies two schools of thought within the neutralist conception of political secularism. The *neutral political concern* school argues "that government action should not help or hinder any life-plan or way of life more than any other and that the consequences of government action should therefore be neutral" (Madeley 2003: 5–6). This version focuses on equality of outcomes. Government policy supporting or restricting religion is acceptable as long as it results in no actual differential treatment. The *exclusion of ideals* school focuses on intent rather than outcome. It mandates that "the state be precluded from justifying its actions on the basis of a preference for any particular way of life" (Madeley 2003: 6). Thus, as long as the state has no intention to treat religions differently, it is acceptable that the outcome of a policy has this result.[1]

These three interpretations of political secularism can have important policy implications. Take for example the issues of religious education and religious dress in public schools. From a *secularist-laicist* perspective both would be prohibited because they would violate secular public space. From an *absolute separationist* perspective religious education in public schools would be an unacceptable form of state support for religion but restricting religious clothing and symbols could be interpreted as an unacceptable form of state limitation on religious freedom. From a *neutralist* perspective both religious education and religious dress could be either allowed or banned as long as it was allowed or banned equally for all students. Thus, it is ill advised to simply discuss political secularism without taking into account the widely divergent views of what this principle means.

# Some Practical Definitions and Measurements

Before examining the extent of political secularism among democracies in practice, it is necessary to define in operational terms how both concepts will be measured. For this analysis I use multiple measurements of democracy. The first are based on the Polity dataset. The Polity variable ranges from –10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic). It is based on the regulation, openness, and competitiveness of executive recruitment; constraints on the executive; and the regulation and competitiveness of political participation.[2] Essentially it measures institutional democracy. I use two operationalizations based on this dataset. The first are all thirty-four countries that score a 10, the highest score, on this measure. The second allows for states which come close to perfect scores: all (p. 108) sixty-nine countries with Polity scores of 8 or higher. The other two measurements of democracy focus on two regions that are considered democratic. First, Western

democracies (Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) are considered to be the culture that originated the concept of liberal democracy and are among the most democratic on the world. Second, the European Union (EU), which overlaps considerably with Western democracies, is considered especially democratic because the countries in this union have agreed to a union-level enforcement mechanism for a number of factors including human rights and democracy. Four countries in the study have no Polity score but are included as Western democracies and, for some of them, as EU members. These are Andorra, Turkish Cyprus, Liechtenstein, and Malta. Thus the total number of countries included in the study is seventy-three. How each state scores on these measures is listed in the appendix to this chapter.

In order to measure whether these countries meet any of the three political secularism standards I discuss here, I use four variables from the RAS dataset. The first measures the states' formal religion policy based on the following categories:

- The state has an official religion.
- The state has no official religion but supports one religion more than others.
- The state has no official religion but supports some religions more than others.
- Supportive: The state has no official religion but supports all religions equally.
- Accommodation: The state maintains separation of religion and state but has a positive attitude toward religion.
- Separationist: The state maintains separation of religion and state but has a negative attitude toward religion.

This variable has codings for states more hostile to religion, but these hostile policies are not found in any of the democracies examined in this study.[3]

The second variable measures state support for religion and includes fifty-one individual types of support including enforcing religious precepts through law or policy, the funding of religion, and entanglement between religious and government institutions. This variable ranges between 0 and 51. The third variable measures the extent to which the government restricts all religions including the majority religion. This includes twenty-nine types of restrictions including restrictions on religion's role in politics, religious institutions, and religious practices. As each item on this variable is coded between 0 and 3, it ranges between 0 and 87. The final variable measures thirty types of restrictions on religious minorities that are not placed on the majority group. These include restrictions on religious practices, religious institutions, clergy, conversion, and proselytizing. As each item on this variable is coded between 0 and 3, it ranges between 0 and 90.[4] Each country in the study and its scores on these variables is listed in the appendix.

These variables are used to operationalize the *laicism-separatism, absolute separationism,* and *neutralism* standards for political secularism as is shown in Table 6.2. Each of these standards is operationalized three times, once using a strict interpretation of the standard, once using an intermediate standard, and once using a loose standard. I apply

this three-operationalization policy because applying these standards in practice is a matter of interpretation and to some extent subjective. Yet to operationalize them, concrete cutoffs must be set. This approach allows for a range of operationalizations that in combination likely (p. 109) capture the essence of these standards. The loose interpretations also allow for a significant amount of activity that might violate a stricter version of these standards, allowing this study to find the maximum number of states that might be considered to follow political secularism as practical policy. Also, the intermediate and loose interpretations allow us to identify states that in large part follow a policy, but may violate it in some small way, which arguably does not undermine the larger policy. If, as is the case for the findings presented here, most democracies do not even meet the loose standards, this would demonstrate that the link between democracy and political secularism is weaker than many assume to be the case.

Table 6.2 Operationalizing Standards of Political Secularism

| SRAS Doctrine | Official Religion Policy | Support | Regulation | Discrimination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Secularism-Laicism Strict | Accommodation and Separationist | Up to 3 | No limit | Up to 1 |
| Secularism-Laicism Intermediate | Accommodation and Separationist | Up to 4 | No limit | Up to 3 |
| Secularism-Laicism Loose | Accommodation and Separationist | Up to 5 | No limit | Up to 5 |
| Absolute Separationism Strict | Accommodation only | Up to 3 | Up to 1 | Up to 1 |
| Absolute Separationism Intermediate | Accommodation and Separationist | Up to 4 | Up to 3 | Up to 3 |
| Absolute Separationism Loose | Accommodation and Separationist | Up to 5 | Up to 5 | Up to 5 |
| Neutralism Strict | Supportive, Accommodation, and Separationist | Up to 3 | No limit | None |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neutralism Inter-mediate | Supportive, Accom-modation, and Separationist | Up to 4 | No limit | Up to 1 |
| Neutralism Loose | Supportive, Accom-modation, and Separationist | Up to 5 | No limit | Up to 2 |

*Note:* SRAS = separation of religion and state.

The *laicism-separatism* standard allows states to restrict religion in public but not support it. Thus the accommodation and separationist codings for the official religion variable are appropriate for all codlings. For the same reason there are no limits on the regulation variable because this variable measures restrictions placed on all religions in the public sphere. Support for religion is limited. However, since no state in the study other than South Africa engages in absolutely no support for religion, low levels of support are allowed. Otherwise only South Africa would meet this standard. Finally, as discussed earlier, singling out minority religions for differential treatment violates this standard so religious discrimination is limited but not to no discrimination because only 13 democracies in this study engage in no discrimination against minority religions.

In theory the *absolute separationism* standard allows absolutely no support and no restrictions on religion. In practice no state other than South Africa meets this standard. Accordingly, (p. 110) the operationalization for even the strict standard allows low levels of support, regulation, and discrimination. The strict standard allows an official policy of accommodation only because separationist policies include a measure of hostility to religion. However, the intermediate and loose standards allow separationist official policies.

Finally, the *neutralism* standard allows restrictions and support as long as there is equal treatment. Thus, the supportive coding for the official variable is allowed in theory but, as shown in the appendix, none of these states have this type of policy. The accommodation and separationist codings are also allowed because they both involve government staying out of the issue of religion, which constitutes equal treatment. Regulation of all religions is allowed. Support and discrimination are limited because they involve differential treatment.

All measurements in this study are taken in 2008, which is the most recent year for which all of the data is available.

# Political Secularism in Practice

In this section I evaluate whether the seventy-three democracies in this study in practice have policies that can be considered consistent with political secularism. I examine this both with regard to their declared policies, as found in their constitutions and with regard to their practical polices as measured by the RAS dataset.

## Political Secularism in Democratic Constitutions

The RAS dataset includes a module that examines religion in constitutions.[5] In this section I examine whether constitutions declare a country to have an official religion or to have separation of religion and state (SRAS). Among those states that declare SRAS in their constitution, I differentiate between those that specifically declare the country secular—that is, they use the word “secular” to describe the country—and those that use some other form of clause. Also, many constitutions, such as those of Austria, New Zealand, and Taiwan, do not have clauses relating to this aspect of religion policy. Finally, the UK is

excluded from this part of the analysis because it has no constitution, but it should be noted that the UK's policy cannot be considered politically secular because it has an official religion. The results are presented in Table 6.3.

Overall, declarations of political secularism are absent from many constitutions. Only France, India, and the Turkish government of Cyprus specifically declare the country "secular" in their constitutions. Article 2 of France's constitution declares that "France is an indivisible, *secular*, democratic, and social Republic." The preamble of India's constitution similarly resolves "to constitute India into a sovereign, socialist, *secular*, democratic republic." Article 1 of Turkish Cyprus's constitution declares "The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a *secular* republic." All other countries that declare SRAS use other language banning the establishment of a religion such as the language in Article 1 of the US constitution or declaring the state separate or independent from religion. For example, Article 7 of Italy's (p. 111) (p. 112) constitution states that the "State and Catholic church are, each within their own reign, independent and sovereign."

Table 6.3 Political Secularism in Constitutions

| | No. of Countries | Constitution Has Secular or SRAS Clause | | | Official Religion in Constitution (%) | Constitution Does Not Address Issue (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | State is Secular, Lay, etc.(%) | Other SRAS Clause (%) | All Cases (%) | | |
| Polity = 10 | 33 | 0.0 | 45.5 | 45.5 | 15.2 | 39.3 |
| Polity 8 or Higher | 68 | 2.9 | 42.6 | 45.6 | 11.8 | 42.6 |
| Western Democracies | 26 | 7.7 | 26.9 | 34.6 | 23.1 | 42.3 |
| European Union | 26 | 3.8 | 53.8 | 57.7 | 11.5 | 30.8 |
| All Countries (including nondemocracies) | 172 | 18.0 | 22.5 | 43.6 | 19.2 | 37.2 |

*Note:* The UK is excluded from this analysis because it does not have a constitution. SRAS = separation of religion and state.

In three of the four groupings of democracies examined here, a minority of states declare themselves secular or declare SRAS in their constitutions. Among EU states, 57.7 percent of states have these types of clauses. Most of those with no constitutional secular or SRAS policy do not address the issue of the state's connection to religion in their constitutions; a good number declare official religions.

Interestingly, worldwide, nondemocracies are more likely to declare themselves secular in their constitutions, with thirty-one or 18 percent of all constitutions having such a clause. However, when combining this type of clause with other SRAS clauses, the results are similar to those for democracies.

Overall, these results show that declarations of political secularism are no more common in democracies than nondemocracies. They are also considerably less common than one would expect if political secularism was an intrinsic element of democracy.

## Political Secularism in Democratic Government Policy

In this section I evaluate how many democratic states meet the political secularism standards I discuss and operationalize earlier in this chapter. I present these results in Table 6.4, which also examines the proportions of democracies with SRAS or "secular" clauses in their constitutions that meet these three standards.

The results show that even among states that declare SRAS or secularism in their constitutions, the vast majority of democracies do not meet any of the three standards for political secularism. This applies even the "loose" standards, which allow for a considerable amount of government support for and limitations on religion. In fact, among the seventy-three democracies included in this study, only fourteen (19.2 percent) meet any of the loose requirements. I list these countries and which requirements they meet in Table 6.5. Jamaica and New Zealand meet only one of the loose standards, leaving twelve countries that meet at least one of the intermediate standards.

Only South Africa, Taiwan, and the United States meet the strict requirements for all three standards. In addition, Estonia, Japan, and Uruguay meet at least one of the strict standards, making for a total of six democracies that meet at least one of the strict requirements. Thus, no Western European country meets any of the strict standards, and only one—the Netherlands—meets any of the intermediate or loose standards. The only EU member states to meet any of the standards are the Netherlands and Estonia. Only four of these states—Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States—can be considered long-standing, stable Western liberal democracies. Three states that meet at least one of these standards can be found in Asia (Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan), Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa), or in the Americas south of the United States (Brazil, Jamaica, and Uruguay). More interesting, there are five African nondemocracies (all scoring below zero on the Polity score) that meet at least one of these standards. These include Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau,

and the Republic of Congo. Thus, there does not seem to be any significant link between traditional liberal democracies and political secularism in practice. (p. 113) (p. 114)

Table 6.4 Political Secularism in Democracies in Practice

| Control Factor | Absolute SRAS Strict (%) | Absolute SRAS Intermediate (%) | Absolute SRAS Loose (%) | Neutral Strict (%) | Neutral Intermediate (%). | Neutral Loose (%) | Secularism-Laicism Strict (%) | Secularism-Laicism Intermediate (%) | Secularism-Laicism Loose (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **All Democracies** | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity = 10 | 8.8 | 17.6 | 17.6 | 5.9 | 17.6 | 20.6 | 11.8 | 17.6 | 17.6 |
| Polity 8 or Higher | 5.8 | 14.5 | 14.5 | 7.1 | 15.9 | 18.8 | 10.1 | 15.9 | 15.9 |
| Western Democracies | 3.7 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 14.8 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 11.1 |
| European Union | 0.0 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 7.4 | 7.4 | 3.7 | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| **Democracies with SRAS Clause in Constitution** | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Polity = 10 | 13.3 | 26.7 | 26.7 | 6.7 | 26.7 | 26.7 | 20.0 | 26.7 | 26.7 |
| Polity 8 or High-er | 6.5 | 16.1 | 16.1 | 9.7 | 22.6 | 22.6 | 16.1 | 19.4 | 19.4 |
| Western Democ-racies | 11.1 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 0.0 | 22.2 | 22.2 | 11.1 | 22.2 | 22.2 |
| Euro-pean Union | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| **All Coun-tries (in-clud-ing non-democ-racies)** | 4.7 | 9.3 | 13.4 | 5.2 | 11.6 | 16.9 | 7.6 | 12.2 | 16.9 |

*Note:* SRAS = separation of religion and state.

Table 6.5 Democratic Countries that Meet at Least One Political Secularism Standard

| Country | Absolute SRAS Strict | Absolute SRAS Inter | Absolute SRAS Loose | Neutral Strict | Neutral Intermediate. | Neutral Loose | Secularism-Laicism Strict | Secularism-Laicism Intermediate | Secularism-Laicism Loose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | | X | X | | X | X | | X | X |
| Botswana | | X | X | | X | X | | X | X |
| Brazil | | | | | X | X | | | |
| Estonia | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Jamaica | | | | | | X | | | |
| Japan | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Lesotho | | X | X | | | | | X | X |
| Netherlands | | X | X | | X | X | | X | X |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Zealand | | | | | | X | | | |
| South Africa | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| South Korea | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X |
| Taiwan | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| United States | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Uruguay | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

*Note:* SRAS = separation of religion and state.

# (p. 115) Conclusions

This analysis demonstrates that most democratic governments do not have policies that can be considered congruent with political secularism. Only fourteen of the seventy-three democracies examined here, or about 19.2 percent, met even the loosest standards for political secularism. In contrast, fifty-five (75.3 percent) have policies that explicitly favor one or some religions over others. This includes fourteen countries (19.2 percent) with official religions. Fifty-nine (80.8 percent) of them restrict the religious practices or institutions of at least some religious minorities, though only twenty-seven (37.0 percent) score a 6 or higher on that variable, which means that they cannot meet even any of the loose standards with regard to religious discrimination for political secularism set by this study. Finally, all of them, other than South Africa, engage in at least some support for religion, and forty-two (56.2 percent) score a 6 or higher on the religious support variable, which means that they cannot meet even any of the loose standards with regard to support for religion for political secularism set by this study.

The discussion of the link between democracy and political secularism is a vigorous one. While not all liberal theorists believe that political secularism is absolutely necessary for democracy to function, it is fair to say that there is a general assumption among these theorists that political secularism is the standard. Also, there is far more discussion of what interpretation of political secularism is the appropriate one than over whether political secularism is linked to democracy.

However, when viewing the facts on the ground, there is little room for debate. An overwhelming majority of democracies, no matter how the concept of democracy is defined, restrict the religious practices and institutions of minority religions, substantially support religion, and give de jure and de facto preferences to a single religion or a few religions. Thus, there is clearly a disconnect between the theoretical discussion and reality. This disconnect is sufficiently strong, I argue, that this widespread, pervasive, and persistent lack of observance of political secular ideals by democracies arguably reaches the point where state practice disproves the relevance of these ideals. Put differently, if so few democracies meet any standard of political secularism, it is clear that political secularism is not an essential element of liberal democracy. The only other alternative is to acknowledge that most states considered liberal democracies do not live up to a central element of the ideal of liberal democracy to the extent that their status as liberal democracies is questionable.

In all, while political secularism is clearly an ideology—or perhaps a family of ideologies—that are present in the world and linked to democracy, this ideology is not as influential in the practical politics of democratic states as many believe. Consequently, we need to reevaluate the roles of both political secularism and religion in democracy. For example, we need to ask whether political secularism is the best model for democracy or whether the best models are those that integrate state support for religion with checks and balances that protect religious freedom such as those proposed by Mazie (2004, 2006),

Driessen (2010), and Marquand and Nettler (2000), among others. Such a model would include how religion can contribute to democracy as well as what forms of government support for religion and restrictions on religion are compatible and incompatible with democracy.

# Appendix (p. 116)

| Country | Polity | Western Democracy | EU Member | Official State-Religion Policy | Support for Religion | Regulation of Religion | Discrimination against Religious Minority | Constitution |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Andorra | na | X | | State prefers one religion over others | 4 | 1 | 0 | No clause |
| Albania | 9 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 1 | 5 | 5 | Other SRAS clause |
| Argentina | 8 | | | Official religion | 7 | 0 | 4 | No clause |
| Australia | 10 | X | | Accommodation | 4 | 0 | 1 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 10 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 4 | 2 | 15 | No clause |
| Belgium | 8 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 8 | 2 | 16 | No clause |
| Bolivia | 8 | | | Official religion | 7 | 5 | 6 | No clause |
| Botswana | 8 | | | Accommodation | 4 | 0 | 1 | No clause |
| Brazil | 8 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 4 | 3 | 1 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 9 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 7 | 15 | 22 | No clause |
| Canada | 10 | X | | Accommodation | 6 | 2 | 0 | No clause |
| Chile | 10 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 3 | 0 | 6 | No clause |
| Costa Rica | 10 | | | Official religion | 7 | 9 | 6 | Official religion clause |
| Croatia | 9 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 11 | 5 | 10 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cyprus, Greek | 10 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 8 | 3 | 3 | No clause |
| Cyprus, Turkish | na | X | | State prefers one religion over others | 4 | 4 | 8 | Secular clause |
| Czech Republic | 8 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 13 | 3 | 6 | Other SRAS clause |
| Denmark | 10 | X | X | Official religion | 12 | 2 | 6 | Official religion clause |
| Dominican Rep. | 8 | | | Official religion | 8 | 0 | 5 | No clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Estonia | 9 | | X | Accom-modation | 3 | 6 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Finland | 10 | X | X | Official religion | 11 | 2 | 3 | No clause |
| France | 9 | X | X | Separa-tionist | 7 | 10 | 15 | Secular clause |
| Germany | 10 | X | X | State prefers some re-ligions over oth-ers | 12 | 9 | 22 | Other SRAS clause |
| Ghana | 8 | | | State prefers some re-ligions over oth-ers | 13 | 7 | 1 | No clause |
| Greece | 10 | X | X | Official religion | 13 | 8 | 15 | Official religion clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Guatemala | 8 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 5 | 11 | 5 | No clause |
| Hungary | 10 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 9 | 0 | 1 | Other SRAS clause |
| Iceland | 10 | X | | Official religion | 9 | 2 | 4 | Official religion clause |
| India | 9 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 15 | 16 | 26 | Secular clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Indonesia | 8 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 28 | 23 | 27 | No clause |
| Ireland | 10 | X | X | State prefers one religion over others | 7 | 2 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Israel | 10 | | | Official religion | 25 | 3 | 6 | No clause |
| Italy | 10 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 6 | 2 | 5 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jamaica | 9 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 5 | 0 | 1 | No clause |
| Japan | 10 | | | Accommodation | 2 | 0 | 1 | Other SRAS clause |
| Latvia | 8 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 7 | 6 | 9 | Other SRAS clause |
| Lesotho | 8 | | | Accommodation | 4 | 0 | 3 | No clause |
| Liechtenstein | na | X | | Official religion | 2 | 4 | 1 | Official religion clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lithuania | 10 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 12 | 2 | 11 | Other SRAS clause |
| Luxembourg | 9 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 5 | 1 | 2 | No clause |
| Macedonia | 9 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 2 | 15 | 20 | No clause |
| Malta | na | X | X | Official Religion | 6 | 0 | 1 | Official religion clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mauritius | 10 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 4 | 1 | 2 | No clause |
| Mexico | 8 | | | Separationist | 4 | 20 | 6 | Other SRAS clause |
| Moldova | 8 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 5 | 9 | 5 | No clause |
| Mongolia | 10 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 3 | 4 | 5 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Montene-gro | 9 | | | State prefers some re-ligions over oth-ers | 3 | 0 | 5 | Other SRAS clause |
| Nether-lands | 10 | X | X | Accom-modation | 4 | 3 | 1 | No clause |
| New Zealand | 10 | X | | State prefers some re-ligions over oth-ers | 5 | 0 | 0 | No clause |
| Nicaragu a | 9 | | | State prefers one reli-gion over others | 6 | 2 | 2 | Other SRAS clause |
| Norway | 10 | X | | Official religion | 10 | 4 | 8 | Official religion clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Panama | 9 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 5 | 9 | 2 | No clause |
| Paraguay | 8 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 6 | 2 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Peru | 9 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 9 | 0 | 5 | No clause |
| Philippines | 8 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 8 | 7 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poland | 10 | | X | State prefers one religion over others | 8 | 3 | 8 | Other SRAS clause |
| Portugal | 10 | X | X | State prefers one religion over others | 5 | 3 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Romania | 9 | | X | State prefers one religion over others | 12 | 7 | 21 | Other SRAS clause |
| Serbia | 8 | | | State prefers one religion over others | 10 | 8 | 19 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Slovakia | 10 | | X | State prefers one religion over others | 12 | 1 | 3 | Other SRAS clause |
| Slovenia | 10 | | X | State prefers some religions over others | 5 | 0 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Solomon Isls. | 8 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 6 | 0 | 0 | No clause |
| South Africa | 9 | | | Accommodation | 0 | 0 | 0 | No clause |
| South Korea | 8 | | | Accommodation | 3 | 3 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spain | 10 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 10 | 2 | 7 | Other SRAS clause |
| Sweden | 10 | X | X | State prefers some religions over others | 11 | 5 | 10 | No clause |
| Switzerland | 10 | X | | State prefers some religions over others | 11 | 8 | 16 | No clause |
| Taiwan | 10 | | | Accommodation | 2 | 1 | 0 | No clause |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trinidad & Tob. | 10 | | | State prefers some religions over others | 7 | 3 | 2 | No clause |
| UK | 10 | X | X | Official religion | 11 | 10 | 4 | No constitution |
| United States | 10 | X | | Accommodation | 3 | 1 | 1 | Other SRAS clause |
| Uruguay | 10 | | | Separationist | 2 | 1 | 0 | Other SRAS clause |
| Zambia | 8 | | | Official religion | 5 | 3 | 1 | No clause |

SRAS = separation of religion and state; na =

(p. 117) (p. 118) (p. 119) (p. 120)

# Bibliography

Bader, V. 1999. “Religious Pluralism: Secularism or Priority for Democracy?” *Political Theory* 27(5), 597–633.

Casanova, J. 2009. “The Secular and Secularisms.” *Social Research* 76(4), 1049–1066.

Demerath, N. III. 2001. *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Driessen, M. 2010. “Religion. State and Democracy: Analyzing Two Dimensions of Church–State Arrangements.” *Politics and Religion* 3(1), 55–80.

Durham, W. Jr. 1996. “Perspectives on Religious Liberty: A Comparative Framework.” In *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Legal Perspectives,* edited by John D. van der Vyver and John Witte Jr., 1–44. The Hague: Martinus Njhoff.

Esbeck, C. 1988. “A Typology of Church–State Relations in American Thought.” *Religion and Public Education* 15(1), 43–50.

Finke, Roger. 1990. “Religious Deregulation: Origins and Consequences” *Journal of Church and State*, 32 (3), 609–626.

Finke, Roger. 2013. “Origins and Consequences of Religious Restrictions: A Global Overview” *Sociology of Religion*, 74 (3), 297–313.

Fox, J. 2008. *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Fox, J. 2011. “Building Composite Measures of Religion and State.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 7(8), 1–39.

(p. 122) Fox, J. 2015. *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis of Worldwide Data*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Fradkin, H. 2000. “Does Democracy Need Religion?” *Journal of Democracy* 11(1), 87–94.

Greenawalt, K. 1988. *Religious Convictions and Political Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grim, B., and R. Finke. 2006. “International Religion Indexes: Government Regulation, Government Favoritism, and Social Regulation of Religion.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 2(1), 1–40.

Grim, B., and R. Finke. 2011. *The Price of Freedom Denied*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Haynes, J. 1997. “Religion, Secularisation, and Politics: A Postmodern Conspectus.” *Third World Quarterly* 18(4), 709–728.

Jaggers, K., and T. Gurr. 1995. “Tracking Democracy’s Third Wave with the Polity III Data.” *Journal of Peace Research* 32(4), 469–482.

Keane, J. 2000. “Secularism?” *Political Quarterly* 71(Suppl. 1), 5–19.

Kuru, A. 2007. “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies Toward Religion.” *World Politics* 59(4), 568–594.

Laycock, D. 1997. “The Underlying Unity of Separation and Neutrality.” *Emory Law Journal* 46, 43–75.

Madeley, J. 2003. “European Liberal Democracy and the Principle of State Religious Neutrality.” *West European Politics* 26(1), 1–22.

Marquand, D., and R. Nettler. 2000. “Forward.” *The Political Quarterly* 71(Suppl. 1), 1–4.

Mazie, S. 2004. “Rethinking Religious Establishment and Liberal Democracy: Lessons from Israel.” *Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs* 2(2), 3–12.

Mazie, S. 2006. *Israel’s Higher Law: Religion and Liberal Democracy in the Jewish State.* Lanham, Md. Rowman and Littlefield.

Philpott, D. 2004. “Christianity and Democracy: The Catholic Wave.” *Journal of Democracy* 15(2), 32–46.

Philpott, D. 2009. “Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, 183–202.

Rawls, J. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Shah, T. 2000. “Making the Christian World Safe for Liberalism: From Grotius to Rawls.” *Political Quarterly* 71(1), 121–139.

Stark, R., and R. Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stepan, A. 2000. “Religion, Democracy, and the ‘Twin Tolerations.’” *Journal of Democracy* 11(4), 37–56.

Stepan, A. 2012. “The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 125–155. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toft, M., D. Philpott, and T. Shah. 2011. *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Wach, J. 1946. “The Role of Religion in the Social Philosophy of Alex de Tocqueville.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 7(1), 74–90.

Witte, J. Jr. 2006. “Facts and Fictions about the History of Separation of Church and State.” *Journal of Church and State* 48(1), 15–45.

## Notes:

(1.) For a discussion of what types of state support for religion can violate the principle of state neutrality toward religion see Driessen (2010) and Mazie (2006). For a review of the Western intellectual history of the concept of separation of religion and state, see Laycock (1997) and Witte (2006).

(2.) For more details see Jaggers and Gurr (1995) and the Polity Project webpage at http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm.

(3.) This variable was created from a more detailed 15-point scale in the RAS dataset called Official Religion.

(4.) For a full discussion of these RAS variables including a listing of all of the items on the support, regulation, and discrimination variables, see Fox (2008, 2011) and the RAS webpage at www.religionandstate.org.

(5.) The data are available for download at the RAS webpage at www.religionandstate.org. Constitutions were primarily taken from the Religion and Law International Document Database (www.religlaw.org), the International Constitutional Law project (www.servat.unibe.ch/law/icl/), the Political Database of the Americas (http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/constudies.html), and the University of Richmond Constitution Finder (http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/constudies.html). In most cases these sites provided academic or official government translations of constitutions not written in English. Otherwise, I translated the constitutions using Google Translate. To test Google Translate’s accuracy, I compared academic and government translations to Google Translate’s translation. The translations were never identical but the differences did not influence the variables’ codings.

**Jonathan Fox**

Jonathan Fox is Professor of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. He is the Director of the Religion and State Project. Recent books include Political Secularism, Religion and the State; Religion in International Relations Theory; The Unfree Exercise of Religion; and A World Survey of Religion and the State.

# Anglo-American Secular Government

John Perry

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.8

## Abstract and Keywords

What has been called secular government in the United Kingdom and North America emerged from a series of debates about religious freedom and toleration, which reached their climax in seventeenth-century England. John Locke is often considered the hero of that climax, and his resolution to religion–politics conflict is now taken for granted as the basis of secular government in the United States, England, and Canada. It continues to influence Anglo-American political thought for both good and ill. Despite its success, the solution is imperfect. Subsequent modifications—including minor tweaks by various American Founders and a more recent re-appropriation by John Rawls—have failed to perfect it. Its most notable imperfection is a naïve hope that all imaginable future theopolitical disputes will be solved by abstract, neutral principles, specifiable-in advance of the disputes themselves. This leads to animosity and accusations of bias and call for ad hoc compromises.

Keywords: secular government, religious freedom, toleration, America, England, liberalism, rights

# Introduction

THERE is no one model for how government and religion relate in Western, liberal democracies; they vary significantly from one nation to another based on their particular histories and legal traditions. Some combine secular governments with official state churches for ceremonial purposes. Others lack state churches but allow religion, mediated through civil society or church offices, to play an important political role. Still others are overtly secular, even restricting religious attire in certain contexts. In the Anglo-American world, the United States and Canada have no state church. Neither do Wales, Northern Ireland, or the Republic of Ireland (the Irish Constitution acknowledges the importance of worshipping God without being more specific). Scotland has an established church, which is Presbyterian, and England has the Church of England, of which the ruling British monarch is the governor. At the same time, all of these countries guarantee freedom of religion and ensure, in varying ways, a secular basis for public policy: the

United States and Ireland via their constitutions, Canada via the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the United Kingdom (which has no written constitution) via the Human Rights Act and as a signatory of the European Convention on Human Rights. Yet these legal differences, while interesting, do not tell the full story.

The goal of this chapter is to help us see that, whatever their differences, the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada share something crucial. They have a common historical source for how they conceive the relation between religion and government. What North Americans and the British now call secular government emerged from a series of debates about religious freedom and toleration, which reached their climax in seventeenth-century England. Studying this will help us better understand how religion and government came to relate as they do and also allow us to better respond to issues that remain deeply contested today. Much of what we assume about government is shaped by that period, often without us perceiving the influence. This chapter aims to help us recognize how today's Anglo-American governments are, for both good and ill, the children of the seventeenth century.

(p. 126) One reason for pursuing this historical approach is to address an ambiguity about the phrase *secular government* itself. The English word "secularism" as it is appears in the title of this volume was not widely used until after the Second World War, so using it to describe earlier debates could create confusion. Although the Latin equivalent, *saeculum*, does have a significant history in Christian political thought, it might also create confusion if applied directly to modern governments. For the fourth-century African bishop Augustine, the *saeculum* was not a type of government or a sphere without religion but rather a *time period*. It was an era of human history during which two communities, the City of Man and the City of God, coexisted and shared concern for earthly peace. Nonetheless, we can recognize traces of Augustine's idea in today's term, for he assumes that non-Christians and Christians alike are rightly concerned with "secular goods" like security for one's family and that the civil government has a special role in protecting such goods.

The connection between today's *secular* and Augustine's *saeculum* should be clear: as governments stop seeing protecting religious orthodoxy as part of their job description (i.e., once they tolerate), they rethink what their job really is. One plausible answer: promote and protect "secular goods" like personal safety, health, industry, education, and so on.

One worthwhile approach to this topic would be to trace the legal history of these changes, studying, for example, jurisprudence on the First Amendment to the US Constitution, or the European Court of Human Rights. Instead, I pursue a different approach, exploring where those jurisprudential traditions originated. To make our topic manageable, I focus on the role played by the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), who was crucial to these changes in both his homeland and the colonial United States. His works are the most-cited source of the American founding era, apart from the Bible. He was regularly invoked by clergy in support of the American Revolution. His influence on

Thomas Jefferson’s thinking about church and state is obvious and well-documented, and even other, more religiously orthodox founders such as John Adams and James Madison bear his mark. His influence in Canada is more ambiguous because Canadians do not attribute mythological or sacred significance to their founders, as do their neighbors to the south. Nonetheless, his legacy is unmistakable even there (Ajzenstat 2007).

Because the debates of this period were chiefly *among* Christians, I shall follow suit in focusing specifically on that religion. Other voices were excluded from the Anglo-American conversation. It was dangerous to be openly atheist, and Jews, the most significant non-Christian minority, were only allowed back into England in 1655, having been expelled in 1290.

In the second half of this chapter I connect this historical background to some ongoing debates in Anglo-American political thought. We will see how John Rawls (1921–2002) addresses, with varying levels of success, certain problems that the early modern innovators left us with. In particular, he maintains and even deepens the early modern hope to solve future disputes by abstract, neutral principles and not rely on ad hoc solutions, even for tricky cases. As we will see by observing three ongoing disputes (on same-sex marriage, contraception, and religious attire), ad hoc solutions may not be as risky as we fear; sometimes they are preferable.

## (p. 127) Religious Freedom in the Seventeenth Century

It may appear that my focus on the seventeenth century gets to the story too late, after the action is over. According to the historian W. K. Jordon, “the theory of religious toleration stood substantially complete in 1660”—so, before Locke ever wrote a word on the subject (Kamen 1967: 216). Others suggest the opposite: that all the crucial moves come later: “The paradigmatic treatment of the matter … has been to start with John Locke, leap ahead to John Stuart Mill, and then discuss cases like Northern Ireland, Lebanon, or Bosnia” (Laursen and Nederman 1998: 2). In fact, both are right. What sets Locke apart is that he stands uniquely between two different conversations about religion and toleration. He writes the epilogue to one conversation and the prologue for another.

To the centuries-long conversation about the persecution of heretics, Locke writes the epilogue. He offers the final “no” to persecution *for orthodoxy’s sake*. But Locke also writes the prologue to a new conversation about the myriad questions that must now be answered in light of that conclusion. If there are some things the government may not do, what are the limits on what it *may* do to best ensure civil peace? Hence Locke consistently portrays toleration as a political problem, not a religious one. His question is not “Who is a heretic?” (for he does not much care) but rather “Who is a traitor?”

Saying this may lead to a misunderstanding about Locke’s own faith. Locke was not a secular thinker but a Protestant Christian theologian and philosopher. He wrote works of

theology and biblical commentary. (The distinction we make today, between philosophy and religious studies, can only anachronistically be applied to the Early Modern period.) Nonetheless, Locke was a *liberal* Protestant. He had a high regard for reason and was emphatic that all claims based on revelation, including the Bible, must themselves be weighed using human reason. He seems not to have accepted Christ's divinity or at least did not regard it as an important doctrine. He was also very shrewd in how he used theological argument in his work, for he recognized that he would need to convince his readers not only of the reasonability of his views but that they did not demonstrate disloyalty to God.

The seventeenth century is important to our story for another reason. Following the start of the Protestant Reformation in the prior century, the social and political unity of continental Europe began to fragment. Local rulers could side with this or that church as it suited their regime, and, by 1618, the Thirty Years War was underway. In England, the political instability reached its height with the Civil War of the 1640s, though significant strife continued even after.

Though these conflicts have commonly been labeled Wars of Religion, the term is not sufficiently precise. Is a religious war one where some of the soldiers are religious believers? Then virtually every war is religious. Or is it one where the leaders justify the war by giving theological reasons? But as recent American wars show, a regime's stated justification need hardly be the real reason; it may, rather, be tailored to what will excite the populace. (Is it easier to say, "Those devil-worshippers insult Christ by denying transubstantiation" or "We want their land"? Or "we want their oil" or "they hate freedom.")

(p. 128) While these conflicts cannot be labeled Wars of Religion without significant nuance, what is clear is that in the midst of political strife, social and cultural differences can be politically dangerous. Seemingly minor differences, like how people baptize their children or what clothes they wear or how they celebrate holidays, could also be political dividing lines—and were in fact dividing lines separating the Parliamentarians and the Royalists in the Civil War. This is why debates about religious freedom became so pressing at that time. Even those who did not care about trinitarianism versus unitarianism might still be concerned about how such disagreements were identity markers for rival camps.

# John Locke on Religious Toleration

One person who thought precisely this was John Locke. Although he is familiar to us as a great champion of religious freedom, he began his career in the opposite camp. His first work on the subject, the *First Tract on Government* (1660, though unpublished during his lifetime) argued for uniformity—the view that the government could legitimately prescribe details concerning religious worship. He there gives a number of reasons to support his position, but two stand out.

The first might be called the *No Football Colors Rule*. I once took my daughter, Hannah, to a bowling alley in Scotland. She noticed a sign on the door and asked what it meant: "No Football Colours on Match Days." It took me awhile to understand. Apparently, the owners had found from past experience that if I show up in a Dundee United jersey and you in your Aberdeen hat, we will probably fight. In other words, *diversity is a threat to peace*. To support this, Locke quotes the Roman poet Juvenal: "Each party is filled with fury against the other because each hates its neighbours' god, believing that none can be holy but those it worships itself" (*Tract*: 8). None of this is a principled philosophical or theological argument. It is based on Locke's prudential calculation that, on balance, diversity breeds contention and contention breeds war.

To be perfectly accurate, the bowling alley's solution is actually closer to French *laïcité*: because football allegiance cause fights, no football clothes are permitted in public. Locke's proposal in the *First Tract* would be analogous to a sign saying, "Everyone must wear Dundee United shirts"—because then we would all agree. Notice that neither of them consider posting a sign saying, "Don't worry about others' clothes; tolerate rival football allegiances."

Locke's second reason for religious uniformity and against toleration is this: *there's no such thing as limited government*. This sounds like an odd claim, coming from the philosopher that we most associate with limited government, but it is sound reasoning given his premises at the time. The argument has two components:

**1.** Governmental authority must be absolute, for there is no available conceptual or theoretical apparatus by which authority can be limited without undermining it altogether.
**2.** Granting exceptions for diverse religious practices violates the government's authority and thus threatens civil peace.

The first of these points may remind us of Thomas Hobbes, and indeed, it has sometimes been taken as evidence that Locke was Hobbes in sheep's clothing. Yet Locke's reasons are (p. 129) more subtle. The manner and mode of worship, precisely because those details are not essential to our salvation, should be relinquished into the hands of the ruler as part of the social contract. Just as we give up our freedom to drive on the "wrong" side of the road when we contract together to form a government, we also give up our freedom to worship in the "wrong" way.

The second point is the more forceful. Locke's pro-toleration opponents had argued that it was wrong for the government to "impose upon" others' consciences. Locke replies, "Tis true, 'who would have his conscience imposed upon?'" But this cuts both ways, for it is equally true, "who would pay taxes? who would be poor? who … would not be a prince?" (*Tract*: 22). Where is the limit, Locke asks? Allowing religious diversity would open the floodgates of anarchy, for whenever someone did not want to obey a given law, they would simply claim a religious exemption. Rather not pay your taxes this month? Claim that God told you not to. Rather sleep in on Monday? Invent a religious holiday.

In subsequent years, Locke's position softened. In fact, if we read between the lines, it is almost as though he always *wanted* toleration to work, but he feared that it would fail. The following years took him on two trips to continental Europe, where he saw religious freedom work well. The first was a diplomatic mission to Cleves (then under Dutch control but now Kleve, Germany), and the second was his temporary exile in Amsterdam. In both cases he was *intuitively* impressed with how well toleration worked, but he could not —at least not at first—find a way to make it work *intellectually*. What he saw in Europe helped him see that the *No Football Colors Rule* was not universally true. Diversity does not always breed violence. It depends on the people. Some people (bowling alley patrons in Scotland, apparently) will fight when they see rival teams' colors; others will not.

This left two problems to overcome before he could endorse toleration: first, how to persuade the English to become like the tolerant Dutch he had met on his trips—that is, to convince them that when they see a rival sports jersey, they may respond with good natured banter but should not throw a punch. Second, he would need a *principled* mechanism for distinguishing the tolerable from the intolerable; that is, how can a ruler grant freedom without descending into anarchy, where people conscientiously object to taxes and stopping at traffic lights? His thought developed over the course of the subsequent twenty-five years. By his mature statement in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* ([1689] 1983), he had overcome these two problems. As we shall see, what he presents there powerfully shapes how religious freedom develops in the West, including how "secular government" is conceived in the United States and United Kingdom today.

# Why Religious Freedom Might Work After All

Nowadays we are often sloppy in how we use terms like "discrimination" and "intolerance." Locke was more careful, and this helped him overcome the first obstacle. An example of our present sloppiness will sharpen the contrast. To obtain my latest visa to work in the UK, I was required to complete a test on the country's history and values. The morning of the test, there was a newspaper report about a massive police sting operation arresting hundreds for child (p. 130) abuse. One of the officers involved said, "Today's efforts show that this *will not be tolerated* in the UK." When I arrived at the testing center that afternoon, I was amused by my first question: "True or False: Intolerance has no place in the United Kingdom." I knew not to base my answer on what the police officer had said in the newspaper. The immigration officials who wrote the test wanted me to say "True," but that makes sense only if we reinterpret the question as saying, "Intolerance [of certain sorts of things but not others] has no place in the UK."

Locke recognized this nuance. In the Netherlands, he had discovered that the Dutch placed religion in the box labeled "Tolerable because it's like allegiance to sports teams" and not in the one labeled "Intolerable because it's like child abuse." Locke's problem was: How do I convince my English readers to shift religion from the Intolerable box, where they currently have it, to the Tolerable box? His solution is very shrewd and takes

us back to an observation I made earlier: Locke was not just a philosopher; he was a theologian.

Because most of his readers are Christians, they will need to be convinced *on Christian grounds* that tolerating diverse religious opinions and practices is not disloyal to their God. In short, he needs to convince them that tolerating others is *the Christian thing to do*. He attempts this by defining what makes a church a true church: it is not where the gospel is rightly preached, or the sacraments rightly celebrated, or the right doctrines expounded. No—the true church is wherever its members tolerate. With this in mind, we can now make sense of how Locke opens his *Letter Concerning Toleration* ([1689] 1983). "I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church" (23). This and his following arguments in the *Letter* are a shrewd theological argument to convince Christians, on Christian grounds, that religious allegiances can be tolerated, just like sports allegiances should be. (Though I do not examine it here, the heart of the argument is that even if Christianity is the one true faith, it only saves sincere believers. There is no point in forcing others to believe because coerced belief will not do them any good, afterlife-wise.)

This overcomes the first obstacle to toleration, but what of the second? How can we say that the ruler cannot command some things (things that violate conscience) without, in effect, undermining governmental power altogether? His solution may seem overly obvious, because we now take it for granted as conventional wisdom: *government exists only to protect rights*, with rights conceived on a metaphor with property. Precisely because this seems so obvious, it is worth exploring how he arrives at the idea.

Locke says that he needs to separate the business of government from the business of religion. This is perfectly familiar: "I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other." But *why* does he need to "distinguish exactly"? This part is less familiar but equally important:

> So that some may not colour their spirit of persecution and unchristian cruelty with a pretence of care of the public weal and observation of the laws; and that others, under pretence of religion, may not seek impunity for their libertinism and licentiousness; in a word, that none may impose either upon himself or others, *by the pretences of loyalty* and obedience to the prince, or of tenderness and sincerity in the worship of God; I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly. ([1689] 1983: 25–26)

He writes to prevent two false loyalties, two pretenses: the *Pretense of Loyalty to the Common Good*, in which some persecute others under the guise of civic order, and the *Pretense of Loyalty to God*, in which civic order is threatened under the guise of religious duty.

(p. 131) The long, hostile history of theopolitical conflict under liberalism is a series of accusations and counteraccusations that one's opponent is guilty of one or the other pretense. To use twenty-first-century examples, the French ban on religious attire in schools sounds suspiciously like the former pretense: loyalty to the common good. Would it *really* threaten the public good to allow a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy to wear his yarmulke to algebra class? Is it not, rather, that those who fear or do not understand Jews and Muslims justify their persecution under the guise of protecting the common good? The latter pretense, loyalty to God, is well displayed in the case of the Tennessee man who claimed a religious compulsion to wear a chicken suit to court or the British man who would not lower his sweatshirt hood in a grocery store because it was required by his faith as a Jedi knight, though there are less silly examples, such as various objections to taxpaying.

This explains why Locke believes we need a fixed, principled mechanism for distinguishing what falls under government's legitimate purview and what does not. Without such a mechanism, both sides will take advantage of the wiggle room in a cynical bid for personal advantage. Bigots will fabricate threats to the common good in order to persecute their enemies, and those enemies will fabricate conscientious objections to legitimate laws.

The mechanism Locke provides follows from his assertion that the "whole jurisdiction of the magistrate reaches only to these civil concernments": "man's rights." In particular, "Life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture and the like" ([1689] 1983: 26). Thus government makes laws against assault and theft, but it will not tell me how to pray—because whether I pray does not impinge on someone else's rights. So government is limited to protecting those outward things. But here he adds a further point: religion's proper domain is concern for what happens in the afterlife. This may strike us as odd for two reasons. First, religion very often *does* concern this-worldly affairs, like what to eat or who to marry. Second, as long as government is limited to protecting rights, why should it matter what each religion believes about itself, provided adherents are free to leave? Locke's qualifier about religion seems superfluous. Yet he thinks it matters because he wants to avoid even the slightest overlap between the two. For example, he is troubled by excommunication, because even though it is a religious act, it would seem to impact earthly affairs (e.g., if you are excommunicated, I may avoid your restaurant, thus allowing religion to indirectly impact your property rights).

He even provides a series of test cases to help us generate a rule for seeing what pertains to rights (and, thus, by definition, is legislatable) and what pertains to religion (and thus is inherently tolerable). Suppose, he asks, some religion wants to sacrifice infants. Simply ask yourself: Is the killing of infants generally allowed or prohibited? There is your answer. Suppose a different religion wants to sacrifice a calf? If it is permitted to kill cows that you own, it should not matter that your reason is for some ceremonial purpose. May the government regulate baptism? Well, what is baptism but washing with water? Surely washing oneself or one's children does not pertain to rights.

Yet Locke also perceives that nuances may sometimes be necessary. For example, killing your cow may sometimes be prohibited if the cattle stock had been wiped out and, for the common good, needed to be replenished. “Only it is to be observed that, in this case, the law is not made about a religious, but a political matter; nor is the sacrifice, but the slaughter of calves, thereby prohibited” ([1689] 1983: 42). So too washing with water may be regulated during an epidemic, to prevent the spread of disease—though baptism as such may not be (p. 132) regulated. The rule these cases generate is this: Whenever in doubt, ask whether the practice in question is “lawful in the ordinary course of life.”

With this in place, Locke’s defense of religious freedom is complete. It combines elements of political *theology*, including that toleration is itself a Christian tenet, with a political *theory*, that government is limited to protecting rights. What North Americans and British now typically take for granted as common sense comes to us largely via this proposal. That does not mean Locke was the sole author of this conception of religious freedom—or liberalism or rights—but there was no greater single voice for how government’s relation to religion is conceived in Anglo-American world. Despite the widespread acceptance of this solution by religious and secular alike, the real-life controversies that it was designed to avoid persist. More puzzling still is that both sides appeal to the same principles in support of conflicting conclusions.

We can begin to unravel the puzzle if we notice something Locke says at the very end of the *Letter Concerning Toleration*. This will help us see how the classic liberal conception of religious toleration evolves as it does, from the civil war of his day to the culture wars of today.

# Overlapping Jurisdictions: Gaps in the Solution

Throughout the *Letter*, Locke sticks to his stated plan: “distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion.” Having distinguished exactly for pages upon pages, Locke flinches. He backpedals for the briefest of moments, revealing that matters are not quite so simple:

> *A good life*, in which consists not the least part of religion and true piety, concerns also the civil government; and in it lies the safety both of men’s souls and of the commonwealth. *Moral actions* belong therefore to the jurisdiction both of the outward and inward court; both of the civil and domestic governor; I mean both of the magistrate and the conscience. Here, therefore, is a great danger, lest one of these jurisdictions intrench upon the other. ([1689] 1983: 46-47)

In other words, the solution is itself potentially unstable and contingent. Even if religion can be safely confined to the afterlife and civil government to the protection of property in this life, the components of a good life draw on a promiscuous variety of sources. He mentions law, morality, conscience, and religion, but presumably there are others (literature, friendships, artistic expression and experience, social practices like shared meals). There is no straightforward or mechanistic procedure for debundling these interrelated

practices. Yet Locke only flinches; he does not retreat. After expressing the worry, he quickly gathers himself and tries to puts the reader at ease: “But if what has been already said concerning the limits of both these governments be rightly considered, it will easily remove all difficulty in this matter” ([1689] 1983: 46-47). Three centuries later, the matter does not look so easy.

The cracks appear even within the *Letter* itself, and they widen into gaps by the American founding. Jefferson himself noticed these, writing in his personal notes on Locke’s *Letter* that “where Locke stopped short we may go on” (1943: 945). The sort of thing Jefferson had in (p. 133) mind was, presumably, Locke’s limits on the scope of toleration. For example, Locke does not tolerate atheists and probably intends to exclude Roman Catholics as well. Jefferson thought this was too narrow, for as he writes, “It does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty gods or no God; it neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg” (1984: 285). Notice that in saying this Jefferson is adhering rigidly to Locke’s criteria (it’s all about rights—avoiding pickpocketing and leg-breaking), but he comes to a different conclusion. Limiting toleration in the way that Locke did was not uncommon in his day, even in the comparatively tolerant Dutch provinces. Why?

On Locke’s understanding of Catholic teaching, the pope is an earthy ruler, like a king. Hence a Catholic is intolerable for the same reason an Englishman would be who claimed the czar was his true king. Locke’s denial of toleration to atheists is more complex. His *stated* reason is that atheism is socially dangerous because promise-keeping depends on oaths to God, which an atheist cannot make. Elsewhere, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* ([1690] 1996: 25–26), he lists numerous nations that seem to function well without belief in God. He therefore seems to at least be open to the idea that some societies (though evidently not his) could tolerate atheism, or indeed be entirely secular, without civil strife.

In short, religious beliefs and practices, because they are bound up with civil and ethical consequences, are not straightforwardly distinguishable in all cases. Conscientious objections to military service are another example from Locke’s day, debated both in England and the American colonies. Whether Catholicism, atheism, and pacifism are tolerable depends on *contingent* matters, which must be worked out in light of the details of the case at hand. How many pacifists are there? Can we defend against the invading force without their aid? Do atheists keep their promises in some societies but not others? How would we know which sort of a society ours is? Are Catholics more inclined to be traitors?

What we see even in the early years of American Independence is these ideas used to support positions *across the ideological spectrum*. For example, consider George Washington’s promotion of religion while he served as president, not only through his speeches but also substantively through increasing the pay of military chaplains. What is interesting to note is that although Washington shares this ground with today’s religious conservatives, his reasoning is not theocratic or even theological. It conforms to Locke’s solution. Religion is necessary, Washington argues, because it provides “the security for property, for reputation, for life” (1988: 521). As he sees it, he is not promoting religion

as such but only the security of property, which certainly falls within the government's jurisdiction.

While Washington explicitly affirms that public peace depends upon religion, Jefferson reached the opposite conclusion: as president he should not even *symbolically* affirm it, such as by proclaiming days of prayer or thanksgiving, lest this influence public opinion against anyone who did not share the president's views (1999: 397–398). This too conforms to Locke's solution, notably the requirement that even excommunication be carried out gently.

Or consider Patrick Henry's controversial and ill-fated "Bill for Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion." The bill, proposed in 1784, would have levied a property tax to be distributed to various churches. When objections were raised about the acceptability of such overt government support, the bill was amended to begin, "Whereas the general diffusion of Christian knowledge hath a tendency to … preserve the peace of society" (Buckley 1977: 188). When pressed to justify the bill, the reasons given are precisely those that Locke would demand. But Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance," written *against* Henry's bill, also uses Locke's reasoning (Muñoz 2003: 23).

(p. 134) The controversies were hardly confined to the founding era. In the twentieth century, the debates were about school prayer, laws against contraceptives, and laws restricting homosexuality. There has been a similar, and highly contested, series of cases in the United Kingdom, with several reaching the European Court of Human Rights. They are woven like a thread through centuries of American and British political history, confirming that Locke was far too optimistic when he claimed we can "easily remove all difficulty in this matter."

# John Rawls's Attempted Revitalization

There have been many attempts to fulfill such optimism in the intervening centuries, but I will focus on John Rawls's books, *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993). Together with Jürgen Habermas, Rawls has been the most influential voice of the past generation on how secular government is conceived in Western liberal democracies, including on how to deal with problematic cases of overlapping jurisdictions of the sort we just observed. The former book, *A Theory of Justice*, is an attempt to revitalize classical social-contract political liberalism especially against the challenge of utilitarianism, but religious or theocratic challenges are also in view. The second, *Political Liberalism*, is more explicitly concerned with the question of religion and government. His goal, he says, is to address this question: "How is it possible for those affirming a religious doctrine that is based on religious authority, for example, the Church or the Bible, also to hold a reasonable political conception that supports a just democratic regime?" (1996: xxxvii). A brief, and admittedly oversimplified, summary will help us see how Rawls hopes to address the sorts of problems Locke's proposal leaves us with.

Rawls seeks to show how we can arrive at fundamental principles of justice even in a context of widespread moral and religious pluralism. After all, there are many different theories of justice. Some people are utilitarians and ground their conception of justice in Bentham's doctrine that each counts for one and none for more than one. Others are Christians and ground their conception of justice in Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself. Still others have an Aristotelian conception of justice; others still have a democratic conception grounded in Dewey's pragmatism; others are Jewish, and so on and so forth. How can we hope to agree on a basic conception of justice for our society?

Rawls calls his solution "justice as fairness," and it is intentionally proceduralist. In other words, our best prospect for agreement in the face of pluralism is to set aside big-picture questions about the meaning of life or goodness and instead focus on minimal, but fair, rules. As he puts it, *the right has priority over the good*. He provides a now-famous illustration of how such agreement might be obtained. We imagine ourselves behind a "veil of ignorance," where we do not know what our position in the society will be. We might be born rich or poor, Muslim or atheist, fat or slim, Canadian or Korean. Because we have set aside our particular characteristics, we can be sure that the agreed rules will not bias one or another group. Though Rawls uses this device narrowly, to generate two fundamental principles of justice that ground his theory, the basic idea continues throughout his work: we leave aside particular characteristics when those would be an obstacle to fair agreement.

Its influence can be seen in the way that he develops his theory in *Political Liberalism* to address the specific challenge raised by religious believers. His answer is that, at least under certain conditions, citizens must not invoke any "comprehensive" doctrine in their (p. 135) arguments for public policy; by comprehensive doctrine he means to exclude not only religious viewpoints but any complete philosophical outlook. Citizens must instead appeal only to general political values, such as freedom and equality, which are not particular to given philosophies or religions. He never fully explains how these general political values can be identified, but he seems to mean those that could be derived from his idea of justice as fairness and based on the principles of justice agreed behind the veil of ignorance. In short, the state should be *neutral with regarding to competing conceptions of the good*.

Rawls's proposal appears to rectify the problem of overlapping jurisdictions between conscience, religion, ethics, and law. If all comprehensive philosophical, moral, or religious outlooks are excluded (again, at least under certain circumstances), then we cannot encounter any conflicts between them. Governmental policies will be limited to those supportable only by general political values and shared by all. The intuition behind the veil of ignorance is a very appealing one, for it recognizes that our particular perspectives do sometimes bias us. On the school playground, children should set the rules before they know which team they are on: otherwise the fast team will choose a foot race and the stocky team will want to play rugby. So too in society; otherwise the rich citizens will

choose a libertarian conception of justice, the farmers will choose one that benefits agriculture, and so on.

As easy as it is to perceive the appeal of Rawls's project, it should be equally easy to see the pitfalls. What makes a game a success on the playground concerns only a very narrow range of factors. We can readily distinguish the sorts of considerations we should "leave out" due to potential bias (speedy runners choosing a sprint) and those that we should not leave out, because they are essential to choosing well (Do we have the right equipment? Can it be played before recess is over? Is the game fun?). By contrast, what makes a human society go well is not so easily identified, nor can we readily distinguish between the considerations to leave out and those to include when selecting a basic principle of justice. If the utilitarian is asked to leave out his or her basic utilitarian beliefs (justice is the greatest good for the greatest number), he or she will wonder why Rawls does not have to leave out *his* basic values (individual liberty, fundamental equality of persons).

As several critics have pointed out, actually following Rawls's advice leaves out too much. For example, Rawls suggests that because the personhood of the fetus is contested, the government should remain neutral on abortion (1996: 243 note 32; also liii note 31). We know that women are persons, we disagree about whether fetuses are persons, and so we let each woman decide for herself whether to keep her fetus. The problem is that this is precisely what Stephen Douglas argued in defending slavery in the Lincoln–Douglas debates (Galston 1991: 274; Sandel 1996: 21–22). We know that Europeans are persons, we disagree about whether Africans are persons, and so we let each European decide for him or herself whether to keep a slave. In the pre–Civil War American South, bracketing controversial moral positions was the tool by which the majority justified its oppression of the minority. (There may, of course, still be reasons to endorse Rawls's prochoice conclusion. The point of the analogy is to show that governmental neutrality on controversial questions is not always right.) In short, complete disentanglement succeeds only by leaving out too much.

As influential as Rawls has been, there now seems to be a consensus forming that he does not fully succeed in providing a sound, secular basis for government. This consensus is largely due to an influential communitarian critique, but it can be seen elsewhere, even among those sympathetic to Rawls. For example, Habermas now distinguishes between secular and religious spheres less rigidly than he used to (Biggar 2009). Richard (p. 136) Rorty, while remaining (in his words) as adamantly secular and anticlerical as ever, ultimately abandoned Rawls's conception of secular public reason as misguided and unworkable. Even Rawls himself, in his later works, removed a few bricks from the wall between comprehensive doctrines and political values—in limited cases, allowing religious arguments to play a public role (1996: 462).

# I Wish I Had a Principle: In Defense of Ad Hoc

We have seen that what makes Locke so crucial to understanding how we conceive secular government today is that he stood on the boundary between two conversations about religious freedom. He writes the epilogue and the final "No" to the debate about whether government should punish heresy, but the prologue to a new conversation about the myriad details and disputes that must now be worked out if we agree that government is limited (i.e., that promoting orthodoxy is not its business). While many of these disputes are easily resolved, others are trickier.

John Locke and John Rawls each realize, up to a point, that they cannot fully disentangle morality, law, religion, and so on—at least not in the tricky cases. Yet they remain adamant that even the tricky cases *can be made* solvable by means of neutral principles, specified in advance of the particular cases.

This means that both voices in this "Johannine" tradition leaves us with a similar problem, arising from a similar source. They are both opposed to ad hoc or case-based solutions to disputes about the proper bounds between religion and government. We can readily see why they would prefer principled solutions to ad hoc ones. The latter appear more easily manipulated. Recall Locke's fear about the Pretense of Loyalty to the Common Good and the Pretense of Loyalty to God. But *wanting* a neutral, abstract, principled solution does not mean one really exists. Indeed, in light of ongoing conflicts, it now appears increasingly naïve to hope that all imaginable future theopolitical disputes can be solved so straightforwardly. That religion and government may not be disentangled may sound like an argument from religious conservatives, but it was in fact Richard Rorty who acknowledged it most clearly.

The context in which Rorty changes his mind—abandoning, in effect, the principlism that lies at the heart of the Johannine strand of liberalism—was a debate about the proper role of religious texts in political arguments within a secular government. Rorty's Rawlsian position had been challenged by the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, who had argued that, in a democracy, everyone should use whatever arguments they want, whatever their ultimate source. By way of example, Wolterstorff had asked: What if he wants to appeal to Psalm 72 as part of an argument in favor of socialized medicine? Rorty replies:

> [He] has convinced me that my response … was hasty and insufficiently thoughtful. … So I shall offer a chastened, and more cautious, restatement of my anti-clerical views. … I can think of no law or custom that would hinder [Wolterstorff] from doing so that would not hinder me from citing passages in John Stuart Mill in justification of the same legislation. The fact that Psalm 72 belongs to a set of Scriptures claimed by various ecclesiastical organizations which I regard as politically dangerous is not a good reason to hinder Wolterstorff from citing (p. 137) this Psalm, any more than the fact that many people regard Mill's utilitarianism as morally dangerous is a good reason to stop me citing *On Liberty*. Neither law nor

> custom should stop either of us from bringing our favorite texts with us into the public square. (2003: 141–143)

Thus Rorty abandons the *principlist* attempt to distinguish religious from secular reasons for public policy. But what if, rather than advocating socialized medicine, someone supports a law criminalizing homosexuals by citing the usual verses from Leviticus? Rorty responds:

> Here I cannot help feeling that, though the law should not forbid someone from citing such texts in support of a political position, custom *should* forbid it. …
>
> People who quote Leviticus 18:22 with approval should be shunned and despised. Our attitude to them should be the same as that toward people who remark that, though of course Hitler was a bad thing, it cannot be denied that the Jews *did* kill Christ—or, to vary the example, people who urge that, although the lynch mobs went too far, it is a truly terrible thing for a white women to have sex with a black man. (2003: 143)

If an abstract principle cannot distinguish what should be allowable and what should not, can anything? What should be our guide? Here is Rorty's punch line. He realizes this is ideologically loaded and, in fact, embraces it: *"It would be nice if I could appeal to a principle* which differentiated between citing Psalm 72 in favour of government-financed health insurance and citing Leviticus 18 in opposition to changes in the law that would make life in the U.S. more bearable for gays and lesbians. *But I do not have one*. I wholeheartedly believe that religious people should trim their utterances to suit my utilitarian views. … But I do not know how to make either of these propositions plausible to them" (2003: 143–144). Rorty is suggesting that the sorts of considerations that may inform public debate, public policy, and so on cannot be rigidly defined in advance of the particular cases. Whether we support or oppose a given argument cannot always be decided by whether the source of that argument lies in a religious or secular text; it may often depend on the merits of the argument itself.

Compared to a principlist solution, this sounds risky. How risky is it? Certainly Locke would worry that it opens the door to the manipulative pretenses that he had worked so hard to eliminate. I close by briefly considering three cases where ad hoc or nonprincipliist reasoning appears. I do not intend to resolve the cases but merely to help us see what difference this sort of approach would make.

# Is Ad Hoc Possible? Three Test Cases

My first example concerns *Hillary Goodridge v Department of Public Health* (2003), which was the first decision by a US state Supreme Court in favor of same-sex marriage. How would Locke approach the question? Recall that for a secular government to decide about, say, animal sacrifice or baptism, Locke suggests we secularize the practice in question. What is animal sacrifice, in secular terms, but a farmer killing his or her own live-

stock? And what is baptism but a washing with water? So too, what is marriage *in the ordinary course of life* but a contract—or, perhaps, a civic benefit?

Many of the arguments in the dispute—from *both* parties (supporters of same-sex marriage and their [mostly religious] opponents)—conform fairly neatly to this model. That is, (p. 138) they bracket out substantive questions of the human good, the meaning of marriage, and the social and symbolic role that marriage plays. They treat it as any other contract and resolve it with questions of procedural fairness, third-party harm, and so on. Hence, supporters argue (in a fashion that would please Rawls) that the dispute could be settled merely on grounds of fundamental equality. If the government gives marriage licenses to some adults, it cannot refuse licenses to other adults, because that distinction is rooted in beliefs arising from particular comprehensive doctrines. Opponents claimed, among other things, that children—as third parties outside the contact—fare better in mixed-gender households. Furthermore, if equality was really as fundamental as supporters claimed, *any* adults should be allowed to marry—including ones already married to others, brothers and sisters, and so on. Whatever the merits of these arguments, note that they all readily conform to (in Locke's terms) the distinction between the business of government and church and (in Rawls's terms) the distinction between comprehensive doctrines and political values.

Although the court engages these arguments in its ruling, the chief justice, Margaret Marshall, goes considerably beyond them. If we bracket out controversial questions about the meaning of marriage (if we say that marriage is just any-old contract, the way that Locke suggests we regard baptism as any-old washing with water), the criteria remaining for us to decide the case would be inadequate to choose between the available alternatives. For example, basic equality could be achieved by getting government out of the marriage business altogether *or* by allowing marriage to all adults (including those already married, those closely related, and on). Basic equality is too thin of a value to actually help us choose in this case.

Justice Marshall realizes this and refuses to bracket the deeper moral question about the meaning of marriage. She writes, "Civil marriage is at once a deeply person commitment to another human being and a highly public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, intimacy, fidelity, and family." This departs from the principlist tradition, arguing that mutuality and fidelity are virtues that are worthy of the community's honor and that this honor is best conferred through the social practice called marriage. In other words, she is saying that it is inherently good for a community when its members display fidelity and mutuality in their relationships and that therefore the government has a legitimate interest in publically honoring such relationships, including those between members of the same sex.

My second example of ad hoc reasoning is the US Supreme Court case *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014). At issue was whether family businesses could be compelled to include certain contraceptives in their employee health insurance plan, even if the owners had conscientious objections on religious grounds. Hobby Lobby's insurance plan covered sixteen

different forms of birth control, including the birth control pill, but it did not cover IUDs and the so-called morning after pill, which the government specifically required. The ruling found in Hobby Lobby's favor, on the grounds that there were readily available ways for the government to provide the two objectionable methods without involving Hobby Lobby, such as having the insurance companies provide these directly to the employees, sidestepping the employer's involvement.

The case is complicated and involves a number of details that I have left out. My point in including it here is merely to highlight one feature of the ruling. One of the common criticisms of the ruling runs as follows: although the impact on Hobby Lobby employees may be relatively minor, the wider consequences when we look at other employers could be much more serious. For example, Roman Catholic employers will object to all contraceptives. (p. 139) Jehovah's Witness employers will object to blood transfusions. Indeed, at points in the past, some Christian sects have objected to the very idea of insurance itself, considering it a form of gambling. It appears that if employers can object to one form, they can object to any, and so the very idea of socialized medicine is undermined. The danger of such a slippery slope is precisely the argument that Locke made against religious freedom in the first place. If we open the door by making some exceptions, there will be no way to close it again. It gives free rein to the Pretense of Loyalty to God, so that religious believers (and those who pretend to be) avoid legitimate laws.

Whether these implications should worry us is precisely the point disputed by the justices. The four dissenting justices argue that although the decision appears narrow, it is in fact "of startling breadth." The reasoning is clear: if we make an exception for two forms of contraception, we will eventually have to make an exception for five forms, and then all eighteen—and eventually we will be making exceptions to all sorts of things, like laws against sexual discrimination. By contrast, Justice Kennedy's concurring opinion endorses a view like Rorty's ad hoc. Kennedy argues that in *this* case—concerning *this* company, with *that* objection to *those* medicines—there is a way for the government to achieve its interest in providing contraceptives without involving the employers at all. So in this case, that is the best way of unbundling religious and governmental concerns. But, Kennedy immediately adds, it does not follow that the same exemption is available to others. It would depend on the specifics of each case.

My third and final example is from the United Kingdom and will be treated more briefly. In 2006, a Christian women was told that wearing a cross around her neck violated her employer's uniform policy, even though Sikh men are allowed to wear turbans and Muslim women allowed head coverings. The British employment tribunal who initially ruled against her did so partly on the grounds that wearing a cross is not specifically required by Christian teaching in the way that head coverings are required for Muslims and Sikhs (Hambler 2015: 194–198). This reasoning, supported by British courts throughout her appeals (*Eweida v. British Airways*), rejects the Johannine principlist approach. The judges do not secularize "wants to wear a cross" into the more general "wants to wear jewelry." If they did that, they would have bracketed out of consideration the factor that they see as important, that is, that for Christians wearing a cross might be a personal preference

but not a requirement. It may also have been relevant that a Sikh's turban would be impossible to conceal during work hours, while the Christian's cross could be conveniently worn under her uniform shirt. (The European Court of Human Rights eventually found in the worker's favor on grounds that need not concern us here.)

# Conclusion

The point of including these examples is not to resolve them but to indicate what sorts of considerations become important when the boundaries between government and religion are drawn in an ad hoc fashion rather than via bare principlism. They suggest that at least some tricky cases cannot be straightforwardly resolved by the procedure Locke proposed. Sometimes attention to the specifics of the case, even though they are themselves subject to dispute, is an important part of sound judgment.

(p. 140) The Hobby Lobby case will be an important litmus test for this approach in coming decades. Does it prove to be a slippery slope toward endless exemptions for all sorts of (sometimes spurious) religious claims, as the dissenting justices anticipate? This is the sort of thing Locke feared when we wrote of the Pretense of Loyalty to God. Or will subsequent claims be dealt with in a prudential, ad hoc fashion, weighing the specific merits of each case—as Justice Kennedy predicts? This is the approach that Rorty ultimately accepted. Subsequent rulings will reveal who was correct.

In rebuttal to my tentative endorsement, it may be argued that the only reason an ad hoc approach can even be entertained is that we are already a long way from the seventeenth century. In other words, Locke's conception of religious toleration has created, in the intervening centuries, a *culture* within which the most egregious forms of persecution are rendered out of bounds. Only within that culture should we allow ourselves the leeway in the rare tricky cases. That is a wise caution. Contemporary debates would benefit from greater attention to the history from which our "common-sense" responses to the cases emerged. What we take for granted as common sense is hardly a universal value but an inheritance created in early modernity and passed on to us via countless disputes since. Our conception of how government and religion relate is shaped by that created common sense, for good and for ill.

## Bibliography

Ajzenstat, Janet. 2007. *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Biggar, Nigel. 2009. "Conclusion." In *Religious Voices in Public Places*, edited by Nigel Biggar and Linda Hogan, 309–330. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buckley, Thomas. 1977. *Church and State in Revolutionary Virginia, 1776–1787*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. 2014. 573 U.S. __ (docket nos. 13-354, 13-356).

Cavanaugh, William. 1990. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Galston, William. 1991. *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Gutmann, Amy. 1985. “Communitarian Critics of Liberalism.” *Public Affairs* 14(3), 308–322.

Hambler, Andrew. 2015. *Religious Expression in the Workplace and the Contested Role of Law and Religion*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hamburger, Philip. 2004. *Separation of Church and State*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hillary Goodridge, et al. v. Department of Public Health, et al. 2003. 440 Mass. 309.

Jefferson, Thomas. 1943. *The Complete Jefferson.* Edited by Saul Padover. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce.

Jefferson, Thomas. 1984. *Writings.* Edited by Merrill D. Peterson. New York: Library of America.

Jefferson, Thomas. 1999. *Political Writings*. Edited by Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Kamen, Henry. 1967. *The Rise of Toleration*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kessler, Sanford. 1983. “Locke’s Influence on Jefferson’s Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom.” *Journal of Church and State* 25(2), 231–252.

Kymlicka, Will. 1989. *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(p. 141) Laursen, John, and Cary J. Nederman. 1998. *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Locke, John. 1689. *Letter Concerning Toleration.* Edited by James Tulley. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983.

Locke, John. 1690. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1996.

Locke, John. 1997. “First Tract on Government.” In *Political Essays*, edited by Mark Goldie, 3–53. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Macedo, Stephen. 1990. *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue, and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Muñoz, Vincent Philip. 2003. “James Madison’s Principle of Religious Liberty.” *American Political Science Review* 97(1), 17–32.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2008. *Liberty of Conscience*. New York: Basic Books.

Perry, John. 2011. *The Pretenses of Loyalty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rawls, John. 1996. *Political Liberalism,* expanded ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rorty, Richard. 2003. “Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration.” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31(1), 141–149.

Sandel, Michael. 1996. *Democracy’s Discontent*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Stout, Jeffrey. 2004. *Democracy and Tradition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Waldron, Jeremy. 2002. *God, Locke, and Equality*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Washington, George. 1988. *George Washington: A Collection.* Edited by W. B. Allen. Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 2003. “An Engagement with Rorty.” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31(1), 129–139.

Zuckert, Michael. 2002. *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

**John Perry**

John Perry is a professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Riverside and Henry Waldgrave Stuart Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305–2155. USA. Email: john@csli.stanford.edu; johnperry43@gmail.com

# Secularism in France

Amélie Barras

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.9

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores how the meaning given to French laïcité differs in function of sociopolitical and historical contexts and who is using this discourse. It highlights how discourses of laïcité are intimately linked to the religious and its definition, paying special attention to the different meanings given to three concepts around which this discourse is articulated: separation of religion and politics, neutrality, and gender equality. By putting the emphasis on the evolving dimension of this discourse, the chapter also discusses how this has implications for the production of the category "religion" and, more specifically, for delimiting what is religiously acceptable in France. These arguments are explored by paying particular attention to the relation between laïcité and Islam in contemporary France.

Keywords: laïcité, France, Islam, discourse, separation of religion and politics, neutrality, gender equality

> Rather than take secularism to be a neutral or natural space for politics to emerges once religion has been privatized, displaced, or diminished, it takes shape here as a contingent series of legal and political claims and projects that are deeply implicated in the definition and management of religion, religious freedom, toleration, diversity and so on. Secularism is not the absence of religion, but enacts a particular kind of presence. It appropriates religion: defining, shaping and even transforming it.
>
> Hurd (2012: 955)

OVER the last decades, French *laïcité* seems to have become the central protagonist of a story that has been told and (re)told in and outside France. In this story, *laïcité* is often narrated as *the* original and purest model, a model that can be a source of inspiration for other countries, but is impossible to replicate: an exceptional model (see, e.g., Costa-Lascoux 1996). French *laïcité* appears as a stable, almost ahistorical and timeless paradigm. Different versions of this story are articulated around three particular claims—which I call languages of *laïcité* (on this see Barras 2014): a language of separation between reli-

gion and state[1]; a language of neutrality, which is generally, but not exclusively, directed toward state's institutions; and finally a language of gender equality.

This chapter examines some of the aspects of this story and discusses how its main plot varies in function of sociopolitical contexts and who is telling this tale. Through this discussion, it draws attention to the importance of situating this story and documenting how it is applied in practice. So doing sheds light on the complexity, tensions, and inconsistencies carried within this parable. This is particularly visible when we turn our gaze to the contemporary relationship between French *laïcité* and Islam. This chapter begins by examining these three languages of *laïcité* in detail, and then it explores how these are (re)appropriated by French activists challenging current meanings given to these languages.

# Separation of "Church" and State

After the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris, the French government announced new efforts to encourage Imams to take civic lessons in which they would learn about (p. 143) French values and the place of religion in secular France. Manuel Valls, the prime minister at the time, explained: "We need French chaplains and imams, who speak French, who learn French, who like France. And who believe in its values. And we also need French funding."[2] These attempts to train French Imams are not new; they have been ongoing since the past two decades. They are part of the efforts by different French governments to create an Islam *of* France rather than an Islam *in* France, that is: to regulate the forms and organization of Islam in France. This is also visible in the numerous attempts of successive French governments to facilitate the creation of a body that represents Islam in France, which led to the establishment, in 2003, of the French Council of the Muslim Religion.[3]

These intrusions into religion, and in this particular case Islam, have not gone uncriticized. For some these are a direct challenge to the principle of separation between religion and state, which is understood as one of the cornerstones of *laïcité*. For instance, in 2005 the attempts by the French government to encourage the organization of an Imam training course at the University of Marseille was challenged by faculty members of that institution, who argued that this was in contradiction with the spirit of the 1905 law (on the complexity of this process, see Le Bars 2007). The 1905 law, also known as the separation law, is generally considered to be central to the articulation of *laïcité*. It was passed as an effort to put an end to the battle between secularists and conservative Catholics that had been ongoing in France throughout the 1800s (Kuru 2007, 2009). Since the French revolution, secular elites had tried to control and limit the role of the Catholic Church in state affairs. Kuru explains how education was at that time the main "battlefield" (Kuru 2007: 569). During the first part of the Third Republic (1870–1940), for example, secular elites banned members of the clergy from teaching and closed approximately 15,000 Catholics schools (Kuru 2008: 6; Baubérot 2004). For Bowen (2015) and others, the 1905 law is understood as an attempt to strike a "compromise" between these

two forces, with the aim to limit state intrusion in religious affairs and vice versa. The 1905 law actually does not make explicit reference to the concept of *laïcité*. Nonetheless, it is considered by the Conseil d'Etat (2004: 258–260, 405–415), the highest administrative court in France, as putting in place *laïcité's* two main legal pillars. In its first article the law affirms freedom of conscience and freedom to practice as long as this latter freedom does not disturb public order. The second article recognizes the principle of separation of church and state.

To approach this 1905 law in terms of a legal separation of church and state tells us only part of the story. This is why scholars have recommended considering the dynamics that enable this separation, which reveal the complex and intimate relationships between state and religion (Hurd 2008: 16; Agrama 2010; Knott 2005). Indeed, the act of separation in and of itself requires that the state define and locate religion in a way that differentiates it from the nonreligious. In so doing, it intrudes and is deeply implicated in delimiting the religious. This approach invites us to think about how the 1905 law sought to delimitate religion and assign it a precise place in French society outside of state affairs. Thus, to define the boundaries of the secular and the religious is itself a political decision that is made and (re)made throughout contemporary history (Hurd 2008).

The 1905 law, for instance, sought to end government funding of religion, meaning among other things that the salary of the clergy and the preservation of religious buildings would have to be covered by private parties. The clergy, not surprisingly, was opposed to this political move that would put an end to its ability to receive state funding. Consequently, as Bowen (2015) stresses, this law was never implemented in the way it was foreseen. Instead, two additional laws were passed in 1907 and 1908, whereby the state was made responsible (p. 144) for the upkeep of existing religious edifices, resulting in "a large government subsidy paid to Catholic churches, with little or no aid to mosques, synagogues, or evangelical churches, which were built mainly after 1905."[4] The Church was also able to negotiate an arrangement with respect to its role in education, whereby until today Catholic schools receive state funding as long as they teach the national curriculum and do not discriminate among whom they accept (Bowen 2015). Paying attention to the historical and political contexts of the 1905 law also sheds light on the special status of the French region of Alsace-Moselle, where none of these laws apply, as this region was part of the German Empire when they were passed. Consequently, the 1801 Concordat, discussed at greater length later, still regulates the relation between religion and state in that region. This means among other things that the state pays and in some cases appoints religious clergy and that religious education is mandatory in public schools (Kuru 2008; Guénois 2012).

Shifting our gaze to the "politics" that structure this concept of separation allows us to capture some of the complexities and ambiguities of the relationships between the French state and religion, a complexity that remains overlooked if we only think of *laïcité* in terms of establishing a legal, and an ahistorical, separation. Likewise, giving consideration to the historical and political dimensions around which the French model of religious governance is articulated can explain the obsession of successive French governments to

craft an Islam *of* France, including current attempts to develop official Imam training courses. This, according to Bowen (2007a: 1008), should be understood in light of a *Gallican* tradition that goes back as far as the rule of Philippe Le Bel (1268–1314), whereby it was established that the king "asserted his political control over the Church" (1008). This tradition influenced the development of the modalities of the *Concordat* put in place by Napoleon Bonaparte in the early nineteenth century, lasting from 1801 until 1905, whereby the state recognized four religious traditions—Catholicism, Reformed, Lutheran, and Judaism. The state employed their staff, owned their buildings and required full subordination of their clergy to the Republic (1008). It thus influenced the forms and shapes these religions took. To "fit" within this model, for instance, Jews were strongly encouraged to develop representative bodies, *Consistoires*, modeled on the organization of the French Protestant community (Schreier 2007).

While this Concordat was officially de-established after the passing of the 1905 law, this model continued to influence state–Islam relationships in colonial Algeria (Maussen 2007; Achi 2006) and seems to haunt the Republican imagination when it comes to regulating Islam in contemporary France. This history makes it seem almost as if freedom from state interference in religious affairs is only possible when religion takes on shapes that are considered by the state to be compatible with Republican values and ways of organizing. In this paradigm, the state is responsible to ensure that this becomes a reality and to protect society from types of religion that are deemed threathening. Jeremy Gunn emphasizes this useful distinction between French *laïcité* and American secularism: "whereas 'religious freedom' in the United States typically bears the nuance of freedom of religion *from* the state, in France *laïcité* often bears the connotation of the state protecting citizens from the *excesses* of religion" (2004: 421, original emphasis). Kuru's (2007) distinction between French assertive secularism and American passive secularism conveys a similar point.

This historical investigation highlights some of the tensions lodged in the language of separation. Legally, the 1905 separation law establishes freedom of conscience and of practice for all.[5] This sort of separation is enabled by Article 2 of the law that stipulates that the Republic does not recognize or fund any religions. Yet, situating this piece of legislation within its (p. 145) particular sociopolitical and historical context allows us to understand the intricacies of the application of this law. It is also an invitation to consider how models of religious governance put in place before the passing of that law have influenced how it has been and continues to be implemented, including who and what type of beliefs and practices can or should be fully protected by religious freedom.

# Neutrality of What? Of Whom?

In 2004 the French government passed a law banning visible religious symbols in public schools. While the law was phrased in general terms, debates and policy reports related to the law were targeting implicitly students wearing headscarves (Scott 2007; Bowen 2007b, 2015). The law, justified in the name of *laïcité*, sought to ensure that schools be-

come neutral spaces, where students could not be differentiated from one another and thus where they would all be treated equally. Schools were here described as “Republican sanctuar[ies]” (Chirac 2003) for students, enabling them to become “enlightened citizens” and be detached from outside influences. Those influences were understood as possibly incompatible with Republican values, especially gender equality (discussed later; Stasi 2003: 57–58). For many, this law represents a shift in the dominant meaning given to *laïcité* (see, e.g., Hajjat 2015; Bowen 2015; Lorcerie 2015). Until that point the concept of neutrality was understood by most (including courts) to apply first and foremost to the state, including public servants,[6] as a way to ensure its impartiality. With the 2004 law, this neutrality requirement was extended for the first time to students wearing headscarves, as users of a public service.

It is interesting to note that with this reading of neutrality the state seems to assume that religious expressions can be easily modified to become invisible in selected spaces. Hajjat qualifies these interventions as constitutive of a “neo-laïc framework” that specifically “strive[s] to eliminate Islam from public view” (2015: 12). In effect, the 2004 law and its extension of the neutrality principle set a precedent that opened the door for interferences in the subjectivities of citizens beyond school students, including but not limited to other users of public services (Barras 2013; Lorcerie 2015; Hajjat 2015). For instance, France passed a law in 2010 that prohibits the wearing of full-face veils in the “public” realm, a law that affects all women wearing these garments regardless of whether they are public servants or users of public services. Politicians have also suggested that laws be passed to prohibit headscarves in universities (Alemagna 2015), as well as in private daycare facilities (Vauchez and Valentin 2014), including in-home daycare (Lorcerie 2015; Hajjat 2015). This last proposal is noteworthy, inasmuch as the requirement of neutrality is extended to the household of daycare providers. Since these individuals, who welcome children under the age of six years old, are deemed responsible for the education of future French citizens, it is argued that they should avoid influencing them with their religious expressions. Thus, their household, during their working hours, becomes a space subjected to state regulations and interference.

It is important to think briefly about the implication of this reading of the term “neutrality.” In the current context, it is first and foremost defined in relation/opposition to the garments worn by Muslims women (headscarf, full-face veil, long skirts, burkinis). This bears serious consequences for the ability of Muslim women to access and participate in public services, as well as to earn a living. Policy reports have also indicated the need to exclude (p. 146) other practices, especially those that are understood as “segmenting” or disturbing the order of particular spaces, such as requests for halal meals (Rossinot 2006: 38; Lecomte 2015), for separate men’s and women’s hours at swimming pools and sports centers (Rossinot 2006), or for collective prayer spaces (Observatoire de la Laïcité 2014: 57).[7] In these cases neutrality continues to be mobilized to regulate and exclude religious practices, and more specifically Islamic practices. These practices are distinguished sharply from religious beliefs remaining within the private conscience of the believer. Beliefs, taken to be private, can be compatible with public life and should be fully protected by religious freedom. It is equally relevant here to note the spatial dimension of this neu-

trality principle. It is used to delimit spaces in which religious practices can be governed by *laïcité*. While public services have been identified as the primary spaces where this governance should take place, other spaces in recent decades, such as private businesses or home daycares, have become spaces that can also become subject to this requirement, especially if they are understood as spaces in which citizens coexist (see Barras 2013 and Hajjat 2015).

In light of how this concept of neutrality is being defined and applied in opposition to Islamic practices, several scholars have questioned the usage of "neutrality" for the goal of promoting and enabling equal treatment among everyone. They argue, among other things, that it is used in a way that promotes a Christian reading of religion, where "modern" religion takes the form of a belief located within the believer's conscience (Danchin 2011). This language turns out to only apply to specific groups of individuals (in this current case, Muslims) and to particular practices that are not understood as "modern" beliefs. Hence, particular groups are more vulnerable to this regulation process than others, which contradicts the idea of equal treatment. As discussed at the end of this chapter, similar arguments are mobilized by activists challenging this interpretation of neutrality and in particular the extensions of headscarf bans. These debates around the meaning of neutrality point to the tensions and inconsistencies present in that language.

# *Laïcité* and Gender Equality

A related reason that was put forth to justify prohibiting students, and other women, from wearing visible religious symbols is gender equality. For the Stasi Commission, a body set up by former President Chirac in 2003 to reflect on how *laïcité* should be applied in public schools (it recommended the 2004 law), the headscarf is a sign of women's oppression. In other words, its acceptance in schools means that the state is supporting a patriarchal and hierarchical gender model, which goes against the mission of schools to promote a model based on equality. Setting apart schools as places in which *laïcité* should prevail, and thus asking young female students to remove their hijab, purportedly gives them the possibility to free themselves from this oppressive model. More specifically, this is offered as an opportunity to become "autonomous," "emancipated," and "equal" members of society. The report clarifies these points:

> For the educative community, the wearing of the headscarf is too often source of conflict, divisions and even suffering. The visible character of the sign is felt by many to be against the school's mission, which is to create a neutral space, and a place fostering the awakening of (p. 147) critical consciousness. It is also an attack on the principles and values that the school must teach, particularly equality between men and women. … The Republic cannot stay deaf to the desperate screams of young girls [girls pressured to wear the headscarf]. The educational space needs to remain for them a place of freedom and emancipation.
>
> (Stasi 2003: 57, 58, my translation)

In effect French *laïcité* has become intrinsically linked in public discourses with a language of gender equality. To be more precise, asking particular citizens to conform to the neutrality principle in selected public spaces (schools but also universities, daycares, etc.) is narrated as the gateway to gender equality. Interestingly, this connection between *laïcité* and gender equality is almost exclusively mobilized in connection to Muslim women and the need to "save" them from their "oppressive" religion and from the "oppressive" men enforcing it.[8] Thus, the bodies of these women become boundary markers between an undefined "public" space—that seems in the current climate to be expanding exponentially—and a shrinking private realm.

A detour through history is useful at this juncture to contextualize this connection between *laïcité* and gender equality. In fact, *laïcité* has not always been associated with gender equality in the public realm. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's access to political life was limited in the name of *laïcité*. At the time, the discourse of *laïcité* was key to (re)producing a hierarchy between men and women, in which the latter were associated with the household and "private" life. Women were understood as being nonautonomous subjects particularly vulnerable, in part because of their believed inability to make abstraction of their female nature, to the influence of religion and priests. This explains why, during the Third Republic, women were described as potential threats to the Republican project and were not given the right to vote until 1944, while men had received it in 1848 (Scott 1996: 103). In other words, during the Third Republic, *laïcité* in mainland France was also used as a governance mechanism delimiting the boundaries of public and private spaces. Under that regime, women could not be transformed to become "enlightened" and "rational" citizens; they were relegated to their household, excluded from fully participating to public life.

Interestingly, during the same period, *laïcité* was used differently in colonial Algeria. There, this discourse was mobilized to favor Muslim women's "emancipation." French feminists fighting against their exclusion from political life at home, favoring a reform of the French civil code, were for the implementation of this same code in Algeria because they thought that it would "liberate" Muslim women from Islam and the patriarchal order trying to dominate their lives (Kimble 2006: 125; Barras 2014: 32). In many ways, this colonial legacy resonates with the contemporary situation in France. While this connection between *laïcité* and gender equality was already activated in colonial Algeria to govern the bodies of colonial subjects, it is (re)activated today to govern the bodies of Muslim women.[9] These historical episodes provide insights on how this connection between gender and *laïcité* has been articulated. Not only has *laïcité* not always been mobilized to favor the inclusion of women in society, but even when it does so, it favors the inclusion of particular "types" of women while excluding others. In other words, *laïcité* and its languages continue to activate this interplay between inclusion–exclusion central to the (re)production of public–private spaces.

In 2011, a group of activists, including mothers excluded from participating in school outings because they were wearing headscarves, organized as Mamans toutes Égales (Moth-

ers (p. 148) All-Equal; 2011).[10] This association sensibly explains why it considers bans on headscarves to be incompatible with their reading of *laïcité*:

> The measures [bans on headscarves] follow a same logic of stigmatization and exclusion, in complete rupture with the secular principles as defined by the 1905 law. … We refuse this diversion of *laïcité*, which is part of a never-ending sequence of offensives: anti-headscarf law, anti-niqab law, "debate on national identity, " "stigmatisation of prayers in the streets," minarets, "halal" meals, … calls to extend headscarf bans to users of public services and to employees of private companies with a public mission and then to all employees. … We refuse this logic of war and exclusion, in which women wearing headscarves are identified as pestiferous, that tends to disqualify them in the eyes of their own children, and that implicitly says: "stay in your kitchens." (my translation)

Their statement interestingly points to the way that the meaning of *laïcité*, and its languages, is far from stable. It has been and continues to be interpreted in multiple ways depending on social and political contexts, who is using the discourse, and who is being affected by it.

# Tensions within *Laïcité*

While *laïcité* is typically constructed as a timeless and ahistorical concept, it is actually deeply contextual and carries ambiguities that are the product of the different definitions given to the term. Over the past decade the dominant French reading of the paradigm, and in particular its language of neutrality, remains subject to some contestations.[11] This is especially visible in the work of activists opposing bans, such as the organization Mothers All-Equal, who draw on these tensions and inconsistencies to challenge this dominant interpretation. Paying attention to their work is relevant especially insofar as it is an invitation to think of how *laïcité* can be (re)interpreted in a more inclusive manner (Barras 2014: ch. 4).

We have noted how activists can draw on the 1905 law to point out how the new reading of *laïcité* is inconsistent with that law, especially since it enables the exclusion and stigmatization of a particular faith. Activists fighting these extensions have been using the legal framework provided by the 1905 law to explain how for them *laïcité* is about the separation of religion and the state, a separation that is essential for religious freedom, which includes protecting the right to practice one's religion. The state should therefore refrain from interfering in theology by deciding which religious expressions are compatible with Republican values and which are not. This point is also clearly spelled out in the following statement by the Collective Against Islamophobia (CCIF), created in 2003 in response to the increase acts of Islamophobia in France.[12] CCIF is here commenting on the 2010 law banning full-face veils in "public" space in France and the attempts by politicians to assign meanings to these headgears to justify this law (e.g., a symbol of women's oppression):

> The principle of *laïcité* is a principle of political organization that obliges the state to abstain itself from intervening in religious affairs. Consequently, it should not declare what is part of the religious and what is not, attribute a meaning or a message to a religious sign, or even (p. 149) less so judge the legitimacy of a religious practice. *This is the core meaning of the rule of separation of Church and state that comes from the 1905 law*.
>
> (CCIF 2010: 17–18, my translation and emphasis)

Activists are here explicitly challenging interpretations of the language of separation that posit that only a religion considered to be compatible with Republican "values" (meaning those that take the form of a private belief) can be free of interference. While neutrality remains a core element in their reading of *laïcité*, they expect the state to treat everyone equally and not interfere in particular practices of religious expression by individuals. The March 2004 law and its extensions (including the 2010 law) contradict this understanding; those regulations encourage state authorities to directly judge religious practices. This allows the state to scrutinize the behavior of a particular set of citizens,[13] particularly Muslim women, who in consequence see their access to citizenship as seriously limited. In highlighting the gendered dimensions of these regulations, activists also emphasize the paradoxes of the language of gender equality that in practice pushes devout Muslim women back "in [their] kitchen" (Mamans toutes Égales 2011). In other words, paying attention to their argument makes visible how discourses about *laïcité*, including gender equality, can be mobilized to control women's bodies and practices, resembling the patriarchal discourses those discourses criticize. This is well articulated in a petition denouncing the March 2004 law:

> It is not the veil as an essence that has to be challenged but rather it is its imposition … to fight against the compulsory veil and compulsory de-veiling, for the right to go to school bare-headed and for the right to cover oneself, is one and the same fight: to fight for the freedom of choice. … The 15 March 2004 law needs to be revoked, and rather we need to fight against discriminations toward women wearing headscarves and to implement real public policies for girls, who are forced to wear it, it is one and the same challenge.[14]

By (re)appropriating the languages of *laïcité* and building on their inconsistencies, activists opposing bans have developed a narrative in which the post-2004 climate is understood as being in dissonance with the "real" essence of *laïcité* (Barras 2014). That development reflects the hegemony and power of the discourse of *laïcité*, which is framing how activists choose to present their claims. Ironically, their narratives also contribute to (re)producing a story in which the concept of *laïcité* appears to be apolitical, timeless, and stable (whereby current dominant interpretations must be inconsistent with its "true" meaning). Thus, in their version as well, "true" *laïcité* plays the role of a mythical paradigm, overlooking its ambiguities, its political contexts, and its multiple meanings originating from its historical development. And yet, their (re)appropriation of *laïcité* remains deeply entangled in governing and delimiting the religious. Take for instance the petition,

quoted previously, where *laïcité* is understood as enabling the right to choose. It protects religion that has not been "imposed," that is, religion that has been "freely" chosen, including the freely chosen wearing of the headscarf. In their argument, activists are demarcating the boundaries of what is religiously acceptable and protectable by religious freedom.

It is important to acknowledge these dynamics, inasmuch as it draws our attention once again to the intimate relation between discourses of *laïcité* and religion. Thus, it helps us realize that the discourse of *laïcité* is not a "unique" or "pure" paradigm devoid of political influence. It is a discourse of religious governance, also heard in other countries, in which the sovereign state is identified as the actor determining the appropriate place of religion and the (p. 150) contour of religious freedom (Agrama 2006: 655). That place evidently varies as a function of when this discourse is mobilized and by whom.

Acknowledging this contextual reality should not serve as a restriction upon thinking about what type of religious governance is more conducive to an inclusive, equal, and just democratic state. The model proposed by activists is in that sense inspirational, as it has the potential to enable coexistence, while respecting differences: "*Laïcité* has to guarantee the *vivre ensemble* [living together] in the respect of differences, without exclusion, attack, discrimination to ensure equality between human beings."[15]

This kind of discourse is a reminder of the inherent tensions carried within *laïcité*, between an exclusivist and assimilationist-based model of citizenship and a more inclusive model of coexistence (Lorcerie 2015). This discourse is equally a reminder that the inclusive path is and remains, more than ever, a real possibility.

# Conclusion

When comparing French, Turkish, and American secularisms, Ahmet Kuru (2007) classifies French and Turkish secularisms as "assertive" types, contrasting them with the US model that he qualifies as "passive." Assertive secularism indicates that the state "excludes religion from the public sphere" (571). In a passive model, on the other hand, the state plays a less interventionist role and "allows for the public visibility of religion" (571). His work provides a framework organized around "ideal-types" to compare and contrast models of religious governance.[16] Moreover, his discussion of the assertive type insightfully points to the essential "social engineering" role of the state that works to separate and "confine religion to the private domain" (571).

In a sense, models of religious governance are about a dance between the state and religion, in which the sovereign state defines and (re)defines the place of religion in society as a function of particular contexts, histories, and politics. That dance can be more "assertive" or more "passive," but in all cases secularism is about this intimate and complex relationship. What "religion" can be understood to be, and which aspects of it are protected by religious freedom today, is a result of this ongoing dance.

Looking at French secularism through this contextual lens is an invitation to think more deeply about secularism, beyond the initial idea that *laïcité* is exceptional. There are French specificities to be sure, including the value awarded to *laïcité* in the realms of identity construction and its discursive power, illustrated by the fact that activists organize their oppositions to state regulation within that frame. Nonetheless, the ways that *laïcité* is implemented in society through "a contingent series of legal and political claims and projects that are deeply implicated in the definition and management of religion, religious freedom" (Hurd 2012: 955) resemble the workings of other models of governance in other countries. This insight helps us understand *laïcité* as a dynamic framework that can change and evolve, departing from the idea that it is a timeless and fixed frame. This approach is in many ways aspirational, as one realizes that the "neo-laïc" exclusivist model currently dominant in France is not the only possible model. It is equally possible, as activists invite us, to imagine *laïcité* as a "series of legal and political claims" (Hurd 2012: 955) that facilitates and enables inclusivity and coexistence.

## Bibliography

Achi, Raberh. 2005. "La laïcité à l'épreuve de la situation coloniale: Usages politiques croisés du principe de séparation des Églises et de l'État en Algérie coloniale. Le cas de l'islam (1907–1954)." *Histoire de la Justice* 16(1), 163–176.

Agrama, Hussein. 2006. "Asking the Right Questions: Two Engagements with Islam and Modernity." *Political Theory* 34(5), 647–656.

Agrama, Hussein. 2010. "Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy: Is Egypt Secular or a Religious State?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52(3), 495–523.

Alemagna, Lilian. 2015. "Interdiction du voile à l'université: la ministre Boistard s'avance." *Libération* (2 March). **http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2015/03/02/interdiction-du-voile-a-l-universite-la-ministre-boistard-s-avance_1212633**.

Barras, Amélie. 2013. "Sacred Laïcité and the Politics of Religious Resurgence in France: Whither Religious Pluralism?" *Mediterranean Politics* 18(2), 276–293.

Barras, Amélie. 2014. *Refashioning Secularisms in France and Turkey. The Case of the Headscarf Ban*. London and New York: Routledge.

Baubérot, Jean. 2004. *Laïcité de 1905–2005, entre passion et raison.* Paris: Seuil.

Beaman, Jean. 2015. "Qui est Ahmed? Understanding Race, Racism, and French Muslims in the Wake of Charlie Hebdo." *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association* 3(2), 14–18.

Bowen, John. 2007a. "A View from France on the Internal Complexity of National Models." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(6), 1003–1016.

Bowen, John. 2007b. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Bowen, John. 2011. *Can Islam Be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Bowen, John. 2015. "France's own political traditions can accommodate visible Islam and heal social divisions." *Boston Review* (3 March). **http://bostonreview.net/forum/john-bowen-france-after-charlie-hebdo**.

Chirac, Jacques. 2003. "Discours prononcé par M. Jacques Chirac Président de la République relatif au respect du principe de la laïcité dans la République." **http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/les-grands-discours-de-jacques-chirac/?post_id=2371**.

Chouder, Ismahane, Malika Latrèche, and Pierre Tévanian (eds.). 2008. *Les filles voilées parlent*. Paris: La Fabrique.

Collective Against Islamophobia in France. 2010. "Réflexions et révélations sur la mission d'information parlementaire sur la pratique du port du voile intégral sur le territoire national." **http://islamophobie.net/rapports/contre-rapport-Gerin.pdf**.

Conseil d'Etat. 2004. *Rapport Public 2004. Jurisprudence et Avis de 2003. Un siècle de laïcité*. Paris: La Documentation Française.

Costa-Lascoux, Jacqueline 1996. *Les trois âges de la laïcité*. Paris: Hachette.

Cousteau, Libie. 2015. "Education: le long chemin de l'école musulmane." *L'Express* (25 May). **http://www.lexpress.fr/education/education-le-long-chemin-de-l-ecole-musulmane_1681519.html**.

Danchin, Peter. 2011. "Islam in the Secular Nomos of the European Court of Human Rights." *Michigan Journal of International Law* 32(4), 664–747.

Fernando, Mayanthi. 2010. "Reconfiguring Freedom: Muslim Piety and the Limits of Secular Law and Public Discourse in France." *American Ethnologist* 37(1), 19–35.

Fernando, Mayanthi. 2014. *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of French Secularism.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Fredette, Jennifer. 2014. *Constructing Muslims in France: Discourse, Public Identity, and the Politics of Citizenship*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press.

(p. 153) Guénois, Jean-Marie. 2012. "Pourquoi le Concordat s'applique en Alsace-Moselle." *Le Monde* (26 January). **http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/2012/01/26/01002-20120126ARTFIG00484-pourquoi-le-concordat-s-applique-en-alsace-moselle.php**.

Gunn, Jeremy. 2004. "Religious Freedom and Laicite: A Comparison of the United States and France." *BYU Law Review* 2(5), 419–506.

Hajjat, Abdellali. 2015. “Reflections on the January 2015 Killings and Their Consequences.” *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association* 3(2), 7–14.

Hajjat, Abdellahi, and Marwan Mohammed. 2013. *Islamophobie: Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le “problème musulman.”* Paris: Editions La Découverte.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2012. “International Politics after Secularism.” *Review of International Studies* 38 (5), 943–961.

Kimble, Sara L. 2006. “Emancipation through Secularization: French Feminist Views of Muslim Women’s Condition in Interwar Algeria.” *French Colonial History* 7(1), 109–128.

Knott, Kim. 2005. *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*. London: Equinox.

Kuru, Ahmet. 2007. “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles and State Policies.” *World Politics* 59(4), 568–594.

Kuru, Ahmet. 2008. “Secularism, State Policies and Muslims in Europe: Analyzing French Exceptionalism.” *Comparative Politics* 41(1), 1–19.

Kuru, Ahmet. 2009. *Secularism and State Policies Toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Laborde, Cécile. 2005. “Secular Philosophy and Muslim Headscarves in Schools.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 13(3), 305–329.

Laborde, Cécile. 2008. *Critical Republicanism. The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laurence, Jonathan, and Justin Vaisse. 2006. *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press.

Lecomte, Christian. 2015. “A Chalon, le menu sans porc est une atteinte à la laïcité.” *Le Temps* (22 August). **http://www.letemps.ch/monde/2015/08/21/chalon-menu-porc-une-atteinte-laicite**.

Le Bars, Stéphanie. 2007. “La formation d’imams à l’Institut catholique provoque des remous chez les musulmans.” *Le Monde* (8 October). **http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2007/10/08/la-formation-d-imams-a-l-institut-catholique-provoque-des-remous-chez-les-musulmans_964283_3224.html**.

Lorcerie, Françoise. 2015. “From ‘French-Style Integration’ to ‘Republican Inclusion’… Maybe.” *Newsletter of the American Political Science Association* 3(2), 29–34.

Mamans toutes Égales. 2011. “Pourquoi devriez-vous nous soutenir?” **http://www.mamans-toutes-egales.com**.

Maussen, Marcel. 2007. “Islamic Presence and Mosque Establishment in France: Colonialism, Arrangements for Guestworkers and Citizenship.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(6), 981–1002.

Nouvel Observateur. 2015. “Valls plaide pour une formation ‘obligatoire’ des imams en France.” *Nouvel Observateur* (3 March). **http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/attentats-charlie-hebdo-et-maintenant/20150303.OBS3743/valls-plaide-pour-une-formation-obligatoire-des-imams-en-france.html**.

Observatoire de la laïcité. 2014. “Rapport Annuel de l’Observatoire de la *laïcité* 2013–2014.” **http://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2014/07/laicite_rapport_annuel_2013-2014.pdf**.

(p. 154) Razack, Sherene. 2008. *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rossinot, André. 2006. “La laïcité dans les services publics: Rapport du Groupe de Travail —Présidé par M. André Rossinot.” **http://www.islamlaicite.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Rossinot.pdf**.

Scott, Joan. 1996. *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Scott, Joan. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Selby, Jennifer. 2012. *Questioning French Secularism: Gender Politics and Islam in a Parisian Suburb*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schreier, Joshua. 2007. “Napoléon’s Long Shadow: Morality, Civilization, and Jews in France and Algeria, 1808–1870.” *French Historical Studies* 30 (1), 77–103.

Silvestri, Sara. 2007. “Asserting Islam in the EU: Actors, Strategies, and Priorities.” In *L’espace public européen à l’épreuve du religieux*, edited by F. Foret, 159–177. Brussels: Institut d’Etudes Européenes.

Stasi, Bernard. 2003. *Rapport de la Commission de Réflexion sur l’Application du Principe de Laïcité dans la République Remis au Président de la République le 11 Décembre 2003.* Paris: La Documentation Française. **http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/034000725/0000.pdf**.

Vauchez, Stephanie and Vincent Valentin. 2014. *L’affaire Baby Loup ou la nouvelle laïcité.* Paris: LGDJ.

Wilson, Erin. 2012. *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Notes:

(1.) It is noteworthy that the expression “church” (rather than religion)–state is frequently used when referring to this language of separation. This reflects the fact that the notion of separation was first developed in relation to Christianity.

(2.) Manuel Valls, cited in Nouvel Obs (2015), my translation.

(3.) Bowen (2015) explains that due to the decentralized nature of Islam in France, this body has not been very successful.

(4.) Similar arrangements have been made available to Jewish schools and recently to Muslim schools, although it has been particularly difficult for the latter to sign such contracts. In 2015, France counted only 4 private Muslim schools that had signed a contract with the state, while there were 250 Jewish schools and 7,600 Catholic schools (Cousteau 2015).

(5.) The law protects religious practices as long as they do not disturb “public order,” and this vague term has been frequently used to legally limit religious practices.

(6.) This means that public servants are not able to display their religious affiliations. Over the past decade there has been considerable debates around who is considered to be a public servant. Policymakers have attempted to extend this category to volunteers (including mothers of students who participate to school activities), jury members, or private employees subcontracted by the public sector (see, e.g., Rossinot 2006: 33, 49). For a more extended discussion on these extensions see Barras (2014: ch. 3).

(7.) The issue of collective prayer was raised in a public policy report in a discussion of state-run summer camps. The report argued that these types of prayers could disrupt the activities of the camp, as well as segment campers. It suggested that campers could pray individually in their own intimate space (Observatoire de la Laïcité 2014: 57).

(8.) For more on the discourse that “Muslim women” need to be saved from “Muslim men” and its transnational dimension see Razack (2008).

(9.) It is important to underline that their presence is the result, in part, of the immigration of former colonial subjects after the colonial wars of independence.

(10.) Mothers All Equal is a collective created in 2011 to denounce the exclusions of mothers wearing headscarves from partaking in school activities, as well as the limits put on nannies and daycare providers wearing a headgear to exercise their employment. For a noninclusive list of individuals and associations that support this organization, see http://www.mamans-toutes-egales.com/participez/signez-la-petition.

(11.) These contestations have not, as of yet, received a lot of support in France and represent the point of view of a minority.

(12.) See http://www.islamophobie.net.

(13.) It is interesting to note that while public servants are required in this reading to be neutral as it “allows them to guarantee equality between users” (Collective Against Islamophobia in France 2009: 78), activists do not regard this neutrality requirement as necessarily incompatible with the wearing of visible religious symbols so long as they do not “advantage or disadvantage” users in their service delivery.

(14.) “Lettre ouverte aux laïques et aux féministes de bonne volonté” (Chouder et al. 2008: 325–326, my translation).

(15.) Quoted from an activist, Nadjia Saoudi (Chouder et al. 2008: 149, my translation).

(16.) For Kuru, it is essential to consider history in order to understand the distinctions between those models. Countries tending to follow an assertive pathway are those, like Turkey and France, marked by a conflict between their *ancien-régime* (such as France’s monarchical link with Catholicism) and a new political order (in France, the revolutionary Republic). Those kinds of tensions are not present in countries dominated by a passive model (Kuru 2007, 2008).

**Amélie Barras**

Amélie Barras is Assistant Professor in the Law and Society Program, Department of Social Science at York University, Canada. She also teaches in the Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Program and is a member of the Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women’s Studies. She recently authored Refashioning Secularisms in France and Turkey: The Case of the Headscarf Ban.

# Secularism in Turkey

Kenan Sevinc, Ralph W. Hood Jr., and Thomas Coleman

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.10

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides a brief history of secularism in Turkey and discusses current political issues surrounding secularism. Is Turkey a secular country? This question is entangled in the emergent process of secularism in Turkey and its unique cultural and political history. In Turkey, secularism has little social or historical basis: it has been conducted by the hand of the state, was installed from the top, and emerged through external dynamics. Ataturk's reforms toward secularism and secularization placed strict legal controls on Islam's institutions and practices. The RPP Party and its Kemalism rely on republicanism, nationalism, populism, étatism, secularism, and revolutionism. The JDP party is more anti-Kemalist than antisecularist. A large moderate center is present among today's voters, who mostly affirm democratic values and much freedom of religion. It appears a democratic and secular culture has settled into Turkey, as the only politically secular country with a Muslim majority population.

Keywords: Turkey, Islam, secularization, secularism, modernism, Westernism, Kemalism, religious freedom

TURKEY may be a unique exemplar of issues with respect to secularization. Turkey is the only politically secular country with a Muslim majority population, at approximately 95 percent (European Commission 2005, 2010; International Social Survey Programme 2008), and it is a country without a state religion (Barro and McCleary 2005). At the same time, Turkey is a continuation of the Ottoman Empire, which was a combination of Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Byzantine civilizations. Contemporary Turkey is a candidate for the European Union and a member of NATO. Therefore, Turkey is not only geographically but also demographically, politically, and culturally a bridge between East and West. Furthermore, it is a country heavily involved in issues associated with both secularization and modernization.

From the beginning, the modernization and secularization movements in Turkey were largely inspired by France, and thus French *laïcité* has provided a substantive model for Turkish secularism (Çitak 2004; Berkes 1964; Kuru 2006). The French term *laicism* (Turkish: *laiklik*, Franche: *laïcité, laique*) is commonly used by the Turks when referring

to secularism in their country. According to Parla and Davison (2008), the translation of *laicism* from Turkish into English as “secularism” leads to ambiguity. *Laicism* refers to the control of the clergy by the nonreligious or nonclerical people (through government action). Because of this, Parla and Davison (2008) suggest it is not possible to say Turkey is a secular country. However, other scholars claim that Turkey is an assertive secularist country (Kuru 2006, 2007), classifying Turkey and France as the only countries in the Middle East and Europe with assertive secularism as a constitutional principle (Çitak 2004).

Is Turkey a secular country or not? This question is entangled in the emergent process of secularism in Turkey and Turkey’s relation to its own political history. In Turkey, secularism has little social or historical basis; it has been promoted by the power of the state, it was installed from the top downward onto the rest of the country, and it only emerged by external dynamics (Mardin 1991; Kuru 2006; Tekin 2012; Küçükcan 2005). This chapter sets out a brief history of secularism in Turkey and then discusses current political issues surrounding secularism.

## (p. 156) The History of Secularism in Turkey

Secularization in Turkey, contrary to common understandings, did not simply start with the founding of the Republic of Turkey. It has much earlier roots dating back to the last two hundred years of the Ottoman Empire (Doğan 2013; Findley 2010; Silverstein 2011; Küçükcan 2005). However, our focus here is restricted to historical facts associated with Turkey’s establishment.

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I as an ally of Germany. Some parts of the Ottoman Empire, such as modern-day Turkey, were eventually occupied by the Entente Powers. Immediately after this invasion, the Turk war for independence began. They formed a parliament, the Grand National Assembly, which opened in Ankara in 1920 and elected Mustafa Kemal as president. The parliament included Islamist, Ottomanist, Nationalist, Bolshevist, Turkish, and Kurdish representatives from all sectors of society (religious men, merchants, soldiers, etc.; Çınar 2005: Findley 2010; Berkes 1964). The postwar Entente Greek forces occupied territory in western Anatolia and began to encroach further east. This prompted the parliament to give full power to Mustafa Kemal, a successful military leader, in order to halt the advance of the Entene (Findley 2010). Kemal was victorious. The occupation of the Entente Powers came to an end with the Lausanne Treaty of 24 July 1923. Then Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues founded the Republican People’s Party (RPP), which eliminated the other parties (e.g., Islamists, Kurds, Bolshevists) and enjoyed ruling as a single party for roughly thirty years. The RPP was based on a statist ideology (Walton 2009) intertwined with the principles of Kemalism, which “came to the forefront between 1927 and 1935 as a project of politically constructing and manipulating a modern Turkish nation-state on secular and western, rather than Islamic, precepts” (Momayezi 1998: 5).

The basic principles of the RPP and Kemalism are called the *six arrows*: roughly translated as republicanism, nationalism, populism, étatism, secularism, and revolutionism. These principles appeared as "a poor adaptation of Western modernism and rationalism and an *ex post* rationalization of loosely related policies" (Tepe 2008: 191). Kemal, and by proxy Kemalism,

> moved Turkey closer to the West culturally while moving it further from Western democratic practice. Like the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leadership of 1913–1918, he preferred strengthening the state rather than the constitution or the electoral system.
>
> (Findley 2010: 252)[1]

Further, Kemal saw French *laicism* as the most original form of secularism (Hanioğlu 2012), and, because of this, Turkey had an assertive nondemocratic version (Parla and Davison 2008) of secularism by fiat (Kuru 2006; Özbudun 2012).

# Reforms in the Single-Party Period

Between 1923 and 1937, Mustafa Kemal implemented secular reforms concerning the country's political structure, government administration, education, law, and social life. (p. 157) For example, the Law on the Unification of Education, issued in 1924, had far-reaching implications for the government's position on religion. The religious madrasahs were closed and the entire education system became "secularized" under state control (Çitak 2004). In 1930, all religious schools were closed, and in 1933 faculties of theology met the same fate (Kuru 2006; Kuru and Stepan 2012; Koştaş 1990). Furthermore, even optional religion classes were removed from the secondary education curriculum in 1931 and from the primary school curriculum in 1935, which completed the secularization of the public school system (Kuru 2007).

In Turkey, there are several requirements that both students and schools have to fulfill. For example, all students from primary education to the university level have to attend classes dedicated to studying the history of Atatürk's principles and reforms. In addition, the education system is filled with the symbols and narratives of Kemalism. Meşeci (2007) indicates that in the wake of religion's removal from the educational sphere, other rituals, however state imposed, found their way into the classroom. These rituals are, arguably, intended to create an effect on people similar to the effect of "religion." For example, until recently, in the primary schools, students had to take a vow every morning before beginning their class. This oath, of course, includes pledging commitment to Mustafa Kemal. In addition, his sculpture has to stand in front of the schools, and even the school walls must be adorned with Mustafa Kemal's pictures and Atatürk's "Address to Turkish Youth."

Much like the school system, the Turkish judicial system was secularized with the closure of Sharia courts on 8 April 1924. This effort was then furthered by the adoption of the

Swiss civil code in 1926, abolishing polygamy. In addition, this reform afforded increased equality for women regarding issues such as inheritance and divorce, and it amended the penal code. With these changes, Swiss, Italian, and German legal practices were adapted for use in Turkey. The most symbolic step toward secularization came on 10 April 1928, as the article affirming that the state religion is Islam was removed from the 1924 constitution. By 1937, the principle of *laicism* had entered the constitution to further solidify the assertive secularist stance for Turkey (Berkes 1964).

The secularization of Turkey under Kemalism left no stone unturned. On 1 November 1928 the Arabic alphabet was replaced with the Latin alphabet. Even Turkish words of Arabic and Persian origin were eliminated. According to Çitak (2004), this change clearly favored the Western world over the Arab world. However, this linguistic revolution involved much more than simply switching alphabets. Interestingly, the Turkish state then accepted a rather ideological theory of language (Sun Language Theory), whereby all languages are thought to be derived from Turkish, which in turn is an ancient central Asian language (Findley 2010: 255). Accepting this theory allowed the Turkish state to further justify its adoption of the new alphabet and had the added benefit of constructing a more coherent (if fabricated) national identity. In a further attempt to create this unified identity, a Turkish "history thesis" was developed (Mardin 1991: 68) based on the pre-Islamic central Asian and Anatolian civilizations (Doğan 2013). According to this thesis, the Turks are ancestors of ancient civilizations such as the Sumerians and the Hittites (Fidley 2010). As asserted by the Kemalists, the specifics of this historical thesis consist of three main points: (1) the Turks are one of the oldest nations of the world, (2) the historical heritage of the Ottoman dynasty is rejected, and (3) Mustafa Kemal provided national independence and unity for Turkey (Çınar 2005; Hanioğlu 2012). In order to further distance Turkey from the Ottoman era, government-sponsored history teachings from the Turkish revolution targeted the Ottoman Empire as an (p. 158) *ancien régime* (Mardin 1991), and Ankara was chosen as the capital city to spite Ottomanism (Çınar 2005).

The wave of secularization and Westernization in Turkey went far beyond legal reforms, as a new worldview and lifestyle were created in an effort to shift away from more traditional Islamic practices and ways of life (Gürbey 2012: 5). The state intervened in domains ranging from music to clothing (Çınar 2005). It temporarily banned "oriental-style" music (Mardin 1991) and prohibited or restricted certain clothes. Western music and art saw increasing support from the state. In particular, "balls" and "beauty contests" found their way into Turkish life in an attempt to challenge Islamic perceptions about the place of women in society (Çitak 2004). The "hat law" was enacted on 25 November 1925, coercing people to wear Western-style clothes instead of traditional clothes. Because of opposition to this law, 808 people were arrested and 57 people were sentenced to death (Nereid 2011). Further still, on 21 June 1934 the surname law banned traditional titles of lineage and required the adoption of Turkish surnames. In that year, Mustafa Kemal was given the surname *Atatürk* (the Father of Turks).

In 1935, Sunday replaced Friday as the weekly holiday. Nonreligious holidays were later created to celebrate other national anniversaries. Specifically, many of these national holidays stemmed from historical events, beginning with Mustafa Kemal's arriving on the shores of Samsun in 1919 and leading up to Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938. These festivals are celebrated by the authorities throughout the country, but students and officers must participate compulsorily. Since the early years of the Republic, there have been efforts to erect sculptures of Mustafa Kemal in the center of every city (Mardin 1991). As Çınar (2005: 99) notes: "There is not one city in Turkey that does not have at least one square with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's statue." There is at least one school or street named "Atatürk" in every city, and Kemal's pictures must hang on the walls in every official building (Frick 2011). Officers and civil servants have to visit his statue on national holidays and present a garland to it. Bearing this in mind, Mustafa Kemal's pictures, sculptures, and statues are seen as symbols of assertive secularism, which is one reason they are sometimes damaged by Islamists (Çınar 2005). (This is why there is a 1951 law that protects the image and reputation of Mustafa Kemal.) In 1925, all Sufi orders were declared illegal and banned; their lodges and shrines were forced to close, and their rituals and ceremonies prohibited (Çitak 2004). They represented serious opposition against Turkey's assertive secularism (Mardin 1991). Further, minority populations in the New Republic could not hold political office (Findlay 2010), because minorities were neither Turk nor Muslim. Non-Muslim Turks were not permitted to emigrate to Turkey, and non-Muslims living in Turkey have been heavily taxed (Gürbey 2012).

The main aim of all reforms was to achieve the Ottoman Westernization movement, which has been held at bay for the past 150 years. Complete secularization was the goal. However, a large segment of society, who are Muslims and linked to their tradition, have failed to achieve full compliance with these reforms. The Turkish revolution was not supported by the population but instead arose from a small elite (Mardin 1991). As Momayezi characterizes the situation:

> The new government carried out its reforms by dictatorial means. In their zeal, the Kemalist reformers not only separated religion from government but interfered with the religious worship and practices of individual Muslims. In doing so, they alienated the majority of the population. (1998: 13)

## (p. 159) State Control over Religion

In Turkey, the state controls religious and Islamic authorities (Tezcür 2007; Çınar 2005; Boer 2014; Doğan 2013), as a way to strengthen national unity (Somer 2007). This has permitted Kemalism to limit the influence of religion on the public (Driessen 2014; Yavuz 2003) and use religion as an instrument to benefit the state (Büyükkara 2008). According to Davison (2006), this amounts to a militant secularism in Turkey, precisely because the state controls religion, rather than maintaining state–church separation.[2] As Bernard Lewis notes:

> The basis of Kemalist religious policy was laicism, not irreligion; its purpose was not to destroy Islam, but to de-establish it—to end the power of religion and its exponents in political, social, and cultural affairs, and limit it to matters of belief and worship. (2002: 412)

The state attempted to limit the influence of religion in many ways. Notably, one of them was by the establishment of a Directorate of Religious Affairs under the Prime Ministry. In the process of rationalizing and nationalizing religion, the state set its sights on religious education (Gürbey 2012), as this fell under government purview with the establishment of the Republic. In the beginning, state-controlled religious education was provided, but then this was banned after 1947 when state control resumed for high school and college-level religious education. From this period, until the 1980 military coup when the constitution was rewritten, the presence of religious education in public schools was left to the discretion of parliament. In 1982, the new constitution made religious culture and morality courses compulsory.[3] The curricula of primary, elementary, and high schools was established by the central government and textbooks were standardized. Of course, it was obligatory to include mention of Mustafa Kemal in all courses (e.g., religious culture, physics, geometry), and educational syllabi were established to control religious messages (Kuru 2007). The content of these obligatory religious courses usually fell outside of traditional Islamic understandings. For instance, according to orthodox Islam, daily prayers and fasting during the month of Ramadan are two of the five key obligations for Muslims. However, Turkey's students were taught that praying and fasting must occur only after one's daily activities were done. Furthermore, and perhaps even comically, they taught if the prophet Mohammad lived today, he would wear a Western-style hat (Gürbey 2012).

Kemalism views religion as just a moral system (Parla and Davison 2008), so it is a private matter based upon one's conscience (Mardin 2012). In turn, this notion of an Islamic "individual conscience" was used by the state for nation-building (Gürbey 2012; Sakallıoğlu 1996). With religion relegated to the status of an institution contributing to the formation of a national identity, Kemalism created a relationship between Turkified folk Islam and Turkish nationalism (Çitak 2004: 261). This was a primary reason why Kemalism found controlling religion so useful.

# The Army and Coups

Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, the Turkish army intervened several times in political affairs by enacting military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997 (Cizre 2012).[4] (p. 160) The army has historically been a reliable bastion of Kemalism. Individuals who have received religious education, who wear a headscarf, whose mother wears a headscarf, who have a beard, or even whose father has a beard are extremely unlikely to be taken into the army as an officer. After the 1997 coup, officers who pray, abstain from alcohol, have a wife who wears a headscarf, and in general do not openly dis-

play a secular lifestyle were expelled from the army without legal redress. As Kuru (2006) notes, almost 900 military officers and civil bureaucrats were expelled during this time.

Since the formation of the Republic, the military has taken up modernization as part of its mission:

> This mission turned the army into the political symbol of nationhood and the instrument of preserving the nation. … The armed forces have always occupied a special position in Turkey. … The armed forces continued to think of themselves as the guardians of secular, reformist, and democratic goals.
>
> (Momayazi 1998: 3–4).

Not only the army but the entire state until the 2000s was largely in the hands of the Kemalists. Indeed, before this period, it was almost inconceivable to rise up through the ranks of the Turkish bureaucracy without being a Kemalist. However, the past ten years have witnessed the emergence of a large anti-Kemalist movement in Turkey.

# The Current Political Situation

There are some central political movements in Turkey whose origins can be traced back to the first modernization movement in the Ottoman Empire (see Figure 9.1). In Turkish political history, power has been handled by these ideologies during different periods. With the proclamation of the Tanzimat Charter (1839), the Westernist Ottomanist ideology took control. Then, conservative Ottomanist ideology emerged in response to that Westernism. After the idea of Ottomanism lost its influence, Islamism rose to prominence, especially in the Hamidian regime. The CUP, which hastened the end of the Hamidian regime, was comprised mostly of soldiers, and it held power in Turkey for over a decade with strong Westernist-Turkist leanings.

Kemalism, largely inheriting the base of the CUP, was the dominating political movement, advancing ever-more progressive Westernism and assertive secularism until 1950 (Mardin 2012). However, some passive secularist politicians were dissatisfied with the Kemalists departed to established the Democratic Party. This ushered in a new era in Turkish politics, as it generated a center-right political tradition that ultimately brought an end to the RPP's reign. This situation is an indication of the great silent reaction that was created by the RPP's assertive secularism and, at the same time, of the Turkish people's unwillingness to whole heartedly embrace the RPP's opposition.

Interestingly, despite being socially liberal, Kemalists advocate a rather statist and conservative economy. Further, they are also quite nationalist and somewhat nondemocratic. According to Doğan (2013), it is because of their assertive secularist ideology that they live in constant conflict between statism and democracy. On the one hand they support democratic values, yet on the other hand they are forced to assume a statist position in order to enforce their specific form of secularism in response to Islamist ideology. **(p. 161)**

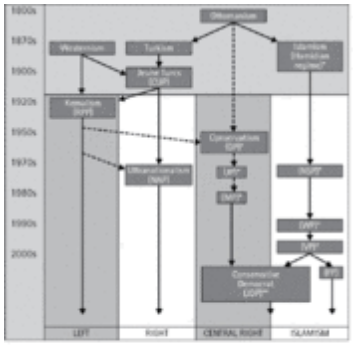


*Figure 9.1* Secular and antisecular political streams and contemporary political parties in Turkey.

The Justice Development Party (JDP) is economically liberal yet socially conservative (Lagendijk 2012). On the other hand, JDP has more democratic policies than the RPP (Kalyvas 2012). During a period from 2002 to 2007, the JDP made serious efforts to gain European Union membership, reduced the effectiveness of military on politics, improved freedom of expression and speech, worked to expand civil rights, and improved the granting of cultural rights of minorities and Kurds (Doğan 2013; Toprak 2005; Çavdar 2006). Thus, the JDP has achieved great success in the elections (see Figure 9.2). Until 2011, the JDP was more liberal, but after 2011 it has been more Islamist. By 2007, the (p. 162) JDP was passing legislation contrary to secularism (Somer 2007). That same year, and just before the presidential elections, the Turkish Army published a memorandum on its website describing the JDP as antisecularist and declaring that they did not want an Islamist president to be elected. After this announcement, in the 2007 elections the vote for JDP increased from 34 percent to 46 percent (Lagendijk 2012). Then, in 2008, the Turkish Supreme Court attempted to prosecute the JDP for its antisecular policies, but the case was eventually dropped (Boer 2014). In 2010 the JDP began pushing for pro-Islamist and anti-Westernist policies. In the eyes of many Turkish people, the political backdrop of one hundred-plus years of pro-Western assertive secularist Kemalism allowed these events to further strengthen the JDP.

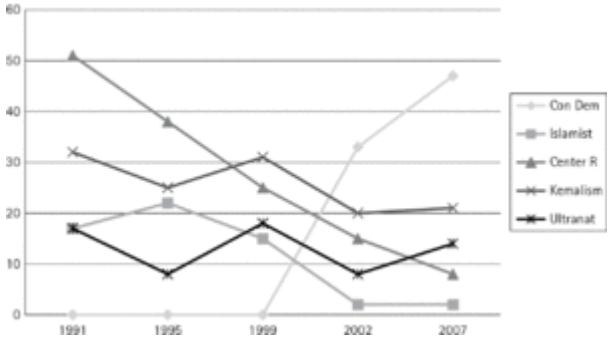


*Figure 9.2* Votes shared by political parties in Turkey (Tepe 2008: 284).

During the third period of the JDP after 2011, for the first time in the history of the Republic of Turkey, women who wore headscarves were permitted to be members of parliament. The ban on headscarves in universities was also overturned. Some grades of Imam-Khatib Schools to train Imams were reopened, and courses about the Quran and the Siyar (life of Muhammad) were placed on school curriculums as optional courses. However, these reforms were not necessarily all positive, as some freedoms were limited. For example, alcohol was more heavily regulated, and the JDP considered taking stances against the EU, Israel, and even the West. With these policy shifts coinciding with the increased visibility of religion in society, the distinction between the JDP and the Islamists became less clear. This has led some to believe that there may be a hidden Islamist agenda within the JDP (Lagendijk 2012). Indeed, it appears that the anti-Kemalists have begun to trade places with the Kemalists not only in the government but in business and media as well.

# Secularism versus Anti-Kemalism

The specific type of assertive secularism in Turkey, and the conditions under which it was first established—involving post-Ottoman, anti-Westernism, and Islamism factors—has (p. 163) created a political battlefield. It is assumed that the Kemalist RPP represents the secularist block, while the JDP represents the antisecularist block. Due to this historical background, some scholars suggest there is a divide between secular and Islamist factions (Çarkoğlu 2004; Mardin 1991; Sakallıoğlu 1996). This divide has grown since the 2002 elections, as the JDP and RPP have comprised the majority of the voting bloc. According to Çarkoğlu and Toprak's (1999) research, the most distant voters for the RPP are political Islamist voters, and there is a polarization between the two. Therefore, it is claimed that JDP is the continuation of political Islamism and that it has an antisecular Islamist understanding. Thus Islamism and "prosecularism" (represented by Kemalism) may *appear* to constitute two extreme poles in Turkey. However, we suggest this is an oversimplification of the situation. Instead of a strict division along secular and Islamists lines, perhaps the real division is among Kemalists and anti-Kemalists, with secularism caught in the middle. What is the reason Kemalism could not win an election to control the government except by means of military coups? Why are anti-Kemalist parties suc-

cessful? Despite eighty years of propaganda and a secular education system, why are more Turkish people not Kemalist? Figure 9.3 offers some clues.

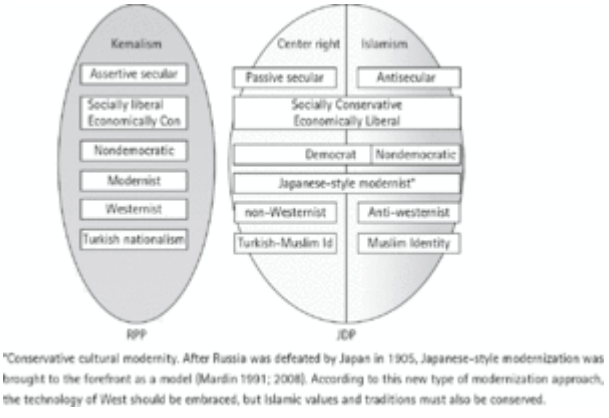


*Figure 9.3* Mainstream Kemalist Party and Anti-Kemalist Political Party.

If it is assumed that the JDP represents the Islamist bloc and the RPP represents the secularist bloc, then it is easy to see why there has been political polarization between secularism and Islamism or secularism and antisecularism for not only the past ten years but stretching well into the past. However, between these two poles there is a center position caught between the rhetoric of two extremes. For example, the JDP is a combination of some Islamists and those more to the center-right. Figure 9.3 depicts at least two possible types of secularism and at least three combinations of stances on secularity. The problem is one of interpretations over the meaning of secularism itself:

> [T]he state–religion debate in Turkey is not merely between secularism and Islamism; instead it centers on the true meaning and implementation of secularism itself. The two powerful (p. 164) movements in Turkey—the Kemalists and pro-Islamic conservatives—defend two opposite meanings of secularism—assertive and passive secularism.
>
> (Kuru 2006: 185)

Walton (2009) addresses two types of secularism in Turkey: liberal secularism and illiberal/*laicist* (Jacobin secularism) secularism. As we discussed, it is due to the socio-political history of this region that we find Turkey with a *laicist* secularism, as compared to a more passive secularism, such as in the United States. Passive secularism seeks only to limit religion's influence—by distancing it from governing—in the public square, while assertive secularism additionally seeks the actively control of religion, perhaps as far as its abolishment (Kuru 2006, 2007, 2012). Therefore, assertive secularism may be undemocratic (Tezcür 2007). However, there is a portion of the JDP bloc that advocates a passive type of Anglo-American (United States, England, and Canada) model of secularism in Turkey. The pragmatic political principle of passive secularism is even advocated by some center-right parties and Islamists in Turkey. According to Büyükkara (2008), moderate Islamism is also moderate secularism (passive secularism). Therefore, it is *not* necessary to

define the JDP voters as antisecularist. Perhaps the JDP is not so much antisecularist as it is anti-Kemalist.

Kemalism “has tended to be an authoritarian state ideology to stamp out religious and ethnic differences in the name of Enlightenment values” (Yavuz 2003: 60). As a result of Kemalism’s adherence to assertive secularism, it has had to construct itself as much more nationalistic in its raison d’être. Thus, it was forced to fabricate a “modern Turkish identity” as the rallying call in accordance with its own ideology, which equated Turkish modernity with the demise of religion. However, anti-Kemalism in Turkey embraced Islam as a cultural repertoire and henceforth did not reject religion (and, importantly, religious culture) on its path to “modernity.”

The general characteristics of Islamism in Turkey are anti-Westernism, antisecularism, and anti-Kemalism. One interpretation of Islamism, which is a part of the political understanding of the JDP, is anti-Kemalist, passive antisecular, anti-Westernist, modernist, and democratic. Other interpretations of Islamism and extremist Islamism are anti-Kemalist, assertive antisecular, anti-Westernist, traditionalist, and nondemocratic. Both interpretations of Islamism perceive the economical and technological superiority of the West as a shared threat and wish to Islamize society. Where they differ, however, is in terms of democratic attitudes. Here, the extremists are against the folk-Islam. They reject the cultural and historical Ottoman heritage and regard the Ottoman Empire as not being “Islamic enough.” However, it is because of Turkey’s democratic and secular culture, which cannot be found in other Muslim countries (Mardin 1991), that extremist Islamists make up a very small percentage of Turkey.

Çarkoglu and Toprak (1999) conducted a survey with the participation of 3,053 respondents from sixteen provinces in greater Turkey. They arrived at the following conclusions. First, the majority of the population identifies as Muslim, but this does not mean that the “Islamists” will soon have political majority, or that every Muslim is an Islamist. Second, there is almost no possibility of establishing a Sharia state, and fears about this are unfounded. Third, the majority of the population engage in religious activities, fulfill what they see as their worship obligations, and remain tolerant of others’ beliefs. Furthermore, Çarkoglu and Toprak found that the majority of Turks do not want a religion-based political party (60 percent), while only 25 percent do. Thus, many in Turkey find the mixing of (p. 165) politics and religion at the level of government is harmful. This rejection of the religion/politics mix is a type of secularist stance.

One tenet of Islamic Sharia law dictates that a man can have several women as wives. If this is an Islamic position, do the Turks embrace it? Çarkoğlu and Toprak (1999) asked participants the following: “If the civil code were rearranged to allow marrying up to four women, would you support this?” They found that 85 percent responded “no,” and only 10.7 percent replied “yes”: 71.7 percent of those who identified as “extremely religious” responded “no,” and only 22.8 percent responded “yes.” Interestingly, even the most religious people did not want to change secular civil code in favor of this idea. In research conducted by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 2013 with 37,624 respondents, 61.1

percent agreed that secularism (*laiklik*) is necessary for Muslims to "live freely," with only 20.1 percent disagreeing (Directorate of Religious Affairs 2014). Although at least 95 percent of Turkey identify as Muslim, and only around 10 percent go on to then identify as not-religious (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 1999; Directorate of Religious Affairs 2014), these results can be taken as an indicator of secular culture on an important level. As suggested by Çarkoğlu and Toprak, it is very interesting that a large portion of Turks (67.2 percent) —the same ones who arrange their working times in accordance with Friday prayers, do not support headscarf bans, and disagree with "atheist publications"—still find the suggestion that religion and politics should be intertwined in governmental affairs a harmful one. A more recent study by Çarkoğlu and Toprak (2006) looked at the extent to which the Turks value democratic culture in Turkey. Notably, between 75 percent and 80 percent of their sample agreed with the following three "democratic values": (1) democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government; (2) freedom to choose a religion and way of life should not be restricted in any way; (3) freedom of speech and expression should not be restricted in any way. Compared to other Muslim countries, it appears that a democratic and secular culture has settled into Turkey.

Çarkoğlu and Toprak (2006) found that 61.3 percent of Turks see no evidence of a push by fundamentalist movements to establish an Islamic state in Turkey over the past fifteen years. For those who felt there was such a push (32.6 percent), the number one reason was people feeling that the number of women wearing headscarves was increasing (20.6 percent). While this 2006 study also found that 63.5 percent in Turkey *did* wear either the hijab or Turkish-style headscarf, the number who *did not* increased from 27.3 percent in 1999 to 36.5 percent in 2006. Thus, contrary to a small percentage of the population perceiving an increase in head coverings, the opposite is occurring. In Çarkoğlu and Toprak's data we see the distribution by political affiliation of those who think that the number of "covered women" is increasing and found that the highest proportion was comprised of those respondents identifying as RPP (44.3 percent). Toprak and colleagues (2008) conducted face-to-face interviews with 401 participants from twelve provinces of Turkey and found that Alawites, seculars, Kemalists, and other left-wing voters report they have been "othered" and discriminated against under the JDP government. These are most likely RPP's voters, as almost half of RPP voters think that secularism is under threat in Turkey (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006). Given the RPP's understanding of secularism, these results may indicate that it is not so much "secularism in general" that is under threat, per se, but, specifically, assertive secularism. Perhaps the Kemalists may be unfounded in their fear that society is becoming Islamized (Berger 2008). Kemalists criticize conservatives for having a hidden Islamist agenda, and conservatives criticize Kemalists for being antireligious, rather than being "real" secularists (Kuru 2006). (p. 166)

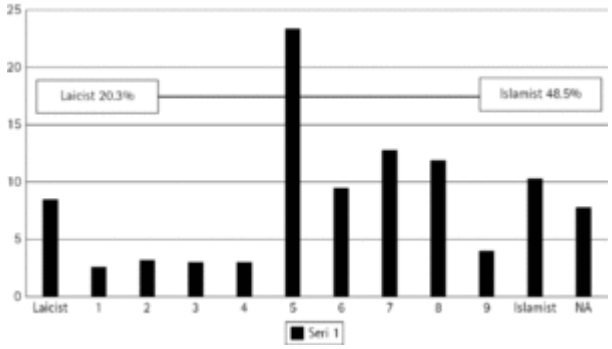


*Figure 9.4* "There are 'Islamists' and 'Laicists' in Turkey. Where would you place yourself on this scale?" (Çarkoğlu and Toprak 2006: 39).

At first glance, it is seen in Figure 9.4 that there is a secularist–Islamist polarization in Turkey. However, the figure reveals a substantive center position. In regard to the diversity of secularism in Turkey, Paker (2005) conducted interviews with seventy-seven university students (average age 22.5) in 1999 and found at least three approaches to *laicism* in Turkey: (1) full secularization of daily life, (2) the requirement of democracy, and (3) a reconciliation of religion with modern life. Based on these types, Kemalism, as an ideology, can only embrace the first. The second and third types, however, correspond to the passive secularism largely represented by the center-right. Paker (2005) suggests that the first group largely has negative attitudes toward tradition/religion, supports daily affirmations based on reason and science, views science and religion in conflict, and sees modernity and tradition as opposites. Parker finds that the second group sees little, if any, contradictions between modern life and religion/tradition. In the third group he suggests that tradition and religion are very important and that tradition, religion, and science do not stand in contradiction to one another. While the first and second types appear to be the positions that polemically garner the attention of the public eye, there lies a substantive center position that would align itself with neither, respectively. The secular–Islamist debate seems to involve much more than mere arguments over the proper understanding of secularism. Perhaps this debate is better considered by taking into account arguments over modernity and tradition.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish community was divided into two parts: the urban center (Istanbul) and the country (everything else, respectively). The "commoners" lived in the country and the "elites" lived in the city and associated the concept of "civilization" with only themselves (Mardin 1969). This elite and commoner distinction has continued into the Republican period. While Kemalists saw themselves as modern, urbanite, intellectual, and educated, they saw others as rural, redneck, backward, and ignorant (Çınar 2005, 2012). Assertive secularist ideology in Turkey can be, as Berger (2008: (p. 167) 277) writes, "located between Kemalist political and military elites." According to the Kemalists, "Secularism is public, Islam private; secularism is knowledge, Islam is belief, secularism is modern, Islam is traditional; secularism is urban, Islam is rural; secularism is

progress, Islam is reactionary [*irtica*]; secularism is universal, Islam is particular (Çınar 2005: 47).

Turkish secularization appears to be a struggle between the elites of "the city" and the religious people of the countryside (Doğan 2013). Secular elites consider Kemalism as the foundation of the country, which will be threatened along with liberalization and democratization in Turkey if "the ignorant people" are not kept under control (Oğuzlu and Özpek 2008).

In Turkey, the concepts of secularism (*laiklik*), modernism (*çağdaşlık*), and Westernism (*batıcılık*) appear synonymous with one another to the Kemalists (Momayezi 1998; Berkes 1964; Çınar 2005). The West was taken as its "model" by the Ottomans during its period of stagnation and decline from 1683 until 1908. The first adopters of this modeling were the educated elite ruling class and the military. Westernization has also been conceived in two major ways. Radical Westernization adopts its secularism and its culture. Moderate Westernization adopts only the West's science and technology while maintaining Islamic values and culture (Tepe 2008). The first has been referred to as Westernism (Kemalism) and the latter as anti-Westernism (anti-Kemalism). Furthermore, two understandings of modernity have competed in Turkey: a liberal Western-oriented modernity and a conservative East-oriented or Islam-grounded modernity (Findlay 2010; Çınar 2012). In Turkey, the term "modern" (*çağdaş*) refers just to the West-oriented modernity intertwined with being nonreligious. Westernization and secularization are the basic principles of this type of modernity: "To be modern is to have broken ties with the past" (Çınar 2005: 23). Therefore, on behalf of the modern, Kemalists entered into a conflict with traditional Turkish-Islamic culture and lifestyle (Öncü 2012). For example, Kemalists think that clothing, music, drinking alcohol, and so forth are indicators of modernity (Hanioğlu 2012). Because of that, they view Islam as a threat for modernist reforms (Yılmaz 2002).

Although political Islamists and some other groups regard Kemalists as imitating the West's modernism, this may be a misperception (Mardin 1991). According to results of a survey (Paker 2005), these different groups (Islamists, moderates, Westernists, etc.) are attributing different meanings to modernity. There is a conflict between Westernism and the authoritarian and repressive traditionalism. This conflict persists so long as tradition and modernity are thought to stand opposed to each other. Yet there is another image of tradition that overlaps with modernity. While Kemalists see modernity as Westernization, others see modernity as democratization and development. This discussion surrounding the concept of modernity exposes how this polarization comes down to traditional forces and other forces that want to change the tradition. Therefore, as indicated by Berkes (1964), secularism in Turkey is predominately the separation of social values from the authority of tradition. Basically, the conflict is over whether Turkey should be a "traditional" or "nontraditional" society. Berger paints a quite accurate picture:

> A country in which the challenge to secularism is politically prominent right now is Turkey. The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 by Atatürk, who was decidedly anti-Islamic and probably antireligious in general. He wanted to "civilize"

> Turkey, and civilization for him meant the secular culture of Europe. His political model was the French one; public life made, (p. 168) as it were, antiseptically free of religious symbols and behavior … This secularist ideology was firmly established in large sectors of Turkey's society, particularly in the Kemalist political and military elite. It was dominant in urban, middle-class populations. Back in the Anatolian hinterland, a deeply Muslim culture continued to prevail, with people paying lip service to the Kemalist ideology but at the same time passively resisting it in family and community life. In recent years, this resistance turned politically active (2008: 277).

# Conclusion

A number of cultural and political forces have contributed to contemporary Turkey and making it a unique country today, steeped in Islamic history yet striving to be a contemporary secular culture. Modern Turkey strives to be both secular in its own manner and also tolerant of faith traditions such as Islam, which remains a powerful social force within a culture still moving toward greater secularity. Turkey is a useful test case for empirically studying the many facets of secularization and secularism within a country where Islam has played a prominent role.

# Acknowledgments

The authors thank Sally B. Swanson of the Hood Psychology of Religion Lab for her feedback and editing on this chapter. Ralph W. Hood Jr. and Thomas J. Coleman III offer their warmest appreciation to Kenan Sevinc, who was a 2014–2015 visiting scholar in the Department of Psychology of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga under the direction of Hood. The many discussions and exchanges that took place during this time would go on to serve not only as the basis for this chapter but as the basis for something a bit more intangible: friendship.

## Bibliography

Aksin, S. 2007. *Turkey, from Empire to Revolutionary Republic: The Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to the Present*. Translated by D. Mursaloğlu. New York: New York University Press.

Alaranta, T. 2014. *Contemporary Kemalism: From Universal Secular-Humanism to Extreme Turkish Nationalism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Albayrak, Ş. 2012. "Amerika Birleşik Devletlerin'nde din-devlet ilişkileri: Sosyolojik bir analiz." PhD diss., Marmara University, Istanbul.

Barkey, K. 2012. “Rethinking Ottoman Management of Diversity: What Can We Learn for Modern Turkey?” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 12–31. New York: Columbia University Press.

Barro, R., and R. McCleary. 2005. “Which Countries Have State Religions?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(4), 1331–1370.

Berger, P. 2008. “Sekülerleşme yanlışlandı.” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 59(1), 271–281.

Berkes, N. 1964. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill University Press.

Boer, R. 2014. “Marx and the Christian Logic of the Secular State.” In *Secularisations and Their Debates*, edited by M. Sharpe and D. Nickelson, 61–73. Dordrecht: Springer.

Bulut, S. 2009. “27 Mayıs 1960’tan günümüze paylaşılamayan Demokrat Parti mirası.” *SDÜ Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 19, 73–99.

Büyükkara, M. A. 2008. “Ilımlı Islam tartışmaları zemininde günümüz Türkiyesi’nde laikliğin anlam ve sınırları.” *Usul* 9(1), 173–200.

Çarkoğlu, A. 2004. “Religiosity, Support for Şeriat and Evaluations of Secularist Public Policies in Turkey.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(2), 111–136.

Çarkoğlu, A., and E. Kalaycıoğlu. 2009. *Türkiye’de dindarlık: Uluslararası bir karşılaştırma*. Istanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Çarkoğlu, A., and B. Toprak. 1999. *Turkiye’de din, toplum ve siyaset*. Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları.

Çarkoğlu, A., and B. Toprak. 2006. *Değişen Turkiye’de din, toplum ve siyaset*. Istanbul: Tesev Yayınları.

Çavdar, G. 2006. “Islamist ‘New Thinking’ in Turkey: A Model for Political Learning?” *Political Sciences Quarterly* 121(3), 477–497.

Çınar, A. 2005. *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Çınar, A. 2012. “Subversion and Subjugation in the Public Sphere: Secularism and the Islamic Headscarf in Turkey.” In *Visualizing Secularism and Religion: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India*, edited by A. Çınar and S. Roy, 25–46. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Çitak, Z. 2004. “Nationalism and Religion: A Comparative Study of the Development of Secularism in France and Turkey.” PhD diss., Boston University.

Cizre, Ü. 2012. “A New Politics of Engagement: The Turkish Military, Society, and the AKP.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 122–148. New York: Columbia University Press.

Davison, A. 2006. *Türkiye’de sekülerizm ve modernlik*. Translated by T. Birkan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Directorate of Religious Affairs. 2014. *Türkiye’de dini hayat araştırması*. Ankara, Turkey: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı.

(p. 170) Doğan, A. U. 2013. “The Conception of Laïcité of the Republican People’s Party between 2002 and 2010.” PhD diss., Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

Driessen, M. D. 2014. “Regime Type, Religion–State Arrangements, and Religious Markets in the Muslim World.” *Sociology of Religion* 75(3), 367–394.

European Commission. 2005. *Public Opinion in the European Union*. Eurobarometer 64. **http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_en.pdf**.

European Commission. 2010. *Europeans and Biotechnology in 2010*. Eurobarometer 73(1). **http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_341_winds_en.pdf**.

Findley, C. V. 2010. *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789–2007*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Frick, A. 2011. “Turkey’s Secularism: Has the AKP Undermined the Ideals of Ataturk?” Master’s thesis, University of South Dakota, Vermillion.

Gülalp, H. 2005. “Enlightenment by Fiat: Secularization and Democracy in Turkey.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 41(3), 351–372.

Gürbey, S. 2012. “Rethinking Popular Sovereignty and Secularism in Turkey and Beyond.” PhD diss., Columbia University, New York.

Hanioğlu, M. Ş. 2012. “The Historical Roots of Kemalism.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 32–60. New York: Columbia University Press.

International Social Survey Programme. 2008. *Religion III* (No: 4950). **http://www.gesis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion/2008/**.

Kalyvas, S. N. 2012. “The ‘Turkish Model’ in the Matrix of Political Catholicism.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 189–198. New York: Columbia University Press.

Koştaş, M. 1990. “Ankara üniversitesi ilahiyat fakültesi.” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31(1), 1–27.

Küçükcan, T. 2005. “Modernleşme ve Sekülerleşme Kuramları Bağlamında Din, Toplumsal Değişme ve İslâm Dünyası.” *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 13, 109–128.

Kuru, A. 2006. “Dynamics of Secularism: State–Religion Relations in the United States, France, and Turkey.” PhD diss., University of Washington, Seattle.

Kuru, A. 2007. “Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion.” *World Politics* 59(4), 568–594.

Kuru, A., and A. Stepan. 2012. “Laïcité as an ‘Ideal Type’ and a Continuum: Comparing Turkey, France, and Senegal.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 95–121. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lagendijk, J. 2012. “Turkey’s Accession to the European Union and the Role of the Justice and Development Party.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey,* edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 166–188. New York: Columbia University Press.

Lewis, B. 2002. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mardin, Ş. 1969. *Din ve ideoloji*. Ankara, Turkey: AÜSBF Yayınları.

Mardin, Ş. 1991. *Turkiye’de din ve siyaset*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Mardin, Ş. 2008. *Türk modernleşmesi*, 18th edition. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları

Mardin, Ş. 2012. *Türkiye’de toplum ve siyaset,* 19th ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Meşeci, F. 2007. “Cumhuriyet sonrası Türk eğitim sisteminde ritüeller: Kuramsal bir çalışma.” PhD. diss., Marmara University, Istanbul.

Momayezi, N. 1998. “Civil–Military Relations in Turkey.” *International Journal on World Peace* 15(3), 3–28.

(p. 171) Nereid, C. T. 2011. “Kemalism on the Catwalk: The Turkish Hat Law of 1925.” *Journal of Social History* 44(3), 707–728.

Oğuzlu, H. 2011. *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Oğuzlu, H. T., and B. B. Özpek. 2008. “Turkey’s Europeanization.” *International Journal* 63(4), 991–1009.

Öncü, A. 2012. “Talk Television: Reinventing Secular Muslims in the Era of Neoliberalism.” In *Visualizing Secularism and Religion: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India*, edited by Alev Çınar and Srirupa Roy, 174–203. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Özbudun, E. 2012. “Turkey: Plural Society and Monolithic State.” In *Democracy, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*, edited by A. Kuru and A. Stepan, 61–94. New York: Columbia University Press.

Paker, K. O. 2005. *Günlük düşüncede modernlik, din ve laiklik*. Ankara, Turkey: Vadi Yayınları.

Parla, T., and A. Davison. 2008. “Secularism and Laicism in Turkey.” In *Secularism,* edited by J. R. Jakobsen and A. Pellegrini, 58–75. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Sakallıoğlu, Ü. C. 1996. “Parameters and Strategies of Islam–State Interaction in Republican Turkey.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28(2), 231–251.

Shively, K. 2008. “Taming Islam: Studying Religion in Secular Turkey.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 81(3), 683–711.

Silverstein, B. 2011. *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Somer, M. 2007. “Moderate Islam and Secularist Opposition in Turkey: Implications for the World, Muslims and Secular Democracy.” *Third World Quarterly* 28(7), 1271–1289.

Tekin, M. 2012. “Batı’da sekülerlik ve Türkiye müslümanlığının seküler içerimleri.” *İnsan & Toplum* 2(4), 181–204.

Tepe, S. 2008. *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Tezcür, G. M. 2007. “Constitutionalism, Judiciary, and democracy in Islamic Societies.” *Polity* 39(4), 479–501.

Toprak, B. 1981. *Islam and Political Development in Turkey.* Leiden: Brill.

Toprak, B. 2005. “Islam and Democracy in Turkey.” *Turkish Studies* 6(2), 167–186.

Toprak, B., I. Bozan, T. Morgul, and N. Şener. 2008. *Turkiye’de farklı olmak: Din ve muhafazakarlık ekseninde ötekileştirilenler*. Istanbul: Boğaziçi University.

Walton, J. 2009. “Horizons and Histories of Liberal Piety: Civil Islam and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey.” PhD diss., University of Chicago.

White, J. 2013. *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Yavuz, M. H. 2003. “The Case of Turkey.” *Daedalus* 132(3), 59–61.

Yavuz, M. H. 2009. *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Yılmaz, İ. 2002. “Secular Law and the Emergence of Unofficial Turkish Islamic Law.” *Middle East Journal* 56(1), 113–131.

## Notes:

(1.) The CUP was established as an underground organization among military students in the late nineteenth century. The group dethroned Abdulhamid II in 1908, marking the beginning of the Turkish Revolution, although the republic was not officially proclaimed until 1923. Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues were the successors of the CUP (Mardin 2008).

(2.) For one view that sees this strategy as necessary, given the structure of Islam, see Berkes (1964).

(3.) Kemalism is divided into leftist Kemalism and rightist Kemalism. Rightist Kemalists advocate obligatory religious culture and ethics courses, but leftist Kemalists wish to abolish them.

(4.) Full coups occurred in 1960 and 1980; 1971 and 1997 (28 February) were half-coups (Toprak 2005).

**Kenan Sevinc**

Kenan Sevinc is Assistant Professor of Psychology of Religion at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey. He is an assistant editor for the Journal of Intercultural and Religious Studies, the Turkish Journal of Religious Education Studies, and Journal of Divinity Faculty of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University.

**Ralph W. Hood Jr.**

Ralph W. Hood Jr. is Professor of psychology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is a former editor of the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion and a recipient of the William James award of the Division of the Psychology of Religion of the American Psychological Association.

**Thomas Coleman**

Thomas J. Coleman III is a research psychology doctoral student in the Brain, Belief and Behaviour research group at Coventry University in the United Kingdom. He is an assistant editor for the journal Secularism & Nonreligion and a managing editor for The Religious Studies Project.

# Secularization in Israel

Guy Ben-Porat

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.11

## Abstract and Keywords

Neither the study of the political system nor surveys of individual religiosity capture the full picture of secularization in Israel. The power of religious parties seems unshaken, and formal changes in religious policies and legislation are few. A large number of Israelis maintain their attachment to Jewish religion in beliefs and practices, and the Jewish majority agrees that Israel is and must remain a "Jewish state." However, economic and demographic trends in the past two decades have caused incremental changes, not registered in formal political channels, toward the partial yet significant secularization of Israel. Religion still has a hold on private beliefs and practices, but secularization will unfold in societal changes involving a decline of religious authority over significant spheres of life. A more complex concept of secularization allows for contradictions observed in Israel and helps to explain how secularization can occur while religion remains embedded in state and society.

Keywords: secularization, secularism, Israel, Judaism, Zionism, Orthodox Judaism, religious freedom

SECULARIZATION seems a strange term to apply to describe the developments in Israel. Religion continues to play an important and disputed role in both private and public life in Israel, religious parties hold significant power, and, consequently, a separation of religion and state is unlikely in the near future. Religion is welded into the essence of nationality that is built into the Jewish definition of the state and is institutionalized through religious institutions that have a direct bearing on individual lives on intimate issues such as marriage and divorce. The late writer and journalist Israel Segal, a secularist who left the ultra-Orthodox world years ago, provided a pessimistic account of a secular defeat in a culture war: "In my view, the full-scale war has already ended in defeat for the secular people. … [W]e are living under a regime of occupation imposed by a *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) minority and this occupation is growing more intensive" (Segal, 1999: 140).

While studies of religion and politics in Israel may have been right about their assessment of secularism, they missed other important developments that suggest secularization may be part of contemporary life. The expansion of commerce on the Sabbath, a

thriving nonkosher culinary culture, marriages performed without Orthodox rabbis, civil burials, and even an annual lively gay pride parade (that recently came to the fore after a parade in Jerusalem was attacked and one of the participants murdered). These relatively new developments encounter opposition but overall allude that the religious hold on public and private life may be changing. What is unique about these developments, and explains why they remained under the radars of social scientists, is first, the fact they are not necessarily related to a secular ideology; second, they occur alongside a religious resurgence; and, third, they advance outside of formal political processes. These developments fall far short of religious freedom or a liberal order, but since the early 1990s secular Israelis have gained new freedoms and choices that defy religious authority.

Neither the study of the political system nor surveys of individual religiosity capture the full picture of secularization in Israel. Politically, the power of religious parties seems unshaken, and formal changes in religious policies and legislation are few and minor. Individually, a large number of Israelis maintain their attachment to Jewish religion in beliefs and practices, and many have become more religious in various ways. Moreover, the consensus among the Jewish majority that Israel is and must remain a "Jewish state" guarantees (p. 173) the all-but-permanent importance of religion in public life. However, economic and demographic changes in the past two decades have created new incentives and opportunities for secular entrepreneurs and, following their actions, for Israelis to challenge existing institutions. These incremental changes, not registered in formal political channels, establish the partial, yet significant, secularization of Israel.

Secularization, as Mark Chaves (1994) suggests, is most productively conceived as a "decline in religious authority" and the decrease in the influence of religious values, leaders, and institutions over individual behavior, social institutions, and public discourse. The influence of these processes on individual indicators of religiosity—belief or practices—remains an open question, but secularization need not imply that most individuals relinquish all their interest in religion (Chaves 1994; Lechner 1991). Religion, according to this argument, may still have a hold on private beliefs and practices, but secularization will unfold in societal changes that involve a decline of religious authority over significant spheres of life. The disaggregation of the concept of secularization enables us to come to terms with the contradictions observed in Israel and explain how secularization can occur, while at the same time religion remains embedded in state and society.

# Religion and Nationalism

Zionism established itself as a national movement led by Jews who rebelled against the Orthodox leadership and followed the modernization of Jewish life that began in the eighteenth century. Zionism, which appeared toward the end of the nineteenth century, was one form of modern Jewish identity, related to the growing national sentiment across Europe and to the anti-Semitism that threatened to undermine Jewish emancipation. The solution to the "Jewish problem," argued Zionist leaders, was not emancipation but territorial sovereignty that would "normalize" Jewish existence. Jewish nationalism, on one hand,

was a secular ideology but, on the other hand, could not completely detach itself from its religious roots. As a secular ideology, Zionism challenged religious authority that held the view that Jewish redemption would come about with the advent of the Messiah. As a national ideology, religion was indispensable to Zionism as a marker of boundaries and a mobilizing force. This ambivalence toward religion could hardly be resolved, as secular nationalists would often acknowledge.

Zionism not only had to challenge religious institutions by presenting its national destiny, but it also had to separate itself from what religiosity symbolized. National revival implied a break with the past and the attempt to replace Judaism, a religion identified with the old world, with Jewishness, a modern identity based on culture, ethnicity, a historical sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and a proactive approach toward the future. Theodor Herzl, a secularized Jew and one of the founders of the Zionist movement, envisioned a secular entity with a separation of religion and state. But, as Herzl and those who followed discovered, religion was not easy to dismiss of confine. The territorial debate was exemplary of the power of religion and religious symbols, as attempts to find territorial solutions outside Palestine, the historical land of Israel, encountered strong opposition. When a plan that came to be known as the “Uganda Plan” to settle Jews in Africa was brought before the Zionist Congress in 1903, it encountered fierce resistance. Only the historic Land of Israel (*Eretz Israel*), it was (p. 174) acknowledged, could evoke sentiments among a critical mass of Jews, sentiments mediated through traditional religious symbols. Not only for internal purposes was the symbolic value of the Land of Israel significant. Externally, the Zionist claim to this specific territory combined a historical relation with a reference to God’s promise that granted the land to the Jewish people.

In the nation-building process, religious symbols have played a major instrumental role. Zionism developed the classic features of organic nationalism, producing its own cult of ancient, biblical history, the contact with the soil and the desire to strike roots in it, and the “sanctification” of the territory where the ancient biblical heroes lived and fought (Sternhell 1998). The seemingly secular Zionism was cultivated by the messianic enthusiasm and adopted religious symbols (Shapira 1992) so that, beneath a thin veneer of secularism, a Jewish tradition never ceased to exist. The Hebrew culture adopted by Zionists and the civil religion it created reinterpreted religious texts and borrowed from traditional Jewish culture so that almost all its symbols, rites, and myths bore a religious significance (Don-Yehia and Liebman 1984). The Bible and Jewish religious tradition, after selection and reinterpretation, provided for Zionism a narrative of continuity of nationhood, connection to the land, culture, and a calendar for national life. This calendar included the Jewish day of rest on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays emptied of their old religious Jewish content, which was replaced with symbols of new national experience and expectations, turning them into celebrations of national liberation (Ben-Porat 2000; Liebman and Don-Yehia 1984; Ram 2008ba).

As a result, Zionism could lend religion it its own interpretation but could never completely detach itself—as it continued to be directed by powerful religious structures (Raz-Krakotzkin 2000; Ben-Porat 2000) and share “a common ideological mantle” with religion

and the religious population (Elam 2000). Both symbolic and practical political questions kept Jewish religion inside the political life of the nation and, later, of the state. First, the Zionist movement also included religious groups that shared with secular Zionists the desire to establish sovereignty. Second, more important, the Zionist claim to speak on behalf of the Jewish people encouraged it to seek wide support and forced it to make compromises on practical religious questions. Third, religion has always remained in the background as a legitimating force for territorial claims.

# Political Compromise

The debates over the role of religion in public life became concrete after the establishment of the state of Israel when the sovereign state was required to define the rules of the game. In 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine was formed to deliberate the future of Palestine and the possibility of establishing a Jewish state. In order to create a united Jewish position, David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Zionist Labor Party, sent a letter to the ultra-Orthodox party Agudat Israel to ensure them that the future state would respect religious rights and provide a role for Jewish religion in public life. The letter, known as the status quo, became a cornerstone of future religious–secular arrangements. The commitments in the letter were somewhat vague, but the status quo laid down a basic agreement on the Jewish character of the state of Israel that enabled secular and religious political elites to formulate compromises and avoid conflicts (Don-Yehia 2000).

(p. 175) Two of the components of the status quo, institutionalized after statehood, dealt largely with duties and obligations. First, ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students were exempted from military service, meaning that the burden of defense in a country with universal conscription would not be equally shared. Second, the government granted autonomy to the ultra-Orthodox school system, a decision that raised debates over issues of curricula and funding. Three other components had a more direct effect on the lives of secular Jews: the designation of Saturday, the Sabbath, as the day of rest, with the mandatory closing of stores and public services; the required observance of Jewish dietary rules (*kashrut*) in public institutions; and the Orthodox monopoly over burial, marriage, and divorce.

The status quo operated as a guideline for religious–secular negotiations during the first decades of statehood (Susser and Cohen 2000). State laws based on the status quo included the jurisdiction of rabbinical courts over marriage and divorce, educational autonomy for religious groups, and declaration of the Sabbath as the official day of rest. Beyond legislation and formal institutions regulating private lives, the status quo included informal institutions that helped overcome disagreements. These included refraining from formal and binding decisions over controversial matters, favoring coalition partnerships over majority rule, allowing religious autonomy in specific areas, and attempting to shift disputes from national-political to judicial and local arenas. The general desire to avoid conflict shared by many Jewish Israelis, external threat, challenges of state-building, and political cooperation between the dominant Labor Party and the National Religious Party

upheld the functionality of the status quo for reinforcement of consensus with respect to the state.

The majority of nonreligious Israelis continued to relate to codes, values, symbols, and a collective memory that could hardly be separated from Jewish religion (Kimmerling 2004: 354) and remained loyal to the idea of a "Jewish state." The secular idea of a Jewish state referred to ethnicity or culture, but religion was called up as the gatekeeper to provide the criteria for inclusion and exclusion (Ram 2008b). The status quo arrangements granted religious Orthodoxy the monopoly over significant aspects of public and private lives in Israel. Publicly, Orthodox rabbis and establishments are funded by the state and only orthodox rabbis hold official positions in bureaucracy and the military. The Orthodox monopoly also impacts private lives as, for example, there is no civil marriage in Israel and (for Jews) only marriage conducted by an Orthodox rabbi can be registered by the state.

# Secularism

While the majority of Israelis, religious and nonreligious, for the reasons described previously, accepted the status quo as a given, others attempted to challenge it, demanding religious freedom. Secular ideas advocating freedom—described in terms of religion–state separation, freedom from religion, or religious freedom—have been part of political life since the rise of Zionism. Roots of this secularism can be found in different historical, social, and ideological sources that include the Jewish Enlightenment movement, which appeared toward the end of the eighteenth century and attempted to bridge the gap between Jewish identity, modern science, and citizenship of the nation-state.

Secular ideas and ideologies that continued to develop engaged with both theoretical dilemmas of Jewish identity and practical political questions of rights and obligations. (p. 176) Influenced by the ideas of enlightenment, some secularists attempted to merge their Jewishness with liberal-humanistic perspectives, universal moral principles, support of individual liberties, and rationality held above religious commandments. Secular-humanistic Jews see themselves as individuals who "wish to belong to the Jewish people and continue the tradition of the Jewish people completely free of any supernatural authority. They believe in the sanctity of the human personality and the inviolability of dignifying human honor and integrity" (Bauer 2006: 37). The universal secular humanism developed alongside, and at times against, more particularist secular visions of Jewish cultural-ethnic identity and concrete demands for religious freedom, independent from universal-liberal visions. The different attempts to define Jewish identity in cultural rather than religious terms implied the rejection of religious authority and resistance to the ultra-Orthodox monopoly over significant aspects of public life. In practical political terms, it implied the vision of a secular public domain where religion would exercise its authority only over those who chose to accept it.

Secular challenges to the status quo in early years of statehood were few, and mostly local and short-lasting. One exception was the League against Religious Coercion, formed in the 1950s, which developed a comprehensive agenda and explained it would

> distribute among the general public the idea that a man's convictions are his own private affair and so in Israel it is essential to struggle for the separation of religion and state, freedom of religion, belief and conscience; to encourage and support any individual who feels that he himself has been damaged … by religious restrictions.
>
> (Tzur 2001: 220)

Assisted by the organizational resources of the kibbutzim, the league struggled for civil marriage, easing the requirements for conversion to Judaism, and ending the restrictions on activities on Shabbat ("Shabbat without chains"). In 1955, the league submitted a petition with 100,000 signatures to the Knesset (Parliament), demanding a referendum on the authorization of civil marriage (Tzur 2001: 212). The league, however, failed to mobilize the general public, and its cooperation with the secular parties did not yield any significant results either. Its activities gradually declined until it disappeared after the 1967 war.

The secular-liberal political agenda that advocated religious pluralism and freedom of choice instead of the status quo and the religious monopoly appealed only to a small group with marginal political power. For the majority of Israelis, the support or acceptance of the role of religion in public life resulted from pragmatic political attitudes, the continued attachment to religious symbols and rituals, and a "traditional" self-identity located between religious and secular. Surveys carried out between 1969 and 1985 found that 15 to 25 percent of the population defined themselves as Orthodox (*dati*), 40 to 45 percent as traditional (*masorti*), and another 35 to 45 percent as nonreligious (Kedem 1991). Many Israelis, including those who defined themselves as nonreligious, took part in religious rituals during holidays (Passover) or private events (marriage, burial, and circumcision). Jewish Orthodoxy, therefore, acted as what Grace Davie (2007) described elsewhere as a vicarious religion: "performed by an active minority but on the behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing." (p.22) The role religion played in private lives and its role as a gatekeeper of the national boundaries has rendered the possibility of separating state and religion unlikely, even for those who described themselves as "nonreligious."

(p. 177) The "traditional" category many Israelis choose to describe their religiosity is not necessarily a comfortable middle position but is also an identity rooted in the ethnicity and culture of immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa (Mizrahim) and their descendants. The state's secular elite attempted to secularize these immigrants as part of a modernization process that showed little regard for the immigrants' traditions. However, the Mizrahim resisted secularization and developed a strategy of cultural accommodation, steering a religious path midway between Ashkenazi Orthodoxy and Ashkenazi secularism that they describe as "traditional" or *masorti* (Shokeid 1984). The traditional model open to variations in beliefs and practices and an oral tradition (different from Ashkenazi formality and its written tradition) was an "imported" pattern that developed among

Jews in Muslim countries that, like the Muslim majority in their countries of origin, continued to perceive religion and religious authorities as significant even as they went through a modernizing process. This pattern is sustained in the second and third generations of Mizrahim in Israel as well. Although flexible in some of its practices, the group maintains a conservative position regarding the role of religion in its community and is strict in its observance of rituals (Leon 2009).

Conservatism and the acceptance of the rules of the game as a given was shared until the 1980s by the majority of Israelis. Consequently, secularism as an ideology could hardly drive a process of secularization that would challenge the religious authority vested in the status quo. Not only religious Israelis but also traditional and nonreligious ones showed no desire for change. Specifically, restrictions on marriage and burial choices or activities on the Sabbath were accepted by the majority of Jewish Israelis. The rules and regulations limited freedoms but were perceived as constitutive to the Jewish character of the state, a necessary compromise between religious and secular, or simply an issue of minor importance that did not affect their everyday lives enough to justify action against them.

# Secularization

Secularization, a process of societal change and a decline of religious authority, could not advance in Israel by secularism, an ideology and a worldview shared by a small minority. In the 1980s, however, the consensus that underscored the status quo began to wane and secular resentment toward religious orthodoxy and especially the ultra-Orthodox (*haredim*) strengthened. Beyond the resentment, discussed later, three important changes provided new grounds for secularization and the opportunities for secular entrepreneurs to challenge the status quo and the orthodox monopoly: a neoliberal economy, the immigration of a million Jews from the former Soviet Union (FSU), and the emergence of religious and spiritual alternatives.

The modest collectivist ethos and the limited material resources available in early statehood provided a protective shield for the status quo. Life in Israel in the 1950s was rather simple, influenced by the pioneering ethos of state-building and the limitations of a developing economy. Liberal economic policies introduced since the 1970s took a more dramatic turn in the 1980s and set in motion the rapid rise of a consumer society similar to, and aspiring to be even more similar to, other Western countries. Economic growth exploded in the 1990s, influenced by immigration and the peace process, and the high-tech industry has raised the (p. 178) standard of living and brought with it the new possibilities and desires that characterize a consumer society—and the new lifestyles rendered the restrictive arrangements of the status quo difficult to maintain. Shopping malls and large stores, many of them American or global, began to emerge in the 1980s, offering a variety of commodities and a new shopping experience. The collective ethos of frugality was replaced by individualism, hedonism, and a consumerism around which the Israeli middle class organized its daily life (Carmeli and Appelbaum 2004: 6). The consumerist desire for

new experiences and the new leisure patterns were often incompatible with the religious restrictions of the status quo. For religious people, also influenced by consumer culture, the religious rules held firm, although some challenges to religious authority have emerged in relation to the use of the Internet or mobile phones, for example. However, secular Israelis (and, to a lesser extent, traditional ones) were ready to transgress the restrictions they no longer saw as fitting.

The immigration from the FSU, about a million immigrants who arrived between 1989 and 2000, was another important influence on secularization. Although this large group is not homogeneous, its members do share some general characteristics, including a secularization process they underwent during the communist regime, leaving them with only vague notions about Judaism (Ben-Rafael 2007; Leshem 2001). In addition, owing to intermarriage, about one-fourth of the immigrants do not meet the Orthodox criteria of Jewishness (Ben-Rafael 2007). The law grants Israeli citizenship to "the child or grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, and the spouse of a Jewish child or grandchild." According to Jewish Orthodoxy, a Jew is "someone who was born to a Jewish mother, and who does not belong to another religion, or someone who converted to Judaism." Consequently, immigrants were granted citizenship under the Law of Return (1970) but were not considered Jewish by the Orthodox establishment unless they went through an Orthodox conversion process. The status quo agreements and the Orthodox monopoly caused considerable difficulties for the immigrants, especially for those not recognized as Jews who, among other difficulties they experienced, could not marry in Israel. This reinforced their tendency to remain as a separate community but also strengthened the political demands for change in the current state of affairs and, most important, initiatives that undermined the status quo.

FSU immigrants' contribution to secularization, however, developed separately from that of veteran Israelis for two main reasons. First, the political orientation of the immigrants, described as "pragmatic-secular-rightist and ethnic" (Al Haj 2002: 240), was different from the more liberal political stance of most secular Ashkenazim. FSU immigrants, as a result of their Soviet experience (Shumsky 2001, 2004), adopted an ethnocentric approach that prevented cooperation with secular left-wing parties. Second, the FSU immigrant imported a "passive citizenship" approach (Philipov and Bystrov 2011) and a preference for practical solutions, often provided by "Russian" entrepreneurs or their political representatives, rather than for a struggle for comprehensive political change.

Alongside material and demographic changes, ideational developments also took a new turn of challenging the Orthodox monopoly, demanding that alternative Jewish identities be recognized by the state and receive an equal stance to Jewish Orthodoxy. The Reform (Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism) and Conservative (Masorti) movements became sharp critics of the status quo demanding religious pluralism. These movements that provide a less restrictive form of religiosity are not recognized by Israeli authorities and, therefore, do not receive state funding, and, among other things, marriages conducted by reform or conservative rabbis cannot be registered. Although the Reform and Conservative communities (p. 179) remained small and based mainly on immigrants from Eng-

lish-speaking countries, they received substantial backing from their related communities in the United States, which defended their status and enabled them to function without government funding for religious institutions, a budget that was controlled by the Orthodox establishment.

Beginning in the 1990s, an additional trend developed in Israel and became known as the "fourth stream," or secular Judaism. It is difficult to characterize this trend, which was influenced by "New Age" orientations, the search for a Jewish identity, and the hope for a religious–secular dialogue, especially in the aftermath of Itzhak Rabin's assassination in 1995. These groups frequently insisted on distinguishing themselves from Reform Jews, whom they associate with immigrants from English-speaking countries, and prefer to define their group as a deeply rooted Israeli development. For many of those who associate with secular Judaism, belonging includes the right for appropriation and reinterpretation of scriptures and the adoption of Jewish rituals to modern life and to universal values. Initially, this secular interest in Judaism and Jewish scriptures seemed to bring secular Jews closer to religion and the religious. However, the open and critical reading of texts and, more important, the reinterpretation of rituals and commandments directly challenged religious orthodoxy and the status quo.

The new forces behind secularization in the 1990s did not change the inherent ambivalence of Israeli secularism. While a minority of secular Israelis was occupied in a cultural and political struggle, for many Israelis secularization was about lifestyle and practical decisions related to everyday life. Religious authority, in the form of the rabbinate and affiliated institutions, however, was losing its authority not only because of the secular demands for religious freedom or practical individual decisions but also because of a tarnished image. Allegations of corruption, insensitivity, rigidity, and poor service were often waged against religious authorities and incorporated in the demands for change. In a survey conducted by a popular website, 41 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that the chief rabbinate is no longer necessary (www.ynetnews.com). In a wider survey, only 45 percent of Jewish Israelis expressed trust in the chief rabbinate, a low score similar to those for political institutions such as the parliament or the government (Israel Democracy Institute 2007). The negative—and, at times, hostile—attitude of secular Israelis toward the rabbinate undermined its privileged position, its legitimacy, and its ability to exert authority.

# Countersecularization

As elsewhere, secularizing trends in Israel have met counterforces of religion fundamentalism fighting to defend their way of life and fashion the public realm surrounding it. Three important developments in religious revival have occurred in Israel alongside (and against) secularization: secular and traditional Jews adopting a religious way of life, the rise of a new and powerful ultra-Orthodox religious party, and a Zionist revival led by religious Jews. What is common to these three developments is the desire to strengthen the authority of religion in both private and public domains.

The movement encouraging Jews to return to a religious way of life (*hazarah be-teshuvah*) dates back to the crisis that affected Israeli society in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur war (Beit-Hallahmi 1992) as well as to the 1960s, when it was one among other spiritual trends (p. 180) (Caplan 2007). This trend received considerable attention, especially when secular celebrities embraced an Orthodox religious way of life and denounced their former lives. The return to religion has been orchestrated by religious entrepreneurs who specialize in finding ways to the hearts of nonreligious Jews using different strategies. The number of secularists who turned religious is unknown; *haredi* spokesmen mention numbers reaching into six figures, but researchers estimate their number at around 40,000 and that the overall influence of the *hozrim be-teshuvah* on the size of the *haredi* society is minor (Caplan 2007: 101–102).

The most important development of upsurge of religiosity among Mizrahim, Jews originating from Muslim countries, was SHAS, a political party that gained prominence from the 1980s onward. Combining ethnicity and religiosity, SHAS advocated a return to tradition against the secularization forced on Mizrahi immigrants. SHAS organized its activities using an extensive network of educational and welfare institutions, constituting a substitute for the receding welfare state and thereby reinforcing the party's standing with both the state, which used it as an intermediary, and with its voters, who became more dependent on this party network (Levi and Amreich 2001). Through its extensive educational and welfare network, SHAS became an important player in promoting religious (and antisecular) Jewish identity.

Religious Zionism was part of the Zionist movement, but, until the late 1960s, it settled for the secondary role of managing the religious institutions and protecting their monopoly. A younger generation of religious Zionists who took power after the war of 1967, however, was no longer willing to accept its marginal role. Gush Emunim ("Bloc of the Faithful"), which appeared on the scene during the 1970s, constituted an attempt by the religious Zionists to make headway into a position of leadership while fusing religion, politics, and territoriality (Schwartz 1999: 83). Religious Zionists came to believe that secular Zionism has "fulfilled its mission and finished its role" (Karpel 2003: 15) and it was now their turn to assume leadership and settle the new territories occupied in the war to ensure they would become part of a larger Israel. The settlement of the territories—areas with historical and religious significance—was for religious Zionists the fulfillment of religious commandments and national duty. The national revival that Gush Emunim offered replicated many of the symbols and practices of secular Zionism but instilled them with religious meaning. Hiking the land, community life, Hebrew culture, and, especially, pioneering became the markers of the new movement (Ben-Porat 2000).

The three countersecularization developments—*hazarah be-teshuvah*, the growth of the SHAS party, and Gush Emunim—shared a common agenda to protect, first, what they described as "the Jewish character of the state" and, second, the authority of religion in public and private lives. These developments indicated that a privatization of religion was unlikely and that religion would remain a significant political force in years to come.

# Religious and/or Secular—The Numbers

Measured by self-identity, the numbers of religious and secularists in Israel have not changed radically, as many Israelis continue to describe themselves in surveys as “religious” or “traditional.” Measured by self-identity, differences among religious, traditional, and secular Israelis can be discerned. 47.9 percent of Israelis describe themselves as secular, 32.7 percent as traditional, 10.1 percent as religious, and 9.4 percent as ultra-Orthodox. At the same (p. 181) time, however, 80 percent of Jewish Israelis believe in God (Ben-Porat 2013). Secular Israelis tend to be more educated, Ashkenazi, and politically identified with the left and tend to describe themselves as upper-middle class. The “traditional” category is popular among Mizrahim. Furthermore, religiosity strongly correlates with a rightist political orientation. Secularization, however, is not necessarily about numbers of self-identified secularists but may be expressed in changes within the categories themselves, measured first by preferences, choices, and practices and second by their impact on religious authority.

The attempt to place the categories on a single-dimensional axis of religious belief based on self-definition not only misses out on the uniqueness of the groups and subgroups (Goodman 2003) but also overlooks the complexity and the multidimensional nature along the different axes of faith, behavior, and values and the changes that occur within those categories as they unfold in the everyday behavior of individuals. Thus, being “secular” or “traditional” might mean different things for different people, and, more important, this meaning can change over time or depend upon the context in which identity is defined. Consequently, secularization unfolds not necessarily in identity change (as individuals continue to describe themselves “traditional” or even “religious”) but in actual choices and practices that defy religious authority. Similarly, people who identify themselves as “secular” may, in some instances, choose to obey religious authority and engage in religious practices.

Surveys and studies of Jewish religiosity in Israel depict a complex picture of beliefs, practices, and values. Many Israelis observe religious rites selectively, without being concerned with their theological import or with religious consistency. Thus, adherence to *kashrut* (dietary) laws may be partial or complete, motivated by belief or respect for the environment, and accompanied by the observance of various prohibitions and commandments—or not. Conversely, individuals who identify themselves as traditional, when faced with economic or leisure-related decisions, make choices that can be described as “secular” in the sense of defying religious laws or norms. People who shop on the Sabbath often do not regard themselves as secular, provide pragmatic and instrumental reasons for defying religious commandments, and obey other commandments and practices (Ben-Porat and Feniger 2009). Finally, many of those who identify themselves as secular practice some religious rituals, such as the fast on Yom Kippur and the Passover traditional seder, and believe that circumcision is an important ritual that must be observed.

The societal changes affect almost all groups but in different ways. On the religious side, openness toward the secular world (or to “modernity”) is manifested both in artistic creation (literature, cinema, and art) and consumer culture. Even among the ultra-Orthodox *haredim*, some changes are emerging in the patterns of consumption, culture, and leisure, as well as civil and political values and involvement, all of which draw them nearer to the secular world (El-Or and Neriah 2003; Stadler et al. 2008) but exert no influence on the essence of their religious identity (Caplan 2007: 252).

Secularization in Israel, as elsewhere, is a complex and nonlinear process that unfolds in a bricolage of beliefs, values, and choices and is matched by countersecularization processes. This bricolage is not arbitrary or individual but is mediated by ethnic, class, and religious identities. Measured in the declining authority of religion, secularization is manifested in practical choices of everyday life or in concrete demands for change that require neither a secular identity nor a coherent secular political agenda. Following these choices, the reasons behind them, and their impact reveals what is being secularized and how. The diversity and the seemingly blurred boundaries of the religious and secular categories do not necessarily (p. 182) indicate compromise and moderation. Rather, the demographic, economic, and ideational changes undermine the foundations of the status quo, which is no longer able to provide the answers, and present a major challenge for the political system to provide answers and solutions.

# Political Standstill

The new demographic and economic developments described earlier presented new demands—for shopping on the Sabbath or civil marriage—that could not be answered by the status quo. The politics of accommodation that characterized the status quo was replaced by a “politics of crisis” that undermined stability, split the political system (Susser and Cohen 2000), and eventually rendered it ineffective. Secular resentment against what was perceived an infringement of religion on public lives and the exemption of ultra-Orthodox men from military service was channeled into political action and extraparliamentary activity. Opposition to “religious coercion” and support for pluralism became major issues for the secular parties and the parties representing immigrants from the FSU, all competing for the “secular vote.” Political parties with a pronounced secular agenda demanded curbing the *haredi* parties’ powers and promised to protect liberal freedoms.

The political system, however, on the one hand, was no longer able to enforce the old rules, but, on the other hand, was incapable of creating new, updated rules that could answer the rising challenges and contain the differences. The political standstill was not unique to questions of religion but was indicative of a deeper and wider political crisis and an unstable political system. This instability included frequent changes of elected governments that failed to complete their terms of office and a loss of public confidence in the democratic institutions. The ossification of political parties and low responsiveness of the Israeli representative government and the disappointing results of protest activity and extraparliamentary pressure encouraged citizens and political entrepreneurs to seek

alternative courses of action outside the political system. Secular entrepreneurs—ideological atheists, advocates of Jewish renewal, FSU immigrants, or business owners—identified the needs, desires, and demands against the restrictions of the status quo and the opportunities to challenge the restrictions by different actions and services. In some cases, the motivations were political-ideological goals (promotion of civil marriage), and, in other cases, they were economic (opening businesses on Sabbath). These choices and strategies, based on different combinations of ideological or economic motives, at times consciously challenged the status quo with a clear political objective (civil marriage or burial). Many other times, however, these were individual choices that took advantage of opportunities (private marriage or burial services) and had no political aspirations.

Initiatives were supported by different arguments, including individual rights and freedoms, republican citizenship claims, and market rationality. Individual freedom arguments are characteristic of the ideological entrepreneurs and the more established Israeli secularism but have also been used by more recent secular initiatives. Liberal arguments, somewhat paradoxically, were complemented with republican arguments of good citizenship. This "republican equation" (Levy 2008) included a reciprocal relationship between the state and its citizens, in which the citizens' contribution to the common good (military (p. 183) service) determined their citizenship status and allowed their claims toward or against the state. Israeli soldiers who were sons of immigrants, who could not be recognized as Jewish, receive Jewish burial, or get married under Jewish law, were used in campaigns against the Orthodox monopoly.

The "transformative effects" entrepreneurs had on politics, policies, and institutions (Sheingate 2003) described in the following chapters was the cumulative result of different actions that extended beyond formal political action. This does not exclude formal political action, as secular entrepreneurs included politicians or political activists who attempt to introduce formal change of existing rules. But, when actions in the formal political actions failed to achieve the desired results and trust in the political system declined, political action shifted elsewhere and new entrepreneurs appeared on stage. The transformative effects of this new secularization has nevertheless remained limited by several constraints. First, the ambivalent attitude of the majority of Israelis toward religion and the general desire for consensus discouraged a direct challenge to the existing rules of the game. Second, the conservatism and the narrow commitment to liberalism of some entrepreneurs and many of the nonreligious Israelis who take part in the process often led to partial solutions. Third, similarly, the market-based initiatives that dominated the contemporary era were, almost by nature, limited in their transformative motivations and potential as they were selective in appeal and often instrumental in their strategies.

# Secularization of Everyday Life

Secularization in Israel was described earlier as the decline of religious authority that may or may not be paralleled by changes of individual beliefs and identities, is independent from a secular-liberal worldview, and is uncommitted to a political struggle. In Is-

rael, secularization as a process is driven both by secular-liberal ideology and by economic and demographic changes removed from ideology and, particularly, from liberalism. This multifaceted process includes various needs and demands that encounter both a stagnant political system and religious opposition. But, in spite of political opposition and stagnation, secularization advanced through different processes and initiatives that were able to circumvent political confrontation.

Marriage can be secular Israelis' most significant encounter with religious authority. Rabbinical courts hold jurisdiction over matters of marriage and divorce for all Jews in Israel, regardless of their beliefs and preferences, and the rituals are conducted in accordance with Orthodox laws. Demands for reform made by secular Israelis who object to the Orthodox monopoly, and by those prevented from marrying in Israel by that monopoly, have gained in momentum and intensity in the past two decades. Until now, these demands have failed to change the formal rules, but the new needs and desires have been channeled into secular initiatives that have aimed at bypassing the political impasse. These included marriages conducted abroad, cohabitation and legal arrangements resulting in the growing number of "nontraditional" families, and families formed outside the rabbinate that may or may not bother to register their marriage through the state.

Death rituals and burial were not officially part of the status quo but became another part of the Orthodox monopoly in Israel, largely uninterrupted until the 1990s. The social, economic, and demographic changes described earlier also had influence on burials when, (p. 184) on one hand, FSU immigrants not recognized as Jews had nowhere to be buried and, on the other hand, secular Israelis demanded services compatible with their worldviews and rejected the uniform Orthodox service. Burial and funeral alternatives began to emerge as an answer to the immediate needs of immigrants and secular demands for new rituals and services and the freedom to choose the way they depart from their loved ones. Private cemeteries, profit oriented, which could hardly be imagined until recently, now provide a way for secular Israelis to avoid the Orthodox rabbinate and assume control over their departure from the world. The new alternatives created by secular entrepreneurs—motivated by ideology, profit, or a combination of both—provided a variety of burial and funeral services that would reflect the worldview of the deceased and the family, their aesthetic preferences or, in some cases, their status.

The Jewish *halakhic* prohibition on eating pork and raising pigs is an ancient and blanket ban. The pig is a forbidden food not only because it is identified as a repulsive animal but also because it signifies the persecution and humiliation of the Jews for many generations. In the early years of statehood, the majority of Jewish Israelis, including nonreligious ones, refrained from eating pork. The evolving status of nonkosher food in general, and of pork in particular, symbolizes—probably more than anything else—the new reality, according to which such meat, which had been sold in the past mostly under the counter and given the vague name "white steak," has now established a presence on the menu of many restaurants and is sold openly in new delicatessens and food chain stores throughout the country. Although the religious public, and most of the traditional population in Israel, regard pork as a symbol of impurity, and for them eating it is a serious transgres-

sion, for many Israelis it is now a commodity judged by taste and price. The increasing legitimization and expansion of the nonkosher meat industry and the eating of pork constitute a fundamental change in the generally accepted lifestyle underscored by demographic and economic changes.

The declaration of the Sabbath as the official day of rest was one of the tenets of the status quo and, for many Israelis, also a principal expression of a Jewish state (Shaki 1995). The proliferation of commerce on the Sabbath (*Shabbat,* in Hebrew) is a marked indication of the erosion of the status quo and the growing rift between religious and nonreligious Israelis, who hold different interpretations of the Sabbath and different expectations regarding its public status. For religious people, the Sabbath is a day dedicated to prayer and family life, when commercial activity is strictly prohibited. For the nonreligious public, strongly influenced by consumer culture, the Sabbath has come to mean something entirely different, a day of rest and leisure, as the large crowds that visit shopping centers and restaurants on the Sabbath indicate. The use of the term “nonreligious” rather than “secular” is purposeful, as many of those who shop on the Sabbath would not identify themselves as secular and their other practices and values may be not demonstrate secularism. The expansion of commerce on Sabbath can be explained as a direct outcome of the emergence of a consumer society in which shopping is not just for satisfying basic needs but is a cultural-leisure decision.

# Conclusion

Collective national identity in Israel, shared by religious and secular Jews, is deeply anchored in Jewish religion. This pertains not only to symbols and shared memories but also to the (p. 185) instrumental role religion performs in drawing boundaries and providing the legitimacy they require. Religion, in other words, continues to play a critical role in the definition of national boundaries translated into immigration laws, citizenship, and rights. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the (Jewish) nation from (Jewish) religion, the majority of nonreligious Israelis were (and still are) ambivalent toward religion and its role in public life as, on the one hand, it places limitations but, on the other hand, secures privileges. Consequently, many are suspicious of a secularism that seemingly threatens the secure boundaries of the Jewish state. It is hardly surprising that, in this context, secularism (an ideology related to liberalism) would be marginal and secularization (a process) could hardly challenge the status quo.

The secularization that took off in the late 1980s was different. This process, underpinned by economic and demographic changes, included new players, goals, and strategies that responded to new needs and demands, as well as to the new opportunities that emerged. The decline of religious authority was not registered in formal changes in the status quo. Rather, it was new informal institutions and secularized spaces that provided alternatives by circumventing, rather than clashing with, religious authority.

Rules pertaining to religious monopoly largely remained in place, the privileges and rights of Orthodox Jews were protected, and religious parties' power did not diminish. Focusing, however, on the formal aspects of politics—lobbying, negotiation, and legislation—may miss important developments that take place elsewhere. Changes of preferences, initiatives, and choices, with or without political intent, may bring institutional change incrementally. Looking beyond the formal aspects of politics and political change, therefore, uncovers a dynamic reality. As this account of the secularization of Israel has demonstrated, ideology and political struggles explain only part of the changes that have occurred in the past two decades. Civil marriage, civil burial, shops selling pork, and the rapidly expanding commerce on the Sabbath are all evidence for a secularization process unfolding in Israel.

## Bibliography

Al Haj, Majid. 2002. "Ethnic Mobilization in an Ethno-National State: The Case of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(2), 238–257.

Bauer, Yehuda. 2006. "The Intellectual Development of the Jewish Humanist Movement." In *Jewish Secular Culture,* edited by Y. Malkin, 33–67. Tel-Aviv: Keter. (Hebrew)

Beit-Halahmi, Benjamin. 1992. *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ben-Porat, Guy. 2000. "In a State of Holiness: Rethinking Israeli Secularism." *Alternatives* 25(2), 223–246.

Ben-Porat, Guy. 2013. *Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of Contemporary Israel*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Ben-Porat, Guy, and Yariv Feniger. 2009. "Live and Let Buy: Consumerism, Secularization and Liberalism." *Comparative Politics* 41(3), 293–313.

Ben-Rafael, Eliezer. 2007. "Mizrahi and Russian Challenges to Israel's Dominant Culture: Divergences and Convergences." *Israel Studies* 12(3), 68–91.

Ben-Rafael, Eliezer, and Nissim Leon. 2006. "Ethnicity, Religiosity and Politics: The Question of the Sources of Ultra-Orthodoxy among Mizrahim." In *Israel and Modernity,* edited by (p. 186) U. Cohen, E. Ben-Rafael, A. Bareli, and E. Yaar, 285–312. Sde Boker: Merkaz lemoreshet Ben-Gurion. (Hebrew)

Caplan, Kimmy. 2007. *Internal Popular Discourse in Israeli Haredi Society.* Jerusalem: Shazar Center. (Hebrew)

Carmeli, Yoram, and Kalman Appelbaum, 2004. "Introduction." In *Consumption and Market Society in Israel,* edited by Y. Carmeli and K. Appelbaum, 11–18. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chaves, Mark. 1994. “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority.” *Social Forces* 72(3), 749–774.

Davie, Grace. 2007. “Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge.” In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives,* edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, 21–36. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Don-Yehia, Eliezer. 2000. “Conflict Management of Religious Issues: The Israeli Case in a Comparative Perspective.” In *Parties, Elections and Cleavages,* edited by R. Hazan and M. Maor, 85–108. London: Frank Cass.

Don-Yehia, Eliezer, and Charles Liebman. 1984. *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Elam, Yigal. 2000. *Judaism as a Status Quo*. Tel-Aviv: Am Over. (Hebrew)

El-Or, Tamar, and Eran Neriah. 2003. “The Haredi Wanderer.” In *Israeli Haredim: Integration without Assimilation?*, edited by E. Sivan and K. Caplan, 171–195. Jerusalem: Van Leer.

Goodman, Yehuda. 2003. *The Return to Religion and Jewish Identities in the Early 2000s*. Discussion Paper 15–2002. Tel Aviv University: Sapir Center. (Hebrew)

Israel Democracy Institute. 2007. *The 2007 Israeli Democracy Index*. Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute.

Karpel, Motti. 2003. *The Revolution of Faith: The Decline of Zionism and the Religious Alternative*. Alon Shvut: Lechatchila. (Hebrew)

Kedem, Peri. 1991. “Dimension of Jewish Religiosity in Israel.” *Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Israel,* edited by Z. Sobel and B. Bet-Hallahmi, 251–278. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kimmerling, Baruch. 2004. *Immigrants, Settlers, Natives: The Israeli State and Society Between Cultural Pluralism and Cultural Wars*. Tel-Aviv: Am Oved. (Hebrew)

Lechner, Frank J. 1991. “The Case Against Secularization: A Rebuttal.” *Social Forces* 69, 1103–1119.

Leon, Nissim. 2009. “A Post-Orthodox View on Mizrachi Traditionalism.” *Pe’amim* 122–123, 89–115. (Hebrew)

Leshem, Elazar. 2001. “The Immigration from the Former USSR and the Religious–Secular Schism in Israel.” In *From Russia to Israel: Identity and Culture in Transition,* edited by Moshe Lissak and Elazar Leshem, 124–148. Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad Press. (Hebrew)

Levi, Gal, and Zeev Amreich. 2001. “Shas and the Mirage of Ethnicity.” In *Shas: The Challenge of Israeliness*, edited by Y. Peled, 126–158. Tel-Aviv: Miskal. (Hebrew)

Levi, Yagil. 2008. “Israel’s Violated Republican Equation.” *Citizenship Studies* 12, 3: 249–264.

Philipov, Michael, and Evgenia Bystrov. 2011. “All by Myself? The Paradox of Citizenship among the FSU Immigrants in Israel.” In *The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State,* edited by Ben-Porat and Turner, 258–277. London and New York: Routledge.

Ram, Uri. 2008a. *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel-Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem*. London and New York: Routledge.

(p. 187) Ram, Uri. 2008b. “Why Secularism Fails: Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 21, 57–73.

Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon. 2000. “Rabin’s Legacy: On Secularism, Nationalism and Orientalism.” In *Contested Memory: Myth, Nationalism and Democracy,* edited by L. Grinberg, 89–106. Beersheba, Israel: Humphrey Institute, Ben-Gurion University.

Schwartz, Dov. 1999. *Religious Zionism: Between Rationality and Messianism*. Tel-Aviv: Am Oved. (Hebrew)

Segal, Israel. 1999. “Fallen Asleep While on Guard.” In *We, Secular Jews,* edited by D. Tzuker, 132–141. Tel-Aviv: Yediot Aharonot. (Hebrew)

Shaki, Hai Avner. 1995. “The Legal Status of the Sabbath in Israel.” *Moznei Mishpat D,* 147–217. (Hebrew)

Shapira, Anita. 1992. *Land and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sheingate, Adam D. 2003. “Political Entrepreneurship, Institutional Change, and American Political Development.” *Studies in American Political Development* 17, 185–203.

Shokeid, Moshe. 1984. “Cultural Ethnicity in Israel: The Case of Middle Eastern Jews’ Religiosity.” *AJS Review* 9(2), 247–271.

Shumsky, Dimitry. 2001. “Ethnicity and Citizenship in the Conception of the Israeli-Russians.” *Tiuoria Vibekurit* 19, 17–40. (Hebrew)

Shumsky, Dimitry. 2004. “Post Zionist Orientalism? Orientalist Discourse and Islamophobia among the Russian-Speaking Intelligentsia in Israel.” *Social Identities* 10(1), 83–99.

Stadler, Nurit, Edna Lomsky Feder, and Eyal Ben-Ari. 2008. “Fundamentalism’s Challenges to Citizenship: The Haredim.” *Citizenship Studies* 12(3), 215–231.

Sternhell, Zeev. 1998. *The Founding Myths of Zionism: Nationalism, Socialism and the Making of the Jewish State*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Susser, Bernard, and Asher Cohen. 2000. *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Tzur, Eli. 2001. “To Be a Free People: The League against Religious Coercion.” In *State in the Making,* edited by A. Shapira, 205–234. Jerusalem: Shazar Center. (Hebrew)

Yadgar, Yaacov. 2010. *Secularism and Religion in Jewish-Israeli Politics: Traditionists and Modernity*. Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge.

**Guy Ben-Porat**

Ben-Porat is Associate Professor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. He has authored Global Liberalism, Local Populism: Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland. His most recent book is Between State and Synagogue: The Secularization of Contemporary Israel.

# Secularism, State Neutrality, and Islam

Abdullah Saeed

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society, Religion and Politics
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.12

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores how Muslims understand secularism and respond to the idea of separating religion from the state. For many Muslims, secularism has negative connotations, as they understand it to be against religion, equivalent to irreligion or antireligion. Due to these preconceptions, a Muslim who calls for secularism to be accepted may face significant resistance in many Muslim-majority countries. Various historical, social, and political reasons account for why much of the Western world has moved to separate religion or the church from the state, even while religion has remained, in several instances, an explicit part of the state. There is ample room in Islamic thought to explore the basic issue of state neutrality vis--vis religion, but the language of political discourse must shift toward more neutral terms. The term “state neutrality” is more acceptable. Muslims can come to accept state neutrality, despite their negative historical experiences associated with secularism.

Keywords: Islam, secularism, colonialism, anti-religion, state neutrality, theology

THIS chapter considers how Muslims understand the term “secularism” and how they respond to the idea of separating religion from the state. For many Muslims secularism has very negative connotations. They understand it to be against religion, equivalent to irreligion or antireligion. Even for some Muslims living in Western countries, under the legal and institutional banner of secularism, the notion of separating religion from the state remains unpalatable because they perceive it to be in conflict with Islam. Due to these preconceptions, a Muslim who advocates for secularism may face significant resistance.

In recent history, the concept of secularism has become inherent to Western political systems. There are various historical, social, and political reasons why much of the Western world has moved to separate religion (or the church) from state functions, even while religion has remained, in several instances, an explicit part of the state. The United Kingdom, for example, has separated the operations of the state from the influence of religion, yet the head of state continues to act as the official head of the most dominant religion. The same thing holds true for a number of other countries throughout Europe, where

such a relationship exists between religion and the state. On one level there is separation, while on another there is accommodation. There are various social, political, and religious reasons that have led to such de facto separation.

# What Is Secularism?

What exactly does the term “secular” mean? According to Palomino (2012: 210), secular means “not connected with religious or spiritual matters,” while the verb “secularize” means “to transfer from ecclesiastical to civil or lay use, possession, or control.” Secularism provides an analytical framework that contains two key notions: first, that religion is opposed to the secular, and second, that the religious and the secular should be confined to the private and public spheres, respectively.

In the West, the idea of the separation between religion and the state is referred to by many different words. Key terms include “neutrality,” “secularism,” and “separation” (Palomino 2012 (p. 189) : 210). However, in France, the term *laïcité* is used to describe the state’s neutral stance toward religion and religious beliefs. All of these terms imply some kind of institutional separation between religion and the state, but not necessarily isolation (Palomino 2012: 209). This is an important point that I will return to later in the chapter.

John Locke, an influential political theorist of the seventeenth century, strongly advocated the separation of church and state. Locke was a deeply religious man who observed the wars of religion, the religious-based political struggles between great European dynasties, and the conflicts between the British Crown and the Parliament unfolding around him, and recognized the need to rethink the proper relationship between the claims of religion and the working of political power (Blackford and Cavanaugh 2014). Locke ([1689] 2000) concluded that the state’s role should simply be to take care of people’s “civil interests,” which he defined as “life, liberty, health, and indolency of the body; and the possession of outward things such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like” (3). It was the duty of the ruler to protect those things belonging to this life, but that duty should not extend to the “salvation of souls” (4). Indeed, Locke strongly believed that the state had no expertise in ‘otherworldly’ things. Rather, the church was a free and voluntary society responsible for worshipping God and saving those involved; its powers were limited to teaching and excommunicating, and it had no jurisdiction over those who did not belong to it (Blackford and Cavanaugh 2014).

For Locke, who saw no conflict between his personal Christian convictions and the model of secularism he was proposing, separation was key to facilitating a peaceful civil society. It was also important to allow people to freely adopt religious beliefs based on their own personal convictions. If the state had unchecked power and the ability to influence the religious realm, it would impinge on people’s freedom to follow those convictions. For this reason state sovereignty needed to be curtailed, enabling the church to function sepa-

rately from the state (Kalanges 2012: 45-46) and allowing each religion to pursue its own goals, so long as they did not cause civil harms (Blackford and Cavanaugh 2014).

Locke's ideas were hugely influential on the American public and on James Madison, who drafted a comparable document articulating the United States' founding fathers' conception of religious freedom. Like Locke, Madison firmly advocated a strict separation of church and state, expressing concern at governments being allowed to influence or control religion. He explicitly rejected governmental support at any level for religious traditions (Kalanges 2012: 46).

# Models of the Secular State

Discussions about secular states in the West often assume that they share a common set of beliefs and that similar practices govern the relationship between religion and government. However, this is not necessarily the case. Although Western states may share some commonalities, they are also marked by extraordinary diversity. Archer (2001), for example, highlights some of the differences between a subset of Western secular nations—those rooted in English cultural, political, and economic traditions. He notes, "The United States has a secular state, but not a secularized society. Britain has a secularized society, but not a secular state. And only Australia has both a secular state, and a secularized society" (274). Moreover, Western countries have come to secularism via different paths. Secularism in France came (p. 190) about as a result of a mobilized antireligious movement and massive conflict, while in the United Kingdom, conflict between religion and the state was limited (275). Thus, in Europe, through these historical specificities, states have developed very different understandings of the separation between religion/church and the state.

For example, France's experiences during the French Revolution led to the adoption of a more uncompromising notion of church–state separation. Having witnessed the negative consequences for the average citizen of the state's misuse of religion, the revolutionaries recognized that the kind of equality they sought was not possible under a state guided by religion. As such, many thinkers of the time advocated separation of the two. Thus, the French understanding of secularism has its own unique history, based on a particular understanding of the dangers inherent in the cooperation and collaboration between the state and religious institutions. In effect, this understanding was driven by fear of the *ancien régime* in which the state and religion closely collaborated to systematically oppress the masses. These historically rooted fears are important in understanding the rather extreme approach to secularism adopted by the French and why many French thinkers and intellectuals do not want religion to have any influence whatsoever on the state or even a strong public presence. In other European countries, such as many Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom, different historical experiences have conditioned more moderate views on the separation of church and state.

Outside of Europe the case of the United States is especially interesting. The settlers who established the northern colonies of New England in the 1630s were religious radicals who sought to establish a “righteous” society in America, based firmly on the principles of Puritan Protestantism. Interestingly, their religious beliefs were by no means conducive to secularism or religious tolerance. In fact, the idea that there should be a separation of church and state was completely alien to their belief system. On the contrary, the unity of religion and politics was central to the very rationale for founding the new society.

How then did the United States come to have a secular constitution that institutionalized the separation of religion and state? Three historical developments preceded this change in thinking according to Archer (2001: 277): the two “Great Awakenings” and the Revolution. The Great Awakenings were mass Protestant revival movements that swept through the American colonies, the first taking place in the 1740s and the second in the first half of the 1800s. These movements had a crucial impact on the religious makeup of American society, as they left behind a multitude of sects and denominations: Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others that split or displaced the previously dominant Puritan traditions (Murrin 1990: 25–6; quoted in Archer 2001: 277). This made it increasingly difficult for the colonies (and later states) to maintain an official preference for any one church (Archer 2001: 277). As a result, this burgeoning religious pluralism decisively framed the new federal Constitution in the 1780s. The First Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1791, stipulated that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (278 -

There were two other factors that were crucial to the emergence of a secular constitution in the United States. First, faced with competing religious organizations and traditions, many denominations and sects were concerned that if they could not control it themselves, the state would fall into hostile hands (278). While most still considered a united regime of church and state to be optimal, they recognized that it was not possible under the circumstances and therefore, a neutral state that enabled citizens to live a Godly life of their choosing was the next best thing—certainly better than being forced to live according to the (p. 191) laws of another religious group (Pole 1993; quoted in Archer 2001: 278). Second, the writers of the Constitution saw that the fervent emotions sparked by religion could hinder their nation-building project. Therefore, in order to ensure the success of their project, they felt it was best to exclude religion from the political arena. By keeping the *federal* government out of religious affairs, states would be free to implement their own institutional arrangements (either neutrality or an established church) (Archer 2001: 278). In short, the United States adopted a secular constitution “not because religion was unimportant to the colonists, but rather because it was too important” (278). For many Protestant sects and denominations in the United States, the need to coexist with other religious groups “came to outweigh purely ideological considerations” (279).

If we move outside of the Western context, other models of secularism have been adopted. India, one of the largest countries in the world in terms of population, provides a good example of ‘soft secularism.’ While the Indian population is deeply religious, be they Hindus, Christians, Muslims, or Buddhists, the founders of modern India argued that, given

the diversity of their religious population, religious neutrality must be maintained at a state level (Choudhury 2008: 63). The Indian Constitution makes no explicit mention of secularism (63) but employs the maxim *sarva dharma sambhava* ("all religions are valid") (67) to describe the state's position on religion. At the same time, instead of relegating religion to the private sphere, religious groups were allowed to administer their communities through their own personal laws (64). Indian courts were also given jurisdiction to make rulings in these areas (Jacobsohn 2003: 97 quoted in Choudhury 2008: 63). A notable exception to this is in Goa, which is a former Portuguese (rather than British) colony. In Goa, there is a single secular law (a uniform civil code) that governs all Goans, regardless of their religion. Some do not support the recognition of religious personal law and see this approach to secularism as a potential model or 'blueprint' for the rest of India (Shetreet 2011: 100). Choudhury (2008), for example, argues that India's willingness to "accommodate religion" within the secular constitution has allowed religion and "religious racism" to enter the public domain and "erode" secular institutions (62). Nevertheless, India's model of secularism shows that a religiously neutral state does not always have to be completely averse to working with religion.

Indonesia has also been described as an example of "soft" or "passive" secularism. This secularism has served to strengthen the democratic process and resulted in a vibrant civil society (Rahim 2011: 15). In Indonesia, a soft version of secularism is enshrined in the "five principles" of the state's constitution (also known as *Pancasila*). The first of these principles acknowledges that Indonesian citizens hold many different religious beliefs; however, all should be respected for the sake of harmony and peace. In effect, it enshrines the precept of religious tolerance and the notion that all citizens may adhere to the religion or faith of his or her choosing. This is the case despite Indonesia being the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world, and the ongoing demand from some Muslim traditionalists that Islam be declared the religion of the state (Duran 1992).

While India and Indonesia may present good examples of soft secularism, the twentieth century has seen the emergence of hard secularism in many non-Western countries, including many former communist countries, such as the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Under the Soviet regime, relationships between religion and the state varied considerably throughout the Eastern Bloc, depending on local histories and the degree of religious diversity. Approaches to religion also depended on whether churches were "national" (as in the case of the Orthodox Churches of Serbia or Bulgaria) or "international," with alleged foreign (p. 192) allegiances (such as the Catholic Church in Croatia or Poland; Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 9). Other factors included the size and influence of the religion and the country's behavior during World War II (Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 9).

In the case of the former Yugoslavia, from its very beginnings, the socialist regime of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia decided theoretically and practically that sectarian religious tendencies should be contained to moderate the potential for political opposition. The constitution set out the principles of the separation of the church and state and religious freedom (Article 25) but also warned that "the abuse of the Church and of reli-

gion for political purposes and the existence of political organization on a religious basis… [were] forbidden" (quoted in Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 11). The early socialist state in Yugoslavia was modeled on Stalin's Soviet Union and shared its unforgiving attitude toward enemies. Religious functionaries were perceived as such, and religious institutions were treated with suspicion. The government provided its own education through literacy classes and state schools and closed down religious schools throughout the state (Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 12).

Similarly in Bulgaria, state officials began to remove all religious education from public schools immediately following the Communist victory of 9 September 1944. The church strongly opposed these efforts to secularize education, but the Communist government felt that religious education would undermine efforts to modernize Bulgarian society. In 1946, the government also initiated new laws that only recognized marriages performed by civil authorities. In fact, all life-cycle rituals previously performed by the church (e.g., baptisms, marriages, funerals) were eventually replaced by socialist rituals created by the state, which were devoid of spiritual meaning. Various charitable functions of the church were also taken over by the state and church properties nationalized (Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 13). In 1947, the Dimitrov Constitution, the first communist constitution enacted, closely modelled on Stalin's 1936 Soviet Constitution, established the separation of church and state by removing the language that had once recognized Orthodoxy as the traditional religion of Bulgaria. After Stalin's death, religious persecution was relaxed slightly, and many of the priests who had been sent to labor camps were granted amnesty. Still, religion was frowned upon in public life, and social mobility remained tied to atheism (Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 14). Stalin's death ushered in a new emphasis on the co-optation (rather than repression) of religious groups. Since then, state–religion relationships have generally relaxed in all of the former Communist states. In many socialist nations, forms of religious instruction have remained possible but are subject to strict state controls. These initiatives are regarded more as an assertive attempt by the state to control religion, rather than a move to eliminate it altogether (at least from the public realm; Ballinger and Ghodsee 2011: 9).

In all, when it comes to the separation of religion and the state, there is no single model that can or should be followed. Indeed, the separation of the functions and institutions of government and religion can take on a range of forms, based on a variety of political, social, cultural, and historical factors.

# How Do Muslims Speak about Secularism?

Muslim engagement with secularism originated in the colonial period in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this time, the colonial powers that dominated Muslim (p. 193) communities provided the first lens through which many Muslims experienced the idea of secularism. This historical experience has meant that, for the average Muslim, the concept of secularism remains deeply connected to colonial domination, Western hegemony, and the control of Muslim communities and their land. Many Muslim thinkers

who first listened to colonial authorities discuss how a state could be managed without any reference to religion (particularly Islam) considered this idea blasphemous. At least in theory, Muslims, by and large, have maintained the idea that a Muslim state should be built upon a religious/Islamic foundation. The leader of the Muslim community (the caliph or imam) should uphold the *sharia* (Islamic law) and implement its requirements in society. The leader should also promote faith and religion and defend Islam and the community. As such, the notion that one can govern a community without any reference to people's religion is simply unthinkable for many Muslims including traditionally trained thinkers and scholars.

The second significant experience for Muslims as far as secularism is concerned was the first national experiment with secularism in Turkey. After the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in the early part of the twentieth century, the founders of modern Turkey, in particular Musafa Kemal Ataturk (1881–1938), argued that that there was no need for a caliph or indeed any religion-based state functions in the modern period. To transform Turkey into a modern nation, the ancient ideas or models of past regimes that did not align with modern understandings of governance should be rejected, they argued. For the leaders of modern Turkey, it was absolutely essential that religion be kept separate from the state but still under its control, or in a sense subservient to it. The state did not need to be based on religion, religious precepts, or religious law. Instead, modern Turkey, with its multireligious and multicultural population and geographical position adjacent to modern Europe, needed to adopt a more modernized form of governance. This meant, at least in part, minimizing public expressions of Islam and eradicating the close connection between the Turkish state and religion.

To achieve these goals, the Turkish authorities implemented a series of programs to help shape the modern nation and to show the rest of the Muslim world how a modern secular state could function. For Muslims around the world, however, the secular model presented by the Turkish authorities implied the marginalization of the *sharia*; a ban on a range of public expressions of Islam; the prohibition of religious education for young Muslim children; restrictions on the use of the Arabic language, even in certain key rituals; and a ban on the headscarf and the veil for Muslim women, at least in public. This is how secularism looked, and for many Muslims it was shocking. They raised their voices to criticize it around the world. As a result, Turkish secularism has remained an oft-cited negative example of secularism in its most virulent form.

The third experience through which Muslims have come to understand secularism is through discourses on Arab nationalism and secularism. Arab nationalism, advocated by the intellectual movement of Ba'thism, has been most clearly visible in countries such as Iraq and Syria. In both nations there was a strong emphasis on secularism and state dominance in all aspects of life, including religion. A number of Arab of Ba'thist (in many cases Christian) thinkers promoted an understanding of governance that did away with many of the key aspects of its role and function that Muslims have relied upon throughout the ages. Under the guise of secularism, the regime in Syria, for instance, promoted minorities at the expense of the majority, leading to state dominance by the Alawis. In Iraq, the

state, under Saddam Hussein, was intolerant of religion and attempted to disallow religious influence on (p. 194) its government. In both countries the security apparatus (the dreaded *mukhabarat*) treated religious communities with disdain. The kind of persecution and oppressive practices these regimes used against their predominantly Muslim populations left a mark on the psyche of Muslims, not only in these countries but in the wider Arab world and beyond. From these Muslims' point of view, secularism cannot tolerate any challenge to the state through religion or religious institutions. Moreover, they perceive the state, with its ideology rooted in an antireligious set of ideas, as willing to use its power to destroy both religious institutions and religious figures who do not conform to the state-imposed path.

Because of these negative historical experiences, Muslims, including traditionalists, political Islamists, puritans, moderates, and extremists, are fearful and suspicious of secularism. Those in Muslim societies who argue for secularism or for the separation of religion and the state are usually treated with scorn, ridiculed, or labeled as puppets of the West. Indeed, before a discussion can even begin on this subject, advocates are automatically labeled as trying to destroy religion in Muslim societies. Their advocacy is seen as promoting subservience to Western hegemonic, political, economic, and cultural interests, which aim to take Muslims away from their religion. Even those Muslims who appear to be rather moderate on many political issues are very uncomfortable talking about secularism in a positive way. The historical legacies of colonialism, Ba'thism, and other extreme forms of nationalism have made secularism a sensitive and problematic topic for many Muslims.

# New Ideas Emerging among Muslims in Relation to State Neutrality

Since it carries such negative connotations, it is perhaps not very useful to use the term "secularism" in Muslim contexts and discourses. It is important to look at and explore other terms that could be used to foster the debate on religion and the state in a modern context. For this reason, I now use the term "state neutrality" when referring to the idea of the separation of the state and religion.

Over the past three decades or so there has been intense debate among Muslim thinkers, both in Muslim-majority countries and in minority contexts, about the pros and cons of state neutrality. Given today's religious plurality, state neutrality vis-à-vis religion is extremely important for some Muslims. For them, this is an issue that must be discussed and debated as part of thinking about contemporary governance in religiously plural societies where the equality of all citizens is a given. For other Muslims, while the idea of equality is important, they argue that in Muslim-majority countries the state cannot be completely neutral: it cannot be completely separated from religion and religious matters. The Muslim-majority state should recognize the majority religion and facilitate its functioning in society, while still allowing other religions to be practiced. From their per-

spective, recognizing the majority religion does not necessarily lead to discrimination against people of other faiths or giving more rights to Muslims at the expense of others.

The debate is a complex one, and the fact that it is occurring among Muslims is interesting in itself. There is a wide variety of views among Muslims on what state neutrality actually means. Some completely reject the idea of a separation between religion and the state, (p. 195) while others find the concept to be useful in a modern context. Many others fall somewhere between these two poles. Later, I survey some of the views put forth by Muslim scholars who are prepared to accept some kind of state neutrality. The views presented here will show that in spite of the sensitivity associated with the terms “secular” or “secularism,” Muslims are making some useful contributions to the discourse on this topic.

One of the stronger views regarding the noncompatibility of Islam with the idea of the separation of religion and the state is presented by Yusuf al-Qaradawi. For al-Qaradawi, Western countries with majority Christian populations are more comfortable with the idea of state neutrality because Christianity can accept secularism relatively easily (al-Qaradawi 1977). This is because Christianity has more or less always maintained a clear separation between matters of government and those of faith. A famous saying that has been attributed to Jesus Christ pronounces, “Render unto Caesar things which belong to Caesar, and render unto God things which belong to God” (Luke 20:25). In a sense, this statement provides the necessary guidance on this matter. For al-Qaradawi, it also indicates that Christianity is a religion that is comfortable with keeping these two crucial domains separate. (al-Qaradawi 1977: 113–114). For scholars like al-Qaradawi, therefore, this explains why separation should be the norm in places like Europe.

Islam’s experience has indeed been the opposite, al-Qaradawi and others may argue. From its very beginning, Islam has provided a comprehensive guide regulating all aspects of life, from birth until death (Gallagher 1989: 211), including those in the political sphere. From the time of Prophet Muhammad, through various regimes and caliphates, up to the modern period, it has maintained a close connection between the state and religion. Most Muslims, at least in theory, have not accepted the idea of separation, particularly since nonseparation has always been the norm. Scholars such as al-Qaradawi argue that the ideology of state neutrality does not have the necessary cultural, theological, or historical roots to be applied effectively in Muslim contexts. Indeed, “If Islam does not have political power it does not have any power at all” (Gallagher 1989: 211).

On the other hand, new ideas on this topic have been emerging in Muslim contexts. Some scholars, like the Iranian thinker Abdolkarim Soroush, argue that separation can be viewed at different levels. Soroush (2010) argues that people should be free to make their own choices in matters of belief but should also be able to agree on political secularism—that the state transcends the religious. This kind of secularism does not give the followers of any particular religion special privileges. Instead, it recognizes religious pluralism and applies the law equally to all. For Soroush, this kind of state neutrality is very important in today’s multireligious societies. The state, when showing preference for one particular

religious group, will create inequality. Instead, the state should be neutral toward all religious traditions and guarentee equality to all citizens as far as rights and obligations are concerned. While secularism may be a deliberate attempt to exclude religion from world affairs, Soroush argues that this does not mean that governments are opposed to religion. Religion is accepted as a vital part of daily life, but should not be used as the basis for legitimizing state actions as it has in the past.

Importantly, thinkers like Soroush may argue that there is no prohibition in the Qur'an or traditions of the Prophet that may prevent separation from being implemented in Muslim societies. Muhammad 'Abduh from Egypt argued that anything that results in the abandonment (*khidhlan*) of religion, harm (*idha'*) to its people, or damage (*ida'a*) to their interests is forbidden (quoted in March 2009). Secularism does not fall into any of these categories (p. 196) because it is not against God and does not interfere with Islam (March 2009). While for some scholars it might be ideal to have a religiously governed Islamic state, thinkers such as Rashid Ghannouchi of Tunisia acknowledge that it is not possible to achieve this under current circumstances. Since this is the case, a "secular democratic regime which fulfils the category of the rule of reason" is the next best option (Esposito 2010: 10). At the end of the day, as long as the government takes into account the presence of different religious traditions in society and provides for them all equally, a number of models of governance may be equally acceptable.

It is important to note that how we understand equality today is quite different from how equality was understood in the premodern period. At that time, the state did not recognize the equality of all citizens. Those who belonged to the dominant religion often had more rights than those who belonged to a minority religion. In the modern period, the notion that citizenship grants people equal rights and equal treatment in all key areas is taken for granted.

Some scholars, such as Faisal Gazi and Sami Zubaida, argue that there is no religious reason why Muslims cannot support the notion of separation between religion and the state. Neither the Qur'an nor the traditions of the Prophet specify a particular form of governance. Gazi (2009) notes that Islam has not prescribed a specific regime or system according to which Muslims must be governed. Instead, there is freedom to organize the state according to prevailing intellectual, social, and economic conditions. Sami Zubaida (2005) agrees, stating "God and the Prophet have left these matters to the discretion of the believers to proceed according to their circumstances and intelligence" (446). If Muslims have the freedom to implement a model of governance that is most suitable to their context, there is no reason why ideas about state neutrality vis-à-vis religion should be rejected. As long as important values such as justice, fairness, and equity are implemented in the community, then there should be no reason why ideas such as religion and state separation cannot be accepted.

There may also be public interest arguments that support this position. This type of governance may have many advantages for Muslims in terms of preventing the state from victimizing people of faith, or having ultimate power to enforce a particular brand of or-

thodoxy. These are good reasons why, in certain circumstances, the idea of state neutrality is even advantageous. Historical evidence could also support the case for some kind of separation. Although, in theory, Muslim states have always been strongly connected to religion, in practice there has often been a clear distinction between the political and religious domains. Although the caliph is supposed to embody both political and religious authority, in some periods of Islamic history the caliph as the head of state did not occupy both spheres of power. Religion was often subservient to the political power of the ruler, and, in some cases, the ruler did not have political power, only religious authority. One can cite a number of relevant historical examples. The Sudanese/American scholar Abdullahi An-Na`im argues that religious and political authority stem from different sources and require different skills. Therefore, to conflate the two can lead to dangerous confusion. According to An-Na`im, this nexus was only possible during the time of the Prophet (Esposito 2010: 15). Moreover, An-Na`im asserts that a secular state—one that is neutral regarding religious doctrine—is "more consistent with Islamic history than is the so-called Islamic state model proposed by some Muslims since the second quarter of the twentieth century" (quoted in Esposito 2010: 14-15). Since this is the case, there is no reason why Muslims cannot experiment with an idea that has always been part and parcel of Islamic tradition, at least in practice.

(p. 197) Another argument that can be put forward today is that state neutrality actually indirectly promotes spirituality and helps religion to flourish. When the state takes a neutral position, it allows religious traditions to function confidently and without fear. Thus, as long as people of different religious traditions follow the law of the land and behave decently, there is no need for the state to interfere in the practice of religion. In non-Muslim contexts, it has been noted, "Countries without established churches … often experience a higher degree of genuine religious observance" (Benard 2008: 73). Importantly, "When people are given the freedom to worship as they choose, church attendance rises, as does the level of donations to religious charitable organisations" (73). Within a Muslim context, the principles of the sharia "lose their religious authority and value when enforced by the state" (Hallaq 2005: 4). One of the best examples of how religion can flourish in a neutral state is of course the United States—a country established by people fleeing religious persecution in Europe. As a result, the nation strongly opposes the idea of state interference in religion, and after a few hundred years the benefits of such neutrality are still visible. Despite the separation of church and state enshrined in the Constitution, the United States remains one of the most religious societies in the world.

Another very important argument in favor of state neutrality stems from the reality of religious pluralism today. In any given society, anywhere in the world today, there are people of different religious traditions. This is the case within both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority countries. Historically, people of other religious traditions have always been present in Muslim societies. Traditional Islamic law has always accepted the idea that societies by and large are religiously plural. Muslims are not allowed to force other people to accept Islam, no matter how powerful the Muslim population or the Muslim state is. Moreover, many verses in the Qur'an refer to humankind as being one nation, stemming from a single origin. The Qur'an emphasizes that all people were created from one person

— Adam (Q 7.189) —although they may differ in size, race, language, nation, and tribe. The only difference that the Qur'an recognizes between people is in their piety toward God (*taqwa*). Islam, therefore, supports and promotes the concept of universal brotherhood, peace, and unity (Abu-Munshar 2012).

Although inequality has always existed, the emphasis on equality in the modern period has no historical precedent. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its very first article emphasizes the importance of this value. The declaration states that, regardless of religious, political, cultural, social, or economic differences, human beings are equal. Following on from this, the religious traditions we belong to should also be treated equally by the state. The state, even if dominated by a Muslim majority, should not treat religions unequally. This does not mean that one has to accept the idea of all religions being equally valid or authentic. People belong to different religious traditions because they were born into them, or they consider their religious tradition to be the most appropriate for them and therefore the most valid. For this reason, perhaps the best way to manage plural societies is to have a state that is neutral toward all religious traditions, including the majority religion, whatever that may be.

Another argument in favor of state neutrality comes from Muslims living in predominantly Western societies who see the benefits of this model of governance. As Muslims living in a minority context, they would be affected if the religious majority decided to push a particular religious agenda. However, the separation that exists between church and state functions to safeguard religious freedom and to protect Muslims and their religious beliefs (p. 198) to a great extent (although of course there are exceptions to this). Many Muslims observe that living in secular Western societies is extremely helpful for practicing their religious traditions, in terms of feeling supported by the state, its institutions, and the legal system. Many Muslims also find that there is substantial overlap between what secular governments are trying to achieve in terms of worldly benefits and what Muslims would be seeking under a religiously-based government. The values of justice, liberty, equality, and nondiscrimination enshrined in Western secular constitutions (or the equivalent highest legal order) drive public policy, institutional aims, and government spending (March 2009: 2841). Therefore, members of all religious traditions in these societies, including Muslims, benefit from these practices and policies.

In effect, state neutrality means that Muslims, as well as the followers of other religions, can actively petition the government to address their needs or aspirations and to direct social spending toward eligible Muslim communities; secure recognition for religious schools; or even support foreign policies beneficial to the welfare of Muslims in Muslim-majority countries (March 2009: 2841). Islamic law places great value on the pursuit of such worldly goods. According to Rashid Ghannushi, it is a Muslim's duty "to work towards preserving whatever can be preserved of the aims of *shari'a*" (quoted in March 2009: 2837). These can be understood broadly as the five basic human interests of life, faith, property, intellect, and lineage. Non-Islamic, secular governments can be seen as sufficiently just because they protect these crucial human interests. Other Muslim thinkers such as 'Abd al-Qadir argue that, along with specific policy benefits or outcomes,

there is an inherent benefit in Muslims playing an active role in secular democratic societies so that “Muslims do not become cramped, isolated and withdrawn from their societies,” while non-participation only leads to “marginalization and remaining in darkness” (quoted in March 2009: 2841). Thus, the benefit of participation in secular societies for Muslims goes beyond a simple list of desired policies or reform goals.

Moreover, the religious neutrality of Western liberal political institutions should alleviate Muslim concerns about offering their loyalty to non-Islamic governments or doctrines or participating in such societies socially and/or politically. In a *fatwa* by Texas-based American Muslim scholar Mohamed el-Moctar el-Shinqiti (2003), he writes:

> Taking part in the US elections … is not a sign of affiliation [*muwalah*] to the polytheists, nor is it a kind of support for the oppressors. … The US Congress, for instance, is not a religious organization, as the American constitution neither supports a certain religion nor restricts another. The US Congress is not, thus, a gathering of disbelief, even though its members are disbelievers. … It is a neutral political body in relation to matters of religion, according to the American constitution.

# Conclusion

Although, for Muslims, the terms “secular” or “secularism” carry very negative connotations, there is ample room in Islamic thought to explore the basic issue of state neutrality vis-à-vis religion. If we are to make headway in this debate, however, we must shift the language that is being used in the discourse toward more neutral terms. In this chapter, I have used the term “state neutrality” vis-à-vis other religions as a more acceptable and (p. 199) palatable term. There are many reasons why Muslims can come to accept state neutrality, despite their negative historical experiences with secularism. Theological, legal, and textual sources, as well as the historical and contemporary experiences of Muslims, can support the concept of state neutrality, particularly in a contemporary climate. State neutrality is not about being antireligious; it is about noninterference and noncoercion by the state, which allows religious communities to flourish and be treated equally. The state should not interfere in the activities of religious followers. Instead, it should focus on the governance of society for the benefit of all of its members, not simply the religious majority.

## Bibliography

Abu-Munshar, Maher Y. 2012. “In the Shadow of the ‘Arab Spring’: The Fate of Non-Muslims under Islamist Rule.” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 23(4), 487–503.

al-Azmeh, Aziz, and Effie Fokas (eds.). 2007. *Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity and Influence*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. 1977. “Secularism vs. Islam.” In *Al-Hulul al Mustawradah wa Kayfa Jaat `alaa Ummatina* (How the Imported Solutions Disastrously Affected Our Ummah), 113–114. Cairo, Egypt: Maktabat Wahbah. Translation: **http://islamicweb.com/beliefs/cults/Secularism.htm**.

Archer, Robin. 2001. “Secularism and Sectarianism in India and the West: What Are the Real Lessons of American History?” *Economy and Society* 30(3), 273–287.

Ballinger, Pamela, and Kristen Ghodsee. 2011. “Socialist Secularism: Religion, Modernity, and Muslim Women’s Emancipation in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia 1945–1991.” *Aspasia* 5, 6–27.

Benard, Alexander. 2008. “The Advantage to Islam of Mosque–State Separation: What the American Founders Can Teach.” *Policy Review* 8(2), 73.

Blackford, Russell, and William Cavanaugh. 2014. “Putting Religion in Its Place: The Secular State and Human Flourishing—A Debate.” *ABC Religion and Ethics* (24 June). **http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/06/24/4031567.htm**.

Choudhury, Cyra Akila. 2008. “(Mis)Appropriated Liberty: Identity, Gender Justice, and Muslim Personal Law Reform in India.” *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 17(1), 45–110.

Cottee, Simon. 2015. *The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam*. London: C. Hurst.

Duran, Khalid. 1992. “Muslims and Non-Muslims.” *In Muslims in Dialogue: The Evolution of Dialogue*, edited by Leonard Swidler, 55–69. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press.

El-Moctar el-Shinqiti, Mohamed. 2003. “Muslims’ Participation in US Elections.” **http://www.islam-online.net/fatwaapplication/english/display.asp?hFatwaID=106769**. Now archived: **http://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-the-scholar/international-relations-jihad/should-muslims-participate-in-us-elections/**.

Esposito, John L. 2010. *Rethinking Islam and Secularism*. ARDA Guiding Paper Series. State College: Association of Religion Data Archives, Pennsylvania State University. **http://www.thearda.com/rrh/papers/guidingpapers.asp**.

Gallagher, Nancy E. 1989. “Islam v. Secularism in Cairo: An Account of the Dar al-Hikma Debate.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 25(2), 208–215.

Gazi, Faisal. 2009. “The First Muslim Secularist.” *The Guardian* (10 April). **http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/apr/09/religion-islam-secularism-egypt**.

Hafez, Sherine. 2011. *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women’s Islamic Movements*. New York: New York University Press.

(p. 200) Hallaq, Wael B. 2005. *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Hashemi, Nader. 2009. *Islam, Secularism, and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jacobsohn, Gary Jeffrey. 2003. *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Jenkins, Philip. 2010. *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kalanges, Kristine. 2012. *Religious Liberty in Western and Islamic Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Locke, John. 1689. *Letter Concerning Toleration.* Edited by James Tulley. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983.

March, Andrew F. 2009. "Are Secularism and Neutrality Attractive to Religious Minorities? Islamic Discussions of Western Secularism in the 'Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities' (Fiqh Al-Aqalliyyat) Discourse." *Cardozo Law Review* 30(6), 2821–2854.

Oh, Irene. 2007. *The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Palomino, Rafael. 2012. "Legal Dimensions of Secularism: Challenges and Problems." *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice* 4(2), 208–225.

Pole, J. R. 1993. *The Pursuit of Equality in American History*, 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rahim, Lily Zubaidah. 2011. "Towards a Post-Islamist Secular Democracy in the Muslim World." Paper presented at the Contemporary Challenges of Politics Research Workshop, Coogee, NSW, Australia (31 October).

Shetreet, Shimon. 2011. "Academic Blueprint for the Implementation of a Uniform Civil Code For India." *Utah Law Review* 2011(1), 97–120.

Soroush, Abdolkarim. 2000. *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam Essential Writing of Abdolkarim Soroush*. Translated by Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Soroush, Abdolkarim, and Nooshabeh Amiri. 2010. "The Current Iranian System Rests on Obedience Not Human Rights: Interview with Abdulkarim Soroush by Nooshabeh Amiri for Roozonline.com." **http://drsoroush.com/en/the-current-iranian-system-rests-on-obedience-not-human-rights/**.

Stan, Lavinia. 2009. “Church–State Relations and Secularism in Eastern Europe.” In *Quo Vadis Eastern Europe? Religion, State, Society and Inter-Religious Dialogue after Communism*, edited by Ines Murzaku, 89–106. Bologna, Italy: University of Bologna Press.

Zubaida, S. 2005. “Islam and Secularization.” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 33(3), 438–448.

**Abdullah Saeed**

Abdullah Saeed is Sultan of Oman Professor of Arab and Islamic Studies at University of Melbourne.

# Secular Government in Sub-Saharan Africa

Baffour K. Takyi

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.13

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter looks at religion in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the context over a contested "secularization" debate in contemporary societies. The chapter contends that a genuine transformation is underway in many parts of SSA following its independence from European colonial rule. However, these postcolonial advances are yet to significantly affect the belief systems of many Africans. On the contrary, in many SSA countries, there is evidence of an increasing growth in religiosity with its concomitant influence in both the private and public sphere. Also, while it cannot be denied that secular institutions are spreading throughout most of Africa, there is little evidence to suggest that salience of religion in the lives of many Africans. Compared to many parts of the world, religion has yet to move into the private sphere in Africa, and people have not become less religious or less vocal in the public domain.

Keywords: Africa, Christianity, African religion, secularism, democracy, church and state

SECULARIZATION, the idea whereby some scholars suggest religion weakens, fades, or loses its hegemonic influence or public significance in the context of modernization, has been debated at least since the inception of sociology as an academic discipline.[1] One of the central concerns of the early sociological thinkers such as Durkheim and Weber focused on understanding the relationship between religion and modernity or societies that were undergoing transition at their time of writing, as the case was with western Europe. This debate has not subsided.

Many African countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), are thrust into this ongoing debate concerning the secularization of contemporary societies or societies in transition as is happening in many parts of SSA. In general, the debate about the growing secularization of contemporary societies engages two opposing viewpoints: those who subscribe to the idea that modern societies are becoming more secular and thus less religious, and those who think otherwise (Keddie 2003; Bruce 2001; Berger 1996; Chaves 1994; Tschannen 1991).

Some social scientists theorize that as societies become more modern they tend to be less religious. That view involves a contentious conception of “modern” given the differential meaning attributed to what is meant by “modernization” or “developed” (an industrial-scientific society) and on a linear view of society that assumes an inverse relationship between development and reductions in religious behaviors and actions. Yet, as evidence from SSA attests, that expectation may not necessarily be the case. In many postcolonial or contemporary African countries such as Ghana, religion has been exploited by political elites to achieve or serve their political interests.

Moreover, in many parts of SSA, the separation between the secular and church relations is somewhat fluid and constantly changing. In addition, studies have found religion to be an important organizing force in both public and private discourse in many parts of SSA. Rather than religion fading in many parts of SSA, these societies have adapted to an increasingly modernized and globalized world—both at the individual and societal level—without necessarily losing their religious beliefs and thoughts. Besides the missionary religions, religion there is defined broadly to include magic and witchcraft, beliefs and practices that are common throughout Africa and influence the behavior and actions of the populace as well. It is within this context that this chapter examines the religious scene in contemporary SSA (p. 202) in the discourse on secularization since, in many ways, Africa, and for that matter SSA, differs from other world regions when it comes to religion.

There is a genuine transformation underway in many parts of SSA following its independence from European colonial rule—for example, increased levels of education, technological shifts arising in part from globalization, a growing middle class, and high levels of urbanization. However, these postcolonial advances and substantial improvements in the standard of living of the average African has not yet significantly affected their belief systems. On the contrary, in many SSA countries, an increasing growth in religiosity with its concomitant influence in both the private and public sphere is apparent (Gifford 1995; Takyi and Addai 2002; Takyi 2003, 2015; Gyimah et al. 2006; Gyimah et al. 2008). On the surface, most African countries are considered secular societies, but in reality it is often difficult at times to separate church (religious) and state (secular) activities. In comparison to many other parts of the world, religion has yet to move into the private sphere in Africa, and people have not become less religious or less vocal in the public domain.

# The Religious Landscape in Africa: Evidence of a Decline?

For over a century, many scholars have written about the concept of secularization even though they attribute different meanings to what they consider “secular.” According to Hurd (2004), this elusive and differential attribution dates back several centuries. Today, some researchers define “secularization” to imply the absence or neutrality of religion in public affairs. Others view it in terms of religion’s declining influence on people’s lives as they increasingly embrace modern or empirical-based scientific worldviews in their explanations. Zukerman (2010: viii) also contends that secularization involves the historical

process whereby religion weakens, fades, or loses its hegemonic dominance or public significance.

The notion that in secular modernized societies religion has become more private and a less potent force in social relations is increasingly been challenged in much of SSA. This observation is true with respect to the predominantly Christian or Muslim countries in Africa. While studies (as reported by other chapters in this volume) of some Western countries such as the United States have reported some decline of faith, the growth of atheism, and an increasing number of people who consider themselves as nonreligious or admit to belonging to no religion, the opposite appears to be happening in many parts of Africa. At the moment, Africa is home to some of the world's fastest-growing Muslim and Christian populations. In terms of adherents or membership in religious organizations, the two major religious groupings that many Africans subscribe to, Christianity and Islam, have seen their numbers grow exponentially over the past two decades (Gifford 1994; Berger 1996; Bediako 1995; Jenkins 2002a, 2002b, 2007; Amadu 2005; Pew Research Center 2010; Lipka and Hackett 2015).

A notable feature of the recent growth in the African Christian community in particular is the advent of new religious groupings and belief systems. In countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda, the Christian growth has occurred primarily among the Pentecostal and other evangelical denominations, encompassing those who call themselves "born-again" Christians, rather than to the mainline Christian denominations (p. 203) (Pew Research Center 2006). Some of these Christian denominations have some links to the Evangelical movements in the United States. Equally important to worldwide Christianity, some of these new religious groups from Africa themselves have gone global with branches all over the world, especially in countries with significant resident African immigrant communities (ter Haar 1998).

Studies have also reported a significant decline in those who claim to be nonreligious (unaffiliated with any faith group, whether Christianity, Islam, or African religious traditions). A case in point is Ghana, where Yirenkyi and Takyi (2010) analyzed data from the 1988, 1993, 1998, and 2003 Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys on those who claim to be irreligious. They concluded that between 1999 and 2003, the number of Ghanaians who claimed to be nonreligious declined significantly. From a high of 12 percent in the late 1980s, by 2003 only 4 percent of those surveyed identified as nonreligious Ghanaians.

Besides affiliation, the growing trend toward increased religiosity in Africa is evidenced, for example, by the number of people who attend church on a regular basis and also report that religion is important in their lives. Several studies conducted under the auspices of the Afrobarometer Surveys,[2] WIN-Gallup International and the Pew Center on Research on Religion have all reported that most Africans attend church on a regular basis. In their study of fifty-eight countries, WIN-Gallup International (2012) found Ghana and some other African countries to be among the most religious and devout in the world. In Ghana, 96 percent of Ghanaians professed to be religious and 93 percent of Nigerians al-

so identified themselves as religious. The same survey reported that the proportion of Africans who attend church on a regular basis ranged from a low of 60 percent for South Africans to a high of 88 percent in Nigeria, a figure higher than the 57 percent reported among adults in the United States.

On the relevance or importance of religion, studies have also found that in many countries across the African continent, roughly nine in ten people or more say religion is very important in their lives. These figures are rather high when compared to the United States, where respondents were asked whether religion is gaining or losing influence in their lives and 72 percent of the adults surveyed (including 70 percent of the religiously unaffiliated) reported that indeed religion is not particularly relevant in their lives and that it was actually losing influence (Lipka 2014). Another observation about the religious outlook in much of Africa, and especially in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda, is its intensity, vibrancy, and influence in the lives of many Africans. In addition, faith is something that many Africans live by on an everyday basis and often colors the decisions and actions they take on a regular basis, whether at home or at work. A typical example of how religion in Africa at times clouds people's views about social reality can be gleaned from the recent Ebola crisis that hit some West African countries in 2014. It is true that in times of dire need, as exemplified by the Ebola crisis, many people turn to faith communities. But the overarching influence of religion in the lives of many Africans is exemplified in reports to the effect that, rather than seek medical help, many people in the affected countries were attributing the Ebola disease to a curse from God. Consequently, these people were resorting to faith healers who were peddling untested remedies and potions for a cure to their afflictions (Takyi 2015).

Finally, and concerning Christianity in particular, religion has become a very visible and vocal part of the culture of many Africans. A case in point is Ghana, where it is not uncommon for questions such as "Are you a Christian?" to come up in the first five minutes of a (p. 204) conversation. In addition, some have suggested that it is also common for an invitation to someone's worship service to come up within the first twenty minutes in ordinary conversations in that country. Not surprisingly, one of the booming businesses in Ghana and many African countries is the "church business." Churches have become lucrative businesses in Ghana to the extent that it is common to find most classrooms of basic schools booked on many occasions for religious services. The use of public schools and classrooms for church services has become so common throughout Ghana that the mayor of Accra and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly charged with managing this capital city had no choice but to ban the practice from the municipality as of January 2015 (Pappoe 2015). Some people have even converted their homes into churches or prayer houses.

# The Growing Interest in Religion

There is a general agreement by religious scholars that religion is growing at a phenomenal rate in many parts of Africa. Furthermore, the airwaves of many towns and cities in Africa are bombarded on a regular basis with religious sermons and music of one kind or

the other. Places of worship dot the landscapes of many African cities and towns. In some of the most religious nations such as Ghana and Nigeria, one is likely to find a place of religious worship at many corners and in many neighborhoods—at times only a few meters or walking distance from each other. Schools have at times been turned into places of worship during the nights and weekends in many towns and cities of Ghana.

What is driving this interest and growing popularity with all things religious in SSA? In other words, why is it that many Africans have turned/resorted to religion or become more religious in recent years? Academic researchers, both inside and outside of Africa, have been able to identify many reasons. They range from economic considerations to health concerns. One popular thesis for the upsurge in religiosity and particularly Christianity in Africa draws on economic conditions found in many postcolonial African countries. Those who subscribe to the notion that economic reasons undergird the growing interest in religion in SSA point to the discontent and general disenchantment about the economic situation and well-being of many Africans in the past couple of decades.[3] They contend that many Africans have become impoverished and disillusioned with their socioeconomic conditions and well-being since the end of colonial rule. They point to such factors as corrupt practices, economic mismanagement by the political elites, and the inability of many African countries to diversify their economies as responsible for the widespread poverty, malnutrition, and disenchantment in the region. In turn, those conditions provide a ready context for the spread of religion as an attractive option to a populace looking for hope and salvation, things that religion offers.

Besides their declining economic situations, the need for social support, especially among the ailing middle class and the poor alike in the absence of limited governmental support for those confronted with poor economic conditions, also provide another context for faith-based groups and organizations (Christians and non-Christian alike) to step in to provide these services. In so doing they have used their positions and roles in their evangelization efforts. These religious groups (especially growing Pentecostal and Evangelical groups) also provide a sense of hope and belonging, helping to mitigate the ravages of daily struggles and (p. 205) conditions, as some scholars have suggested. Perhaps the harsh economic conditions make religion quite appealing to many Africans as a coping mechanism given their social situations and lived experiences. This perception provides another context for understanding the incessant prayer vigils and conventions that sometimes run into several weeks, which one find throughout the continent.

Support for the assertion that economic conditions are partly responsible for the growth in religiosity in many parts of SSA is evidenced by research in a number of African countries. In the case of Ghana, one of the most religious nations in Africa and the world as well (WIN-Gallup 2012), it has been observed that many Ghanaians began to turn to God to provide for their needs during the times of adversities in the late 1970s and 1980s. A manifestation of the growing attraction to religion is evidenced by the changing inscriptions displayed on cars. Stephen Atta Owusu (2011) writes,

> Many Ghanaians began to turn to God to provide for their needs when the going became tough. There was an increased number of Muslims and Christians throughout Ghana. This began to manifest in front of vehicles: “Onyame bekyere” (God will provide), “Allahu Akbar” (God is great). These slogans like many others which were already there, resurfaced. “Awurade huyen mmobo” (Lord have mercy on us), “Aka m’ani” (I am in trouble), “God is King,” “The road to Jesus,” “Hallowed be thy name” and many more. When all hope was lost, Ghanaians began to pray and trust the Lord to solve their problems for them. When the going is good and many are able to afford new vehicles, the inscriptions on the vehicles denote happiness, satisfaction and contentment. Some of the inscriptions are: “Cash Man,” “Cool and Collected,” “Lover boy,” “Envy no man,” “Pe wodie” (Look for your own), “Otan nni aduro” (Hatred has no medicine), “Who Jah bless,” “Sea never dries,” “Ele Mawusi” (It is in the hands of God), and “I shall return.” The driver knows that since his bus or lorry is new, he will never be stuck on the way due to engine problem. He trusts his new vehicle. Most of these inscriptions can be found in a song which Nana Kwame Ampadu dedicated to the drivers of Ghana.

Endorsing miracles reached new heights when Ghana’s late president John Atta Mills credited his victory in the 2008 presidential election to a supernatural intercession by the Nigerian leader of the popular Synagogue, Church of All Nations, T. B. Joshua.

With respect to the growth of new Pentecostal and Evangelical-Charismatic groups, some scholars also contend that their popularity and appeal to many Africans has something to do with the inadequacies, monotony, and orthodoxies of the old and mainline missionary denominations. For example, unlike the mainline Christian denominations, the growing Pentecostal and Evangelical groups preach about prosperity and spiritual healing, and they teach a simple religion of instant salvation. Ignorance and poverty compel some people to seek easy ways to prosperity and at times end up getting robbed by fake healers, religious leaders, and prophets who abound in the region.

Health concerns also feature prominently in the discourse about the growing interest in religion in many parts of SSA. The idea that health considerations are partly responsible for the mass appeal with religion in Africa, especially Christianity, is shared widely by many people in the region. Writing specifically about Ghana, Elizbeth Ohene (2014), a BBC correspondent and former Minister of Education under former President Kuffour’s administration, described what she sees:

> The germ theory of disease has not quite taken hold among some of us yet and, probably because we prefer to attribute the source of disease to the supernatural, we provide very ripe (p. 206) pickings for those who peddle miracles—fetish priests, religious fundamentalists of all shades, charlatans, cynical politicians and innocent grandparents. Since we believe that diseases come from supernatural powers, we tend to expect cures and miracles for every disease.

With so many miracle workers, the majority of whom are people of faith purporting to have answers and solutions (miracles, prayers, etc.) to the many health problems afflicting Africans, it is no surprise that many Africans have gravitated to places of worship or places that claim to have answers to their health problems, such as infertility, physical ailments, and emotional and mental health issues.

Ohene (2014) does not stop there, as she points out how miracle cures go beyond diseases. “If you are in need of a wife, a husband or money, there must be a ‘magic cure’ from the newest prophet and a potion to go with it. And he will be grateful if you will tell your friends about the efficacy of his prayers and potions.” This is one of the reasons for the sudden interest and growth in religion in some of the fastest religio-growth countries in SSA.

The views expressed by Ohene are not unique to Ghana. There are reports of such reference to religion in the context of health behavior and outcomes in other parts of SSA. Regarding the recent Ebola crisis that killed so many people in the hardest-hit countries in West Africa, cultural practices such as ancestral worship and mortuary practices helped to sustain the spread of the disease from one person to the other (Takyi 2015). These cultural practices and superstitious beliefs about the disease’s causation draws on people’s religious beliefs and in turn has led to some unscrupulous faith healers to dupe some of the vulnerable populations as they peddle untested medications and preach false religious claims about disease causation.

In addition to the factors already mentioned, there is another explanation that some scholars have offered to explain the growth of religion, and particularly Christianity, in many parts of SSA. Meyer (2004) has the view that the spread of African independent churches in the region during the 1980s and the current upsurge in Pentecostal theology has to do with the fact that these new religious movements or groups offer what she calls a more “authentic” Africanized version of Christianity than those provided by the traditional and for the most part missionary-based mainline churches having a longer history in the region. In the case of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that are spreading throughout many parts of Christian Africa, Meyer suggests that they seem to draw their mass appeal from the fact that they propagate a teaching that completely breaks with the past and also links up these “born-again” African Christian believers with global currents beyond the continent. This can be an appealing proposition to disaffected populations in Africa looking for answers to a variety of issues facing them.

Finally, and contentiously, there are some people who think that the upsurge in Christianity has something do with the way that churches have now become business ventures in SSA, pushing their growth and the fervor with which people go to open churches.

# Religion and the Public Sphere: Africa

“Our never failing God won for us in 2012 and he will in 2016.” This statement was made by John Dramani Mahama, the president of the Republic of Ghana, to supporters of the National Democratic Congress party in September 2015 (Allotey 2015).

(p. 207) Researchers such as Hurd (2004) argue that secularism is the dominant language of religion and politics in Western societies. For Hurd, knowledge about religion and its relation to politics in many parts of the Western world are dominated by secularist assumptions. Such assumptions suggest a clear distinction between religion (church) and state activities. One falls within the purview of the private and the other the public domain. Though secularists suggest a clear separation between religion and issues pertaining to state, the economy, and science, the views and beliefs expressed by President Mahama of Ghana underscore the potentially close connections between religion and politics in supposedly secular nations in Africa, both past and present. What is more striking in the context of SSA is the use of religion for political gains and public mobilization.

While it cannot be denied that secular institutions are spreading throughout most of Africa, there is also evidence to suggest that religion shows no sign of diminishing in the lives of the people. This is also the case with respect to religion’s role in political developments in the region—as an agent of social mobilization, development, conflict generation or creation, and conflict resolution, as the case may be (Manglos and Weinreb 2013; Ter Haar 2005). Certainly, religious groups and their leaderships have had a long and uneven history of civic and political engagement in the politics of many African countries, including South Africa, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Uganda. Their role in social mobilization, especially during the pre-independence struggle in a number of African countries, and also social and political activism after independence, is a topic that has received scholarly attention in the literature on African politics (Gifford 1998; Pobee 1991; Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah 1991; Ninsin and Drah 1987, 1991; Yirenkyi 2000). Abbink (2014) observed that, in some cases, this involved the use of perceived spiritual or divine forces or powers, or the appeal to religious passages to call for emancipation and independence. During the 1970s in Ghana, it was the leaders of the various churches and progressive groups such as student organizations that called for the abolition of the military regime of General Acheampong and his attempts at involving the military in governing in Ghana (through what he called a “Union” government).

In addition, when discussion shifts to the recent waves of democratization in SSA, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it becomes clear that religious leaders played a significant role in these efforts. Generally speaking, the expectation in many African countries is that religious communities and organizations will be neutral when it comes to politics. On the contrary, an examination of the social histories of many African countries shows that many political decisions are made with religious considerations and undertones in mind, although this is not always acknowledged by the political elites. Of equal importance, several scholars have pointed out that religious organizations in many parts of Africa occupy portions of the public space in many ways and in many places, be it neo-

Pentecostal, charismatic, or Islamist movements, or any of the difficult-to-categorize phenomena, exemplified by Uganda's "Lord's Resistance Army" (Van Acker 2004).

In a speech by a religious leader in Ghana by the name of Reverend Benny Wood (the leader of the Concerned Clergy), he is reported to have said that that churches and their leaders are aligned to Ghana's political parties (Gadugah 2013). This observation seems to be consistent with findings from a recent paper on religion and voting patterns in Ghana (Takyi et al. 2010). Many scholars who have written about religion in Africa also have suggested that one cannot understand fully the politics in Africa without reference to the religious ideas that are widely shared by the people (Ellis and Ter Haar 1998; Meyer 2004). According to this view, many Africans of today—irrespective of whether they live in urban areas or rural (p. 208) hinterlands—still draw on their knowledge of African traditional cosmologies in dealing with their lived experiences.

In a related observation, Ellis and ter Haar (2007) have pointed out that while religion and politics are in constant interaction, this is not always the case with respect to African politics, where the quest for spiritual power by political leaders obscures in some ways the whole argument about the Western conception of the separation between church and state. Like politicians all over the world, African leaders have the responsibility of distributing material resources to their followers. The cultivation of spiritual power by African political elites is also considered to be an important part of their political careers, something that is widely attested to, or fanned by, the popular media and the street commentary of *radio trottoir*. These two researchers have consequently argued (Ellis and ter Haar 2006) that no study of African politics can afford to ignore the religious factor in the discussion of development and governance in that part of the world.

Another issue about religion in Africa is that religious organizations in this part of the world, from colonial times to the present, have historically been involved in the development of many African countries, especially concerning the provision of social services, health care, and education (providing facilities from primary schools and high schools all the way to universities). In many countries, including Ghana, some of the best hospitals are owned by religious organizations.

Beyond the provision of social amenities, religious groups in Africa have not been passive observers upon the political discourse in the region, during both the colonial and postcolonial periods. A case in point is how Ghanaians have used biblical images, themes, and passages in talking about their leaders, past and present. President Nkrumah, the first postcolonial leader, was called the "anointed one" and the redeemer, while Jerry Rawlings, who was the 1979 and 1981 military coup leader and later elected president, was called "Junior Jesus (JJ)" who came to save Ghanaians from years of decay and mismanagement. John Atta Mills (deceased 2012) was presented through rhetoric and imagery as the *asomdweahene* (King of Peace), a Christ-like figure who is a peaceful savior to his people. By contrast, Nana Akuffo Addo (New Patriotic Party presidential candidate) was framed by his opponents (especially the National Democratic Congress party) as a "vio-

lent" person who was deemed "unfit" for the position of president for peace-loving Ghanaians.

Going solely by the utterances of political leaders in Africa, one is inclined to think that African countries are secular with a separation between church and state. And the constitutions of many African countries such as Ghana indicate that the country is a secular one. Similarly, no religion is supported by the constitution, whether it is Christianity, the dominant belief system in Ghana (about 70 percent or more identify as Christians, according to a 2010 census), or Islam. Yet, for political advantages and exigencies, personal religious decisions and practices have increasingly become national issues in a number of African countries. A specific example is the practice whereby the state (the government of Ghana) and its agencies organize the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj for Muslims) or sponsor Christians to go to holy places in Jerusalem to worship. The annual Hajj by Ghanaian Muslims has now become politicized to the extent that various governments have used state resources at their disposal to organize trips to Mecca. Not doing so is often interpreted as being anti-Muslim. Glitches in the Hajj planning in turn are blamed on the government in power and its Hajj Management team. In 2009, the National Democratic Congress government put massive financial and other material resources behind Ghanaian Muslim pilgrims on the Hajj, at about the same time that President Mills's government was bitterly (p. 209) complaining that the previous New Patriotic Party administration had bequeathed them and Ghanaians with an unprecedented budgetary deficit.

The major religious holidays are all considered national holidays and celebrated as such in Ghana and many other parts of Africa. With the majority of Ghanaians professing to be Christians, such a large constituency cannot be ignored when it comes to political issues in Ghana. In 2009, the National Democratic Congress government under President Mills called for the permanent institutionalization of an annual Christian week of prayer for the nation, an idea criticized by some people (especially his political opponents and non-Christians). Not to be outdone, after the death of President Mills, the Assemblies of God (Osu Branch) where his vice president, John Mahama, happens to worship, hurriedly sent a letter to congratulate him upon his appointment. Interestingly enough, barely one month after the burial of Mills, several of his party members and followers implied that they witnessed him ascending to heaven, as reported in some of the newspapers in Ghana. In a religious and pro-Christian Ghana, the image of the deceased president ascending to heaven connotes a Christ-like figure after the resurrection, thus appealing to many Christians.

Religious organizations and their leaders have not always been neutral; many have been active participants in political issues and discussions throughout Africa. This is evidenced by another example from Ghana exemplifying the checkered history of religious leaders and secular matters, in connection to an outburst by the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey, about electricity problems that have led to occasional blackouts.

> No sooner did Ghana find oil that we were all plunged into more hardship just because of bad leadership. Lack of vision means lack of knowledge; hence *dumsor dumsor* [lights on and off]. It is only in a corrupted country that truth becomes controversial. When we talk about these things they say the church should not talk about politics. Who said the church cannot talk politics? It is only those who don't know the Bible that criticize some of us when we speak against the destruction of our country. And this is why the Presbyterian Church of Ghana cannot sit down.
>
> (Adu 2014)

Although on paper, as written in their various constitutions, many SSA nations such as Ghana are secular nations and few African countries have established state religions, religious ideals and organizations have often been used to achieve political goals in many African countries, thus negating the whole argument about a strict separation between church and state. As Paller (2014) writes in a recent article about informal institutions and personal rule in urban Ghana, leaders including politicians and chiefs gain power by extending their social networks, accumulating wealth, being family heads, and speaking the language of the gospel. In essence he finds that leaders in Ghana are friends, entrepreneurs, parents, and also preachers, in a way. This is to be expected, as religious organizations in the region (including their leadership) have had a considerable influence in the development of many SSA nations and the provision of social services.

# Conclusion

There is a growing acknowledgement that a strict separation between the secular and the religious realms may not be applicable to Africa. As Ellis and ter Haar (2007) point out, (p. 210) policymakers are increasingly coming to the realization that development can be achieved by letting people build on their own resources, including social capital, which in the case of Africa include spiritual beliefs. There, the spiritual world is inextricably interlinked with the physical world to such an extent that many Africans define good governance in spiritual terms. Another case in point is the Muslim definition of good governance as a government that conforms to Islam's religious rules and beliefs (based on *sharia*). This is relevant to the current discourse about religious insurgency groups such as Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb, or Al Shabaab in Somalia.

Sub-Saharan Africa is among the most religious continents on the planet and is home to some of the world's fastest-growing Muslim and Christian communities. In contrast to some parts of the world such as northern Europe and the United States where religion is on the decline, the opposite is occurring in SSA. The religiosity of many Africans is evidenced by the number of people who identify with a religious organization, attend a church or a mosque on a regular basis, or report that religion is a salient aspect of their daily lives. While the number of self-declared atheists around the world may be rising, this is not the case with respect to Africa.

It is fair to argue that many Africans have embraced a scientific worldview in some ways, but that has not diminished their religious explanations about the social world. Moreover, a growing population of middle-class people and improved living standards has not quenched their quest for religion. Unlike in other parts of the world, Africans remain overwhelmingly religious without signs of waning, and religion has emerged as a potent force in social relations, including political relations, in many countries. The region is replete with the complicity of religious and faith-based political advocacy groups that have played and continue to play influential roles in nation-building and governance and contribute to discourse in matters of the state. Overall, then, a separation of church and state exists in many parts of Africa only in the area of rhetoric. The realities are that governments in the region have repeatedly exploited religious sentiments and beliefs to maintain their hold on power.

## Bibliography

Abbink, Jon. 2014. “Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of the Secular.” *Africa Spectrum* 49(3), 83–106.

Adu, E. 2014. “Ghana Needs a Visionary Leader—Presby Moderator.” *Daily Guide* (23 December).**http://ghana-news.adomonline.com/news/2014/December-23rd/ghana-needs-a-visionary-leader-presby-moderator.php**.

Allotey, G. 2015. “God Won 2012 Election for Us; He Will Do It Again in 2016.” *Citifmonline* (7 September). **http://citifmonline.com/2015/09/07/god-won-2012-election-for-us-mahama/**.

Amadu, Jacky Kaba. 2005. “The Spread of Christianity and Islam in Africa: A Survey and Analysis of the Numbers and Percentages of Christians, Muslims and Those Who Practice Indigenous Religions.” *Western Journal of Black Studies* 29(2), 553–570.

Bediako, K. 1995. *Christianity in Africa: Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh, U.K.: Edinburgh University Press.

Berger, Peter. 1996. “Secularism in Retreat.” *The National Interest* 46, 3–12.

Bruce, Steve. 2001. *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chaves, Mark. 1994. “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority.” *Social Forces* 72(3), 749–775.

Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. 1998. “Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36(2), 175–201.

Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. 2004. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar. 2007. “Religion and Politics: Taking African Epistemologies Seriously.” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45(3), 385–401.

Gadugah, N. 2013. “Ghana’s Partisan Churches Were Anti-Rawlings—Concerned Clergy.” *Joy Online* (8 April). **http://edition.myjoyonline.com/pages/news/201304/104104.php**.

Gifford, Paul. 1994. “Some Recent Developments in African Christianity.” *African Affairs* 93(373), 513–534.

Gifford, Paul. 1995. *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

Gifford, Paul. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gyimah, Stephen Obeng, Baffour K. Takyi, and Isaac Addai. 2006. “Challenges to the Reproductive-Health Needs of African Women: On Religion and Maternal Health Utilization in Ghana.” *Social Science & Medicine* 62(12), 2930–2944.

Gyimah, Stephen Obeng, Baffour K. Takyi, and Eric Yeboah Tenkorang. 2008. “Denominational Affiliation and Fertility Behavior in an African Context: An Examination of Couple Data from Ghana.” *Journal of Biosocial Science* 40, 445–458.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2004. “The Political Authority of Secularism in International Relations.” *European Journal of International Relations* 10(2), 235–262.

Jenkins, Philip. 2002a. *The Next Christendom: The Rise of Global Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press

Jenkins, Philip. 2002b. “The Next Christianity.” *Atlantic Monthly* 290(3), 53–68.

Jenkins, Philip. 2007. “Christianity Goes South.” In *Global Christianity: Contested Claims*, edited by Frans Wijsen and Robert Schreiter, 15–33. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Keddie, Nikki. 2003. “Secularism and its Discontents.” *Daedalus* 132(3), 14–30.

Kudadjie, J. N., and R. K. Aboagye-Mensah. 1991. *The Christian and National Politics*, vol 1. Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers.

Lipka. Michael. 2014. “Is Religion’s Declining Influence Good or Bad? Those Without Religious Affiliation Are Divided.” Pew Research Center. **http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/23/is-religions-declining-influence-good-or-bad-those-without-religious-affiliation-are-divided/**. (p. 212)

Lipka, Michael, and Conrad Hackett. 2015. “Why Muslims Are the World’s Fastest-Growing Religious Group.” Pew Research Center. **http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/23/why-muslims-are-the-worlds-fastest-growing-religious-group/**.

Manglos Nicolette D., and Alexander A. Weinreb. 2013. “Religion and Interest in Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Social Forces* 92(1), 195–219.

Meyer, Brijit. 2004. “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, 447–474.

Ninsin, K. A., and F. K. Drah. 1987. *The Search for Democracy in Ghana: A Case Study of Political Instability in Africa*. Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers.

Ohene, E. 2014. “Letter from Africa: Why Do We Rely on ‘Miracle Cures’?” *BBC News* (10 October). **http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29505493**.

Owusu, S. 2011. “Inscriptions on Vehicles—Funny and Thought-Provoking.” *Ghana Web* (21 September). **http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=219461**.

Ninsin, K. A., and F. K. Drah. 1991. *Ghana’s Transition to Constitutional Rule*. Accra, Ghana: Universities Press.

Paller, J. 2014. “Informal Institutions and Personal Rule in Urban Ghana.” *African Studies Review* 57, 123–142.

Pappoe, P. 2015. “Reconsider Decision to Ban Churches from Classrooms—Most Rev. Asante.” *Graphic Online* (3 February). **http://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/reconsider-decision-to-ban-churches-from-classrooms-most-rev-asante.html**.

Pew Research Center. 2006. “Overview: Pentecostalism in Africa.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/overview-pentecostalism-in-africa/**.

Pew Research Center. 2010. “Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa.” **http://pewforum.org/about-the-project-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa.aspx**.

Pobee, John. 1991. *Religion and Politics in Ghana*. Accra, Ghana: Asempa Publishers.

Swatos, William H. Jr., and Daniel V. A. Olson. 2006. *The Secularization Debate*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Takyi, Baffour K. 2003. “Religion and Women’s Health in Ghana: Insight into HIV/AIDS Preventive and Protective Behavior.” *Social Science & Medicine* 56, 1221–1234.

Takyi, Baffour K. 2015. “What Ebola Can Teach Us about the Complexities of Religion and Health.” Association of Religion Data Archives. **http://globalplus.thearda.com/globalplus-ebola-religion-and-health-in-africa/**.

Takyi, Baffour K., and Isaac Addai. 2002. “Religious Affiliation, Marital Processes and Women’s Educational Attainment in a Developing Society.” *Sociology of Religion* 63(2), 177–193.

Takyi, Baffour K., Chris Opoku-Agyeman, and Agnes Kutin-Mensah. 2010. “Religion and the Public Sphere: Religious Involvement and Voting Patterns in Ghana’s 2004 Elections.” *Africa Today* 56(4), 62–86.

ter Haar, Gerrie. 1998. *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*. Cardiff, U.K.: Cardiff Academic Press.

ter Haar, Gerrie. 2005. “Religion: Source of Conflict or Resource for Peace?” In *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace*, edited by G. ter Haar and J. Busuttil, 3–34. Leiden: Brill.

(p. 213) ter Haar, Gerrie, and Stephen Ellis. 2006. “The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship between the European Union and Africa.” *European Journal of Development Research* 18(3), 351–367.

Tschannen, Olivier. 1991. “The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(4), 395–415.

Van Acker, F. 2004. “Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered.” *African Affairs* 103(412), 335–357.

WIN-Gallup International. 2012. “Global Index of Religion and Atheism.” **http://www.wingia.com/web/files/news/14/file/14.pdf**.

Yamane, David. 1997. “Secularization on Trial: In Defense of a Neo-Secularization Paradigm.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36(1), 107–120.

Yirenkyi, Kwasi. 2000. “The Role of Christian Churches in National Politics: Reflections from Laity and Clergy in Ghana.” *Sociology of Religion* 61(3), 325–338.

Yirenkyi, Kwasi, and Baffour K. Takyi. 2010. “Some Insights into Atheism and Secularity in Ghana.” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by P. Zuckerman, vol. 2, 73–89. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Zuckerman, Phil (ed.). 2010. *Atheism and Secularity*. 2 vols. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

## Notes:

(1.) Writings on this discourse and the debate on secularization by sociologists include Tschannen (1991), Chaves (1994), Yamane (1997), Swatos and Olson (2006), and the special issue of *Sociology of Religion* 60(3), (1999).

(2.) Afrobarometer is an African-led, nonpartisan survey research project that measures citizen attitudes on democracy and governance, the economy, civil society, and other topics. It is conducted in partnership with the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in South Africa, the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy in Benin, the Institute for Development Studies at the Uni-

versity of Nairobi, the Democracy in Africa Research Unit at the Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town, and the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University.

(3.) This same argument has been used by many scholars to explain the recent wave of emigration of Africans to other parts of the world.

**Baffour K. Takyi**

Baffour K. Takyi is Professor of Sociology at the University of Akron in Ohio. His research and publications concentrate on demographics of developing African nations, health outcomes in Africa, religion and the family, gender and reproductive behavior, the intersection of gender and power on fertility decisions, and the experiences of Africans and other black immigrants in the United States.

# Secularism in India

Vidhu Verma

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.14

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the historical emergence of secularism through movements, debates, and legal formulations to explain specific features that the concept has acquired in the context of India. The first part examines the tensions between the theoretical narratives of Indian constitutionalism and the practices of politics that led to the acceptance of certain essential conditions of secularism. The approach towards secularism found in writings of Nehru, Gandhi and Ambedkar are then discussed. The third part focuses on the ill-defined meaning of secularism that does not accurately reflect the conceptual shifts made by the modern legal system. The final section critically examines the claim that secularism is a state-led exercise in certain domains. An overview of the legal literature shows that secularism is also the domain of experts, bureaucrats, and professionals. The history of court decisions about what constitutes a religious practice that is protected by law reveals considerable variation and arbitrariness..

Keywords: India, Mahatma Gandhi, personal law, state secularism, denominations, gender justice

COUNTRIES in South Asia have produced many-layered debates about secularism in their constitutional provisions and normative practices. Compared to the experience of Europe where a critique of organized religion and its subsequent protection from encroachment by the state was spread over centuries, the experience of colonization has allowed only a few decades for administrators, missionaries, and national leaders to define their role on religion and cultural traditions. The main challenge for the Indian state has been to relate to people belonging to different faiths within this arena and to religion that has been employed to create divisions and sometimes to denigrate the culture of a people. But more than a doctrine that checks absolutism and religious bigotry, the idea of secularism as expressed in the Indian constitution, and as articulated in the political process, has been closely associated with defining the boundaries within which religious freedom of individuals and groups must operate in a liberal democracy. In the Indian case, understanding secularism is central to the way minorities contest cultural and religious homogenization

and negotiate ideas of belonging to forge a truly plural society.[1] By focusing on India, this chapter explains how the state has deployed secularist discourse in a unique way.

This chapter examines the historical emergence of secularism in India through social movements, political debates, and legal rulings, to explain its specific features there. The first part examines tensions between the theoretical narratives of Indian constitutionalism and the practices of politics that lead to the acceptance of three essential conditions of secularism: (a) the state shall have no religion; (b) there shall be no discrimination on the ground of religion; and (c) the individual shall have the freedom to practice, profess, and propagate religion. This is followed by the approach toward secularism found in writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. Diversity of religious identities and the widespread religious prejudice, identity conflict, and inter-religious strife are main worries of these nationalist ideologues. The third part questions meanings of secularism that do not accurately reflect the conceptual shifts made by the modern legal system to accommodate interests of many religious and cultural groups within Indian society. The final section critically examines the claim that secularism is a state-led exercise in the following domains: rights of religious denominations, gender justice, and social justice. An overview of the legal literature, including judicial pronouncements, shows that secularism is also the domain of experts, bureaucrats, and professionals. The history of court decisions about what constitutes a legally protected religious practice reveals considerable variation (p. 215) and arbitrariness, leaving difficult questions about group rights in a liberal polity, the limits of cultural accommodation, and the conceptions of difference left behind in the realms of family and civil society.

A growing body of theorists has challenged the paradigm of moral reasoning defined by the discourse of secularism that retains a distinction between a public domain of formal reason and a private domain of religion. Recent scholarship has also disrupted the implied universalism in the idea of secularism and demonstrated the ways it has its genealogies within the West itself. On such a view secularism forms part of acultural theories that describe the transition of modernity in terms of a loss of traditional beliefs and rise of modern scientific reason (Taylor 2001). Secularism is a disputed notion because its principles fail to capture the condition of postcolonial states where many religious groups still seek a fair share of state support for resources in order to protect their traditions. It is also a disputed notion as many scholars contend that secularism is shaped by the imperative of creating a democratic majority. There are also problematic assumptions and blind spots to viewing the emergence of secularism in the colonial context as just a matter of minority politics, as secularism lends itself to multiple interpretations in subaltern contexts. In an increasingly ideological age, it has rested on institutional innovations and attendant normative justifications of what politics should be in the new state. Deeply distrustful of popular sovereignty, political elites brought out a new balance of democratic and liberal principles in the constitution while ignoring economic inequalities produced by the structural logic of feudalism and capitalism. Secular discourses nevertheless continue to legitimate certain political or ideological practices of the nation-state in the postcolonial context related to national unity, socialism, democracy, and nation-building. Although secularism should not be appraised with reference to a normative Western model,

a redefinition of secularism as a local version of religious harmony cannot satisfy the claims for equality and inclusion raised by many marginalized groups in India today.

# Nationalism and the Making of Secularism

In the year 1975, the word “secular” along with “socialist” was inserted in the constitution of India by the government headed by the prime minister, Indira Gandhi. The intention to create a secular state goes back to the debates during the constituent assembly.[2] In the aftermath of India’s partition, the framers of the constitution adopted a concept of secularism that was different from the wall of separation thesis adopted in Western countries. In the Indian case, the political and religious spheres could not be easily differentiated so there was no agreement about what a secular state implied. But there was a commitment to public life not steered by religious doctrines or institutions. Could the postcolonial state be reinvigorated by forms of Western secularism? Could such a secular state respond to communal tensions and caste-based discriminations? Keeping these questions in mind, it was debated during the discussion on the preamble of the Indian constitution whether to include secularism in order to promote the values of religious tolerance and cultural coexistence amongst the different communities in India.

Separating religion from the state was a daunting task in the project for the democratization of India’s future polity. Leaders of the national movement had to clarify whether the Indian nation-state was to be based on religion of the majority community or based on a disassociation from religion. The constitutional draft of the Nehru Report (Nehru Report 1928) best (p. 216) captured the nature of rights later embodied in the Indian constitution, as it recognized the rights of minorities to their religion and culture. Under the guidance of Mohandas Gandhi, the Congress party was keen to allay the fears of the religious minorities in a majoritarian India and granted to all religious communities the right to their language, script, culture, and religious practice. The report hesitated in accepting the institutionalization of separate electorates, “even though the right to freedom of conscience and to the free profession and practice of religion” was included explicitly “to prevent one community domineering over another”; in short, it recognized the importance of liberty of religion and cultural autonomy (Austin 2000: 55).

Similar assumptions and commitments were affirmed in the Indian national congress at its Karachi session in 1931. It resolved that the idea of religious liberty and adequate protection to the minorities should be observed by the future state. During the second session of the Round Table Conference, a memorandum was presented before the minorities committee demanding that a new constitution must include a guarantee for the protection of their cultures, languages, scripts, education, profession, and practice of religion and personal laws. It also demanded a proportionate share in the legislature for all communities through joint electorates along with a protection of minority interests in the central and provincial cabinets (Rao 2006: vol. 1, 173; Ansari 1996: 145–50). Later the Sapru Committee report recommended full religious tolerance, non-interference in religious be-

liefs, practices and institutions, and protection to language and cultures of all communities (Sapru 1945).

The constituent assembly was ready to accommodate these promises in the draft of the constitution. However, minority rights became a contentious issue during constitutional debates preceding Indian independence in 1947. They were increasingly perceived as infringing upon individual rights and the homogenizing ideology of the nation-state, while powerful events, such as the violent partition of Pakistan from India, inhibited acceptance of the protection of minorities and group rights. These changes were reflected in deliberations on representation of religious minorities through separate electorates and through the adoption of a majority–minority framework. This displays the ambivalence in the constitutional process that stressed minority rights but hesitated to encourage community-based identities. Safeguards for minorities in the political domain were perceived as remnants of a system of communal representation encouraged by the British colonial administrators since 1909 and hence a hindrance to the development of a nation-state.[3] The opposition to and eventual retraction of group preferential policies for religious minorities initiated a legitimate vocabulary for a national identity on a secular basis. This step was taken in order to refute the widespread notion spread by colonial policy that Indian was a conglomeration of communities rather than a nation. But a second viewpoint emerged to argue that minorities must have a right to their culture and religion, safeguarded by the constitution, considering the inherently plural composition and deep diversity of India where people adhered to multiple faiths with each religion internally differentiated into confessions, denominations, and sects.

# Defining Minorities and Secularism: Nehru, Gandhi, and Ambedkar

Tracing the usage of the term “minorities” in nationalist discourse, it began admirably in the writings of the leaders of Indian National Congress and socialist leaders who were (p. 217) witnessing large-scale communal eruptions within India and upheavals in the post–world war era. They were well aware of excesses that can result when one denomination is established as the official religion. During these decades of mass mobilization, “communalism” as a term was increasingly defined as a politics of religious minorities and in opposition to “secularism” (Pandey 1990). Many of the responses to minority rights and secularism in India were shaped by a presumed dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

Nationalist ideologues also faced the challenge of defining the relation between religion and politics suited to a context where a majoritarian religion coexisted with significant minorities, including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Secular nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru were at the forefront of negotiating the category of communalism and secularism. Comparing the history of India with European countries, he observed that “there can be no stable equilibrium in any country so long as an attempt is made to crush a minority or force it to conform to the ways of the majority” ([1930] 1973: 259–260).

Nehru's vision of secularism was, first, a ground where religious discourse is regarded as a form of false consciousness, as much as a moral stance toward the plurality of religious and cultural voices in Indian society. He wrote how organized religion and theologically charged politics filled him with horror. In many speeches he accused religion of responsibility for India's weakness under colonial rule, as an opiate dulling a desire for freedom. He argued in public speeches that the customs and dogmas of religion were relics of the past, unsuitable for modern conditions (Nehru 1972), and claimed that religious categories would lose their relevance in politics and would no longer be an instrument for power politics ([1934] 1973: 260). His views were indissolubly linked to nationalism and the project of modernity where no one particular religion could claim universal allegiance. Second, for Nehru, there was no place in a democracy for ascriptive identities or fragmentary aspirations to obstruct nation and nation-building. If new moral languages were to be invented in the workings of the state, then they could be achieved by changing the public discourse. Third, Nehru's promotion of industrialization along with secularism appeared to be a confirmation of the secularization thesis. Finally, Nehru's condemnation of violence was deeply rooted in his account of a political order that rested on the rational agreement of the masses. Drawing from both the liberal and socialist traditions, Nehru described the character of religion in his *Autobiography* as blind belief and dogma catering to the inner cravings of human beings (Nehru 1955: 374). It appears that Nehru's conception of secularism was more about secularization and overcoming superficial differences between citizens based on faith while relying on the virtues of modernization for cultivating the scientific rationalism to reduce transcendent religions to a subsystem of society.

Although Gandhi agreed with Nehru that politics was becoming the "dominant medium of public life," his position on religion differed from Nehru's (Khilinani 2007: 94). Gandhi did not see the secular as supplying the ground from which religious discourse could be expunged. He spent his entire life defining and practicing his religiosity in nontraditional, individualized, and institutionally flexible ways. Profoundly engaged with existing religious faiths, he claimed: "Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (Gandhi 2008: 65). Gandhi began with the premise of *sarva dharma sambhava* (equal respect for all religions) to discuss secularism, which is similar to Nehru's understanding of tolerance of religious diversity and cultivated virtue. But rather than neutralizing religion or separating it from public life, Gandhi aimed to prevent those spaces from closing to religion. Gandhi's secularism was neither about being indifferent to religion (p. 218) nor about rejecting its existence as anathema to reason (Gandhi 1947: 257). Since distinctive theological features of religious traditions explain cultural differences between people, he stressed the relationship between members of different religions and the political status of minorities in independent India.

Although Gandhi and Nehru differed on how religion could lose its dominant and coordinating influence on society in modernity, they both agreed that religion was about doctrines, code of conduct, and worship practices, and that the advocacy of secularism must be sensitive to the context of religious pluralism. But Gandhi did not stop at the plurality of religions. Alongside respect for pluralism, all religions should have the legal equality to

pursue their own paths to divinity, a kind of unifying “justice between communities” (2004: 329). For Nehru, the struggle against inequality and backwardness was only possible through social transformation and development, disagreeing with Gandhi’s stress on the religious aspects of independence movement, which he found dangerous. In the constituent assembly, he said that the combination of politics and religion in narrowest sense of the word leads toward communalism (Rao 2006: vol. 2, 9). While in power, Nehru was highly conscious of the association of political parties with religious revivalism and the mobilization of the masses for political purposes. A “weak” secularism fairly managing diverse religious views is a better fit for his politics than a strong secularism for the separation of state and religion. He was unsure about giving secularism a constitutional status. In 1954, he stated that the use of the word “secular” to describe the nature of the Indian state was “not a very happy one” and that it was being used “for want of a better word” (cited in Setalvad 1967: 17–21).

Like Nehru and Gandhi, Ambedkar believed that modernity was a critical force in India. Whereas they focused on engaging in a nationalist discourse, Ambedkar focused on the domination of individuals by caste institutions, from his alternative *dalit bahujan* perspective on Untouchables. He was possibly one of the greatest influences on subordinate social groups, as well as the architect of the Indian constitution. He had great faith in the capacity of political institutions to slowly undermine the basic principles of the caste system. Ambedkar held that prescriptive uses for the concept of equality in moral and political arguments are quite useful while remaining aware of unequal treatment based on religion and tradition. Over the years, he considered Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism in his search for a new religion, but his early and constant preference was Buddhism. While virtually extinct in India for centuries, Buddhism was a traditional and familiar kind of Indian faith. More significantly, it was a religion “that could be conceived as rational, ethical and unburdened by sacerdotal hierarchy” (Dirks 2001: 271). Some have interpreted Ambedkar’s theory of social action as a plausible ground for a Buddhist concept of social justice that respects the primary focus on individual salvation (Verma 2010). In Ambedkar’s writings we find a creative interpretation of democratic liberalism for crafting a new kind of group politics in India for Dalits. Just as an individual’s right to convert to Buddhism should be protected, Dalits can be protected as equals although they are not within the fold of Hinduism. Furthermore, caste hierarchies and unequal resources undergirded two different kinds of exclusions that got entangled and produced distinct patterns of exclusion and unjust distributions. Hence Ambedkar saw conversion as a context within which individuals can actualize freedom as a mode of thought in action and gain a sense of self-respect and dignity. Ambedkar raises a new set of questions about the role of religion in social life as the individual becomes the main point of reference in shaping of values, attitudes, and beliefs. He effectively particularizes politics as a vibrant and unique human activity, developing a critique aimed at freeing (p. 219) individuals from the domination and violence of coercive traditions. It is a central feature of Ambedkar’s political vision that for power to be chastened, political institutions must redress social inequities. Politics is coextensive with social, cultural, and economic con-

cerns of life, opening these domains to public scrutiny and avoiding the conflation of the political with the social (Verma 2011).

The views of Nehru, Gandhi, and Ambedkar were each unlike Western understandings of secularism that prioritize the autonomy of the political from the religious domain over the principle of equality before the law. The values of nondiscrimination, equality, and freedom, each central to secularism, evolved through the struggle for nationhood to be embodied in the constitution. Rather than emerging from a clash between religion and the state, secularism in India arose from its contesting religious traditions, the unifying forces promoted by a secularization process, and its long history of religious pluralism.

# Meanings of Secularism: Legal and Normative

A strict wall between government action and religious practice relies upon the concept of secularization as a theoretical framework. Its main characteristics—a decline of religious beliefs and practices associated with modernization, the privatization of religion, and a differentiation of secular spheres—are all deeply related within the West's modernization process. Indian political leaders hoped that economic development and nation-building would replace the religious and caste cleavages of Indian society. While accepting the free exercise of religious liberty in a democratic society and the guarantee of equal protection for religious diversity, India's path avoided the normative ideal of state neutrality in the treatment of religions. Rustom Bharucha notes that the matter of translating secularism into the Indian context was not merely linguistic but conceptual: "It is part of the rift that exists between the rhetoric of secularism as it is enunciated in the Indian constitution, and its insufficiently realised, if not downright distorted, practice in the social and civic domains of everyday life" (1998: 16).

India's constitution grants minorities the right to their own culture and the right to run their own religious institutions under Articles 29 and 30 of the chapter on fundamental rights. While these two articles recognize groups as bearer of rights, Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience, freedom to practice religion, and freedom to propagate religion as individual rights to religion. The practical scope of these freedoms is subject to the state's goals of maintaining public order, morality, and health, so there are various restrictions associated with religious practices. Nowhere in the constitution was an attempt made to enumerate any minorities or define secularism (Rao 2006: vol. 2, 38). In 1971, India's Supreme Court rejected the contention that a religious or linguistic minority has to be a minority in relation to entire population of India, ruling that a minority has to be determined in relation to the particular legislation that was sought to be impugned.[4] Hindu sects in Punjab, for example, constituted a religious minority entitled to protections. In the late 1990s, the government established institutions such as the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions to investigate alleged violations of the rights of religious (p. 220) and linguistic minorities. The issue of clarifying different concepts of "religion" for the purposes of legal discourse and everyday practice in India has been amply debated (Derrett 1968: 462). Courts have largely avoided defining religion,

relying on the conception of religion provided by the community or sect itself (Ratilal Panachand Gandhi v. State of Bombay 1954). In the next section, we consider how this problem partly stems from conceptual confusions over defining the public sphere and making this sphere a neutral arena apart from religious affiliation.

# Rights of Religious Denominations

The is widespread agreement on the abstract value of Constitution Articles 29 and 30 for religious minorities but much disagreement about what these clauses require, permit, and forbid the state from doing toward religion. Some controversial decisions have concerned the question of whether government involvement with social reform can redefine essential practices of religion. After independence, provincial legislatures began to enact laws reforming religious institutions and practices restricting entry or worship in Hindu temples, and they also outlawed the institution of dedicating girls or their dancing in the precincts of any temple. The Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act (1947) and the Madras Devadasi (Prevention of Dedication) Bill and Central Untouchability (Offenses) Act (1955) are examples. The temple-entry movement was a long and cherished part of the struggle against the caste system historically excluding ex-Untouchables of the Hindu community. These concerns to reform the social domain in the postcolonial era led the Indian government to enact a series of laws concerning discriminatory practices related to untouchability, such as the abolition of untouchability (Article 17), the opening of Hindu temples to people of all castes (Article 25 2[b]), and the management of religious endowments (Article 25[a]).

In response to these laws, religious minorities asked for accommodation of their religious practices (ceremonies, diets, slaughter of animals, burial grounds, and so on) and exemptions from legal intervention. The argument for including freedom of religious practice as opposed to restricting it to freedom of worship was linked to a distinctive understanding of observing religion in India. Courts have held that practices essential to a religion cannot be regulated or restricted. However, interpretations of various practices may be inferred from the doctrines and traditions of that religion, or perhaps by distinguishing secular matters from religious matters. Since religious doctrines and practices in India typically cover many aspects of life from birth to death, judges attempt to determine which essential tenets and practices of a faith are undertaking what Marc Galanter calls an internal “reinterpretation of Hinduism” (1997: 251). Acutely aware of the challenges to implementing constitutional mandates about religious practices, judges in India soon became pivotal players in policymaking on minority rights.

In some cases, courts had to decide between religious freedoms of a group against directives of the state to reform a religious practice. Judicial interventions in relation to minority practices took an interesting turn when appellants claimed that a temple founded by Gowda Saraswath Brahmins was a denominational temple, entitling them to manage their own affairs in matters of religious worship, and Article 26(b) of the constitution recognizes such a right. Eventually, by relying on scriptural exegesis and case law, the courts

ruled that all (p. 221) Hindus are allowed entry into the temple but the Saraswath Brahmins could restrict participation in certain religious ceremonies. Some followers of Swami Narayana, also known as Satsangis, made the claim, rejected by the ruling judge, that they were socially and culturally Hindus but formed a distinct and separate religious sect from Hinduism, which is not required to permit all castes and classes to enter their temple.[5] Despite the temple entry movement (Jeffrey 1976), a large number of temples still restrict entry of believers into temples and bar them from activities on the premises (Dorairaj 2009). In the Sabarimala temples, women between the ages of ten and fifty are still forbidden from offering prayers in the temple, in violation of the provisions in Article 15 of the constitution. Similarly, the entry rules for the twelfth-century Jagannath temple in Puri restrict entry to only orthodox Hindus. The Indian government also initiated limited land reforms in the 1950s for the control of lands held by religious endowments and the management of Hindu religious and charitable endowments and trusts. Religious institutions complained about being deprived of key sources of autonomous income. Popularly known as the Shirur Mutt case, in 1954 the courts struck down the right of unrestricted entry into religious institutions of persons unconnected with the spiritual community.[6] These judgments relied on what has been sometimes described as a difference between the “essential” features or components of religion, where courts can scrutinize government intervention, and “nonessential” matters that the government may regulate.

Little consensus could exist on what constitutes religion, so judges adopted various standards to define essential practices. Not all minority practices have been judicially protected as a result, even though Constitution Article 26(b) allows religious denominations or organizations complete autonomy about deciding what rites and ceremonies are essential to them. The Durgah committee case and the Nathdwara temple case involved juridical definitions of religion. Considering the validity of constituting a Durgah committee under the Durgah Khwaja Saheb Act of 1955 for the administration and management of the Ajmer Durgah, the court did not find that it encroached upon the denominational rights of the chishti sufis. The judge argued that the administration of the shrine in question had always been under a state official; moreover, a practice should not only be essential to a religion but also “rational” in order to receive full constitutional protection under Article 26.[7] With similar reasoning, a court also held that the Muslim practice of sacrificing a cow on Bakr Id Day was not a religious requirement, since goats and camels were religiously approved on this holiday as well.[8] These early rulings have been critically summed up by experts as establishing precedents providing judges with a three-step inquiry to determine “whether a claim was religious at all, whether it was essential for the faith, and perforce, whether, even if essential, it complied with the public interest and reformist requirements of the constitution” (Dhavan and Nariman 2000: 263).

The framing of the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions is also part of Article 30 of the constitution, and this issue is linked to debates about access to institutions of higher education. The argument for the secularization of education is inspired by ideas of humanism and rationalism and the struggle against all forms of obscurantism. The right to operate educational institutions under this article was linked to the preservation of the cultural identity of a group irrespective of whether it was

of a religious or linguistic nature. Under this right, minority groups have gone on to assert their autonomy and demand the pluralization of education, the media, public cultural institutions, and symbols of national identity. In response to these demands, the courts have produced decisions (p. 222) emphasizing the rights of minorities to administer their own educational interests while also emphasizing accommodation in the public interest in educational institutions.[9]

In recent decades, rulings by India's Supreme Court concerning minority educational institutions have significantly shaped institutions of higher education. In view of the Forty-Second Amendment to the constitution, the subject of education was transferred to the concurrent list from the state list under the seventh schedule of the constitution. The TMA Pai foundation case involved the issue of determining who constituted a "minority" for availing the special right of minorities under Article 30(1) of the constitution to "establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."[10] Subsequently, religious and linguistic minorities are now considered on a state-by-state basis, and they have the right to establish and administer professional educational institutions. Minority institutions do not have to reserve seats for various categories under the reservation (or "quota") policy for scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST), or socially and educationally backward classes (OBC) as required for other educational institutions. Instead, they can reserve up to 50 percent of the seats for students of their own community. This has not gone uncontested. The case of Aligarh Muslim University, established by legislative act, was initially not treated as established by a minority community, but a controversial decision by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development to reserve 50 percent of seats in postgraduate courses for Muslims led to writ petitions contesting that reservation.[11]

# Personal Laws and Gender Justice

It is a fair summation of these developments to state that, according to the Indian Constitution, citizens have the right to religious freedom, the right to profess and propagate their religion, the right to manage their educational institutions, and the right to promote their own language and culture. The vague language of the constitution encourages questions about the proper scope of religious liberty, however, through its protections for minority cultures, which place personal matters outside the scope of legal scrutiny. The granting of minority rights in the constitution goes along with individual freedoms for Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others regarding private matters such as marriage, divorce and succession, guardianship, adoption, gifts, and wills and inheritances, although certain matters covered by civil laws are equally applied to all communities. The debate over personal liberties is closely linked to Article 44 of the constitution's Directive Principles, which states that India should endeavor to adopt a uniform civil code (UCC) throughout the country for greater national integration. Leaders in the constituent assembly argued for abolishing differences among the personal liberties that keep the nation divided (see Austin 2000: 80). Closely related to these problems of conflict and con-

tradiction were difficulties in creating a common Indian citizenship and redressing grievances related to discriminatory practices within communities.

Since the 1950s, freedoms for minorities coexisting with civil laws has been a source of conflict (Hasan 2000; Forbes 1999). When Ambedkar was the law minister in Nehru's cabinet, the Indian government initiated legislation reforming private practices of the general Hindu community but refrained from directly intervening in affairs of religious minorities for fear of alienating religious minorities.

(p. 223) This reluctance to reform private practices led liberal pluralists and feminist scholars to contend that prioritizing minority rights has obstructed legislation that could ensure gender justice for all women. In contrast to laws prohibiting discrimination based on the caste system occurring in the social sphere, religion-based family traditions within the private sphere have been retained. Private practices of religious communities tend to compromise women's quest for equality and freedom, since many religious groups are discriminatory toward women. By permitting religion-based private practices, women have fewer equality rights as citizens. Another critique from religious revivalist groups, including the forces of Hindutva, is that members of minority communities are preoccupied with their distinctive identities and tend to resist trends toward greater integration within the nation. The demand for a UCC has become identified with agendas of right-wing nationalist organizations worried about impediments due to the appeasement of minority communities by the government. Conservative opinion within religious minorities, in contrast, regards the imposition of a UCC as a way of forcing the majoritarian dominant code upon the minority communities of India.

These differences emerged in the mid-1980s amidst the democratization of subgroups in the country with the Shah Bano case.[12] Shah Bano was deserted by her husband, but he did not pay her any alimony in violation of section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. While her appeal was pending, her husband, Mohammad Ahmad Khan, divorced her according to the Muslim law. Subsequently the courts granted her annual maintenance from Khan, but he argued this violates the Muslim law concerning divorce only granting three months' maintenance after the divorce. The Supreme Court dismissed her husband's appeal, ruling that this Muslim law failed to provide redress appropriate to this context. This decision was especially controversial because the Court went beyond the issue of ensuring justice for divorced Muslim woman by commenting on the desirability of implementing the UCC and using arguments interpreted as critical of cultural backwardness, particularly with regard to Muslim communities and their handling of gender equality. Liberal Muslims accepting the need to reform discriminatory customs were in the minority compared to the large organized Muslim opposition to reform. After this judgment, leaders of the ruling Congress party persuaded the then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to enact a law in parliament overturning the judgment, to prevent the Congress party from suffering the disapproval of upset minorities. In 1986 the parliament passed legislation allowing maintenance to a divorced woman only for ninety days, matching the Muslim law,

so Muslim women have no legal recourse. This law was critiqued in turn by the Hindu right as an example of minority appeasement.

Such conflicts arise between claims made to preserve culture by an ethnic or religious minority and claims made by women who wish to interpret the same culture according to a different set of principles. Elected representatives from communities, at both the level of state legislative assemblies and the national parliament, seek to reinforce the autonomy of their communities in regard to the personal sphere of individual life. With that autonomy, the community receives priority; cultural practices receive protection, at the expense of denying women their constitutional rights. Although this Supreme Court judgment can be viewed as a feeble attempt to safeguard the status of women in respect of Muslim personal law, the Indian government's approach displayed a lack of commitment to women's rights against the claims of patriarchal communities. The idea of equality before the law is thereby compromised, as differential treatment within communities is ignored, and the "authentic voice" within minority communities is permitted to prevail.

## (p. 224) Social Justice, Reservations, and Group Representation

Secularism, when it is inconsistently applied to all religions, has clear implications for social justice. The preoccupation with what constitutes "religion" in the debates on secularism has meant that sufficient attention has not been given to caste in the politics of secularism. The Indian Constitution permits the government to make policies for reservations for mainly the SC, ST, and OBC. The general premise is that non-Hindu religions do not have a caste hierarchy, and therefore they do not need similar kind of protections.

Reflecting on a presidential order that restricts SC status to Hindu groups in postcolonial India, Marc Galanter explains that "religion was introduced as a qualification into the first Scheduled Castes Order in 1936" but due to the disputes leading to this listing Muslims and Christians were excluded. The latter were already beneficiaries of special electoral treatment as minorities. In spite of the constitutional ban on discrimination in article 14, "the elimination of separate representation for religious minorities and the change in purpose of the list from electoral to administration of welfare, the religious qualification was retained after independence" (Galanter 1984: 143-144). The President's Order of 1950 provides that no person professing a religion different from Hinduism shall be seen as a member of a Scheduled Caste. An exception was made for certain Sikh members. In 1956, in response to an appeal of the Sikh community, the parliament amended the order to include Dalit Sikhs in the SC formerly restricted to only Hindus, and, in 1990, Buddhists of SC origin and neo-Buddhists were added in the list to honor Dr. Ambedkar on his birth centenary. Even as provisions of affirmative action were extended to members of non-Hindu religious minorities, scholars note that this system, as Susan Bayly says, "has been based on an idea of fixed and inflexible boundaries between Hinduism and other Indian faiths." She adds that caste stratification was seen "as the features of a monolithic Hindu world; by this definition adherents of so called convert faiths had no need for re-

dress of shared disability" (2005: 270). In short, when the Dalit Muslims or Dalit Christians demand quotas, their claims are seen as being advanced as religious groups, but when Dalits in the Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist religion advance their claims, they are treated from the perspective of caste. This situation is further confounded if one raises the issue of religious conversion, and the SCs are compared with the STs. If an SC converts to Christianity or Islam, such a person is automatically deprived of his SC benefits. But if the convert is an ST, he continues to take the advantage of the ST benefits because those are religion-neutral categories (Jenkins 2003).

The Mandal Commission, appointed by the government in 1980, acknowledges that there are caste-like structures among Muslims, which are the Muslim counterpart of a "backward class." Recently published government reports are united on delinking SC status from religion to provide reservations to minorities, particularly Dalits falling within the SC quota, and to suspend the 1950 order excluding Muslims, Christians, Jains, and Parsis from the SC's purview. Galanter's position on this problem is that the

> notion of religion as essentially private and separate from public life is an equally indefensive dogma to those who hold religion to encompass more than doctrine, worship and private conduct, but to provide obligatory principles for the ordering of public life. (2009: 259)

(p. 225) He concludes that secularism "cannot be entirely neutral among religions when it undertakes to confine them to their proper sphere" (Galanter 1998: 259).

In the late 1990s, the Bharatiya Janta Party and its allies appealed to the Hindu majority community in India by reclaiming a mosque that had been built by the first Mughal emperor Babar in the sixteenth century. The controversy centered on the demand made by extremist Hindus that since Babri Masjid stood at site of birthplace of Lord Ram, it should be restored to Hindus for worshipping their gods.[13] Following the increasing communalization of politics, and particularly after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992, the politicization of identities has propelled religion as a mobilizational force into the public sphere in India. Since there are no restrictions on the right to propagate one's religion, culture, or language (except in the interest of public order, decency, and morality), the courts have intervened in the misuse of religion for corrupt actions in electoral politics. In a 1995 verdict, popularly known as the Hindutva judgments, the court held that soliciting vote in the name of Hindutva or Hinduism did not amount to appealing to religion, since Hindutva is a way of life of the people and more like a state of mind.[14] Hinduism cannot be construed as narrowly confined only to Hindu religious practices unrelated to the culture and ethos of the people of India. With these legal developments, a fresh examination of the concepts and practices of Indian secularism in the light of historical experience needs to be undertaken.

Given these contestations, many scholars believe that the concept of secularism is incompatible within the Indian setting (Chatterjee 1994; Nandy 1998). Many discerning scholars raise the question of state's involvement in religious questions, its indifference to the context of secularism, and its stance on different conceptions of equality and difference.

They argue that the principle of secularism is not central to the heritage of Indian society as it was introduced at a specific stage of political formation in India.[15]

# Conclusion

Despite the growing body of critical work on secularism in the West, studies of secularist ideologies and projects in the Indian context have been fairly limited. This chapter explores some of the methodological reflections on secularism with respect to the specific version India has adopted, in response to the dynamics of globalization and religious traditions in India's historical and political context.

Secularism was a core ideological imperative of the newly independent country of India and its efforts to bind together citizens with new loyalties to the nation. In its pursuit, features of religious practices in India received redefinitions. By exploring this discursive domain, we have highlighted the epistemological and political implications to the codependent relationships between the secular and religious dimensions in India. This chapter also comments on the conditions of the serious engagement of the state and state power with secularism and on the way the secularism is implicated in narratives of modernity. It delved into some local understandings of secularism and the multiple forces that are presently contesting it. Although there are dissimilarities among conceptualizations of the secularizing imperative and the rhetoric of socialist modernization, nationalist ideologues are keen to overcome religious backwardness and bigotry in India. The impacts of colonial rule, constitutional debates (p. 226) on rights, and legal contestations over secularism show how the Indian government's ongoing support and reform of religious traditions have been out of step with the "state neutrality" position espoused by Western constitutions.

In the 1950s, as the Indian government ventured into uncharted territory in crafting social reform, many religious groups deployed counterstrategies. According to the constitution, religious groups have the right to maintain distinct cultures under Article 29 and the right to establish educational institutions under Article 30, which forbids the state from discriminating against them. Both articles raise the question of whether different laws for groups according to religion should be permissible if citizenship rights must be equally enjoyed. As we have observed, it is difficult to find a central notion of secularism exemplified in the bureaucracies, parliament, formal statutes, and judiciary. Courts have attempted to demarcate the essential and secular functions of religious groups and institutions. Contending pulls of the various provisions in the legal discourse led to claims that religious freedom does not imply that any essential core can be determined by external sources; the identification of the essential practices with religious groups only essentialized the identities of religious groups despite the actual heterogeneous character of most religions in India.

The political, economic, and cultural situation since the 1990s and the democratic transformation of the Indian polity have spurred an ardent defense for new foundations for public and private life. Subsequently, many novel religious orientations have come to the

fore along with the call for freedom of religion, faith, and conscience. This has given rise to new understandings of secularism that emerged from public discourse and landmark cases for rights of minorities and women. The invocation of religious identities in electoral politics and their privileged position in the public life has polarized Indian society instead of promoting respect for religious differences. The debates over a UCC raise crucial questions for gender justice; the state's respect for all religions is seriously compromised in its attempt to negotiate with conservative forces of the Muslim community. Marginalized groups rely on religion in a bid to establish themselves as legitimate voices, in order to claim rights vis-à-vis other groups as beneficiaries of policies related to social justice. Although successive judicial judgments have lent different meanings to secularism, the preamble of India's Constitution remains an inspiration along with its guarantees against discrimination that assure minorities a life of dignity. Despite weaknesses in its actual practices, secularism plays a major role in disseminating the political values of nondiscrimination and decision-making, ensuring that no voices of India's communities are ignored or silenced.

Instead of the ideal of state neutrality, secularism in India flows from the principle of nondiscrimination, seen as synonymous with the principle of equality of rights and opportunity for all minorities. Although the ideal of nondiscrimination has remained valid for all religions, its meaning and scope has fluctuated. The state needs to recognize the internal discriminations that stem from the tenets of various religions. We have argued that India should surpass the ideal of nondiscrimination and rise to a politics of difference that pays attention to oppression, domination, and exploitation faced by different social groups and advocates just norms to govern the interactions of diverse groups.

## Bibliography

Ansari, Iqbal (ed.). 1996. *Readings on Minorities Documents and Perspectives*, Vol. 1. New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies.

Austin, Granville. 2000. *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Backward Classes Commission. 1955. *Report of the Backward Classes Commission*. 3 vols. Delhi: Government of India.

Bayly, Susan. 2005. *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bharucha, Rustom. 1998. *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2010. *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, Rajeev (ed.). 2009. *Secularism and Its Critics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1994. “Secularism and Toleration.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29(28), 1768–1777.

Chaube, S. C. 2000. *The Constituent Assembly of India: Springboard of Revolution*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments, Madras v. Sri Lakshimindra Thirtha Swamiar of Sri Shirur Mutt. 1954. SCR 1005.

D. A. V. College etc. v. State of Punjab and Ors. 1971. SCR 688.

Derrett, J. D. M. 1968. *Religion, Law and the State in India*. London: Faber & Faber.

Dhavan, Rajeev. 1994. “The Ayodhya Judgment: Encoding Secularism in the Law.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29(48), 3034–3040.

Dhavan, Rajeev, and Fali Nariman. 2000. “The Supreme Court and Group Life: Religious Freedom, Minority Groups and Disadavantaged Communities.” In *Supreme But Not Infallible: Essays in Honour of the Supreme Court of India*, edited by B. N. Kirpal, 256–288. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Dirks, Nicholas. 2001. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Dorairaj, S. 2009. “No Entry.” *Frontline* 26(15), 18–31.

Durgah Committee, Ajmer v. Syed Hussain Ali and Others. 1961. SCR (1) 383 (1962).

Forbes, Geraldine. 1999. *Women in Modern India.* Vol. 4 of *The New Cambridge History of India*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Galanter, Marc. 1984. *Competing Equalities. Law and the Backward Classes in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Galanter, Marc. 1997. *Law and Society in Modern India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Galanter, Marc. 1998. “Hinduism, Secularism and the Indian Judiciary.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 268–296. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

(p. 229) Gandhi, M. K. 1947. *India of My Dreams*. Compiled by R. K. Prabhu. Ahmedabad, India: Navjivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, M. K. 2004. *Soul Force: Gandhi’s Writings on Peace*. Edited by V. Geetha. Chennai, India, and London: Tara Publishing.

Gandhi, M. K. 2008. *The Essential Writings.* Edited by J. Brown. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hasan, Zoya. 2000. “Religion and Politics in a Secular State: Law, Community and Gender.” In *Politics and the State in India*, edited by Zoya Hasan, 269–289. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Hasan, Zoya, Eswaran Sridharan, and R. Sudarshan (eds.). 2005. *India’s Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies*. London: Anthem Press.

Jacobsohn, Gary. 2003. *The Wheel of Law: India’s Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Jeffrey, Robin. 1976. “Temple Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860–1940.” *Social Scientist* 4(8), 3–27.

Jenkins, Laura. 2003. *Identity and Identification in India: Defining the Disadvantaged*. London: Routledge Curzon.

Juergensmeyer, M. 1993. *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kerala Education Bill. 1957. SCR 595 (1959).

Kesavananda Bharati and Ors v. State of Kerala. 1973. 4 SCC 225.

Khilinani, Sunil. 2007. “Nehru’s Faith.” In *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, edited by A. Needham and R. Rajan, 89–106. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Lal, Vinay (ed.). 2009. *Political Hinduism: The Religious Imagination in Public Spheres*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

M. Hanif Quareshi v. State of Bihar. 1958. SCR 629 (1959).

Madan, T. N. (ed.). 1998. “Secularism in Its Place.” In *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 297–370. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mandal Commission. 1980. *Report of the Backward Classes Commission II*. Delhi: Akalank.

Mudaliar, Chandra. 1974. *The Secular State and Religious Institutions in India: A Study of the Administration of Hindu Public Religious Trusts in Madras*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Nandy, Ashis. 2009. “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, 321–344. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Needham, A. D., and R. Rajan (eds.). 2007. *The Crisis of Secularism in India*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1934. *Recent Essays and Writings.* Allahabad, India: Kitabistan.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1955. *An Autobiography*. London: Bodley Head.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1972. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,* Vol. 3. Edited by S. Gopal. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1973. "Note on Minorities." In *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,* edited by S. Gopal, vol. 4, 259–260. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973. (Originally published 1930)

Nehru Report. 1928. *All Parties Conference: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution*. Allahabad, India: General Secretary, All India Congress Committee.

(p. 230) Pandey, Gyan. 1990. *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Rao, B. Shiva. 2006. *The Framing of India's Constitution: Select Documents.* 6 vols. Revised by S. Kashyap. New Delhi: Universal Law.

Ratilal Panachand Gandhi v. State of Bombay. 1954. SCR 1035 (1955).

Sapru, T. 1945. *Constitutional Proposals of the Sapru Committee*. Bombay: Padma Publications.

Sachar Committee. 2006. *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India*. Delhi: Government of India.

Setalvad, M. C. 1967. *Secularism: Patel Memorial Lectures, 1965*. New Delhi, Government of India.

Smith, D. E. 1963. *India as a Secular State*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

S. R. Bommai v. Union of India. 1994. SCC (3) 1.

State of Bombay v. Shastri Yagna Purushadasji. 1958. 61 BOMLR 700 (1959).

Taylor, Charles. 2001. "Two Theories of Modernity." In *Alternative Modernities*, edited by D. Gaonkar, 172–197. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Tilkayat Shri Govindlalji v. The State of Rajasthan and Others. 1963. SCR (1) 561 (1964).

Venkataramana Devaru v. State of Mysore. 1958. SCR 895.

Verma, Vidhu. 2010. "Reinterpreting Buddhism: Ambedkar on the Politics of Social Action." *Economic and Political Weekly* 45(49), 56–65.

Verma, Vidhu. 2011. *Non-Discrimination and Equality: Contesting Boundaries of Social Justice in India*. London and New York: Routledge.

## Notes:

(1.) On secular nationalism and religion as “ideologies of order,” see Juergensmeyer (1993: 31); for questioning secularism as a viable alternative to meet the challenge of Hindu majoritarianism, see Chatterjee (1994).

(2.) Under Indira Gandhi, secularism was viewed as part of the “basic structure” that remained a respected doctrine of the Indian constitution. Rooted in the seminal case of Kesavananda Bharati and Ors v. State of Kerala (1973), it restricted the power of parliament to amend and protected many issues related to the constitution including its basic structure. It also added that the preamble, which embodies the founding values of the republic, could not be altered. See S. R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994) for issues related to secularism as part of the basic structure.

(3.) Muslims were treated as a separate group under special electorates that accompanied the introduction of electoral politics under the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909.

(4.) D. A. V. College etc v. State of Punjab and Ors (1971). The term “minority” based on religion was restricted only to religious minorities—Muslims, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, and so on—who kept their identity separate from the majority (the Hindus).

(5.) These two cases were Venkataramana Devaru v. State of Mysore (1958) and State of Bombay v. Shastri Yagna Purushadasji (1958).

(6.) See Commissioner, Hindu Religious Endowments, Madras v. Sri Lakshimindra Thirtha Swamiar of Sri Shirur Mutt (1954) SCR 1005. The plaintiffs challenged the Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act of 1951, the first legislation setting up an elaborate regulatory mechanism for Hindu temples and mathas (Mudaliar 1974).

(7.) Durgah Committee, Ajmer v. Syed Hussain Ali and Others (1961). Sufi Muslims of the shrine of Moinuddin Chisti challenged the Durgah Khawaja Saheb Act 1955, which took away their right to manage properties of Durgah and to receive offerings from pilgrims. See also Tilkayat Shri Govindlalji v. The State of Rajasthan and Others (1963).

(8.) M. Hanif Quareshi v. State of Bihar (1958).

(9.) See, for example, Ahmedabad St Xavier’s College Society v. State of Gujarat, 1975 SCR (1)173; St Stephens College v. Delhi University, 1992 SCR 1630; Frank Anthony Public School Employees Association v. Union of India, 1986, 1987 SCR (1) 238; Naresh Agarwal v. Union of India, 2005 4 AWC 3745.

(10.) In T.M.A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka, 2002 SCC 481, it was held that a minority, linguistic or religious, is determinable only by reference to demography of the state and not by taking into consideration the whole country’s population.

(11.) Scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST), and other backward classes (OBC), as they are labeled in India. See Azeez Basha v. Union of India 1968 SCR (1) 833; and The Aligarh Muslim University v. Malay Shukla, 2006 (1) AWC 992.

(12.) Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum (1985) SCR (3) 844.

(13.) The Allahabad high court ruled in 2010 that the land be divided into three portions: one for Ram lala represented by Hindu Mahasabha for construction of a temple, another for the Sunni Waqf Board, and the third for the Hindu group Nirmohi Akhara.

(14.) See Ramesh Yeshwant Prabhoo v. Shri Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte (1995) 1996 SCC (1) 130; Manohar Joshi v. Nitin Bhaurao Patel (1995) 1996 SCC (1) 169; and Professor Ramchandra G. Kapse v. Haribansh Ramakbal Singh (1996) SCC (1) 206.

(15.) Madan (2009). In the past decade, these critiques have gained popularity as minority rights were violated in the riots in 2002 in the State of Gujarat. Attempts to hold perpetrators of riots accountable were hampered by a weak judicial process and lack of sufficient evidence.

**Vidhu Verma**

Vidhu Verma is a Professor in the Centre for Political Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. She has been a Senior Fellow of the Indian Council of Social Science Research. She is director of a project on Changing Conceptions of Legal Justice in India. She edited Unequal Worlds: Discrimination and Social Inequality in Modern India and recently authored Non-Discrimination and Equality in India: Contesting Boundaries of Social Justice.

# Soviet Atheism and Its Aftermath

Sonja Luehrmann

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society, Atheism
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.15

## Abstract and Keywords

If Soviet atheism is a variety of secularism, it more resembles eliminationist movements viewing religions as obstacles to the political integration of citizens into the state. Before World War II, the Bolshevik government issued decrees to disentangle the state from the church. Later, Khrushchev emphasized atheism and closed churches as part of a general populist, mobilizational approach to promoting communist values. By the 1970s, religious practices were not precluded but were assigned a marginal space outside of public engagement. The post-Soviet era has seen self-reported religiosity increase, while self-reported atheism has diminished, although remaining significant. Russia's 1997 law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations requires a denomination to exist in a region for fifteen years to enjoy the full legal and tax status. Today, Russia differentiates between "good" religions that help to promote particular moral visions and "bad" religions that create social strife, promote violence, and endanger public health.

Keywords: communism, Soviet atheism, Russian Orthodox Church, anti-religion policy, secular government, secularization

IN the inner courtyard of Alexander Nevskii Monastery in St. Petersburg, just outside of the cathedral that holds the relics of the medieval nobleman whom Czar Peter the Great had made one of the patron saints of his eighteenth-century capital, there is a decidedly non-Christian burial ground. Instead of crosses, most graves are marked by conical or square headstones, some by statues. Many of the names on the headstones, such as Eino Rahja and Avramii Iosifovich Shmai, emphatically do not evoke membership in the Orthodox Church. Finnish and Jewish revolutionaries and war heroes are included in the first row of graves facing the cathedral entrance, in a location that church tradition reserves for clergy, monastics, or special benefactors of the monastery.

This is one of the secular burial plots established in 1919, after the Bolshevik government had nationalized all cemeteries and detached access to burials from social rank and religious or ethnic identity (Izmozik and Lebina 2010: 49–50). It is no accident that a burial ground for Communist elites was situated on the doorstep of what was then still a functioning Russian Orthodox cathedral and pilgrimage site. Rather, it exemplifies the deliber-

ately provocative and performative nature of early Soviet attempts to build a secular society of equal contemporaries on the ruins of a dynastic Christian empire. The atheist graves are still there today, in the middle of the re-established monastery and metropolitan see. This shows the enduring influence of the increasingly routinized but always uneasy coexistence between belief and unbelief that established itself during the later decades of the Soviet Union and continues in a variety of forms in its successor states.

# Is Atheism Secularism?

One possible interpretation of the communist burial plot is that it is an attempt to appropriate the sacred to the service of the new state. Some have argued that such a state should not be called secular but sacralizing or "messianic" (Halfin 2009). Burying Bolshevik activists and party functionaries at a place formerly reserved for those honored by the church is one of the gestures of substitution that has earned communism the name of "substitute" or (p. 232) "political" religion (cf. David-Fox 2011a). Even today, citizens of postsocialist Eastern Europe often speak of communist political engagement as one kind of "faith" that, after the collapse of socialist governments, needed to be replaced with another (Luehrmann 2015b). Given this pervasive faith-talk and the disregard for the values of freedom of conscience commonly associated with liberal varieties of secularism, calling the Soviet Union secular requires some clarification.

Comparisons between communism and religion began soon after the revolution. The émigré intellectual Nicholas Berdyaev (1932) denounced the Bolshevik usurpation of religious feelings of devotion and sacrifice, whereas Eric Voegelin and others used the term "political religions" to designate the irrational elements in twentieth-century totalitarianisms: fascism, national socialism, and communism ([1938] 1989; see also Gurian 1952). Later observers of Soviet political culture continued to note parallels between the use of symbols and ritual action in Soviet politics and those of religious traditions and spoke of "secular ritual" (Lane 1981) or "cults" of political leaders or war dead, with their own array of "icons," "shrines," and hagiographies (Tumarkin 1983: 3, 1994).

These terminological choices go back to the creators of Soviet propaganda themselves, who both denounced and envied religion's hold on the popular imagination. Festival culture is an obvious example of Soviet attempts to replicate and "colonize" the orders of time and rhythms of labor that had once been set by religious traditions (Petrone 2000; Rolf 2006). Several influential figures of early Soviet cultural policy such as Education Commissar Anatolii Lunacharskii and Commissar for Culture Maksim Gor'kii came out of the prerevolutionary God-builder movement. Inspired by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, they hoped that revolutionary conditions would create new human gods (Fitzpatrick 1970; Clark 1995). But as historian Nina Tumarkin notes, the use of words and imagery drawing on Russian Orthodox Christianity and other popular religious traditions was not always meant to be taken literally. Sometimes the intended effect was parody, inciting people to irreverence toward prerevolutionary values. Sometimes artists reached for quasi-religious symbols in their wish to communicate a similar intensity of emotion as

the one attached to religious practices. Sometimes they thought that religious analogies were the only way to reach peasant audiences, and they used them instrumentally to "transfer deep-seated feelings of reverence for holy images to equally profound stirrings of devotion to the Communist Party" (Tumarkin 1983: 70).

These three motivations are difficult to distinguish in hindsight and may have blended together for historical actors. The cemetery for revolutionary heroes on the grounds of a monastery that held important political and religious functions under the old regime has elements of all three: the carnivalesque reversal of a previous order, the expression of respect for the dead in a familiar and emotionally resonant way, and the attempt to appropriate the popular reverence evoked by the place to the Bolshevik elite. But the funerary plot has another characteristic that says something about the nature of Soviet secularism as a political project. By including people with recognizably Jewish and Lutheran names in the front row of burials, the designers of the site made a statement about the elimination of the numerous ethno-religious distinctions that, along with a system of feudal ranks, had determined legal and social status in the Russian Empire (Werth 2014). Bolsheviks saw the elimination of confessional privileges as one way to show the contours of their new society.

In their view of religion as a supporting structure of outdated hierarchies, Bolshevik intellectuals and cultural planners drew on the atheism of the nineteenth-century Russian (p. 233) intelligentsia, for whom Orthodox religiosity often stood for compliance with an autocratic state, and on Friedrich Engels's critique of religion as a justification for patriarchal authority (Frede 2011; Engels 1902). Organizations such as the League of the Militant Godless (founded in 1925) repeated old anticlerical motifs of priests as greedy exploiters of the credulous faithful. But atheist publications and films also blamed religious prejudices and superstitions for hindering the advancement of women and young people, especially among ethno-religious minorities regarded as lagging behind social progress, such as Jews, Muslims, and indigenous Northern peoples (Peris 1998: 75–81; Slezkine 1994, 2004; Kamp 2006). Banishing religion from public and private lives was thus seen as a precondition for the new communist society in which all would be equally productive contributors.

Thus, if we want to treat Soviet atheism as a variety of secularism, it is best understood as "exclusive humanism" in Charles Taylor's (2007) sense. However, it should be compared not to the liberal strands that emphasized the privatization of religion and individual freedom of conscience, but to the eliminationist movements that saw religious traditions as an obstacle to the political integration of citizens into a new state, such as revolutionary France or Kemalist Turkey. Over time, the Bolshevik government also had to recognize the continued existence of religion, leading to the emergence of forms of accommodation of religious institutions in a political sphere that was designed to exclude them.

# Eliminationist Secularism in the Prewar Decades

Soon after seizing power, the Bolshevik government issued a series of decrees that were designed to cut the state loose from institutional entanglement with the Russian Orthodox Church and other established religious institutions. Church property was nationalized in the decree on land that was one of the first pronouncements of the revolutionary government. The decree “on civil marriage, children, and on the registration of acts of civil status” (18 December 1917) took the registration of births, deaths, and other life events away from churches, mosques, and synagogues and unified it in the hands of the state. A month later, on 20 January 1918, the decree “on the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church” brought all educational institutions under state control, banned the use of religious symbols in state institutions, and deprived religious congregations of the status of legal persons and property-holders. The adoption of the “new” Gregorian calendar later that same month brought Russia into temporal step with most of Europe but instituted a separation between secular and Christian time-keeping that persists until today (Hosking 2010: 124–125; Husband 2000: 46–48). The decree on the secularization of cemeteries of December 1918 came at the end of a long line of measures aimed at excising religious institutions from the public roles they had played in the Russian Empire.

After these initial separationist steps, more aggressive measures followed that were initially aimed almost exclusively at the Russian Orthodox Church, as a formidable institutional enemy. An early campaign to exhume relics of saints and expose them to public view was meant to counter popular beliefs in the bodily incorruptibility of holy men and women and brand the church itself as a corrupt institution that exploited ordinary believers. During (p. 234) the famine of 1921–1922, this turned into a full-fledged hunt for church valuables, which were confiscated allegedly to aid the hungry, while congregations were forbidden from directly distributing aid among the needy (Husband 2000: 55–57). During this time, the government also lent short-lived support to a modernizing renovationist movement within the Russian Orthodox Church, which was dropped as soon as Patriach Tikhon issued a declaration of loyalty to the Soviet state in June 1923 (Roslof 2002). Deprived of their status of property holders, religious institutions were allowed to lease their expropriated buildings back from the state for the purpose of worship, and clergy became employees of a group of at least twenty citizens who had registered as a religious congregation.

During some years, signing one’s name as part of the group of twenty parishioners (Russian *dvatsatka*) was a virtual death sentence, as was ordination as bishop (Pospielovsky 1987). At the same time, these structures formed the basis for a fragile *modus vivendi* for religious communities within the Soviet Union. Codified in the law on religious organizations of 1929, it remained in force until the collapse of the Soviet state. Under the law, associations of lay religious believers rented registered cult buildings and employed clergy who had received prior state registration. Clergy were only allowed to carry out ritual

acts within houses of worship or on cemeteries during funerals, not outside or in private residences. Orthodox icon processions, Qur'an readings at home, and blessings of fields in various religious traditions were made illegal, as were charitable and educational outreach activities by religious groups.

Beyond such efforts to combat the church as an institutional enemy, measures to secularize Soviet society were initially far less straightforward and consistent. The fledgling Soviet government hesitated to apply draconian measures against religion in non-Russian, non-Christian regions where it competed against separatist tendencies. At the same time, the introduction of first Latin then Cyrillic scripts for the Turkic languages of the Soviet Union cut new generations off from literacy in Arabic writing and access to religious literatures (Martin 2001: 186). In Ukraine and southwestern Russia, areas with substantial groups of Baptist, Pentecostal, and other nonconforming Christians, the removal of privileges for the Orthodox Church initially led to a blossoming of congregational life in other denominations and among newly formed Orthodox splinter groups. In some places, Protestant dissenters or dissolved monasteries formed Christian communes. These experiments were squashed during Stalin's collectivization drive beginning in the late 1920s (Coleman 2005; Freeze 2012; Wynot 2004). At the same time, former religious buildings were turned into schools or youth clubs (others into agricultural store houses), and members of the Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*) were among the most visible agents of antireligious acts, showing the symbolic reversal of power between patriarchal elites and young people as agents of a different future (Gorsuch 2000).

Besides proclaiming the liberation of women and other subjugated groups, many campaigns against religious practices were justified through appeals to public health and hygiene (Northrop 2004; Kamp 2006; Husband 2000: 75). Newly invented Soviet rituals, by contrast, emphasized healthy bodies, public engagement of women and youth, and access to formerly closed-off ritual sites (Petrone 2000: 30–34; Luehrmann 2005). Although Soviet festivals are often discussed as measures of one-to-one substitution of secular for religious practices, they were meant to introduce new social settings where participants would develop emotional habits and standards of propriety that were quite different from those associated with religious traditions. Soviet rituals were emphatically joyful but also very bureaucratic in form, (p. 235) taking the form of official meetings "almost as though people can think of no other 'Soviet' way of doing things" (Humphrey 1998: 399).

Although large percentages of the population continued to adhere to religious faith, as the suppressed results of the 1937 census dramatically showed (Hirsch 2005), the early atheist campaigns set the Soviet Union on the path of "forced" or "hurried" secularity (German *forciert;* Wohlrab-Sahr et al. 2009). "Soviet ways of doing things" made it impossible not to overstep boundaries of awe and ritual precaution, and reoriented emotions and desires toward an egalitarian community of contemporaries working to reap benefits from their collective efforts in this world without help from divine beings or ancestral spirits.

# World War II as a Turning Point

Government efforts to eliminate religious institutions from the territory of the Soviet state reached a final peak during the purges of 1937. Orthodox priests, imams, rabbis, Buddhist lamas, and indigenous priests and shamans were sent to firing squads and labor camps, as were laypeople who had lent their signatures to the registration papers of a religious organization (Pospielovsky 1987: 65–66; Bernstein 2013: 55). The situation changed dramatically with the attack on the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany on 22 June 1941. In the short term, it led to the release of prominent clergy from camps and the use of Orthodox and Islamic clergy as de facto chaplains who blessed troops who were going to the front. The Nazi occupiers of Ukraine and western Russia were reopening churches and posing as defenders of Christianity against godless enemies; Stalin's government needed the church in order to bolster the support of its own population (Shkarovskii 2005; Khalid 2007: 77–78; Peris 2000). Over the long term, this wartime experience led to a reorganization of the relationship between the Soviet state and religious institutions, and a shift from an eliminationist approach to secularism to one that was focused on regulating and to some degree even accommodating religiosity.

In 1943–1944, two decrees from the Central Committee of the Communist Party established a bureaucracy to deal with religious institutions: the Council of Russian Orthodox Church Affairs, complemented by the Council of Religious Cult Affairs, whose job it was to deal with all other recognized religious groups in the USSR. In 1965, both organizations merged into the Council of Religious Affairs (*Sovet po delam religiĭ*), and even before, shortages of qualified personnel sometimes led to both councils being represented by a single regional commissioner (*upolnomochennyi*). The commissioners represented the Council in every regional capital and autonomous region, reported to the regional government and the Communist Party hierarchy, and were in charge of registering religious congregations and clergy and monitoring their compliance with Soviet law. Many commissioners had had a prior career in the secret police (KGB), and few of them had specialized knowledge of the religious traditions of their regions. They often carried out the duties of commissioner of religious affairs alongside other administrative positions (Chumachenko 2002: 17–27; Ro'i 2000: 12–28; Luehrmann 2011: 54).

Shortly after the councils were established, educational institutions for religious specialists reopened. The Russian Orthodox Church received three seminaries (Zagorsk near Moscow, Leningrad, and Odessa); Muslims were served by the medrese Mir-Arab in (p. 236) Bukhara, Uzbekistan (Kenworthy 2012: 135; Ro'i 2000: 161). In the wake of the war, the USSR was a Marxist state in which only atheism could be publicly propagated but which incorporated liaisons with religious institutions into its structures. It was also poised to export its version of state-enforced atheism to newly acquired territories on the Baltic Sea and in western Ukraine and to the eastern European states that fell under its sphere of influence.

After the Soviet victory in World War II, a relatively tolerant time for religion continued until Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, put atheism back on the agenda as part of a general populist, mobilizational approach to politics. Two campaigns to close houses of worship and deregister religious communities in 1956 and 1960–1961 occurred in the context of a new focus on personal responsibility for communist values and heightened expectations of attaining the communist paradise in the near future (Paert 2004; Smolkin-Rothrock 2014b; Stone 2008). Rather than returning to the carnivalesque anticlericalism of the 1920s, the focus now was on mobilizing public opinion to "demand" the closure of churches and mosques and on monitoring compliance with Soviet law on religion. The 1929 law was more strictly enforced again, leading to police interference with open-air worship, charitable distributions of goods, and restrictions on the participation of children in congregational life (Altshuler 2012; Baran 2014; Kolymagin 2004).

After Khrushchev was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev in 1964, the idea of permanently eradicating religion from Soviet soil was again abandoned. Instead, the struggle for communist legality began to focus on manifestations of religion that spilled out from containment in the rituals of registered congregations. Campaigns against pilgrimages to holy sites (often syncretistic manifestations of popular religiosity that were controversial from the point of view of Christian and Muslim orthodoxies) and against unregistered "sects" divided religion into harmless and dangerous varieties. The state took on the role of arbiter between what was canonically permitted by a religious tradition and what was not (Huhn 2014; Rock 2012; Dobson 2015).

Through the ups and downs of various campaigns, commissioners of religious affairs embodied the contradictions of the state's stance toward religion. On the one hand, they were enforcers of state schemes and often helped to fabricate reasons why a given congregation had to be closed or an uncooperative member of the clergy needed to be removed. On the other hand, they were also the point of contact for religious believers in their interactions with the state and for other members of the Soviet public who needed information about religious life. The commissioner of religious affairs in the Tatar Autonomous Republic, a region with a mixed Muslim–Christian population, was called upon to help reinstate Baptists who had been fired for being religious; approve lists of pilgrims for the annual Soviet delegation to the hajj in Mecca; approve or disapprove when residents of the Tatar republic applied to enter religious seminaries or monastic vocations; and advise local theaters on productions that depicted religious scenes (Luehrmann 2015a; see also Wanner 2007; Ro'i 2000: 171–175).

By the end of the Soviet period, there was a measure of equilibrium in which religious organizations that abided by Soviet law had some security of existence. It was recognized that a Soviet citizen could also be a religious believer. At the same time, religion never became a private matter as in western European secular societies. In an influential article, the anthropologist Tamara Dragadze (1993) refers to the "domestication" of religion in the Soviet Union. This means that religion was "tamed" and transformed from an institutional adversary to a marginalized part of the social landscape but also that it retreated to

the household. A loss of formal religious knowledge and feminization of religious expertise (p. 237) often went along with this, as women transmitted religious practices in the home that were frowned upon in public. Stories of members of Communist youth organizations who took off their baptismal crosses on the way to school and put on red scarfs instead have caused some scholars to interpret Soviet secularization as a mere veneer that people put on in public in order to retain their true religious selves in private (Froese 2008). But this view ignores the deeper changes as the Soviet Union came of age, leaving neither public nor private lives untouched.

# Secular Living

As in the prewar decades, regulating religious institutions was only one side of Soviet atheist policy. The other involved propagating what was known as a "scientific world view." The League of the Militant Godless, disbanded in 1943, was never replaced with another organization whose sole mandate was atheist propaganda. Rather, the Knowledge Society (full original name: Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge) was founded in 1947 as an association of intellectuals who took it upon themselves to lecture for public audiences in enterprises and houses of culture. Topics covered by Knowledge Society lectures ranged from explication of the latest Communist Party decisions to classical Russian literature and new discoveries of Soviet science. Atheist lecturers were part of the natural science division, and atheist topics were often covered as part of astronomy (the origin of the universe and Soviet space exploration), biology (human evolution), or chemistry (demonstrations of experiments that gave scientific explanations for popular miracles such as the sudden brightening of the colors of an icon). Trying to differentiate themselves from crude anticlericalism, atheist theorists advised lecturers to avoid direct polemics against religious narratives and instead present the superiority of science in a way that would gradually make reliance on divine intervention obsolete (Frogatt 2006; Luehrmann 2011; Smolkin-Rothrock 2011).

But Soviet theorists also realized that religion and atheism were not simply rival explanatory schemes that could be the subject of intellectual debate. Their vision of a secular society hinged on the combined effect of intellectual insight and new social environments to produce changed behaviors and relationships. A budding empirical sociology looked to the newly emerging cities and collective farm villages as places where new family, gender, and interethnic relationships should evolve. They focused on what they saw as signs for a new Soviet social formation and often explained its emergence in part by the recession of religious beliefs.

Among village studies, the work of a team of ethnographers who worked in the collectivized village of Viriatino in central Russia in the mid-1950s set the tone (Kushner [1958] 1970). In order to demonstrate the social consequences of mechanization, collectivization, and the drive to bring cultural and educational institutions to the village, the researchers investigated family relationships. They found that the authority of the father persisted but was modified within the many households that were headed within women

in the aftermath of World War II. They also observed subtle changes in intergenerational hierarchies, where elders no longer took precedence over younger family members but reserved cash income for the needs of the latter. The new amenities of Soviet life, such as store-bought clothes and dances or film (p. 238) screenings in the village house of culture, were considered to be the prerogative of younger generations. The Soviet slogan “the best things to the children” (*vse luchshee—detiam*) was frequently quoted by the villagers to characterize the new times. The oral history research of historian David Ransel (2000) shows that this new public role of children went along with the weakening of ritual precautions against showing young children and infants to people outside one’s own household. The availability of medical facilities and education were one factor in causing this change to a more secular view of childhood, but changing possibilities of consumption were also involved: as babies became presentable in store-bought clothes and strollers, fears about exposing them to the evil eye or demonic influences by taking them on social visits receded.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the urbanizing trends that had started under Stalin continued at a faster pace. Soviet city plans organized space around factories with a vision of rational needs that included produce shops, schools, parks, and medical facilities but not houses of worship (DeHaan 2013). Life in such cities did not necessarily preclude religious practices, but it assigned them a marginal space outside of the public eye. Official Soviet publications emphasized the growth and deepening of interethnic ties in the new cities as a crucial indicator of progress toward the building of a secular communist society. The questions “Does the nationality of your coworkers matter to you?” or “Would you object if your son/daughter married a member of another nationality?” were standard parts of sociological questionnaires, and Soviet respondents were usually well aware that the ideologically correct answer was “no” (Dragadze 2011). Sociologists from the Institute of Scientific Atheism at the Academy of Social Sciences in Moscow, who started to conduct mass surveys of the population in the late 1960s, argued that religious belief was more likely to make people uphold ethnic boundaries. A series of studies conducted in the Mari Autonomous Republic in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, found that atheists were more likely to answer “no” to both questions than religious believers. The rate of affirmative responses was highest among Tatars, an ethnic minority in the republic, who also had higher rates of self-reported religious belief than either the population of the Mari republic in general or the Tatars in their own autonomous republic. Sociologist Viktor Solov’ev speculated that there was a complicated interaction between the historical experience of being an ethnic minority and the need to maintain ethnic traditions and religious boundaries (Luehrmann 2012).

Soviet scholars struggled to understand the changes in their society and could not always be honest about the extent of religious persistence under socialism (Smolkin-Rothrock 2014a). But to focus instead on the resistance of religious believers to Soviet socialism would mean overlooking the real social changes and the population’s investment in the promises of its government. Due to the effects of Soviet campaigns against religious institutions, members of postwar generations often grew up without significant exposure to religious ritual or buildings or contact with religious specialists. Religion was reduced to

quick and furtive prayers said by a grandmother or coloring eggs at Easter (Raleigh 2012: 42–44). In his study of late Soviet youth in the closed Ukrainian city of Dnepropetrovsk, Sergei Zhuk (2010) finds that exposure to religion happened through the mantle of culture and national history. Field trips to historic cities and musical performances exposed youth to religious themes that had to be explained within the framework of Soviet society. For this generation, encounters with religiosity were often a rediscovery rather than an unselfconscious continuation of tradition.

As happened in China, where the one-child policy may have done more to change practices of ancestor worship than Maoists campaigns against religious superstition (Goossaert (p. 239) and Palmer 2011: 238), Soviet secularization often progressed through indirect effects of industrialization and elimination of religious institutions from everyday life, rather than through the persuasive power of atheist propaganda. This also means that studies of Soviet secularism have to look beyond issues of state governance of religious affairs and changing forms of popular religiosity. Rather, they should include new understandings of community, humanness, health, and kinship that emerged during the attempt to build a multiethnic, industrialized society whose solidarity was grounded in this-worldly expectations of the fruits of human physical and intellectual labor.

# Post-Soviet Developments

Depending on how seriously one takes Soviet-era secularization, interpretations of post-Soviet religious dynamics differ. For scholars who see the success of state secularizing campaigns as superficial at best, the growth of self-reported religiosity and observable participation in religious rites after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is a resurfacing of tendencies that were hidden during the preceding decades. For example, Viktor Yelensky (2012) speaks of a “revival before the revival” that involved a gradual weakening of ideological restrictions on religious practice during the 1970s, preparing a generation of educated believers who were ready to take the lead in the 1990s. Paul Froese (2008) likewise emphasizes the resistance of the Soviet population to attempts to promote atheism and characterizes the post-Soviet religious scene as one in which the ideological monopoly of the state and of the Orthodox Church have both been destabilized. Inspired by theories of the religious marketplace developed by the American sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1992), Froese claims that the “Soviet experiment” shows that people will give preference to free choices between a variety of competing religious groups, and religious or ideological monopolies can only be temporarily imposed from above.

Critics have pointed out that this model ignores the historical specificity of ways of ordering political and ideological loyalties, not all of which tend toward the US model of voluntaristic religiosity (David-Fox 2011b). Most scholars approach post-Soviet developments with a more nuanced curiosity about the way in which Soviet subjectivities encountered political, economic, and philosophical transformations (Rogers 2005). In light of their analyses, the shift in the Brezhnev era appears to be more toward a greater interest in prerevolutionary and non-Marxist cultural heritage and philosophical orientations, includ-

ing, but not limited to, religious traditions and architectural monuments (Garrard and Garrard 2008; Kelly 2014). The celebration of the millennium of the Christianization of Kievan Rus' in 1988, sponsored by the Soviet state as well as the Russian Orthodox Church, was an important turning point that refocused such searches into a more straightforwardly "religious" direction in Orthodox-majority republics. In other parts of the Soviet Union, autonomy and independence movements emphasizing national distinctiveness contributed to bringing religion back into the public sphere (Hann and Pelkmans 2009; Pelkmans 2006).

In terms of numbers, percentages of self-reported religiosity have grown since 1991 and those of self-reported atheism have shrunk but remained significant. To take the example of Russia, 42 percent of the population claimed to be atheists and unbelievers in 1991. In (p. 240) 2004 it was just 20 percent, but the latter number has remained constant in more recent surveys (Furman and Kaarianainen 2006: 48; Levada Center 2015: 252). The same surveys show that over 70 percent of Russia's population consider themselves Russian Orthodox, but rates of participation in church ritual or even expressed belief in God are lower. Such a trend for people to identify with the religion historically associated with their ethnic group exists for Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Buddhists, and Lutherans as well (Filatov and Lunkin 2006). Analysts often treat such an ethnicization of religion as a consequence of the Soviet period, when religious practice was repressed, while cultural policy fostered ethnic identities (Balzer 1999; Goluboff 2003; Khalid 2007; Luehrmann 2005; Pelkmans 2006). However, attempts to explain religious diversity in terms of ethnolinguistic differences were characteristic of the Russian Empire as well and may reflect ways of thinking about religious and communal boundaries that go back further than socialism (Werth 2014).

As a strategy of governance, this equation between religion and ethnicity often translates into the attempt to distinguish between religions that are "traditional" to a particular region or country and are thought to have contributed positively to the moral development of the population and "foreign" or proselytizing religions that have only limited claims to state recognition and protection. Russia's 1997 law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, for example, requires that a denomination be present in a region for fifteen years in order to enjoy the full legal and tax status of a religious organization. Comparable distinctions between traditional and nontraditional religions exist in Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Latvia, among other countries (Fagan 2013: 66–68; Curanovic 2013; Ozolins 2013). Groups deemed nontraditional may still gather for worship but often face restrictions when acquiring or renting worship space, sponsoring visitors or missionaries from other countries, and establishing educational institutions. Many state and regional governments also maintain advisory councils on which only members of those religious groups recognized as traditional or indigenous are allowed to sit.

The main thrust of such laws and regulations is often against competition that might come to the established religious groups from transnational versions of the same religion. In Christian and to some extent Muslim regions, the main adversary is evangelical Protestantism; in Muslim regions emphasis is placed on the danger presented by Salafi schools

of Islam, which official pronouncements associate with Saudi and Turkish missionaries, although groups of post-Soviet Muslims have come to embrace them and spread them on their own initiative (Zanca 2005; McBrien and Pelkmans 2008; Hilgers 2009). Part of the reason more “orthodox” and scripture-based schools are gaining popularity among adherents of Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism are the socialist legacies of increased levels of education and challenges to traditional religious authority. With traditional religious elites destroyed and lay believers both able and forced to seek religious knowledge through books, more literalist and rule-focused interpretations can easily gain ground (Bernstein 2013; Khalid 2007).

Ukraine, with its history of denominational diversity within Christianity, is an exception in this regard. The conflicting claims of two different Orthodox churches (one loyal to Moscow, the other claiming the status of an autocephalous church) and the Greek Catholic or Uniate church (following the Eastern rite but recognizing the authority of the Pope in Rome) make it difficult to base state policy on preference for traditional religion (Naumescu 2007; Wanner 2007). This leads to a legislative and administrative climate that is kinder to new religious movements and various branches of Protestant Christianity, for whom (p. 241) Ukraine has become an important center that sends missionaries to the rest of the post-Soviet world (Wanner 2009).

One could thus say that post-Soviet government has moved from a stance that sees all religion as harmful and destructive to social life to one that differentiates between “good” religions that are useful partners in cooperation and help to promote particular moral visions and “bad” religions (often glossed as “fanatical”) that create social strive, promote violence, and endanger public health (Panchenko 2011; Pelkmans 2014). In the words of the anthropologists Chris Hann and Mathijs Pelkmans (2009: 1519), “state policies toward religion have shifted from disregard and hostility toward intensified co-option.” As elsewhere in the world, gender norms of dress and comportment are important symbolic battlefields, but so are ideas of public health and moral economy. The postsocialist world has had a number of headscarf affairs (Ghodsee 2010; McBrien 2009), while religious organizations as well as governments point to family values, support for citizens in economic need, and the treatment of addiction and HIV/AIDS as potential fields of collaboration (Caldwell 2012; Wanner 2007; Zigon 2011a).

Despite the headlines made by the revivalist religiosities, no post-Soviet state has returned to an established state religion as it existed in the Russian Empire before the revolution. All societies remain pluralistic in the sense of harboring people with atheist as well as diverse religious orientations. In the Volga region, religious as well as nonreligious citizens often point to the multiethnic population as a reason no one religion should be given predominance, and similar views of the state as an arbiter that should be above ethnic or religious divisions can be found in other regions of the post-Soviet territory (Fagan 2013; Knox 2008; McBrien and Pelkmans 2008). The long dispute provoked by the proposal to teach Russian Orthodox culture in Russian public schools brought out many concerns about the appropriateness of particularistic religious and philosophical traditions in state schools (Papkova 2011). The end result was the introduction of a group of subjects called

"Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics" in 2010. In theory, students or their parents are supposed to choose between various religious and nonreligious modules; research on the implementation of the law shows that often a school as a whole decides to offer one or two particular subjects based on the availability of teachers and local demographics (Willems 2012; Suleymanova 2013). Voices calling for Russia to be a secular state that restricts religious interests from public influence are well-represented in this dispute, as well as in debates about art and public expression provoked by a series of blasphemy trials and the protest staged by the punk-rock band Pussy Riot in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior in February 2012 (Bernstein 2014).

In many respects, these conflicts are similar to those in the secularized, postwelfare state societies of western Europe. However, comparative research points to different generational distributions of belief and unbelief in former socialist countries, where younger age cohorts tend to have higher percentages of religious believers than middle-aged compatriots whose education fell in the years of developed socialism (Gärtner et al. 2003). The deep-seated faith in science and the universal requirement to study Marxist philosophy in postsecondary education has bred a particular kind of amalgamation of religious and scientific ideas that blurs the boundaries between "secular" and "religious" modes of explanation: archaeologists, for example, may speak of the energy fields emanating from archaeological sites, and Christian and Buddhist pilgrims debate the chemical properties of sacred springs and saintly bodies (Antonyan and Siekierski 2013; Kormina 2004; Quijada 2012). (p. 242) Whereas the separationist secularism of liberal democracies is often grounded in a distinction between a "spiritual" view of things, appropriate for the religious sphere, and a "materialistic" view appropriate for the sphere of secular politics, this distinction is blurred in post-Soviet discourse.

# The Post-Soviet Condition

A comparative view of the modes of secularism and religious change created by socialist regimes in eastern Europe and Asia is still underdeveloped and could contribute much to our understanding of specifically socialist and postsocialist dynamics (Goossaert and Palmer 2011; Ngo and Quijada 2015; Yang 2008).

Remaining within the former Soviet world and eastern Europe, a challenge is to move away from public disputes over the place of religion and grasp secular ways of life empirically. Scholars have spoken of "doubt" (McBrien 2013), "moral breakdown" (Zigon 2011b), or "patriotism of despair" (Oushakine 2009) to characterize a general disengagement from positive communal identifications among a generation that has seen a whole ideological project collapse around it. Such skepticism encompasses views toward religion but is broader, characterizing a situation in which otherworldly as well as this-worldly sources of support have become uncertain. While states try to identify those religious forces that can help consolidate new orders, questions for research may be how existential uncertainty manifests itself in ways that bridge "the secular" and "the religious." Sites to study this question empirically can include mundane magical practices (Lindquist

2006); ideas about natural medicine, food, and healing that combine chemical properties with relational and spiritual ones (Caldwell 2011); businessmen who often show few qualms about violating religious prescriptions but use donations to religious institutions as “insurance” (Köllner 2011); or attempts to maintain and reconstitute kinship and social networks under conditions of violence, economic upheaval, and displacement (Raubisko 2011).

If Soviet atheism substituted a secure and positively defined human community for the nonhuman patrons and helpers whose existence it denied, the secular world has itself become unstable and unpredictable for post-Soviet citizens. As the optimistic community of the Soviet secular order recedes to historic graveyards, a question provoked by its legacy is whether there can be a secular orientation toward existential insecurity.

## Bibliography

Altshuler, Mordechai. 2012. *Religion and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union, 1941–1964*. Translated by Saadya Sternberg. Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press.

Antonyan, Yulia, and Konrad Siekierski. 2013. “A Neopagan Movement in Armenia: The Children of Ara.” In *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson, 266–283. London: Acumen.

Balzer, Marjorie Mandelstam. 1999. *The Tenacity of Ethnicity: A Siberian Saga in Global Perspective*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 243) Baran, Emily. 2014. *Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehovah’s Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach About It.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Berdyaev, Nicholas. 1932. *The Russian Revolution: Two Essays on its Implications in Religion and Psychology.* London: Sheed & Ward.

Bernstein, Anya. 2013. *Religious Bodies Politic: Rituals of Sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernstein, Anya. 2014. “Caution, Religion! Iconoclasm, Secularism, and Ways of Seeing in Post-Soviet Art Wars.” *Public Culture* 26(3), 419–448.

Caldwell, Melissa. 2011. *Dacha Idylls: Living Organically in Russia’s Countryside.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Caldwell, Melissa. 2012. “Placing Faith in Development: How Moscow’s Religious Communities Contribute to a More Civil Society.” *Slavic Review* 71(2), 261–287.

Chumachenko, Tatiana A. 2002. *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years.* Edited and translated by Edward E. Roslof. Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe.

Clark, Katerina. 1995. *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, Heather. 2005. *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905–1929.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Curanovic, Alicja. 2013. "The Post-Soviet Religious Model: Reflections on Relations between the State and Religious Institutions in the CIS Area." *Religion, State and Society* 41(3), 330–351.

David-Fox, Michael. 2011a. "Opiate of the Intellectuals? Pilgrims, Partisans, and Political Tourists." *Kritika* 12(3), 721–738.

David-Fox, Michael. 2011b. "Religion, Science and Political Religion in the Soviet Context." *Modern Intellectual History* 8(2), 471–484.

DeHaan, Heather. 2013. *Stalinist City Planning: Professionals, Performance, and Power.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Dobson, Miriam. 2015. "The Social Scientist Meets the 'Believer': Discussions of God, the Afterlife, and Communism in the mid-1960s." *Slavic Review* 74(1), 79–103.

Dragadze, Tamara. 1993. "The Domestication of Religion under Soviet Communism." In *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies, and Local Practice*, edited by C. M. Hann, 148–156. London and New York: Routledge.

Dragadze, Tamara. 2011. "Soviet Ethnography: Structure and Sentiment." In *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia,* edited by Florian Mühlfried and Sergey Sokolovskiy, 21–34. Münster, Germany: Lit.

Engels, Friedrich. 1902. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Translated from the 1884 German edition by Ernest Untermann. Chicago: C. H. Kerr.

Fagan, Geraldine. 2013. *Believing in Russia: Religious Policy after Communism.* London and New York: Routledge.

Filatov, Sergei, and Roman Lunkin. 2006. "Statistics on Religion in Russia: The Reality behind the Figures." *Religion, State and Society* 34(1), 33–49.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America, 1776–1990.* New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. 1970. *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Frede, Victoria. 2011. *Doubt, Atheism, and the Nineteenth-Century Intelligentsia.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

(p. 244) Freeze, Gregory. 2012. “Subversive Atheism: Soviet Antireligious Campaigns and the Religious Revival in Ukraine in the 1920s.” In *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, edited by Catherine Wanner, 27–62. New York: Oxford University Press.

Froese, Paul. 2008. *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Frogatt, Michael. 2006. “Renouncing Dogma, Teaching Utopia: Science in Schools under Khrushchev.” In *The Dilemmas of Destalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Polly Jones, 250–266. London and New York: Routledge.

Furman, Dmitrii, and Kimmo Kaariainen. 2006. *Religioznost’ v Rossii v 90e gogy XX – nachale XXI veka.* Moscow: OGNI TD.

Garrard, John, and Carol Garrard. 2008. *Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent: Faith and Power in the New Russia.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Gärtner, Christel, Detlef Pollack, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (eds.). 2003. *Atheismus und Religiöse Indifferenz.* Leverkusen, Germany: Leske + Budrich.

Ghodsee, Kristen. 2010. *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Goluboff, Sascha. 2003. *Jewish Russians: Upheavals in a Moscow Synagogue.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goossaert, Vincent, and David A. Palmer. 2011. *The Religious Question in Modern China.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gorsuch, Anne. 2000. *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Grant, Bruce. 1995. *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Gurian, Waldemar. 1952. “Totalitarian Religions.” *Review of Politics* 14(1), 3–14.

Halfin, Igal. 2009. *Stalinist Confessions: Messianism and Terror at Leningrad Communist University*. Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Hann, Chris, and Mathijs Pelkmans. 2009. “Realigning Religion and Power in Central Asia: Islam, Nation State, and Post-Socialism.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61(9), 1517–1541.

Hilgers, Irene. 2009. *Why Do Uzbeks Have to Be Muslim? Exploring Religiosity in the Ferghana Valley.* Berlin: Lit.

Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Hosking, Geoffrey. 2010. “The Russian Orthodox Church and Secularisation.” In *Religion and the Political Imagination*, edited by Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, 112–131. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Huhn, Ulrike. 2014. *Glaube und Eigensinn: Volksfrömmigkeit zwischen orthodoxer Kirche und sowjetischem Staat, 1941 bis 1960*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz.

Humphrey, Caroline. 1998. *Marx Went Away, But Karl Stayed Behind*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Husband, William. 2000. *“Godless Communists”: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Izmozik, Vladlen S., and Nataliia B. Lebina. 2010. *Peterburg sovetskii: “novyi” chelovek v starom prostranstve, 1920–1930e Gody*. St. Petersburg, Russia: Kriga.

Kamp, Marianne. 2006. *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

(p. 245) Kelly, Catriona. 2014. “From Counter-Revolutionary Monuments to National Heritage: The Preservation of Leningrad Churches, 1964–1982.” *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 54(1–2), 131–164.

Kenworthy, Scott. 2012. “The Revival of Monastic Life in the Trinity-Sergius Lavra after World War II.” In *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, edited by Catherine Wanner, 117–158. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khalid, Adeeb. 2007. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Knox, Zoe. 2008. “Religious Freedom in Russia.” In *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*, edited by Mark Steinberg and Catherine Wanner, 281–314. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Köllner, Tobias. 2011. *Practising Without Belonging? Entrepreneurship, Morality, and Religion in Contemporary Russia*. Berlin: Lit.

Kolymagin, Boris. 2004. *Krymskaia ekumena: Religioznaia zhizn’ poslevoennogo Kryma*. St. Petersburg, Russia: Aleteiia.

Kormina, Jeanne. 2004. “Pilgrims, Priest and Local Religion in Contemporary Russia: Contested Religious Discourses.” *Folklore* 28, 26–40.

Kushner, I. P. 1970. *The Village of Viriatino: An Ethnographic Study of a Russian Village from the Revolution to the Present*. Edited and translated from the 1958 Russian edition by Sula Benet. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

Lane, Christel. 1981. *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society—The Soviet Case*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Levada Center. 2015. *Obshchestvennoe mnenie–2014: ezhegodnik.* Moscow: Analitich-eskii tsentr Iuriia Levady.

Lindquist, Galina. 2006. *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia.* New York: Berghahn.

Luehrmann, Sonja. 2005. "Recycling Cultural Construction: Desecularisation in Postsoviet Mari El." *Religion, State and Society* 33(1), 35–56.

Luehrmann, Sonja. 2011. *Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Luehrmann, Sonja. 2012. "A Multi-Religious Region in an Atheist State: Union-Wide Policies Meet Communal Distinctions in the Postwar Mari Republic." In *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, edited by Catherine Wanner, 272–301. New York: Oxford University Press.

Luehrmann, Sonja. 2015a. *Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luehrmann, Sonja. 2015b. "Was Soviet Society Secular? Undoing Equations between Communism and Religion." In *Atheist Secularism and Its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia*, edited by Tam Ngo and Justine Quijada, 134–151. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave-MacMillan.

Martin, Terry. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

McBrien, Julie. 2009. "Mukadas's Struggle: Veils and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(Suppl. 1), 127–144.

McBrien, Julie. 2013. "Afterword: In the Aftermath of Doubt." In *Ethnographies of Doubt: Faith and Uncertainty in Contemporary Societies*, edited by Mathijs Pelkmans, 251–268. London: I. B. Tauris.

(p. 246) McBrien, Julie, and Mathijs Pelkmans. 2008. "Turning Marx on His Head: Missionaries, 'Extremists,' and Archaic Secularists in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan." *Critique of Anthropology* 28(1), 87–103.

Ngo, Tam Thi, and Justine Quijada (eds.). 2015. *Atheist Secularism and Its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia*. Basingtoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Northrop, Douglas. 2004. *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Oushakine, Serguei. 2009. *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Ozolins, Gatis. 2013. “The Dievturi Movement in Latvia as Invention of Tradition.” In *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson, 94–111. London: Acumen.

Paert, Irina. 2004. “Demystifying the Heavens: Women, Religion, and Khrushchev’s Anti-Religious Campaign, 1954–64.” In *Women in the Khrushchev Era*, edited by Melanie Ilič, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, 203–221. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Panchenko, Alexander. 2011. “Morality, Utopia, Discipline: New Religious Movements and Soviet Culture.” In *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, edited by Jarrett Zigon, 119–145. New York: Berghahn.

Papkova, Irina. 2011. *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pelkmans, Mathijs. 2006. *Defending the Border: Identity, Religion, and Modernity in the Republic of Georgia.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Pelkmans, Mathijs. 2014. “Paradoxes of Religious Freedom and Repression in (Post-)Soviet Contexts.” *Journal of Law and Religion* 29(3), 436–446.

Peris, Daniel. 1998. *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Peris, Daniel. 2000. “God Is Now on Our Side: The Religious Revival on Unoccupied Soviet Territory during World War II.” *Kritika* 1(1), 97–118.

Petrone, Karen. 2000. *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades: Celebrations in the Time of Stalin.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Pospielovsky, Dimitry V. 1987. *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies.* New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Quijada, Justine Buck. 2012. “Soviet Science and Post-Soviet Faith: Etigelov’s Imperishable Body.” *American Ethnologist* 39(1), 138–155.

Raubisko, Ieva. 2011. “A Lot of Blood Is Unrevenged Here: Moral Disintegration in Post-War Chechnya.” In *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, edited by Jarrett Zigon, 92–118. New York: Berghahn.

Raleigh, Donald. 2012. *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia’s Cold War Generation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ransel, David. 2000. *Village Mothers: Three Generations of Change in Russia and Tataria.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Rock, Stella. 2012. “They Burned the Pine, But the Place Remains All the Same: Pilgrimage in the Changing Landscape of Soviet Russia.” In *State Secularism and Lived Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, edited by Catherine Wanner, 159–189. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rogers, Douglas. 2005. “Introductory Essay: The Anthropology of Religion after Socialism.” *Religion, State and Society* 33(1), 5–18.

(p. 247) Ro’i, Yaacov. 2000. *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Rolf, Malte. 2006. *Das sowjetische Massenfest.* Hamburg, Germany: Hamburger Edition.

Roslof, Edward. 2002. *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905–1946.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Shkarovskii, Mikhail. 2005. *Tserkov’ zovet k zashchite rodiny: Religioznaia zhizn’ Leningrada i severo-zapada Rossii v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny*. St. Petersburg, Russia: Satis.

Slezkine, Yuri. 1994. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Slezkine, Yuri. 2004. *The Jewish Century*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2011. “Cosmic Enlightenment: Scientific Atheism and the Soviet Conquest of Space.” In *Into the Cosmos: Space Exploration and Soviet Culture*, edited by James Andrews and Assif Sidiqi, 159–194. Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014a. “The Confession of an Atheist Who Became a Scholar of Religion: Nikolai Semenovich Gordienko’s Last Interview.” *Kritika* 15 (3), 596–620.

Smolkin-Rothrock, Victoria. 2014b. “The Ticket to the Soviet Soul: Science, Religion, and the Spiritual Crisis of Late Soviet Atheism.” *Russian Review* 73(2), 171–197.

Stone, Andrew B. 2008. “Overcoming Peasant Backwardness: The Khrushchev Antireligious Campaign and the Rural Soviet Union.” *Russian Review* 67(2), 296–320.

Suleymanova, Dilyara. 2013. “Education between Religion and Secularism: The Case of Post-Soviet Tatarstan.” Paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, New York, 18–20 April.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tumarkin, Nina. 1983. *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tumarkin, Nina. 1994. *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: Basic Books.

Voegelin, Eric. 1989. “The Political Religions.” In *Modernity without Restraint*, edited by Manfred Henningsen, 19–73. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. (Original work published 1938)

Wanner, Catherine. 2007. *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Wanner, Catherine. 2009. “Conversion and the Mobile Self: Evangelicalism as ‘Traveling Culture.’” In *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith*, edited by Mathijs Pelkmans, 163–182. New York: Berghahn.

Werth, Paul. 2014. *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in the Russian Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Willems, Joachim. 2012. “Foundations of Orthodox Culture in Russia: Confessional or Non-Confessional Religious Education?” *European Education* 44(2), 23–43.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Uta Karstein, and Thomas Schmidt-Lux. 2009. *Forcierte Säkularität: Religiöser Wandel und Generationendynamik im Osten Deutschlands.* Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Campus Verlag.

Wynot, Jennifer. 2004. *Keeping the Faith: Russian Orthodox Monasticism in the Soviet Union, 1917–1939*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

Yang, Mayfair (ed.). 2008. *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yelensky, Viktor. 2012. “The Revival before the Revival: Popular and Institutionalized Religion in Ukraine on the Eve of the Collapse of Communism.” In *State Secularism and Lived* *(p. 248)* *Religion in Soviet Russia and Ukraine,* edited by Catherine Wanner, 302–330. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zanca, Russell. 2005. “Believing in God at Your Own Risk: Religion and Terrorisms in Uzbekistan.” *Religion, State and Society* 33(1), 71–82.

Zhuk, Sergei. 2010. *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960–1985*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Zigon, Jarrett. 2011a. *HIV Is God’s Blessing: Rehabilitating Morality in Neoliberal Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zigon, Jarrett. 2011b. “Multiple Moralities: Discourses, Practices, and Breakdowns in Post-Soviet Russia.” In *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, edited by Jarrett Zigon, 3–15. New York: Berghahn.

**Sonja Luehrmann**

Sonja Luehrmann is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. She has published two books on Soviet atheism and its effects on post-Soviet religion and historical memory: ecularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic and Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge.

# Sacred, Secular, and Neosacred Governments in China and Taiwan

Cheng-tian Kuo

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society, Religion and Politics
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.16

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores a puzzle in comparative religion–state relations: both the atheist Chinese communist government and the democratic Taiwanese government have substantially restored the traditional, pluralistic, religious state of Chinese dynasties. After 1949, the Chinese government and the Taiwanese government developed different types of religion–state relations. The Chinese Communist government initially aimed to eliminate all religions but lost its religious legitimacy. After 1979, it swiftly established a Leninist religious state that would regain its religious legitimacy but maintain its dominance over all other religions. Similarly, the Taiwanese government started with a quasi-Leninist state to keep religions at arm's-length. But after the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Taiwanese government gradually developed a democratic religious state by which religious freedom and equality are maximized. Both the Chinese government and the Taiwanese government developed neosacred states with differential impacts on religious freedom and equality.

Keywords: China, Taiwan, government, religion, neurotheology

IN the past thirty years, the Chinese people have become more religious. In this atheist country, about 85 percent of the population practice various kinds of religious behaviors with some regularity (World Values Surveys 2005, 2010; Yao and Badham 2007). The number of registered believers, religious organizations, and clergy continue to increase at a rapid pace. Even among the "five venoms" (*wudu*) on the Chinese leadership's top political agenda (the Xingjian independence movement, Tibetan independence movement, Falungong, Taiwan independence movement, and democratic movement),[1] the first three political movements are visibly embedded in religion. To accommodate the political needs of legitimation and control, the Chinese state is equipped with an institutional triad of the United Fronts Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), and five state-sponsored peak religious associations (Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Christianity, and Islam) to deal with every aspect of religious life. In coordination with the military, the paramilitary and the police, the Chinese

state has been constantly criticized by the US State Department and other international human right organizations for its violations of religious freedom.

About the same time, the Taiwanese people have grown even more religious than their Chinese counterparts. About 90 percent of Taiwanese people worship at least one deity with some regularity (Tsai 2013). Not including the ancestral altars in most households, there are more than 20,000 temples, shrines, churches, and mosques in this country of 23 million people. The Taiwanese government is equipped only with a small Religion Division within the Bureau of Civil Affairs, under the Ministry of the Interior, to provide financial and legal assistance to religious activities. The US State Department's annual reports on Taiwan's religious freedom have nothing but praises for its congenial legal and cultural environments.

The Chinese communist government and the Taiwanese government have been brothers in a feud since 1949 when the government of the Republic of China, led by Kuomingtang (KMT; the Nationalist Party), was defeated by the CCP and fled from mainland China to Taiwan.[2] Given their common inheritance from traditional Chinese culture, both their similarity in the restoration of a religious state and their difference in religious freedom is (p. 250) a puzzle to the secularization thesis. Why do they restore the traditional religious state in the process of modernization? How do they keep religion from dominating the state as in those religious states in the Islamic world? Why does the Chinese religious state continue to restrict religious freedom while the Taiwanese religious state receives constant praise for its relentless enhancement of religious freedom and equality?

# Neurotheology and Religion–State Relations

Neurotheology is an emerging discipline that consists mainly of biologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, sociologists, and religious scholars who share an interest in the relationships between the human brain and religious behaviors.[3] The religious background of major proponents of neurotheology ranges from devoted religious believers and lukewarm believers of different religions to atheists. Although the path-breaking work of neurotheology, *Phantoms in the Brain*, was published as recently as 1998, numerous books and academic articles have prevented any scholar from doing a comprehensive survey of the literature. Social scientists can no longer ignore the significant impact of neurotheology on the basic assumptions and theories of social sciences.

Although still under construction, neurotheology generates five preliminary conclusions impacting current theories of religion-state relations. First, although the "God Spot," "God Gene," or "God Part of the Brain" has not been found, scientific evidence reveals that different parts of human brain work together to produce religious behaviors. Second, most humans acquire religious information early in their life and this information becomes part of their long-lasting mental "modules" to deal with their social life. Third, these religious modules seem to rank high in the mental hierarchy in initiating emotional and rational responses to environmental stimuli. That is, they mold, strengthen, redirect, or override emotional and rational responses. Fourth, whether a religious person is vio-

lent or peaceful is dependent upon the nature of a particular contextual theology that this person embraces. Finally, the current scientific evidence of neurotheology neither supports nor refutes the existence of deities.

Based on these neurotheological conclusions, this chapter generates five arguments that cogently explain the evolution of religion–state relations in China and Taiwan. First, the temporary secularization in modernizing societies after World War II was replaced by desecularization and growing interest in spiritual matters (Berger 1999; Norris 2004). Second, political leaders always find it useful or necessary to solicit support from major religious groups for their religious legitimacy (Billings 1994). Third, if the major religious groups refuse to bestow legitimacy to them, or when religious groups are politically divided, political leaders may promote an existing religious group or create a new religion in order to consolidate their power. Fourth, the specific form of the state-sponsored religion(s) varies according to the idiosyncratic cultural, historical, religious, and political contexts of the country. It may be a theocracy, a state religion, pluralistic state religions, a statism of religious character, or mixtures of these religion–state relations. Finally, the creation, maintenance, and consolidation of democracy all require the active participation of democratic religions.

(p. 251) Examples of these religion–state relations are abundant. Brubaker (2011) argues that the rise of modern states was intertwined with religion. Lutheranism and Calvinism found favor in the eyes of the feudal lords in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, England, and Prussia who struggled for political independence from Vatican. John Locke ([1690] 1952) provided a religious justification for “divine” human rights to challenge the Hobbesian religious/political Leviathan (Hobbes [1651] 1955). American colonists embraced John Locke’s conception of “divine” human rights and established the first Christian democracy in the world (de Tocqueville 1969). Deist Napoleon Bonaparte started the modern secular-state project by first occupying Rome in 1798, then subjugating the French Catholic Church to his *étatisme* cult via the Concordat of 1801 and imprisoning Pope Pius VII during 1809–1814 (Rose 1907). The Meiji Restoration of the Japanese imperial house literally created a new state religion (State Shinto) out of the obscure folk religion of Shinto (Hardacre 1989). Even the postcommunist Russian regimes found it vital to restore the Orthodox Church in order to provide a religious legitimacy for their neo-Slavic ambition (Knox 2005). Both the Chinese and Taiwanese governments are likely to maintain close religion–state relations as well, although their styles may differ due to differences in political regimes and democratic religions.

# The Religious State in Chinese Dynasties

The Chinese popular mythology about Emperor Yu (around 2100 BCE), the last emperor before Chinese recorded history began, laid a solid foundation to the religious state in China for the next four thousand years (Ding 2011: 219). Yu’s father, Gwun, was a hydraulic official of Emperor Shun whose political constituencies were in the mountain area in northern China. The Yellow River flooded frequently, and Gwun was summoned to con-

tain the flood. He failed and was executed by Emperor Shun. Yu was then summoned to finish Gwun's job or die. Instead of exclusively relying on the political support of the mountain people as Gwun did, Yu solicited political support from the riverbank people who would be direct victims if the hydraulic project failed. How did Yu solicit a persistent commitment to this national project from the riverbank people? He allocated to tribal leaders religious and administrative leadership functions related to the hydraulic project. This institutional design turned out to be the key to Yu's success in mobilizing local support to contain the flood and build a nationwide irrigation system. After the successful completion of the hydraulic project, Yu replaced Shun as the emperor and has been worshipped by the Chinese as the Water God since. Across nine provinces in north and east China, there are still thousands of Yu Temples along the riverbanks of the Yellow River and the Yangzi River (Lu 2002: 270–284).

The first recorded history of Shang dynasty (c. 1766–1122 BCE) in *Liji* (Book of Rites) and *Shijing* (Book of Songs) described the annual exorbitant religious rituals conducted by the emperors and public officials (Zhang 1997). But it was the Zhou dynasty (c. 1122–221 BCE) that built upon Emperor Yu's religious state and bureaucratized the religious state:

> The Son of the Heaven [*tianzi*; the emperor] conducts offerings to the most famous mountains and the largest rivers under the heaven; offerings to five major mountains are the responsibilities of three chancellors; offerings to four major rivers are the responsibilities of feudal lords; and feudal lords also conduct offerings to mountains and rivers within their territories.[4]

(p. 252) In the late Zhou dynasty (776–221 BCE), the country was divided by feudal lords while the emperor served only as a symbolic head. Witnessing constant wars among these feudal lords, intelligentsia began to espouse various political/religious ideologies in order to restore peace. Among them, Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism were the most popular, ascertained by feudal lords who conspired to replace the Zhou royal family.

It has been debated whether Confucianism in its original form was an atheist political ideology or not. Those "neo-Confucian" scholars of the Republican era (1911–1949), like Xiong Shili (1975) and Mo Zongshan (2003), insisted that the prototypical Confucianism was an atheist political ideology, because Confucius urged political leaders to "honor the gods and ghosts but keep a long distance from them," "if you do not know how to serve the people, how can you serve the ghosts," and "pay your attention to the living rather than the dead."[5] Confucius elaborated more extensively on issues of social-political ethics than on religion. He abhorred the extravagant religious rituals adopted by political leaders at a time when the common people were suffering from poverty and war. Particularly, his political ideology promoted a merger of the public sphere with the private sphere by treating the nation as a big family: citizens become the children of their "parental officials," who are in turn children of the patriarch emperor. But Confucius also left with his disciples many teachings about orthodox religious rituals, which were edited into the Book of Rites (*Liji*).

Even if Confucius had intended to secularize the state, as alleged by neo-Confucian scholars, his intention was thwarted when the first emperor of the Western Han dynasty (202–209 BCE) promoted Confucianism as the "state religion," intermingled with Daoism, and applied the syncretistic religion to state administration (Shryock 1932; Kuo 2013: 10–13). Public officials and intellectuals became equally immersed in Confucianism and Daoism. In the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 AD), "official Daoism" attracted many bureaucrats and intelligentsia due to its alchemy of health and spiritual aloofness from daily politics, but it was occasionally entangled in palace politics. "Folk Daoism," however, spread even faster among the populace and was frequently associated with peasant revolutions (Qing 1996).

During the Eastern Han dynasty, Buddhism arrived in China from Tibet. It had difficult first encounters with suspicious Chinese emperors and the coalition of Confucian and Daoist elites, resulting in four major Buddhist persecutions (444–450, 574–578, 842–846, 955 AD), related to succession crises of the royal families. Fortunately, these persecutions lasted for only short periods of time and probably were limited to certain localities in northern China. Buddhism recovered its popularity among common people and intelligentsia soon after the persecuting emperors died. Furthermore, learning a hard lesson, Chinese Buddhism went through what Wright (1959: 42–64) called the "domestication" process and integrated its social/political ethics with Chinese ethics. By the time of Song dynasty (960–1279), Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism had merged (*sanjiao heyi*), particularly after emperor Huizong (1082–1135) promoted the movement of "converting Buddhism into Daoism" (*zhaofo guidao*).

The Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties saw the intensification of state control over religion, and the state remained highly religious. The Ming Code and local gazetteers of the Qing dynasty meticulously regulated temple tax, clergy-officials' behaviors, sacrificial rites, and the number of religious institutions (Brook 1993). But these regulations were mainly directed toward those religious institutions that posed a potential threat to social stability or to the emperors. These regulations tended to be short-lived or ineffective (Brook 1993: 23–24, 27, 30, 33; Yang 1961: 187–199; Qing 1996: 278–291). In the end, the (p. 253) "modernist-secularist" attempts, which had started in the late Qing period, strengthening the state's control over religion might have "actually created 'religion' as a foil and autonomous category" (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 3).

Furthermore, the strong control of the state over religion during the Ming and Qing dynasties did not contribute to the rise of a secular state. On the contrary, various emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties enthusiastically promoted Buddhism and Daoism. Emperor Taizu, who proclaimed the suppressive Ming Code, established the dynasty with critical help from a folk Buddhist sect called White Lotus (*bailianjiao*). After his inauguration, he promoted orthodox Buddhism and Daoism in order to curtail this "rebellious" folk religion with the help of the Ming Code (Zhao 2007; Qing 1996: 265–273). It was also during this dynasty that Islam, Judaism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Catholicism made great inroads into Chinese society. Popular novels written during the Ming dynasty, such as *Journey to the West* (*xiyuji*), *Canonization of the Gods* (*fengshenbang*), and *Outlaws of the Marsh*

(*shuihuzhuan*), became the bibles of many new folk religions that are still popular in contemporary China and Taiwan. The Qing dynasty was less enthusiastic about Islam and Chinese Buddhism. Instead, Qing emperors promoted Tibetan Buddhism to strike a balance against traditional Chinese religions. But folk religions continued to mushroom during the Qing dynasty, while Christianity also found its way into royal courts and society. Most Chinese people had a variety of religions to choose from, and they probably enjoyed as much religious freedom as those who live in modern democracies.

After reviewing the religion–state relations from the Zhou dynasty to the late Qing dynasty, John Lagerwey (2010: 1) challenges the conventional Confucian view that the state had dominated religion. Instead, he argues that "China is a religious state and Chinese society is a religious society." Although we should probably clarify his definition of "religious" in the Chinese pluralistic and syncretistic context, rather than the Western monotheist context, Lagerwey presents Chinese religion–state relations in a far more reciprocal way than the secular state thesis does.

# The Secularization of the State in the Republican Era (1911–1949)

Dr. Sun Yatsen led a revolution to abolish the Qing dynasty and establish the Republic of China. Many intellectuals blamed the failure of the Qing dynasty on the pernicious impacts of traditional Chinese religions on the state and society. Instead, they proposed the transplantation of the Western secular state. The epitome of the secular state was the Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (*jiandu simiao tiaoli*) promulgated in 1929. It contained regulations on registration, religious buildings, artifacts, management, and finance. Local governments frequently expanded these regulations and encroached upon the property and management of local religious organizations (Kuo 2013: 13–15).

However, the Republican state's experiment with a secular state was limited and short-lived. Without religious legitimacy, the secular state fell into near anarchy immediately after its establishment. Warlords controlled different areas of China and held various attitudes toward religion. Official Daoism declined but folk Daoism expanded rapidly (Qing 2007 (p. 254) : 237–543). Traditional Buddhism revived under the leadership of Ven. Taixu and Ven. Yinshuen via the modernized Humanistic Buddhism (*renjian fojiao*) (Shi 1974: 277–358; Welch 1967). In 1928, China was unified by Christian Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek), who vacillatingly followed "the separation of state and religion" principle affirmed by his mentor Dr. Sun Yatsen. However, whatever secular policy he adopted to reform religion–state relations probably could not have left any lasting legacy, because Japan invaded China in 1937, setting off a war that lasted for eight years.

The Western principle of the separation of religion and state met a bizarre political and cultural environment when it was transplanted to China during the Republican era. Sun Yatsen was probably the first Chinese political leader to promote the authentic American principle of separation of state and religion. In the draft constitution of the Republic, in

which the nondiscrimination clause was incorporated (Hu 1979), he introduced the principle of separation of state and religion to the public. He accurately translated the principle of separation of state and religion as "separately standing entities" of state and religion (*zhengjiao fenlì*; Chinese intonation is critical here), instead of strict "separation" of state and religion (*zhengjiao fenlí*; distinct intonation). The former translation was consistent with the Chinese translation of the "separation" of powers (*quanli fenlì*), which the American principle of state–religion separation relied on, while the latter translation prohibits the state and the religion from any contact.

However, very few Chinese intellectuals followed Dr. Sun's translation or his argument for checks and balances between the state and religion. Most intellectuals of the Republican era, probably due to their lack of knowledge of the American background, adopted the strict "separation" translation and argument.[6] A different translation of a single word made a world of difference in the development of state–religion relations in both China and Taiwan over the next hundred years. In the Republican era, religious organizations suffering from state encroachment called for state–religion separation in order to protect themselves. Few actively promoted involvement of religion in politics under the antireligion atmosphere at that time. By contrast, many statist or atheist intellectuals also called for state–religion separation because they did not want Chinese religions to corrupt China's modernization or see Western religions replacing the Chinese culture (Cha 1994: 355–526). It is this particular translation and (mis-)interpretation of historical state–religion relations in China that has decisively framed state–religion relations in Taiwan and China after 1949.

# Building a Democratic Religious State in Taiwan

After being defeated by the CCP in 1949, the KMT state went through radical secularization in order to consolidate its legitimacy on this formerly estranged island.[7] The architect of this secular Leninist state was Jiang Jingguo, the heir-to-be to President Jiang Jieshi. Jiang Jingguo became a devoted communist after his father sent him to the Soviet Union as a political insurance for Sino–Soviet cooperation from 1925 to 1937. Although he was later baptized, probably upon his father's insistence, there was no record showing that he ever practiced Christianity or any other religion (Jiang 1997). Once the party-state was established in 1950, (p. 255) it began to penetrate society by setting up corporatist associations and implanting party cells in all large social organizations, including religious ones.[8]

Under corporatist law, only one national umbrella association was allowed for each religion to represent the interests of its clergy and believers. For instance, at the national level, there were the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, the Daoist Association of the Republic of China, the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference, and the Confucian Association of the Republic of China.[9] No other associations of the same religion were allowed to compete with these state-sponsored associations. The only exception was

Christianity. Although most Christian denominations had their own national associations, such as the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Chinese Baptist Convention, and the Local Church, there was no national umbrella association representing all Christian denominations.

Under the KMT regime, the state exercised all-encompassing control over religion through both formal and informal means. In addition to general martial law regulations restricting free movement, information and speech, the major formal instrument was the Law Regulating Temples and Shrines enacted in 1929 in China. More effective forms of state control over religion came from various state intelligence-gathering agencies, such as the local police, the Garrison Command, the Investigation Bureau, the military intelligence office, and the National Security Bureau.

In addition to these bureaucratic controls over religion, the KMT also implanted party cells in large religious organizations. These party cells assumed at least three functions: to recruit party members within the religion, to monitor religious organizations' political activities, and to elect party members to lead national religious organizations. The KMT coordination center was the First Office of the Social Works Department. There was a loose party caucus (*dangtuan*) set up within the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, but no smaller party cells existed in monasteries or temples. There was no evidence indicating party organizations were present in Christian denominations, although their KMT members kept the KMT center informed of any suspicious activity by their colleagues. Because of the dual supervision of the state and party machinery, most religious organizations during the martial law period had no choice but to adopt either a submissive position or an isolationist attitude toward the state.

In his case studies of three Buddhist organizations (Ciji, Foguangshan, and Dharma Drum Mountain) and one folk religious organization (Enacting Heaven) during the KMT regime, Madsen (2007: 136) gave credit to these large religious organizations for their contribution to Taiwan's smooth transition to democracy because they "nurtured a spirit of engagement with public affairs and a cooperative attitude toward the government." However, we should not confuse making contributions to "smooth democratization" with making direct contributions to democracy. These large Buddhist organizations were apparently more supportive of the authoritarian government than the Presbyterians.

The major exception to the Leninist religion-state relations was the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT; Kuo 2008: 43–44). During the early period of Japanese rule, the colonial government welcomed Presbyterian evangelists in order to provide medical and social services to the Taiwanese. After 1945, Taiwanese Presbyterians resumed evangelism via indigenous leadership, with foreign missionaries serving as auxiliary arms.[10] In the 1970s, after repeated encroachments on their religious freedom by the state, the PCT issued three religious-political documents challenging the legitimacy of the secular state. The Declarations (p. 256) and Suggestions on National Affairs (1971), Our Appeals (1975), and the Declaration of Human Rights (1977) promoted democracy and establishment of a "new and independent nation" for the Taiwanese people. These three documents were se-

verely criticized by the KMT government and by some Mandarin churches as an act of treason and an inappropriate intervention in politics by the church (Lin 1990: 110–117). Condemnations also came from the rank and file of the church: pastors, elders, deacons, and lay believers who were KMT members (Hu 2001: 235–236, 252–255). Nevertheless, the majority of the Presbyterian churches stood firm against the state that had lost its religious and political legitimacy. Major confrontations between the Presbyterians and the government broke out in 1979, when the government harshly reacted to an opposition rally. Leaders of the movement were arrested, along with some Presbyterian pastors who had participated in the demonstration (Taiwan Jidu Zhanglao Jiaohui Zong Hui Bianji Xiaozu 2000: 40). During the martial law period, the PCT supported the opposition movement with concrete actions. Pastors urged their believers to vote for opposition candidates. National and local churches cosponsored rallies and demonstrations to protest against the KMT government.

Taiwan's political and religious environment significantly transformed in the early 1980s when Jiang Jingguo's health deteriorated (Kuo 2008: 12–13). The opposition movement made great progress in attracting grassroots supporters by combining democratic ideals with Taiwanese nationalism. The KMT government finally lifted martial law in 1987.[11] Li Denghui, who succeeded Jiang Jingguo as president in 1988 after Jiang's death, was a devoted Presbyterian. Although he was not involved in the Presbyterian protest movement in the 1970s, he was familiar with and sympathetic to their religious and political causes. Subsequently, most laws and regulations violating human rights were rescinded, and new laws protecting human rights were instituted. Most important among these new laws were the revised Law on the Organization of Civic Groups and the Law on Assembly and Parade, which guaranteed Taiwanese the same freedom of association and movement as citizens in other democratic countries. This meant that the increasing pluralism of religious organizations that began in the early 1980s was finally endorsed by the state. The corporatist structure of religious groups soon yielded to the burgeoning religious pluralism (Lu et al. 2008).

In the post–martial law regime from 1987 to 2000, the state bureaucracy tried to maintain close supervision over religion, but its intentions and methods were very different from those of the Leninist state. The increased freedom of association brought about the mushrooming of "new religions" (*xinxing zongjiao*) emerging locally and imported from abroad. At the same time, however, sexual and financial scandals in these unregulated new religions were exposed from time to time. Partly due to the concern over their collective image and partly due to strong competition for membership and financial donations from these new religions, most religious groups supported the government's effort to reregulate all religions (Ye 2000: 263). However, the content of the proposed law by the Ministry of the Interior, the Law of Religious Groups *(zongjiao tuantifa*), aroused heated debate not only between the state and religious organizations but also among the principal religions on issues such as accounting procedures, property management, building construction, and internal governing structures (Laliberté 2009: 70–71).

The increased political autonomy of religious groups from 1987 to 2000 was evident in several ways. Benefitting from economic prosperity, new religious groups mushroomed outside the state-controlled religious associations (Katz 200:, 395; Laliberté 2001: 97–129; Paper 1996: 105), while religious support of the KMT government declined. Many religious leaders (p. 257) openly blessed politicians from both the KMT and opposition parties, while state and local elites competed for votes by supporting local religious traditions (Katz 2003: 412). In turn, religious organizations solicited support from different political parties via their social networks, in order to maximize government funding for religious activities. More and more religious organizations supported candidates to run against KMT candidates. Furthermore, some clergy ran for public offices under different party banners. However, most religious organizations decided to maintain their separationist position or maintain equal distance from all political forces. Their believers still could not get used to political debate among believers or between the pulpit and the pew.

While the state's negative intervention in religion was reduced, its positive assistance to religion was not. The Bureau of Civic Affairs of the Ministry of Interior routinely provided small grants (up to about $33,000 in US dollars) to religious organizations that planned to hold religious parades, conferences, exhibitions, ceremonies, charity programs, or neighborhood activities. These small grants were given to religious organizations without discrimination, but proportionality was considered. Larger activities tended to receive larger funding. Very few, if any, religious organizations complained about the Bureau of Civic Affairs for violating their religious freedom or transgressing the separation of state and religion.

In the year 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party toppled the fifty-five-year rule of the KMT government, whose extensive corruption and intricate connection to local gangsters had alienated itself from major religious groups. President Chen Shuibian, who became an initiated believer of the syncretistic religion Yiguandao in the early 1990s, won the election probably due to large amount of religious swing votes. His Religious White Paper propagated religious freedom and promised solutions to problems of land acquisition, which was the major concern of small and-medium sized religions (Kuo 2011: 266). This first turnover of the Taiwanese government resulted in major restructuring of not only political coalitions but also state–society relations, including state–religion relations. A neosacred state was now on the rise to replace the secular state of 1949–1987. However, the second term of Cheng Shuibian made the same mistakes as the KMT did before 2000: its extensive corruption and intricate connection to local gangsters disillusioned major religious groups. In 2008, riding a wave of anticorruption sentiment, Ma Yingjeou led the KMT to win back the presidency, passing what Samuel T. Huntington (1991) calls the "two turn-over test" for a consolidated democracy. Never publicly disclosing his Catholic baptism at childhood, President Ma was nevertheless committed to further promoting religious freedom as part of his commitment to expanding human rights in general. In May 2009, he signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The new Human Rights Committee of the Ma government has regularly and diligently monitored different min-

istries to revise laws and regulations that may have infringed upon human rights, including religious regulations.

Since the year 2000, the state has painstakingly transformed itself from a secular state toward a neosacred state. In 2001, the Ministry of Education began active promotion of religious curriculum in primary and secondary schools as well as in universities (ROC Ministry of Education 2001). Primary and secondary schools cooperate with Buddhist, Christian, and Yiguandao organizations, among other religious groups, to offer life education classes (Lin 2012). In universities, life education classes are also added to curricula as optional general knowledge classes, most of them offered by faculty members with different religious backgrounds. As a result of dwindling government subsidies, universities often welcome (p. 258) religion-based foundations to sponsor credited classes and lectures at universities. Students and faculty members can choose from a variety of religion-based clubs, freely wear different religious garments or symbols of their faith, and live peacefully on campus.

In a landmark decision in 2004, the Grand Justice Council declared many clauses stipulated in the 1929 Law Regulating Temples and Shrines to be in violation of constitutional principles of religious freedom and equality. The Grand Justice Council provided detailed arguments based on extensive reviews of domestic and foreign documents of state-religion relations (ROC Grand Justice Council 2004). Although still using the translation that endorsed strict separationism, its substantive explanation of this principle gradually shifted from separation toward checks and balances between the state and religion. As mandated by this Grand Justice decision, the Ministry of the Interior began to work on a draft of the Law of Religious Groups. Earlier drafts tended to be highly regulative and filled with punishment clauses—a reflection of the secular-state mentality. The current version has largely toned down these elements. Most important, with regard to the procedure of registration, a report system has replaced the approval system of the Law Regulating Temples and Shrines' legacy, which had intruded upon religious freedom. New applicants for the various benefits provided by the Law of Religious Groups will only need to fill out some simple forms and need not go through complicated approval procedures. Although it requires further fine-tuning, most religious groups warmly endorse its current format.[12] In 2009, the Ministry of Education began to accept applications for the establishment of religious study institutes (ROC Ministry of Education 2008). Once approved, these religious seminaries will be able to issue state-recognized diplomas to their students, which will allow them to apply for graduate programs in regular universities. They could also receive government subsidies, typically constituting a significant portion of a university's annual revenue in Taiwan.

With steadily narrowing margins of victory in various elections, religious organizations, whose memberships range from hundreds of thousands to millions, have acquired the ability to influence political issues that are of vital religious value, such as abortion, homosexual education in public schools, legalization of gambling and sex industries, and sustainable development. Conservative religious organizations have actively lobbied the Legislature to uphold their religious values. As a result, some liberal bills were postponed

or even terminated at the preparation stage. Others were passed, but only after they were watered down drastically, as in the cases of the Regulation on Development in Offshore Islands in 2006 to legalize gambling and the revision of the Social Order Maintenance Ordinance in order to legalize the sex industry in 2010.

As a combined result of the state's self-restraint and the growing political influence of religious groups, religious freedom in Taiwan has greatly expanded since 2000 to a level higher than in traditional dynasties. The US State Department has published annual reports on religious freedom in all parts of the world since 2001; among them, Taiwan has received nothing but adulation for full religious freedom.

# Building a Leninist Religious State in China

A "Leninist religious state" seems a self-contradictory phrase, given the fact that Leninism is rooted in atheist Marxism. But from 1949 to the present, the Chinese state has gradually (p. 259) transformed the secular Leninist state into a religious Leninist state, which is more adaptable to the Chinese religious society. What is a Leninist religious state? How did it come about?

The Chinese Leninist religious state is based on a new state religion (or pseudo-religion) called "Chinese nationalism" (Kuo 2014: 192–198, 210–214; Yang 2009: 14). Its sacrosanct god is "China," with aliases of the Dragon, Han, or the Yellow Emperor. This god demands total commitment and sacrifice from believers. Any Chinese who opposes or blasphemes it is a "traitor to Han" (*hanjian*) or a "historical sinner" (*lishi zuiren*) and is punishable by death. This Chinese god has a number of auxiliary deities canonized, including Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and other General Secretaries of the CCP. The holy scriptures of Chinese nationalism consist of the writings and speeches of these mortal gods, together called "Chinese communism" or "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." All the Chinese from kindergarten to college levels are required to diligently study the wisdom of these mortal gods. CCP cadres, government officials, and CCP members of large-scale private enterprises and social organizations conduct routine political-study courses to memorize, discuss, reflect, and apply these scriptures to their daily life. In defending major policies, CCP officials and scholars routinely cite these sources for apologetics, prophecies, and prayers in order to facilitate the coming of the utopian Chinese socialism.

Chinese nationalism prescribes a "trinity" for its political theology, which sets rules and boundaries to religion–state relations, consisting of three elements: China, socialism, and the CCP. China is socialism; socialism is the rule by the CCP; and China cannot survive without the CCP. Being patriotic to China, Chinese people need to assert socialism and uphold communist leadership. Anyone who opposes socialism or communist leadership is a traitor to China. All religious groups in China should place this political theology of trinity at the top of their religious creeds: Love your country, (then) love your religion (*aiguo aijiao*') (Zhang and Zhou 2007). The priests of Chinese nationalism are the CCP cadres and scholars. These priests teach these nationalist scriptures and provide unified new

hermeneutics of these scriptures. They hold offices in all governmental branches and social organizations. They are also the religious police to discover, censor, re-educate, or remove political heresies, including those religious believers who refuse to embrace the political theology of trinity (Shambaugh 2008). The religious rituals of Chinese nationalism are performed in all "reformed" traditional Chinese holidays. The major religious sites where these religious rituals are performed are the Bases of Patriotic Education (*aiguo jiaoyu jidi*) omnipresent in all major cities in China, with names like the Memorial Hall of Mao Zedong, Military Museum, Historical Museum, and Memorial Residence of Revolutionary Leaders. Local grade schools are required to arrange annual pilgrimages to these holy shrines of Chinese nationalism (Miyamoto 2012).

If there are gods, holy saints, and true believers in a religion, there must also be devils, fallen angels, infidels, and apostates. Who are the latter group condemned by Chinese nationalism? They are Western imperialism, liberalism, Catholicism, Christianity, and those Chinese citizens "polluted" by Western culture. The worst apostates are the "five venoms" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, who are led astray by Western political forces to desecrate the sacrosanct Chinese god (China) and prophets (CCP General Secretaries). Their fate is to be thrown into prison or summarily executed, as deemed appropriate by the CCP court.

Guided by the adaptable catechism of Chinese nationalism, religion–state relations in communist China went through three phases: 1949 to 1965 (Zhou Enlai's "Religion (p. 260) Accommodates New Democracy"), 1966 to 1979 (Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution), and 1980 to the present (Jiang Zeming's "Active Guidance to the Mutual Accommodation between Religion and Socialist Society").

Being atheists, Marx and Engels abhorred religion. Marx dismissed religion as the opium of exploited peoples, while Engels proposed that criticizing religion is the premise of all criticisms. Religion had no use in the construction of a socialist state (Tang 1999: 1). However, this Marxist hostility toward religion was either ignored or downplayed in the first phase of constructing a secular Chinese state from 1949 to 1965. The CCP government promised religious freedom and mobilized religious groups to participate in the construction of a new China, including the five-year plans and the Great Leap Forward of 1957. With regard to the ultimate goal of terminating all religions, the Leninist state adopted incremental and soft policies of public discussion, criticism, and education. In addition, the government sponsored the establishment of national religious associations to register all clergy and believers and required that each religious organization be governed by the newly established Democratic Management Committee, which was elected by lay believers under the guidance of local CCP.

The economic disaster of the Great Leap Forward discredited Mao Zedong's leadership and brought the reformers to power in the party, the bureaucracy, and the military. In fear of losing all power, Mao Zedong initiated the Great Cultural Revolution with an aim to annihilate all antirevolutionary forces, particularly religions. Why? Because he thought the landlords and wealthy peasants were mobilizing local traditional religions to oppose

Marxism, while Christians and Catholics had been the instruments of Western Imperialism to sabotage communist China. The Great Cultural Revolution was a holy war! The Red Guards were given the authority by Mao Zedong to burn down shrines, temples, churches, and mosques nationwide. All clergy were forced to publicly renounce their religious positions or faced brutality at the spot. This massive persecution of all religions lasted until Mao Zedong died in 1976 and his followers were arrested by moderate political leaders in 1979.

The radical leftist economic and religious policies of the Cultural Revolution severely undermined the legitimacy of the Chinese government. Under the de facto leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the CCP government promoted drastic economic liberalization along with the less drastic, but still significant, religious liberalization. In 1982, the Party Central produced the "Fundamental Perspectives and Policies of Religious Issues in the Period of Chinese Socialism" (dubbed Document No. 19). It proclaimed that religion and socialism will coexist for long periods of time, and religion should make contribution to socialist construction (PRC Party Literature Research Office 1995).

In order to strengthen the ideological legitimacy of the new religious program, several CCP scholars in Shanghai and Nanjing waged a public debate called "the Third Opium War." Citing the new religious program, they drastically revised Marxist thesis of religion as opium. They proposed, instead, that Marx's opium thesis is applicable to European societies where institutions of class exploitation exist but not applicable to communist China where there are no more classes. However, since there are still "internal contradictions among the people" and social problems, religion can provide positive functions and complement socialism. These prophetic hermeneutics were soon endorsed by the Party Central and became new textbooks to be used in the regular political-study courses in the CCP, bureaucracy, and large religious organizations from 1982 to 1990 (Xing 2005: 30–49).

(p. 261) A few weeks after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre of students, Jiang Zeming was elected the General Secretary of the CCP. The Chinese government then suffered yet another major crisis of legitimacy. Unlike the Cultural Revolution, which could be blamed on radical leftists, the Tiananmen massacre was ordered by the economic reformers within the Party Central. Economic success alone was not sufficient to cope with the increasing popular demand for human rights and democratization. The communist leadership was in dire need to find an alternative source of legitimacy. Religion was handily available.

In 1993, Jiang Zeming advocated "three sentences," which summarized all the experiences of religious reforms from 1982 to 1992, to be the new guidelines of religious policies: to implement the CPP's policies of religious freedom with full scale and accuracy, to regulate religious affairs by law, and to actively guide the mutual accommodation between religion and socialist society. Jiang Zeming (2006: 376) even followed up on the revised opium thesis in order to cleanse the original sin of religion in Marxism. But what exactly does it mean to "to actively guide the mutual accommodation between religion and

socialist society”? Ye Xiaowen, who was the director of SARA from 1995 to 2009, provided an official hermeneutics:

> We do not demand that clergy and religious believers relinquish their faith. Rather, we demand that they passionately love the mother land, support socialist institutions, uphold the communist leadership, and obey the laws, regulations and policies of the state. We demand that their religious activities obey and serve the highest interests of the state and the holistic interests of the nation.
>
> (Ye 2007: 167)

In a nutshell, the purpose of religious life in China is to obey and serve the state religion of trinitarian Chinese nationalism.

Following up on Ye’s political hermeneutics, SARA published a series of patriotic textbooks for the five major religions to strengthen the religious legitimacy of the new communist leadership under Hu Jintao (2002–2012). The goal of these textbooks was to

> make students in religious seminaries embrace the socialist belief with Chinese characteristics, to raise their patriotism and socialist weakening, to strengthen their national pride and self-confidence; to combine “love your country” with “love your religion” in order to adhere to the principle of religious autonomy … so that they grow to be a new generation of religious clergy who uphold the leadership of CCP, support socialist institutions, and become progressive patriots.
>
> (PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs 2005: 4–5)

This series of patriotic textbooks consist of one master book and one for each religion. The first published textbook was for Catholicism in 2002, at a time when diplomatic relations between China and Vatican were strained over the controversy about who had authority to appoint bishops in China. Thereafter, the master textbook was published, which provided detailed guidelines for the Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Daoist textbooks. In 2006, the textbooks for Christianity and Islam were published. The Daoist textbook was published in 2011. They also planned two textbooks for Buddhism—Han Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism—but neither were, and probably never will be, published because of internal politics within the Buddhist community.

The editing process of these religious textbooks reflects a changing relationship between the state and religion. In the past, such materials of political nature would be edited by the state alone and then imposed on the religious communities. But under the relatively liberal (p. 262) director Ye Xiaowen, these textbooks were edited by the national religious association of each religion, reviewed by religious scholars in research institutions, and double-checked by researchers of SARA. Therefore, these textbooks integrate different perspectives toward religion–state relations from the government, academia, and religious communities. Interestingly, except for the master textbook, all these textbooks pay only lip service to patriotism, socialism, and the leadership of the CCP. Most of their content is devoted to their authentic tradition, religious figures, and Chinese martyrs. Occa-

sionally, they also plant references to promote religious autonomy from the state. The impacts of these textbooks on the religious communities and religion–state relations have been significant. After their publication, SARA required every religious seminary to hire a tenured teacher to teach this textbook and all seminary freshmen take this core course. In addition, all large religious organizations in the major cities were required to purchase these textbooks to be used in regular political-study courses for clergy and lay believers.

In 2010, SARA published yet another important political hermeneutics, *Chinese Five Major Religions Discuss Harmony*, to address the relationships between the state and religion. In addition to the topics of harmony, social values, and scriptural citations, most of these essays also address issues of democracy, rule by law, and social justice. Particularly, using the language of Liberation Theology, the Catholic and Christian essays promote not only "rule by law" but also "rule of law," checks and balances among governmental branches in order to protect human rights, and issues of social justice. They encourage believers to be patriotic but also to be prophetic in promoting social justice.[13]

In addition to these patriotic education programs tailored to religious communities, Hu Jintao's government further strengthened its religious legitimacy by simultaneously promoting Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism at an international scale, which is reminiscent of the "three-religions-in-one" (*sanjiao heyi*) policy of the Song dynasty. Jiang Zeming's government established the Chinese Confucius Research Institute within the State Council in 1996. Starting in 2002, the Institute began to establish branches on foreign soil. From 2002 to 2012, the Chinese government sponsored 358 Confucius Institutes (*Kongzi xueyuan*) and 500 Confucius Workshops (*Kongzi ketang*) in 105 countries. The World Buddhist Forum was held in China once every three years after 2006; excluded were the supporters of Dalai Lama. More than six hundred monks from over fifty countries participated in the 2012 forum. Modeling after the World Buddhist Forum was the International Daoist Forum held in 2011, in which more than five hundred Daoist specialists from a dozen countries participated.[14]

The Leninist religious state has gradually transformed itself into a pluralistic Leninist religious state in which Chinese nationalism retains the privileged and dominant position as state religion, while other religions expanded their religious freedom within the political parameters set up by the state. It is a "pluralistic" religious state in the sense of the traditional Chinese state, as described in the second section of this chapter. There is a dominant state religion, alongside moderate religious freedom and autonomy for other religions, but religious organizations should shy away from involvement in politics unless ordered to do so under the state's scrutiny. It remains a "Leninist" religious state in the sense that trinitarian Chinese nationalism is still sacrosanct and the state maintains extensive control over religious organizations. Without further democratization, the Chinese Leninist religious state is not likely to turn into a democratic religious state as in Taiwan.

# (p. 263) Conclusion

From the perspective of neurotheology, it is not a surprise that both the atheist Chinese communist government and the democratic Taiwanese government have substantially restored the traditional, pluralistic, religious state of Chinese dynasties. The Taiwanese government started with a quasi-Leninist state to keep religions at arm's-length. But after the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Taiwanese government, in response to the emergence of democratic religions, gradually developed a democratic religious state by which religious freedom and equality are maximized. Similarly, the Chinese Communist government initially aimed to eliminate all religions. But after these suppressive policies backfired and the state lost its religious legitimacy, the CCP established a Leninist religious state that would dominate all other religions. While religious freedom in China has gradually improved, this freedom is always precarious as long as the Leninist religious state remains dominant.

## Bibliography

Barrett, Justin L. 2011. *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology: From Human Minds to Divine Minds*. West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Press.

Berger, Peter L. (ed.). 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics.* Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Billings, Dwight B., and Shaunna L. Scott. 1994. "Religion and Political Legitimation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 20, 173–201.

Brook, Timothy. 1993. *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Imperial China*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center.

Brubaker, Rogers. 2011. "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* 18(1), 2–20.

Bubandt, Nils, and Martijn Van Beek (eds.). 2012. *Varieties of Secularism in Asia: Anthropological Explorations of Religion, Politics and the Spiritual*. London and New York: Routledge.

Cha, Shijie. 1994. *Minguo Jidujiao Shi Lunwenji* (Essays on the Republican Era's History of Christianity). Taipei: Yuzhouguang Press.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1969. *Democracy in America*. Edited by J. P. Mayer. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

Ding, Shan. 2011. *Zhongguo Gudai Zongjiao Yu Shenhua Kao* (An Inquiry into Ancient Chinese Religion and Mythology). Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore.

Goossaert, Vincent, and David A. Palmer. 2011. *The Religious Question in Modern China.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hardare, Helen. 1989. *Shinto and the State, 1868–1988*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Hobbes, Thomas. 1651. *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil.* Edited by Michael Oakeshott. Repr. Oxford: Blackwell, 1955.

Hu, Chunhui (ed.). 1979. *Minguo Xianzheng Yundong* (Constitutional Movement in the Republican Era). Taipei: Zhengzhong Bookstore.

Hu, Huilin. 2001. *Shizijia Zhilu: Kau Junming Mushi Huiyilu* (The Way to Cross: Memoir of Rev. Chunming Kao). Taipei: Wang Chun Fong Press.

Huang, Wudong. 1988. *Huang Wudong Huiyi Lu*. Taipei: Qianwei Press.

Huntington, Samuel T. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press.

Jeeves, Malcolm, and Warren S. Brown. 2009. *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities about Human Nature*. West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Foundation Press.

(p. 265) Jiang, Nan. 1997. *Jiang Jingguo Zhuan* (A Biography of Jiang Jingguo). Taipei: Qianwei Press.

Jiang, Zeming. 2006. *Jiangzemin Wenxuan Disanjuan* (The Third Volume of Selected Works of Jiang Zemin). Beijing: People Press.

Jones, Charles Brewer. 1999. *Buddhism in Taiwan, 1660–1990*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Katz, Paul R. 2003. “Religion and the State in Post-War Taiwan.” *China Quarterly* 174, 395–412.

Knox, Zoe. 2005. *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Kuo, Cheng-tian. 2008. *Religion and Democracy in Taiwan*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kuo, Cheng-tian. 2011. “Religious Participation in Taiwanese Democracy.” In *A Spectacular Century: The Republic of China Centennial Democracy Forums*, edited by Hungmao Tien and Wencheng Lin, 259–289. Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research.

Kuo, Cheng-tian. 2013. “State–Religion Relations in Taiwan.” *Issues & Studies* 49 (1), 10–13.

Kuo, Cheng-tian. 2014. *Democratize Nationalist Theologies: Taiwan and Mainland China.* Taipei: Chengchi University Press.

Lagerwey, John. 2010. *China: A Religious State*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Laliberté, André. 2001. “Buddhist Organizations and Democracy in Taiwan.” *American Asian Review* 19, 97–129.

Laliberté, André. 2009. “The Regulation of Religious Affairs in Taiwan: From State Control to Laisser-Faire?” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 38, 53–83.

Liang, Qichao. 1974. *Yinbingshi Wenji* (The Collected Writings of Yinbinshi). Tainan: Tainan Donghai Press.

Lin, Benxuan. 1990. *Taiwan De Zhengjiao Chongtu* (Conflicts between State and Religion in Taiwan). Taipei: Daoxiang Press.

Lin, Qiyun. 2012. “Zongjiao Shengming Jiaoyu Yu Zhengjiao Fenli: Gongli Xuexiao Guomin Jiaoyu Zhong De Zongjiao Shengming Jiaoyu” (Life Education of Religion and the Separation of Religion and State: Religious Education in Public Schools). Master’s thesis, National Chengchi University.

Locke, J. 1690. *The Second Treatise of Government*. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952.

Lu, Yilu. 2002. *Hongshui Shenhua: Yi Zhongguo Nanfang Minzu Yu Taiwan Yuanzhumin Wei Zhongxin* (Deluge Mythos: Chinese South Volk and Taiwan Indigenous Peoples). Taipei: Liren Bookstore.

Lu, Yunfeng, Byron Johnson, and Rodney Stark. 2008. “Deregulation and the Religious Market in Taiwan: A Research Note.” *Sociological Quarterly* 49(1), 139–153.

Madsen, Richard. 2007. *Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Miyamoto, Yuki. 2012. “The Ethics of Commemoration: Religion and Politics in Nanjing, Hiroshima, and Yasukuni.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80(1), 34–63.

Mo, Zongshan. 2003. *Mo Zongshan Xiansheng Quanji* (Collected Works of Mo Zongshan). Taipei: Lianjing.

Mou, Tsungshan. 2003. *Songming Ruxue De Wenti Yu Fazhan* (The Problems and Development of Song-Ming Confucianism). Taipei: Lianjing Publishing.

Newberg, Andrew, and Mark Robert Waldman. 2009. *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*. New York: Ballantine.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

(p. 266) Paper, Jordan. 1996. “Mediums and Modernity: The Institutionalization of Ecstatic Religious Functionaries in Taiwan.” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 24, 105–130.

PRC Center for Religious Research of China, State Administration for Religious Affairs (ed.). 2010. *Zhongguo Wuda Zongjiao Lun Hexie* (Chinese Five Great Religions on Harmony). Beijing: Religious Culture Press.

PRC Party Literature Research Office. 1995. *Xinshiqi Zongjiao Gongzuo Wenxian Xuanbian* (Selected Writings of the New Era of Religious Works). Beijing: Religious Culture Press.

PRC State Administration for Religious Affairs. 2005. *Aiguo Zhuyi Jiaocheng* (Textbook of Patriotism). Beijing: Religious Culture Press.

Qi, Guangyu. 1996. *Zhonghua Minguo De Zhengzhi Fazhan: Minguo 38 Nian Yilai De Bianqian* (Political Development of the Republic of China: Transition during the 38 years of the Republican Era). Taipei: Yangzhi Press.

Qing, Xitai. 1996. *Zhonghua Daojiao Jianshi* (Brief History of Chinese Daoism). Taipei: Chinese Confucian Orthodoxy Press.

Qing, Xitai. 2007. *Zhongguo Daojiao Shi, Juan Si* (The Fourth Volume of History of Chinese Daoism). Taipei: Chinese Confucian Orthodoxy Press.

Ramachandran, V. S., and Sandra Blakeslee. 1998. *Phantoms in the Brain*. New York: HarperCollins.

ROC Grand Justice Council, Judicial Yuan. 2004. *Interpretation No. 573*.

ROC Ministry of Education. 2001. *Shengming Jiaoyu* (Life Education). Taipei: Ministry of Education. **http://192.192.169.108/2d/citizen/teach/teach_0501.asp**

ROC Ministry of Education. 2008. *Regulations of Religious Studies in College*. Taipei: Ministry of Education.

Rose, John Holland. 1907. *The Life of Napoleon I, Including New Materials from the British Official Records*. New York: Macmillan.

Schmitter, Philippe C. 1971. *Interest Conflict and Political Change in Brazil*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Shambaugh, David. 2008. *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shi, Dongchu. 1974. *Zhongguo Fojiao Jindaishi* (A History of Early Contemporary Chinese Buddhism). Taipei: Dongchu Press.

Shi, Mingfu. 1981. *Zhongguo Sengguan Zhidu Yanjiu* (A Study on the Monkish Official Institution in Ancient China). Taipei: Mingwen Press.

Shryock, John Knight. 1932. *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius: An Introductory Study*. New York: The Century.

Siam-Heng, Michael, and Ten Chin Liew (eds.). 2010. *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia.* Hackensack, N.J.: World Scientific.

Taiwan Jidu Zhanglao Jiaohui Zong Hui Bianji Xiaozu. 2000. *Ren Shi Tai Wan Ji Du Zhang Lao Jiao Hui* (Introduction of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan). Taipei: General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Tang, Xiaofeng (ed.). 1999. *Makesi, Engesi, Liening, Shidalin Lun Zongjiao He Wushenlun* (Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on Religion and Atheism). Beijing: People Press.

Tsai, Yenzen (ed.). 2013. *Religious Experience in Contemporary Taiwan and China*. Taipei: Chengchi University Press.

Tucker, Nancy Bernkopf. 2009. *Strait Talk: United States–Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

(p. 267) Welch, Holmes. 1967. *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wright, Arthur F. 1959. *Buddhism in Chinese History*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

World Values Survey. 2005. World Values Survey – China. **www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp**.

World Values Survey. 2010. World Values Survey – China. **www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp**.

Wu, Naithe. 1987. “The Politics of a Regime Patronage System: Mobilization and Control within an Authoritarian Regime.” PhD diss., University of Chicago.

Xing, Fuzeng. 2005. *Dangdai Zhongguo Zhengjiao Guanxi* (Church–State Relationship in Contemporary China), 2nd ed. Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary.

Xiong, Shili. 1975. *Yuanru* (The Original Confucianism). Taipei: Daming Wangshi Press.

Yang, C. K. 1961. *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yang, Fenggang. 2009. “Religion in China under Communism: A Shortage Economy Explanation.” *Journal of Church and State* 52(1), 3–33.

Yao, Xingzhong, and Paul Badham. 2007. *Religious Experience in Contemporary China*. Cardiff, U.K.: University of Wales Press.

Ye, Xiaowen. 2007. “Shehui Zhuyi De Zongjiao Lun” (Socialist Perspectives of Religion). In *Makesi Zhuyi Zongjiaoguan Yu Dangdai Zhongguo Zongjiao Juan* (Religious Thoughts

of Marxism and Contemporary Chinese Religions), edited by Daji Lu and Xuezeng Gong, 163–173. Beijing: Ethnic Peoples Press.

Ye, Yongwen. 2000. *Taiwan Zhengjiao Guanxi* (Relations of State and Religion in Taiwan). Taipei: Fengyun Forum Press.

Zhang, Fengqing, and Suyu Zhou. 2007. *Zhongguo Gongchandang Yu Dangdai Zhonghua Minzu Nijuli* (Chinese Communist Party and the Cohesive Force of Contemporary Chinese). Hubei, China: Hubei People Press.

Zhang, Rongming. 1997. *Yinzhou Zhengzhi Yu Zongjiao* (Politics and Religions during the Yin and Zhou Dynasties). Taipei: Wunan Chu Ban She.

Zhao, Yifeng. 2007. “Mingchao Zongjiao Zhengce Helun” (Comprehensive Comments on the Religious Policies during the Ming Dynasty). *Journal of Ancient Civilizations* 22, 68–85.

Zheng, Yangen. 1999. *Lishi Yu Xinyang: Cong Jidujiao Guandian Kan Taiwan he Shijie*. Tainan: Renguang Press. **(p. 268)**

## Notes:

(1.) In Chinese traditional medicine, the snake, toad, scorpion, lizard, and centipede are regarded as the most venomous creatures. The Chinese word for “independence” has the same pronunciation as “venom.”

(2.) There have been political and academic debates about whether Taiwan is a state independent from China (Tucker 2009). This chapter uses the words “state” and “government” interchangeably when they fit the context without explicit implications for Taiwan’s statehood.

(3.) Major works of neurotheology include Barrett (2011), Jeeves and Brown (2009), Newberg and Waldman (2009), and Ramachandran and Blakeslee (1998).

(4.) *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian): *Fengchan Shu*. Translations are the author’s own.

(5.) *Lunyu* (Analects): Book VI, *Yongye*, and Book XI, *Xianjin*.

(6.) Liang Qichao, a leading intellectual in the Republican era, proposed strict separation of the state and religion. But he also proposed governance by Buddhist doctrines (Liang 1974: 20, 29–35).

(7.) Comprehensive studies of Taiwan’s religion–state relations are few. Notable works include Laliberté (2009) and Kuo (2008: 10–12). However, neither work fairly addresses the historical legacies and the recent important development of religion–state relations in Taiwan. Both ended their analysis with the “laissez-faire” period and were not able to ana-

lyze the current “checks and balances” period. An updated review of Taiwan’s religion–state relations is Kuo (2013: 13–31).

(8.) Corporatist associations refer to social organizations that are organized according to the criteria of singularity, compulsion, government sponsorship, noncompetitiveness, and functional differentiation (Schmitter 1971). Wu Naithe (1987) meticulously studied Jiang Jingguo’s efforts to establish corporatist controls over Taiwanese society in the 1950s.

(9.) For the relations between the state and Buddhism in Taiwan during the martial law period, see Jones (1999).

(10.) Some foreign missionaries and theologians, such as Michael Thornberry, Donald J. Wilson, David Gelzer, and Daniel Keeby supported the PCT’s Taiwan independence cause and were expelled by the KMT government (Zheng 1999: 71; Huang 1988: 304–309).

(11.) On domestic and external causes for the lifting of martial law, see Qi (1996).

(12.) André Laliberté’s (2009: 74–75) pessimism about the bill’s approval was due to the regulative nature of earlier drafts.

(13.) PRC Center for Religious Research of China, State Administration for Religious Affairs (2010: 306–314, 406–413).

(14.) Kongzi Yenjiuyuan (Chinese Confucius Research Institute), http://www.confucius.gov.cn/; Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui (Buddhist Association of China), http://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/; Zhongguo Daojiao Xiehui (Chinese Daoist Association), http://www.taoist.org.cn/.

**Cheng-tian Kuo**

Cheng-tian Kuo is Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Joint Professor of the Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at National Chengchi University in Taipei, Taiwan. He was a Chair Professor at the International Institute for Asian Studies in The Netherlands. Among his books is Religion and Democracy in Taiwan.

# Religion in the Public Sphere

Cristina Lafont

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.17

## Abstract and Keywords

The priority of public reasons is a necessary component of any plausible account of the legitimacy of the institutions of constitutional democracy. This chapter analyzes the main features of the alternative conception of constitutional democracy that liberal critics endorse. This analysis shows that, in the absence of some version of the priority of public reasons, these critics cannot give a plausible account of the legitimacy of some of the institutions that their own conception relies upon. It then sketches the contours of a conception of the priority of public reasons that more accurately expresses what is at stake. By applying a more realistic and less restrictive interpretation of the priority of public reasons, religious and secular citizens can equally endorse the institutions of constitutional democracy.

Keywords: constitutional democracy, liberalism, public reasons, secularism, pluralism, rights

THE proper role of religion in liberal democracies is as contested as ever. This contestation produces understandable fears that democratic institutions may ultimately be incompatible with religious forms of life. If there is genuinely no hope that secular and religious citizens can take ownership over and identify with these institutions in equal measure, then the future of democracy within pluralist societies seems seriously threatened. In the academic context, these fears commonly arise in debates about the liberal criterion of democratic legitimacy, according to which citizens ought to justify the imposition of coercive policies on one another with reasons that everyone can reasonably accept. Defenses of mutual justifiability as a criterion of democratic legitimacy come in different varieties; paradigmatic examples include Rawls (1993: 217–220), Habermas (1998: 107–111), Gutmann and Thompson (2004: 133), and Gauss (1996: 2011). Only in this way can citizens see themselves not just as subject to the law but as authors of the law, as the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty requires. However, since religious reasons are not generally acceptable to secular citizens and citizens of different faiths, endorsing this criterion entails the claim that, for the purposes of political justification, public reasons should take priority over religious considerations.[1] Critics of liberalism take this claim as a clear confirmation of the incompatibility between liberal democracy and traditional religious forms

of life and thus draw the conclusion that rejecting the former is the only way to protect the latter.[2]

Liberal critics resist this conclusion by questioning the claim that commitment to liberal democracy requires accepting the priority of public reasons. They do so mainly on two grounds. First, liberal critics question the priority of public reasons on the *skeptical* grounds that there is simply no such thing as public reasons, that is, a subset of reasons that all citizens can reasonably accept as having priority for justifying coercive policies (Eberle [2002: ch. 8] surveys this criticism). Second, they contest the priority of public reasons on the *normative* grounds that the unequal treatment of religious reasons for the purposes of political justification is unfair to religious citizens and is therefore incompatible with the core values of liberal democracy. In their view, the priority of public reasons is an *optional* feature of a specific family of *conceptions* of constitutional democracies, those that fall under the heading of "deliberative democracy," but by no means a *necessary* element of the very *concept* of constitutional democracy (Eberle and Cuneo 2015: sec. 4; Wolterstorff 1997b: 176–177).[3] If this is (p. 272) the case, then citizens seriously committed to the legitimacy of constitutional democracy do not have to subscribe to the priority of public reasons.

In what follows I would like to question this claim. In my view, *the priority of public reasons* is a *necessary* component of any plausible account of the legitimacy of the institutions of constitutional democracy. Defenders of those institutions may strongly disagree with specific interpretations of the priority of public reasons, but, whichever version they favor, they cannot dispense with the priority. I will offer support for this claim in two steps. First, I critically analyze the main features of the alternative conception of constitutional democracy that liberal critics endorse. This analysis shows that, in the absence of some version of the priority of public reasons, these critics cannot give a plausible account of the legitimacy of some of the institutions that their own conception relies upon. In a second step, I then briefly sketch the contours of a conception of the priority of public reasons that, in my view, more accurately expresses what is at stake. By offering a more realistic and less restrictive interpretation of the priority of public reasons, I hope to show how religious and secular citizens can equally endorse the institutions of constitutional democracy.

# Pluralist versus Deliberative Democracy

The public reason conception of political justification is characterized by three distinctive claims that liberal critics reject, namely, that (1) there is a set of reasons that are generally *acceptable to all* democratic citizens, (2) these reasons are *independent from* religious or otherwise comprehensive doctrines, and (3) they ought to have *priority* in determining coercive policies (see Wolterstorff 2012: 113).[4] As indicated already, liberal critics question the first two claims on skeptical grounds and the third on normative grounds. In order to articulate an alternative view of political justification, they draw from pluralist models of democracy, which dispense with the assumption of shared public reasons char-

acteristic of the model of deliberative democracy. Even defenders of aspirational models of political justification who endorse the regulative ideal of trying to offer reasons that other citizens may reasonably accept nonetheless contend that, since there is no guarantee that such efforts may succeed, the only alternative open to citizens in that situation is to vote on the basis of whatever considerations they think are right.[5] If giving priority to some type of reasons over others in making political decisions cannot be justified in a way that all citizens can accept, then the only option left is to fall back on a purely procedural solution such as majority rule.[6]

Some liberal critics also point out that the pluralist model of democracy is not only more attractive than the deliberative model but that it also offers a more accurate account of the actual institutional features of extant constitutional democracies. Given that all existent democracies endorse secret ballots, the norms actually embodied in extant democratic practices seem to see nothing wrong with letting citizens vote on the basis of whatever reasons they see fit. The fact that the deliberative conception seems unable to account for the legitimacy of this institutional feature within extant democracies is an additional factor that counts against the plausibility of such conception.[7]

I totally agree with the institutional perspective that underlies this criticism. Framing the debate on the proper conception of political justification exclusively in terms of the ethics (p. 273) of democratic citizenship and the duty of civility can be misleading. It may suggest that the debate mainly turns on whether or not citizens should follow some ideal moral norms and principles when engaging in political activities, whereas the underlying issue is really whether or not citizens can, upon reflection, endorse the ideal norms and principles actually embodied in the democratic institutions and practices in which they participate. Having said this, I nonetheless find the liberal critics' defense of pluralist democracy problematic from both the personal and the institutional perspectives. From the personal perspective of citizens, there seems to be a mismatch between the substantive concern that fuels the rejection of the deliberative model and the purely procedural solution they offer to address it. On the one hand, it is hard to see how a procedural retreat could assuage the substantive concerns of religious citizens (or of any other citizens for that matter) in conflicting situations. If leaving the determination of coercive policies to a process in which *religious* reasons are disregarded is objectionable at all, leaving such a determination to a process in which *all reasons* are disregarded (and only numbers count) would seem to be even more objectionable. If reasons matter at all to the citizens in question, they will presumably continue to matter to them after the vote. On the other hand, if citizens were to in fact accept the view that the procedural fairness of majority rule confers full legitimacy on the outcomes, whatever they are, their original concern would be rendered unintelligible. If the quality of the reasons behind the votes has no effect whatsoever on the legitimacy of the outcomes, why would it matter whether their votes are based on some reasons rather than on others? In fact, if fairness toward everyone's views is all that matters for legitimacy, why should a voting procedure be preferable over other equally fair procedures such as flipping a coin or choosing a decision-maker by lottery?

Liberal critics often appeal to hard cases such as regulations on abortion in order to illustrate the impossibility of reaching an agreement based upon reasons that are acceptable to all citizens (Eberle 2002: 123–125; Ebels-Duggan 2010: 67–70). This impossibility is supposed to show the implausibility of the deliberative model and the superiority of the pluralist alternative they favor. However, it is hard to see how abortion can offer a suitable example in favor of the pluralist model. According to the pluralist model, procedural fairness is what confers legitimacy on outcomes. If this is so, then once a majority decision has taken place citizens should rest content with its outcome, whatever it may be. However, the fact that abortion remains a hotly contested issue for both sides of the debate, regardless of which view happens to be in the majority or minority at any given time, seems to speak against rather than in favor of procedural fairness as a valid criterion of legitimacy. The fact that regulations on abortion remain contested indicates that citizens do not think that giving equal consideration to everyone's view would be a legitimate procedure for deciding this type of issue. Otherwise the issue would have been settled long ago by majority vote. Contrary to what the pluralist model suggests, citizens seem to consider the substantive quality of the reasons in favor and against abortion regulations *essential* for a legitimate decision on the issue. This view finds support from an institutional perspective as well.

Indeed, the claim that the pluralist approach accurately reflects the existing institutions of constitutional democracy seems plainly false. As mentioned earlier, the pluralist approach reflects the fact that the secret ballot allows citizens to vote on the basis of whatever reasons they wish. However, this is not the whole story. What also needs to be accounted for is the significant fact that such decisions may be overruled if they are deemed to be unconstitutional. That is, the liberal critics' alternative conception needs to account (p. 274) for the fact that constitutional democracies impose a constraint upon how insensitive to reasons decisions taken by secret ballot and majority rule can be. However, since this is a *substantive* constraint the resort to procedural fairness will not do. Whereas secret ballot and majority rule can meet the fairness criterion of giving equal treatment to everyone's views, constitutional review cannot even get off the ground on the basis of such a criterion. No matter what specific institutional form this process might take in different democratic societies, it is of necessity a process sensitive to substantive considerations about appropriate content, standards, reasons, and arguments.[8] In order for the process of constitutional review to be properly triggered, it must first be discerned and plausibly argued that the policy in question touches upon some constitutional essentials such as, for example, the protection of citizens' fundamental rights, so that the revision of an otherwise legitimate majority decision (be it by citizens' referenda or by the legislature) can be deemed appropriate in the first place. Once this has been determined, it must then be established whether the policy in question is indeed incompatible with the equal protection of some fundamental right of citizens and, if so, why, to what extent, and so forth. This task must of necessity be guided by substantive considerations about the content and the appropriate normative standards, criteria, reasons, and arguments for its fulfillment. It must discriminate between relevant and irrelevant considerations, appropriate and inappropriate standards, plausible and implausible arguments, forms of reason-

ing, and so on. Now, whatever the standards, criteria, reasons, and arguments may be that are needed and appropriate for such determination, it is clear that they take priority over whatever other considerations may have determined the outcome of the voting process, since the former can legitimately overrule the latter. Citizens may disagree on the standards appropriate for constitutional review and those appropriate for the voting process, but they cannot disagree about the *priority* of the former over the latter if they accept that majoritarian decisions may be legitimately overturned if deemed unconstitutional. Citizens' endorsement of constitutional democracy is tantamount to their endorsement of *that priority*.

Now, since liberal critics endorse constitutional democracy, they are committed to the view that "the state is to protect a schedule of basic rights and liberties enjoyed by all its citizens" (Eberle and Cuneo 2015: sec. 7). This indicates that their account of the proper behavior of citizens who engage in political advocacy and voting cannot be as unconstrained as advertised. As Wolterstorff (1997b: 180) points out, there is an important proviso: citizens should exercise their political voice on the basis of whatever reasons they wish, provided their actions fall within the boundaries of the constitution. But there is a clear tension between a commitment to the equal protection of the basic rights of all citizens and a commitment to the equal treatment of all viewpoints, which grounds the rejection of the priority of public reasons. It is hard to see how the first commitment could find practical or institutional expression without any deviation from the second commitment. If legislation is subject to constitutionality constraints, if the latter can legitimately overrule the former, then it must be because the reasons that are geared to test whether a piece of legislation is compatible with the equal protection of all citizens' constitutional rights can overrule other types of reasons and considerations in support of the policy in question, be they religious or otherwise comprehensive. Thus, if institutionalizing constitutional review is feasible at all, if there is a way for this institution (e.g., judicial review) to do what it is set up to do, it must be because it is possible (1) to draw a distinction between the type of reasons and arguments that are relevant for reviewing the constitutionality of legislation, whatever those are, and the (p. 275) types of reasons and arguments that are relevant for justifying why some piece of legislation is good, beneficial, or whatever the case may be and (2) to give some priority to the former set of reasons and arguments over the latter. The very idea of constitutional review seems to rest on these two assumptions. If we adopt this institutional perspective, we can articulate an interpretation of the priority of public reasons and the duty of civility that is less restrictive than the standard view, but that reflects more accurately what is at stake behind the public reason conception of political justification.

# The Priority of Public Reasons

The public reason conception that I propose is based on a specific interpretation of the three claims already mentioned, namely, that (1) there is a set of reasons that are generally *acceptable to all* democratic citizens, (2) these reasons are *independent from* religious or otherwise comprehensive doctrines, and (3) they ought to have *priority* in de-

termining coercive policies. A defense of the first claim requires identifying reasons and arguments of a certain kind that all democratic citizens, whether religious or secular, can reasonably accept ought to have priority for justifying coercive policies. However, I find the usual characterizations of public reasons as "secular," "accessible," "shareable," "criticizable," and so on highly misleading. Instead, my proposal follows Rawls in identifying public reasons as "properly political" reasons. These are reasons based on those political values and ideals that are the very condition of possibility for a democracy: the ideal of treating citizens as free and equal, and of society as a fair scheme of cooperation, which finds expression in the constitutional principles to which citizens are bound in liberal democracies. These democratic values and principles embedded in the institutions of constitutional democracies provide a reservoir of generally acceptable reasons from which all citizens can draw to publically justify the coercive policies they endorse to their fellow citizens (Rawls 1993: 212–254; Rawls 1999b).

An advantage of this interpretation of the content of public reasons is that it does not face the kind of skeptical doubts that plague other interpretations. Since democratic citizens are precisely the citizens committed to the values and principles of constitutional democracies, it is platitudinous to claim that they share these reasons or that they find them generally acceptable. The standard objection is not that this set of reasons does not exist but rather that the set is too thin to provide a sufficient basis for determining which coercive policies are justified. However, in contrast to Rawls, my proposal is not committed to the "completeness of public reason."[9] To claim that public reasons take priority for the purposes of justifying coercive policies is not the same as the claim that public reasons alone must be sufficient to provide such justification or that they must be the only reasons that citizens can legitimately appeal to for that purpose. Perhaps the best way to explain the difference is by focusing on the second claim, namely, that public reasons are *independent from* religious (or otherwise comprehensive) doctrines.

This claim is usually cashed out in terms of "neutrality," and, as such, it has been the target of vigorous criticisms of the public reason view (Raz 1986; Sher 1997; Arneson 2003). However, it is important to see why this is so. If, following Rawls, one endorses the completeness of public reason, namely, the view that there is a set of reasons shared by (p. 276) all democratic citizens that are sufficient to determine all or nearly all policies that touch upon constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice, then the claim that this set of reasons is independent from all religious or otherwise comprehensive conceptions of the good becomes quite problematic. For it suggests that one could determine the policies that ought to be enforced without any consideration whatsoever as to why they are good. That cannot be right. However, notice that what creates the problem is the assumption of "sufficiency" and not the assumption of "independence." The problem is not that public reasons are indistinguishable from reasons that are religious or otherwise comprehensive but rather that the latter cannot be excluded from the set of reasons sufficient to determine the policies that ought to be enforced. Without the assumption of sufficiency, however, all that is needed to justify the claim that public reasons are independent from other types of reasons is the capacity to intuitively distinguish them for the purposes at hand. My interpretation of the independence claim is based on the intuitive contrast

between, on the one hand, reasons and arguments that aim to show whether or not some specific policy is good, desirable, beneficial, valuable, and so forth and, on the other hand, reasons and arguments that aim to show whether or not the policy in question is compatible with the equal protection of the fundamental rights of all citizens. This contrast can be understood as a specific case of a more general distinction between *the rationale that motivates a practice* and its *justification*. This is a familiar distinction. The reason why people marry, travel, or go to the movies is because they find these practices good, valuable, beneficial, and so on. However, this does not yet tell us whether or under which conditions these practices are justified. For present purposes, we can interpret the contrast in terms of Rawls's catchy characterization of the difference between the right and the good: "the right draws the limit; the good shows the point" (Rawls 2000: 231).

Notice that this way of understanding the logical independence between both types of reasons does not involve any problematic assumption of neutrality. Indeed, if we interpret the claim of independence in this way, it becomes clear that arguments and reasons geared to show the *point* or rationale of a given practice cannot be "neutral" or independent of conceptions of the good, be they religious or secular, since their aim is to show why the practice in question is good, that is, why it is valuable, important, beneficial, and so forth. It seems clear that a crucial element of advocating for the adoption of a specific policy is to offer arguments and reasons that purport to show why the practices the policy regulates are good, worth protecting, or whatever the case may be. However, it seems equally clear that offering these kinds of arguments or reasons may not be enough to *justify* the adoption of the policy in question. For its *justification* may also depend on other kinds of considerations or constraints, for example, whether it is compatible with other policies and practices, whether its benefits and burdens can be fairly distributed, whether it would excessively constrain important freedoms, whether it would have discriminatory effects, and so on. This indicates a sense in which the latter considerations may have constraining priority over the former without in any way annulling their relevance and import. Take the example of same-sex marriage. LGBT citizens want to be able to marry because of the value of marriage, that is, because they find the institution good, beneficial, or whatever the case may be. Certainly, no one wants to marry for the sake of freedom and equality. However, this does not mean that equal treatment or protection of freedom are not important considerations, perhaps even decisive ones, for justifying whether same-sex marriage should be permitted or its ban overruled as unconstitutional.

## (p. 277) The Mutual Accountability Proviso

This intuitive distinction indicates how the *priority of public reasons* can be defended without the additional burden of a commitment to neutrality. In contrast to proposals that either exclude religious or otherwise comprehensive views from public debate or that include them without any restrictions, my proposal articulates a policy of mutual accountability that imposes the same deliberative rights and obligations upon all democratic citizens (Lafont 2014). This proposal recognizes the right of all democratic citizens to adopt their own cognitive stance, whether religious or secular, in political debates in the public

sphere without giving up on the democratic obligation to justify the coercive policies with which all citizens must comply by providing reasons that are acceptable to everyone.

According to the accountability proviso I defend, citizens who participate in political advocacy can appeal to any kind of reasons in support of the policies they favor, provided they are prepared to show—against objections—that these policies are compatible with the democratic commitment to treat all citizens as free and equal and can therefore be reasonably accepted by everyone. In order to fulfill this democratic obligation, citizens must be willing to engage in an argument on the compatibility of their favored policies with the equal protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, and they must be willing to accept the outcome of *that* argument as decisive in settling the question of whether these policies can be legitimately enforced. Objections to the compatibility of such policies with the equal protection of the fundamental rights of all citizens must be (1) properly addressed in public debate and (2) defeated with compelling arguments before citizens' support (or vote) for their enforcement can be considered legitimate.

It is in virtue of this democratic obligation that public reasons have priority. They are the only reasons toward which no one can remain indifferent in their political advocacy. Whereas public reasons need not be the source from which a rationale in support of coercive policies must be crafted, they are the kind of reasons that cannot be ignored, disregarded, or overridden once citizens bring them into public deliberation. They are the reasons that must be engaged *in their own terms* by all politically active citizens if they are offered as objections to the coercive policies under discussion. Since citizens of a constitutional democracy are committed to the equal protection of all citizens' basic rights, it is perfectly appropriate for them to call each other to account regarding the kind of reasons that they are considering or ignoring while advocating for the policies they favor, as this allows them to establish whether or not these reasons are compatible with that commitment. Granted, the shared commitment does not suffice to guarantee *agreement*. But it does give rise to forms of *argumentative entanglement* that allow members of a political community to transform public opinion over time by their continuous attempts to enlist the "unforced force of the better argument" to their cause. Given their shared commitment, they can legitimately ask that convincing reasons and arguments be provided in public debate in order to show that the policies under dispute are in fact compatible with the equal protection of all citizens' basic rights and that this consideration be given *priority* in determining whether or not the policies are legitimate, regardless of other considerations that might also speak in their favor.

As mentioned earlier, the conception of public justification I propose does not share Rawls's assumption about the completeness of public reason. Thus I concede that public (p. 278) reasons alone may be sufficient to rule out some policies in many cases but may not be sufficient to determine which policy to adopt in cases in which both alternatives either are considered equally compatible with treating all citizens as free and equal or are equally contested as incompatible. In cases of the first kind, the policy to be implemented can be decided by majority rule, and its implementation will therefore be based on whatever reasons the majority have in its favor. In cases of the second kind, the contestation

may eventually be resolved one way or the other in public debate, but hard cases are also likely to remain (Dworkin 1977: ch. 4). The abortion debate can be considered a paradigmatic example of the latter.[10] In my view, both sides of the debate have fulfilled the obligation of articulating their objections to the opposite side in terms of public reasons, since both of them appeal to the priority of protecting fundamental rights (in one case of women and in the other of fetuses). They just disagree on their nonpolitical views about what constitutes personhood, whether fetuses are persons, and many such comprehensive issues. So, although the priority of public reasons is indeed reflected in the way the debate has been structured, those reasons alone do not suffice to resolve it. In light of the possibility of a standoff, the political resolution of those types of cases may just have to be a compromise that both sides can live with (at least for as long as there are basic comprehensive disagreements that are directly relevant to the issue but irresolvable). Even so, since according to each side of the debate the protection of fundamental rights is putatively at stake, the priority of public reasons does explain why citizens may consider a policy of accommodation a reasonable (even if temporary) solution in such cases instead of simply endorsing whichever policy happens to be favored by the majority after a vote, as the pluralist approach would suggest. In my view, the abortion example shows that accepting the incompleteness of public reason undermines neither the normative significance of the priority of public reasons nor the practical significance of the duty of mutual accountability.

Now, in order to assess the full significance of the duty of mutual accountability it is important to keep in sight both the personal and the institutional perspectives. The duty of mutual accountability should not be understood as simply expressing a regulative moral ideal that citizens may or may not feel compelled to comply with when advocating and voting for specific policies. As I will briefly illustrate in what follows, the true significance of the duty of mutual accountability is that it makes explicit ideal norms and principles that are implicit in practices and institutions of constitutional democracies—such as judicial review and citizens' rights to legal contestation. These institutional devices provide the legal support needed to transform what would otherwise amount to mere moral aspirations or expectations into effective constraints upon the kind of public deliberation and legislation that characterizes constitutional democracies and distinguishes them from other forms of political organization.

# Citizens' Right to Legal Contestation and Argumentative Entanglement

In constitutional democracies with judicial review, the right to legal contestation guarantees that all citizens can, on their own initiative, open or reopen a deliberative process in which (p. 279) reasons and justifications geared to show the constitutionality of a contested policy are made publically available, such that they can be inspected and challenged with counterarguments that might lead public opinion to be changed and prior decisions to be overturned. The right of citizens to question the constitutionality of any policy or

statute by initiating legal challenges allows them to *structure* public debate on the policy in question as a debate about fundamental rights and therefore as a debate in which the priority of public reasons must be respected. They can do so even if such structuring does not seem antecedently plausible to the rest of the citizenry, perhaps because they frame it in other terms or because they fail to foresee the impact of the statute on the fundamental rights of certain citizens. At least by the time a statute or policy passes through the sluices of judicial review, citizens have to address the constitutionality question and take the priority of public reasons seriously, even if most of them had previously framed the debate in other terms or had given priority to other considerations. Obviously, a claim that a contested statute violates a fundamental right may turn out to be mistaken, and litigants may not be able to change a prior decision or public opinion. But, even in such a case, they still have the right to receive an explicit reasoned justification about why the statute does not in fact violate their rights and why it is therefore compatible with treating them as free and equal. For those who continue to disagree, this reasoned justification in turn highlights the reasons, arguments, and evidence that they would need to more effectively undermine in order to convince the majority of citizens to change their opinion on the matter. From this perspective, the right to legal contestation guarantees all citizens that their communicative power, their ability to trigger political deliberation on issues of fundamental rights, will not fall below some unacceptable minimum regardless of how implausible, unpopular, or idiosyncratic their views may seem to other citizens. The conception of public justification as mutual accountability that I defend emphasizes the contribution that structuring political debates in accordance with the priority of public reasons (and its corresponding standards of scrutiny) has upon the legitimacy of enforcing contested policies. It gives rise to forms of argumentative entanglement that allow members of a political community to gain traction within each other's views and perhaps transform them over time.[11] Although examples are always problematic, the debate on same-sex marriage in the United States offers a good illustration here. For decades the issue was treated in public debate as turning mainly on the meaning of marriage. On that question, there was widespread agreement that marriage is between a man and a woman.[12] However, once political initiatives for state constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriage became part of the political agenda, and citizens legally contested such initiatives in the courts, the focus of public deliberation shifted from an ethical and religious debate on the meaning of marriage to a constitutional debate on equal treatment and fundamental rights.[13] Judicial review of the constitutionality of state bans on same-sex marriage led public debate to treat the issue as a matter of fundamental rights. Quite surprisingly, once the debate became structured in that way, a major shift in public opinion took place in favor of same-sex marriage.[14] Although this development is a complex empirical issue, it is hard to avoid the impression that once the debate became constitutional, many of the citizens who were against same-sex marriage on the basis of their comprehensive views about the meaning of marriage could not find convincing reasons to justify unequal treatment under the law, and they therefore changed their minds about whether it should be legal.[15] Given the astonishingly short period of time within which that change in public opinion has taken place, there is no reason to assume that the majority of citizens who initially opposed same-sex marriage were either unconcerned

(p. 280) about rights or simply falling to attend to reasons. Under such an assumption, it would be hard to explain why they changed their minds. However, there are good reasons to assume that without the extra power that the right to legal contestation granted litigants, such that they could *structure* the political debate as a constitutional debate about fundamental rights, the "unfettered" national political debate would have continued to turn exclusively on religious and ethical questions about which citizens strongly disagree.[16] As a consequence, the comprehensive views of the majority regarding the meaning of marriage would have continued to dictate policy. By contrast, once the public debate became framed in constitutional terms, the standards of scrutiny characteristic of judicial review (e.g., identifying the relevant government interests, investigating the proportionality of the means, weighting empirical evidence, and so on) allowed litigants to get traction within and ultimately transform the views of the majority.

Indeed, whereas it is unclear what standard of scrutiny could be used to resolve religious and ethical debates over the meaning of marriage amongst citizens holding different comprehensive views, it is quite clear that the standards of scrutiny appropriate for a constitutional debate give rise to forms of argumentative entanglement that allow citizens to call each other to account, gather and weight factual evidence "for" and "against" proposals, and transform one another's views over time as a consequence. In the example of the debate over same-sex marriage, the review process required its opponents to identify specific government interests to justify the ban. Once such interests were publicly identified (e.g., protecting the health and welfare of children, fostering procreation within a marital setting), the debate began to turn on questions for which factual evidence could be decisive in settling the answer (e.g., statistical evidence about the welfare of children raised in same-sex couples households, the existence of married couples unable to procreate). But let me briefly focus on a different example that may be helpful for addressing liberal critics' worry that the priority of public reasons threatens religious forms of life in democratic societies.

# The Priority of Public Reasons and Religious Forms of Life

Current debates in European countries on whether to ban the Islamic headscarf from public places seem to be following a very similar path. These debates have mainly focused on the meaning of the Islamic headscarf. On that question there are deep disagreements. Some see it is a symbol of gender inequality, others as a mark of cultural identity, and yet others as having a strongly religious significance. Even those who agree on its religious significance draw very different political conclusions. For some, it justifies the obligation of Muslim women to wear it, whereas for others it justifies the need to ban it in order to prevent foreign religious values from bleeding into or displacing the Christian values of European countries. However, since political initiatives to ban the Islamic headscarf from public places became part of the political agenda in most European countries and citizens began to legally contest such initiatives in the courts, the focus of the debate

has started to shift from a debate on the cultural and religious meaning of wearing the headscarf to a debate on fundamental rights, equal treatment, and nondiscrimination.

(p. 281) This example is particularly interesting because it casts some doubt upon the liberal critics' assumption that the priority of public reasons is unfair to religious citizens and threatens religious forms of life in democratic societies. This view fails to appreciate that the priority of public reasons over comprehensive secular reasons can offer strong protections to religious forms of life. As mentioned previously, many citizens argue in favor of banning the Islamic headscarf from public places by appealing to secular reasons concerning gender equality. Now, it might seem that precisely because their advocacy for the ban draws on the value of equality, it is based on properly political reasons and therefore meets the "priority of public reasons" test. But here lies an illicit conflation. For such a claim would seem to imply that secular reasons, whatever they may be, that purport to explain why the practice of wearing the Islamic scarf is bad are at the same time both appropriate and sufficient for the justification of something entirely different, namely, the imposition of coercion on others who have the right to be treated as equals.[17] The priority of public reasons over comprehensive reasons, whether religious or secular, that is implicit in constitutional review offers an effective protection against this conflation. Indeed, judicial review of the constitutionality of the ban of Islamic headscarves from public places in European countries is slowly shifting the focus of the debate from the meaning and rationale of the practice of wearing the headscarf to the justification for its prohibition. The recent ruling of Germany's Highest Court that the ban on teachers wearing headscarves is not compatible with religious freedom and that excepting Christian symbols from the ban constitutes religious discrimination and is therefore unconstitutional is helping to structure public political debates in accordance with the priority of public reasons and the duty of mutual accountability.[18] It highlights the arguments and reasons that need to be addressed and convincingly defeated before enforcement of the ban can be considered legitimate. Here again there are very good reasons to assume that without the extra power that the right to legal contestation grants litigants, such that they might be able to *structure* the political debate as a constitutional debate about fundamental rights, the "unfettered" political debate would continue to turn on religious and secular comprehensive views about which citizens strongly disagree. As a consequence, the comprehensive secular views of the majority about the meaning of the headscarf would simply continue to dictate policy in European countries.

These examples reveal an important motivation behind the debate about the kinds of reasons that citizens should use to justify coercive policies. It is the danger that a majority could, simply on the basis of their *comprehensive* beliefs, whether religious or secular, illicitly restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of their fellow citizens. However, framing the problem in such anti-majoritarian terms may obscure the democratic character of the interpretation of public reason as mutual accountability that I propose. So let me make a brief final clarification.

# Citizens in Robes

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls (1993: 231–240) claims that in constitutional democracies with judicial review the Supreme Court is the exemplar of public reason. According to my interpretation of public reason, this claim is trivially true. For supreme constitutional courts are precisely the institutions in charge of ensuring, among other things, that policies and statutes (p. 282) respect the priority of public reason, that is, that they do not violate the constitutional rights of citizens. However, if we keep in mind the internal connection between judicial review and citizens' right to legal contestation we can draw two important conclusions on the implicit norms of political justification within constitutional democracies. On the one hand, if citizens endorse the institutions of constitutional democracy, that means that they should behave like they expect the Court to behave; that is, *they should strive to meet the same standards of scrutiny and justification characteristic of public reason that the exemplar they have instituted is supposed to meet*. As Rawls puts it, "public reason sees the office of citizen with its duty of civility as analogous to that of judgeship with its duty of deciding cases" (1993: lv). Contrary to what liberal critics suggest, it makes little sense for citizens to delegate the task of securing the equal protection of their fundamental rights to the courts while simultaneously undermining that task by approaching their own political decisions about fundamental rights in a way that simply gives equal consideration to everyone's views and lets the numbers decide. On the other hand, for that very same reason, the contribution of judicial review to political justification cannot be that the courts undertake constitutional review in isolation from the political debate in the public sphere, as if justice needs to be in robes in order to properly preserve the priority of public reasons (Dworkin 2006). To the contrary, the main way judicial review contributes to political justification is that it empowers citizens to call the rest of the citizenry to put on their robes in order to show how the policies they favor are compatible with the equal protection of the fundamental rights of all citizens.[19]

## Bibliography

Arneson, R. 2003. "Liberal Neutrality on the Good: An Autopsy." In *Perfectionism and Neutrality*, edited by S. Wall and G. Klosko, 191–208. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Audi, R. 1993. "The Place of Religious Argument in a Free and Democratic Society." *San Diego Law Review* 30(4), 677–702.

Audi, R. 1997. "Liberal Democracy and the Place of Religion in Politics." In *Religion in the Public Square,* edited by R. Audi and N. Wolterstorff, 1–66. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Audi, R. 2000. *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Audi, R. 2011. *Democratic Authority and the Separation of Church and State.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Audi, R., and N. Wolterstorff. 1997. *Religion in the Public Square*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Dworkin, R. 1996. *Freedom's Law. The Moral Reading of the Constitution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Dworkin, R. 1997. *Taking Rights Seriously*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Dworkin, R. 2006. *Justice in Robes.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ebels-Duggan, K. 2010. "The Beginning of Community: Politics in the Face of Disagreement." *Philosophical Quarterly* 60, 50–71.

Eberle, C. 2002. *Religious Conviction in Liberal Politics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Eberle, C., and T. Cuneo. 2015. "Religion and Political Theory." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Spring 2015 Edition, edited by Edward N. Zalta. **http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/religion-politics**.

Freeman, S. 2007. *Justice and the Social Contract*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaus, G. 1996. *Justificatory Liberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaus, G. 2011. *The Order of Public Reason*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Greenawalt, K. 1988. *Religious Convictions and Political Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greenawalt, K. 1995. *Private Consciences and Public Reasons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(p. 285) Gutmann, A., and D. Thompson. 2004. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Habermas, J. 1998. *Between Facts and Norms.* Translated by W. Rehg. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. 2005. *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*. Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, J. 2006. "Religion in the Public Sphere." *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 1–25.

Hamburger, P. 2002. *Separation of Church and State*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Laborde, C. 2008. *Critical Republicanism. The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laborde, C. 2012. “State Paternalism and Religious Dress Code.” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 10(2), 398–410.

Lafont, C. 2007. “Religion in the Public Sphere. Remarks on Habermas’s Conception of Public Deliberation in Post-secular Societies.” *Constellations* 14(2), 239–259.

Lafont, C. 2009. “Religion and the Public Sphere: What Are the Deliberative Obligations of Democratic Citizenship?” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 35(1–2), 127–150.

Lafont, C. 2014. “Religious Pluralism in a Deliberative Democracy.” In *Democracy, Law and Religious Pluralism in Europe,* edited by F. Requejo and C. Ungureanu, 46–60. London and New York: Routledge.

Lafont, C. 2016. “Philosophical Foundations of Judicial Review.” In *Philosophical Foundations of Constitutional Law*, edited by D. Dyzenhaus and M. Thorburn, 265–282. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Larmore, C. 1987. *Patterns of Moral Complexity*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Macedo, S. 1990. “The Politics of Justification.” *Political Theory* 18, 280–304.

MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1988. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1990. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press.

Obergefell v. Hodges. 2015. 576 U.S. (No. 14-556, 26 June).

Perry, M. 2010. *The Political Morality of Liberal Democracy*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Pettit, P. 1997. *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, J. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rawls, J. 1996. “Introduction to the Paperback Edition.” In *Political Liberalism*, xxxvii–lxii. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rawls, J. 1999a. “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited.” In *The Law of Peoples,* 129–180. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Rawls, J. 1999b. *The Law of Peoples.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rawls, J. 2000. *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, edited by Barbara Herman. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Raz, J. 1986. *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sandel, M. 2005. *Public Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schwartzman, M. 2004. “The Completeness of Public Reason.” *Politics, Philosophy and Economics* 3(2), 191–220.

Sher, G. 1997. *Beyond Neutrality*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

(p. 286) Stout, J. 2004. *Democracy and Tradition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Vallier, K. 2011. “Against Public Reason Liberalism’s Accessibility Requirement.” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 8, 366–389.

Vallier, K. 2014. *Liberal Politics and Public Faith*. London and New York: Routledge.

Waldron, J. 2005. “The Core of the Case against Judicial Review.” *Yale Law Journal* 115, 1346–1406.

Weithman, P. 2002. *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Weithman, P. (ed.). 1997. *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame.

Wolterstorff, N. 1997a. “The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues.” In *Religion in the Public Square,* edited by R. Audi and N. Wolterstorff, 67–120. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Wolterstorff, N. 1997b. “Why We Should Reject What Liberalism Tells Us about Speaking and Acting in Public for Religious Reasons.” In *Religion and Contemporary Liberalism,* edited by P. Weithman, 162–181. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame.

Wolsterstroff, N. 2012. *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) Well-known defenses of this claim are Audi (1993, 1997, 2011), Habermas (2006), Larmore (1997), Macedo (1990), and Rawls (1993, 1999a).

(2.) For one of the most influential examples of this line of argument, see MacIntyre (1984, 1988, 1990). For an overview of current defenses of this line of argument among the so-called New Traditionalists, see Eberle and Cuneo (2015) and Stout (2004).

(3.) Wolterstorff (2012) articulates an alternative defense of constitutional democracy that aims to avoid the unfairness objection. As he indicates, the commitment to secure

the “equal right to full political voice to all citizens” that lies at the heart of liberal democracy meets the fairness criteria of securing “just treatment of all viewpoints.” (131).

(4.) I omit the additional claim that (4) public reasons are sufficient to decide all or nearly all fundamental political questions, what Rawls calls the “completeness of public reason,” because this claim is not endorsed by all advocates of the public reason conception of political justification. See note 9.

(5.) The aspirational model comes in different varieties; consult Ebels-Duggan (2010) and Eberle (2002).

(6.) For specific defenses of this conclusion, see Ebels-Duggan (2010: 70), Eberle (2002: 10), Wolterstorff (1997b), Weithman (2002: 3).

(7.) For a detailed articulation of this line of criticism against the deliberative conception of democracy, see Wolterstorff (2012: 143–176, esp. 145–147).

(8.) For the purposes of my argument, it does not matter which institutional form constitutional review takes, whether it be weak or strong judicial review or a different solution altogether. For an overview of stronger and weaker forms of judicial review that are adopted in different countries, see Waldron (2005: 1354–1357).

(9.) Rawls claims that public reason “is suitably complete, that is, for at least the great majority of fundamental questions, possibly for all, some combination and balance of political values alone reasonably shows the answer.” (1993: 241) Many authors have forcefully criticized this assumption. For detailed versions of this critique, see Sandel (2005: 223f; Eberle 2002: part 3).

(10.) For the contrary view, see Rawls’s defense of the completeness of public reason based on the example of abortion (1993: 243f). For a similar defense, see Freeman (2007: 242–252). For criticisms of the completeness of public reason, see Greenawalt (1988: 183–187, 1995: 106–120), Sandel (2005: 223f), and Eberle (2002: part 3). For an interesting defense of the normative significance of public reasons in spite of its incompleteness, see Schwartzman (2004).

(11.) The conception of public justification as mutual accountability that I defend is in direct contrast with convergence conceptions of public justification, according to which legitimacy is a function of the de facto convergence on common proposals and not of any form of argumentative entanglement among citizens with different views and ways of reasoning. These remain opaque to one another. For examples of the latter view, see Gaus (2012), Vallier (2011), and Vallier (2014). My approach also contrasts with interpretations of the right to legal contestation as a legal right to be exercised by private individuals in a depoliticized environment and not as a political right to be exercised by citizens. For an example of the former interpretation, see Pettit (1997: 196) and Dworkin (1996: 30). I analyze the contrast between both approaches in detail in Lafont (2016).

(12.) In 1996 the US Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which President Bill Clinton subsequently signed. For federal purposes, Section 3 of DOMA defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Needless to say, the "widespread agreement" on the meaning of marriage was not shared among members of the LGBT minority. See note 16.

(13.) In 1998 Hawaii and Alaska became the first US states to pass constitutional amendments against same-sex marriage. Other states followed suit and passed similar amendments in the following years, reaching a peak of thirty-one in 2012. In Obergefell v. Hodges (2015), the US Supreme Court ruled that the US Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to enter into same-sex marriages.

(14.) According to Pew Research data, "In Pew Research polling in 2001, Americans opposed same-sex marriage by a 57 percent to 35 percent margin. Since then, support for same-sex marriage has steadily grown. Today, a majority of Americans (54 percent) support same-sex marriage, compared with 39 percent who oppose it" (http://www.pewforum.org/2014/03/10/graphics-slideshow-changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage).

(15.) Given the short period of time under consideration, the changes in attitude are only partly due to generational change. As the Pew Research data shows, older generations have consistently become more supportive of same-sex marriage in recent years. It is also interesting to notice that the change in attitude concerns the narrow question of whether same-sex marriage should be legal and not necessarily the comprehensive or religious beliefs concerning homosexuality (e.g., 49 percent of Americans believe that engaging in homosexual behavior is a sin). See http://www.pewforum.org/2014/03/10/graphics-slideshow-changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage.

(16.) Baehr v. Lewin (1993) was the first lawsuit seeking to have the ban on same-sex marriages declared unconstitutional that led to a positive ruling on the question. The state supreme court of Hawaii ruled that, under the state's equal protection clause, denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples constituted discrimination based on sex and that the state needed to justify the ban under the standard known as strict scrutiny, that is, by demonstrating that it "furthers compelling state interests and is narrowly drawn to avoid unnecessary abridgments of constitutional rights." This finding prompted Congress to pass the Defense of Marriage Act and many states to pass constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriages. See notes 12 and 13.

(17.) As in many other cases (e.g., pornography, hate speech), it is perfectly consistent with democratic principles to be simultaneously against the use of the headscarf and against the ban of the headscarf. For an argument along these lines, see Laborde (2012).

(18.) In March 2015 Germany's highest court ruled that a complete ban on teachers wearing headscarves is not compatible with religious freedom. The ruling also overturned state law that granted exceptions to Christian symbols over those of other religions, which would go against the ban on discrimination on religious grounds that is enshrined

in the German constitution. This decision overturned the court’s own ruling on 2003, which allowed states to pass laws banning the headscarf.

(19.) I offer a detailed defense of the democratic function of judicial review in Lafont (2016).

**Cristina Lafont**

Cristina Lafont is Professor of Philosophy at Northwestern University in Illinois, where she is Director of the Program in Critical Theory and codirector of the Research Group on Global Capitalism and Law. A recent book is Global Governance and Human Rights, and coeditor of The Future of Critical Theory: Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order.

# The Liberal Betrayal of Secularism

Shadia B. Drury

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism

*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.18



## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter offers a philosophical overview of the historical relationship between liberalism and secularism in the West. It concludes that secularism has been betrayed by the current ascendancy of a multicultural brand of liberalism. The history of religion in the West has made secularism a necessary posture that the state must adopt in the face of the threat that monotheistic religions pose to political order and stability. Secularism and liberalism are natural allies, but they are not identical. This betrayal has some serious ramifications. Not only is it incapable of dealing with the rising tide of religious extremism, it has allowed Islam to assume the mantle of liberator from the clutches of the colonial hegemon.


Keywords: liberalism, secularism, monotheism, theocracy, cultural hegemony

THE history of religion in the West has made secularism a necessary posture that the state must adopt in the face of the threat that monotheistic religions pose to political order and stability. Secularism and liberalism are natural allies, but they are not identical. What follows is a philosophical bird’s-eye view of the historical relationship between liberalism and secularism in the West and the betrayal of secularism by the current ascendancy of a multicultural brand of liberalism. This betrayal has some serious ramifications. Not only is it incapable of dealing with the rising tide of religious extremism, it has allowed Islam to assume the mantle of liberator from the clutches of the colonial hegemon. With religion back in the driver’s seat, the world is braced for yet another bloodbath. The chapter ends with a letter written by an imaginary personification of secularism, advising his beloved liberty on how to deal with her sad predicament.

# The Menace of Monotheism

Prior to the rise of monotheistic religions, the state and religion were closely allied. Religion was a civil affair. Every city or state had its own gods. These gods were supposed to protect the city from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune—floods, famines, and the horrors of war. The pagan gods were notoriously fickle, and there was no guarantee

that they would actually protect the city from adversity. The gods had to be bribed and cajoled so that they would not neglect the city. This meant that there had to be “sacrifices” made in their honor. These “sacrifices” amounted to grand festivals, where animals were slaughtered, roasted, and eaten in a climate of festivities that included a great deal of singing and dancing. In this way, civil religion united the community in a common life of holidays and festivals.

Pagan religion was not about dogmas or doctrines. It was about ritual. If you did not believe in the gods of the city, no one cared. However, if you did something that was believed to threaten the safety of the city, such as desecrating the temples of the gods, then you were likely to be prosecuted and punished. For example, on the eve of the Athenian invasion (p. 288) of Sicily (415 BCE), the herms that adorned entrances of private homes as well as public buildings, including the agora, were desecrated. These stone structures were a tribute to the god Hermes, who presided over the safety of journeys. They were believed to bring good luck and protection from danger. Such an overt attack on the gods in the middle of the Peloponnesian War threatened the success, even the survival, of the city. Thucydides tells us that when it was discovered that these sacrilegious *acts* had been committed, the Athenians were alarmed; they were afraid that the expedition would fail (Thucydides 1954: vi. 27). Incidentally, it did.

In the pagan world, there was a clear distinction between religion and morality. Morality was about the relations of human beings with one another. Religion was about the relation of human beings with the natural world, especially the elements of the natural world that were unchartered, unknown, and unknowable. Pagan religion made no claims to truth, or knowledge, so it could not stand in the way of science, as the Church did in the case of Galileo and as it is still doing in the case of Darwin. Pagan religion did not pretend to know the deep secrets of the universe, because the latter was inscrutable. Religion was born out of legitimate fear and ignorance—fear of what the future may hold, fear of the contingency of existence, fear of the precariousness of life, and ignorance about the deepest structures of the cosmos as well as the destiny of man.

Pagans rightly assumed that the universe had no *moral* order. They thought of morality as the exclusive province of humanity, its cultures and traditions. All this changed with the intellectual revolution represented by Socrates and Plato—a revolution that paved the way for the reception of monotheism, the triumph of Christianity, and the violent suppression of paganism. This is why the veneration of Socrates throughout the ages has been a colossal error. (I make this case in my forthcoming book, *Socratic Mischief*.)

Socrates, Plato, and the monotheists claimed to have access to a moral order imbedded in the cosmos—a moral order that takes precedence over the order established by the state. In this way, religion, which was inseparable from the state, suddenly became a threat. Monotheism brought an abrupt end to the pluralism, mutual tolerance, and forbearance of the polytheistic world, in which every city had its gods. The Jews declared that only their god was real; all other gods were falsehoods. From a pagan perspective, this was an inexplicably quarrelsome and antisocial posture. The Christians went much further and

declared that all gods other than their own were not only false but also evil; and anyone who worshipped these gods was allied with the forces of darkness, must be reviled, and will ultimately be annihilated. It is easy to see that this point of view is not conducive to political peace or mutual forbearance in a world of diverse people with a plurality of gods.

Far from contributing to human civilization, monotheism has been a menace to humanity. Among its countless destructive achievements, monotheism allied religion with morality. The god of the Christians, like the god of the Jews before them and the god of the Muslims after them, provided a list of "moral laws" that human beings had to conform to if they hoped to avoid his vengeance in this world or the next. This alliance of religion with morality had the effect of making those who did not worship the right god immoral and untrustworthy. Since the only motive for morality was fear, those who did not believe had no fear and hence no decency.

Monotheism did not only moralize religion; it politicized morality. It allowed Christians such as St. Augustine to understand wars of conquest and aggression as just wars, intended to punish the wicked, humble the proud, or vanquish evil. In this way, the alliance of religion (p. 289) and morality did not only degrade morality; it also radicalized politics. It made the latter a reflection of the cosmic struggle between good and evil.[1]

The monotheistic religions have been praised for uniting humanity under a single banner with a single god. They are credited with a cosmopolitan universalism, especially where morality is concerned. But nothing could be further from the truth. The monotheistic god has turned out to be a small, tribal god, not the god of all humanity. This vicious god has inspired violent conquests by Christians, Muslims, and Jews—more than two thousand years later, this viciousness has not abated. What makes the horrors that this god inspires remarkable is the clear conscience and moral righteousness of those who kill in his name —from Crusaders to Jihadists.

The triumph of Christianity over pagan religion was a return of the tormenting malevolent gods that were vanquished by the sunny gods of Homer. The malevolence of the Christian god was not only displayed in the central role played by the eternal fires of hell and damnation in the religion of Jesus but in the fact that the god of the Christians was determined to destroy the world in a great conflagration. Jesus told his disciples that the end will come in their lifetime (Luke 21:32), but it did not. Instead of concluding that Jesus was a false prophet (i.e., someone who makes false prophesies), Christians concluded that the disciples must have misunderstood and continue to anticipate the end of the world with eager expectancy. The idea that the earth is but a temporary abode that will be trashed soon has had dreadful ramifications. Impatient for the glorious conflagration that would bring the world to an end, early Christians lit great fires in the hope of inspiring their god to bring about the promised destruction. This hatred of the world was a shocking development that was rightly regarded with alarm in the pagan world.

The Christians believed, and continue to believe, that the Romans persecuted them for their goodness. But the idea that people hate goodness and find it a threat is not plausible. As the great historian Edward Gibbon (1952) recounted, Christians were persecuted

by Rome because they were dangerous people who threatened the peace, order, and security of the state. The fact that they were suspected of cannibalism (eating the body and drinking the blood of their leader) did not help matters either. Nevertheless, as Gibbon has maintained, the persecution of Christians in Rome has been highly exaggerated, because the number of Christians killed by Rome pales in comparison to the number of Christians killed by their own Church.

After the conversion of Constantine, the Edict of Milan (313) guaranteed all Roman citizens the freedom to worship. But thanks to the alliance of the ecclesiastical hierarchy with political power, this brief period of religious peace and liberty quickly gave way to the Council of Nicaea (325), where a narrowly defined Christian creed was declared the only "true religion" and all else denounced as insolence, heresy, or heathen enormities. As a result, the empire was launched on a merciless persecution of pagans, Jews, heretics, dissenters, women, and freethinkers. Heresy was unavoidable in a religion filled with mind-boggling dogmas and doctrines.

The Theodosian Code (Pharr 1952), a compilation of laws enforced by Christian emperors, reflected the inherent intolerance of Christianity. The building of synagogues was prohibited, pagan worship was criminalized, intermarriage between Jews and Christians was outlawed, adultery and fornication were made punishable by death, and more. Roman law became petty, manifesting a totalitarian intrusiveness into private life, which is still the hallmark of the Catholic Church.

(p. 290) In the end, Rome was overrun by "barbarians" who were mysteriously converted to Christianity. But it may not have been much of a mystery for the ignorant, illiterate, and gullible to be receptive (in the way that educated Romans were not) to a religion that is as magical as it is contradictory. When the Roman Empire collapsed and was replaced by the "Holy Roman Empire," in which the Church was the supreme authority, the West was plunged into the darkest of Dark Ages. Western science, learning, and rationality were arrested. What is worse, the moral sense that monotheism had championed became the casualty of the political triumph of Christianity. The routine burning of heretics (i.e., innocent people)[2] and the invention of the most gruesome instrument of torture made pious people callous to the suffering of others. This callous inhumanity was in line with the hatred of the body and the world.[3]

The emergence of Christianity as a political force introduced a new and hitherto unknown form of politics, which we now know as totalitarianism. The latter is not satisfied with conformity of actions to the law; it seeks control over the hearts, minds, sentiments, and even the private sexual habits of its subjects. Eventually, there came along a heretic that had so many devoted followers that the Church could not kill them all. His name was Martin Luther. In this way, the enforced unity of Christendom began to shatter. Different political entities were allied with either the Catholic Church or the Protestant upstarts. For two hundred years vicious wars raged between Protestants and Catholics. In response to the mayhem of monotheism, liberal ideas emerged, and secularism appeared in their wake.

Prior to the rise of monotheism, religion served the state by supporting its this-worldly endeavors. But the world-be-damned attitude of monotheism in general, and Christianity and Islam in particular, made religion the enemy of the worldly aspirations to which the state (properly understood) is and must be committed. Having become the enemy of the state, religion had to be renounced. Secularism is the name of that renunciation. It is a hostile, but necessary, posture that the state must adopt to defend itself and its citizens from the mayhem that monotheistic religion fosters in the public realm. However, the ability of secularism to defend the state from the threats posed by religion is precarious, as our "postsecular age" illustrates. The reason is that secularism depended heavily on liberalism in the West. Unfortunately, liberalism has never been fully committed to secularism, either in its early inception or in its contemporary incarnation. Liberalism has betrayed secularism, which explains why its success in reigning in religion has been modest in the past and why it cannot cope with the rise of religious terror in the twenty-first century.

# A Flaw in the Foundations of Liberalism

Liberalism emerged as a response to the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In its early incarnations, liberalism was not secular. Of the three great liberal revolutions—the English Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1776), and the French Revolution (1789)—only the latter was secular. The others were based on the ideas of the early founding fathers of liberalism, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and John Locke (1632–1704). Even though Hobbes was unrepentantly anticlerical, his solution to religious slaughter was not secular. Hobbes surmised that if the Christian religion were to be prevented from wreaking havoc on the world, it must be made subordinate to the power of the state. Henry (p. 291) VIII ended the supremacy of the Pope over England and began the process of subordinating the English churches to the state; his daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, completed the task. The Queen made her churches the foundation of faith-based initiatives whose task was to look after the poor, the sick, and the downtrodden. This Elizabethan solution was intended to prevent the Church from acting autonomously. This is how the Anglican (i.e., English) Church was born. It was not an easy task; Popish plots had to be ruthlessly destroyed. Anglicanism was anathema to the Catholic Church and still is. Today, Queen Elizabeth II remains the head of the Anglican Church.

Hobbes defended the absolute power of the state over the church in secular terms—as the rational choice for individuals who wish to escape the "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" conditions of the state of nature, which was a metaphor for the English Civil War of the 1640s and its religious violence. Hobbes surmised that only a state with absolute power over life and death could have any chance of subduing the warring religious factions in its territory and creating a modicum of peace and order. The threat of death is the supreme weapon that the state has at its disposal. And for the most part, human beings are willing to do almost anything to avoid violent death. But Hobbes also realized

that his solution was not foolproof, because religion gives people contempt for life and an appetite for martyrdom, which makes them heedless of death (Hobbes [1651] 1985).

The conflict between Monarchists (Anglicans) and Parliamentarians (radical Protestants) during the English Civil War of the 1640s ended with the beheading of King Charles I and the military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. When the religious fanaticism finally fizzled and the monarchy was restored under Charles II (1660), the established Church of England was still the stalwart of the English establishment; but its enforced religious unity could not be sustained. Radical Protestant Churches demanded freedom, and it was eventually granted with the Glorious Revolution of 1688. John Locke provided the intellectual justification of that liberal revolution and has rightly been recognized as one of the most important fathers of liberalism.

In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke ([1690] 1952) defended the freedom of the Protestant Churches to worship as they pleased. He was sympathetic to the idea that they had to follow their conscience in order to attain salvation. The Lockean love of liberty was erected on the *freedom of religion*, not the *freedom from religion*. Lockean liberalism was not secular; it made religion the center of its defense of freedom. This may have been a wise strategy in the seventeenth century, but it was also fraught with perils that continue to haunt us. I will highlight three of its flaws.

First, the celebrated tolerance of Lockean liberalism was limited to Protestants. In his famous *Letter Concerning Toleration* Locke ([1689] 1993) could not tolerate either atheists or Catholics. Atheists had no fear of hell and damnation, so they could not be trusted to testify under oath in a court of law. (Locke had a Christian view of human depravity, so he assumed that without hell and damnation, human beings had no motive to behave decently.) He did not trust Catholics because their primary allegiance was to a foreign sovereign —namely, the Pope, who would like nothing better than to topple the English throne, its Parliament, and its bogus church. The conflicts in Northern Ireland continue to be a reminder of these religious rivalries.

The second flaw in the Lockean liberal solution to religious strife is making religious freedom the heart of the liberal polity. This is clearly manifest in the American founding, because the radical Puritans who immigrated to America in search of religious freedom (p. 292) adopted Locke’s ideas. The First Amendment to the American Constitution has been generously interpreted as requiring the separation of church and state, religion and politics. But this is too generous an interpretation. The First Amendment reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” It would be more accurate to regard this nonestablishment clause as just that: no established church, and no English Hobbesian ideas that allow the state to tell us what to believe, so freedom of religion must be supreme.[4] This is a far cry from secularism, or the view that the state is to be governed only by principles accessible to all through reason, without any appeal to the authority of revelation.

The American Constitution outlaws the establishment of a state religion, but it does not outlaw religious interference in public policy. On the contrary, it makes the freedom of religion the heart of its liberalism. It insists that the state should not interfere with religion, but it demands no *reciprocal noninterference on the part of religion in state affairs or social policies.* Religious groups continue to resist efforts to secularize laws governing private morality. Religious groups resist the teaching of evolution in science classes, they influence the choice of justices of the Supreme Court, and they campaign against legislation that is contrary to their religious beliefs, such as contraception, abortion, and same-sex marriage. In other words, the vaunted "wall of separation" between church and state was little more than a twinkle in the eye of Jefferson.

The First Amendment to the America Constitution has never prevented Americans past or present from giving their nation a decidedly religious interpretation. The conception of America as the new Zion, the Promised Land, the City on a Hill that will inspire and lead the world to a new epoch of freedom, truth, and justice has hardly abated (Cherry 1998). It continues to guide a foreign policy that is neither secular nor modest but filled with the self-righteous conceits of the godly.

The third flaw of Lockean liberalism is its oblivion to the dangers of unhindered religious liberty. In North America, we have been raised on a culture that gives religion a special place of honor that puts it above all criticism. We are inclined to assume that freedom of religion, like freedom of speech, is sacrosanct. In truth, neither one is sacrosanct. Freedom of religion (like freedom of speech) must be qualified, because freedom is never absolute. Even in the most liberal society, freedom must be limited by the principle of harm (Mill [1859] 1956). Religious people who refuse their children life-saving blood transfusions are harming them—parental freedom of religion cannot trump the harm involved. The liberal principle of harm does not extend to those who are "offended" by ideas that are at odds with their religious beliefs, since they are not required to engage in the conversation or buy the offending books.

The sacrosanct nature of freedom of religion is familiar and natural to us as North Americans, making it difficult to recognize how bizarre it is. Its origin was in the Protestant belief that to qualify for salvation people must be free to follow their conscience. The freedom of conscience that Protestantism glorifies assumed that sin is acting contrary to conscience, *regardless of what conscience may dictate*. The idea has deep roots in Christianity. Even Thomas Aquinas, a stalwart of the Catholic Church, maintained that sin is not doing what is wrong but acting contrary to conscience, even when the latter is *mistaken* and the action involved is wrong. In other words, doing terrible things that harm or kill other people is not sinful, if it is *genuinely and sincerely* authorized by conscience (Aquinas 1981: I-II, Q.19, A.5). By the same token, doing something that harms no one may be a grievous sin if it is (p. 293) contrary to conscience. The doctrine is bizarre because it permits an unbridled freedom of conscience, while at the same time recognizing, as Aquinas did, that conscience is not infallible and can often be tragically mistaken.

The doctrine explains why religion lends itself to the most radical, most bloody, and most gruesome projects—whether it is the butchery of Muslims and Jews by Crusaders in the Middle Ages or the beheadings of Western journalists and Syrian soldiers by the "Islamic State" in the twenty-first century. These gruesome actions are facilitated by religion because the latter allows these horrors to be committed in good conscience. In contrast, Vladimir Lenin used to love to listen to Beethoven's *Appationata*, but he did not allow himself the pleasure because it made him feel like patting everyone's head, when his task required that he break quite a few heads. If he had exchanged his love for Beethoven with a love for Jesus or Mohammed, he would have had no difficulty committing whatever atrocities he needed to commit.

In conclusion, Locke's solution, like Hobbes's, does not succeed in extricating the state from the snares of religious dogmas and debates. Locke may be excused for not embracing secularism. The latter was not likely to be feasible in an age where religious fervor was at such a feverish pitch. Puritans or radical Protestants would never have embraced freedom as a principle of government in and of itself. After all, Christianity cannot embrace freedom as a value, since a fallen humanity cannot possibly use it well. But in the context of religious liberty, freedom as the foundation of the state became palatable. So, as a strategy for making freedom palatable, Locke can be considered successful. In this way, Lockean liberalism unwittingly paved the way for the marriage of liberalism and secularism.

# The Rise of Secular Liberty

The Enlightenment rationalism of the French Philosophes and the French Revolution of 1789 paved the way for the emergence of a secular brand of liberalism. Unlike England, where Protestantism took root, France was a Catholic country subject to the yoke of the Catholic Church. Since the Church was allied with the *ancien régime*, the revolutionary insurrection against absolute monarchy was also an insurrection against the Catholic clergy—good and bad alike were hunted down. All monastic and ecclesiastical property was confiscated. When Napoleon rescued the Revolution from its violent excesses, he maintained the Republic's secular anticlerical posture. He invaded Northern Italy and forced the Papacy to relinquish its temporal power. But after his defeat in 1814, Europe was seized by a reactionary fervor, and the Congress of Vienna restored the temporal power of the Papacy—that is, its sovereignty over the Papal States of Italy. To this day, France thinks of herself as a proud secular republic. In this way, a marriage between secularism and the liberal principles of the Revolution was forged.

Secularism is not simply neutrality vis-à-vis the different religious denominations within the state. It is not a matter of treating all religious groups with equal respect. Secularism is a decidedly wary, if not altogether hostile, disposition to all religious incursions into the public realm. Secularism is the recognition that religion is the enemy of the state. For, whatever we think the state must accomplish or achieve, its first and foremost function is the creation of order and stability within the territory that it controls. Insofar as untamed

religions pose a (p. 294) serious, palpable, and credible threat to order and stability, not to mention freedom, they are the enemies of any state, especially the liberal state, in which freedom is fundamental. France is an overtly secular country in the way that the United States, Britain, and Canada (with the exception of Quebec after the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s) are not.

In the English-speaking world, John Stuart Mill articulated a secular brand of liberalism, which did not revolve around the freedom of religion. In his famous *On Liberty*, he defended freedom of thought and speech, especially when the latter was opposed to received opinion. His liberalism revolved around individuality, eccentricity, and freedom of lifestyle. He defended the most extensive freedom of action, limited only by the principle of harm. He argued that a liberal state could legitimately punish people only if they cause harm, or present a great risk of harm, to others. This meant that the state could not punish people for private vice. It follows that a host of victimless crimes must be removed from the legal apparatus. Mill opposed legal sanctions against prostitution, gambling, drunkenness, adultery, suicide, the purchase of dangerous substances, and fornication between consenting adults. This secular liberalism began to take root in England a decade after the Wolfenden report was published in 1957. The report was created by a group of individuals who were appointed to examine laws criminalizing homosexuality and prostitution. Influenced by Mill, they believed that the function of law is to prevent harm, not to enforce the moral norms of society. In other words, the function of law is not to police the private lives of individuals in an effort to stamp out what the religious deem to be “sin.”

This was a clear triumph for both secularism and political freedom. For the process of exterminating private vice cannot be clearly separated from punishing dissident opinions, enlightened points of view, and even the truth itself whenever these conflict with orthodoxy, religious or otherwise. One thing is clear: secularism and liberty are natural allies because religion, especially Christianity, is not satisfied with the external conformity of conduct; it seeks an inner conformity of heart and mind. This is why a secular state is necessary for freedom of thought as well as the freedom to live by one’s own lights, as long as this involves no harm to others.

Conservatives and religious moralists denounce the secular liberal state on the grounds that it promotes immorality and private vice. But there is a gulf between promoting something and refusing to allow governments to define morality and use the power of law to enforce it.

# Liberal Suicide

Having finally embraced a truly secular liberty, it was soon betrayed—not by the reactionary forces of religion and misogyny but by liberalism itself. Leading liberals began to doubt the liberal primacy of the individual. They were convinced by their communitarian opponents that the individual could not be the unit of analysis, on the grounds that the individual could not be conceived without the community. At the heart of the debate between liberals and communitarians was the conception of the self. Communitarians

dreamed of a time when the self was “situated,” or “rooted in the soil” as Heidegger would put it. They dreamed of a shared conception of the good and a shared morality. They surmised that in the absence of shared goals, the self is isolated, alienated, empty, and meaningless (Taylor 1991). They (p. 295) accused liberalism of creating this meaningless self. Some went so far as to invoke Hannah Arendt in thinking that this atomized, dislocated, rootless self is liable to become part of the thoughtless masses who are vulnerable to the seductions of totalitarianism.[5]

In his introduction to *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, liberal philosopher Will Kymlicka (1989) confessed that the communitarian critics of liberalism have had a discomforting effect on him. He surmised that liberalism has not paid sufficient attention to the importance of belonging to specific communities and cultures. Kymlicka conceded the obvious: individuals are nourished in communities. From that platitude, he concluded that groups should have rights, which include a positive effort on behalf of the state to assist them in maintaining and preserving their distinctive cultures—even when the goals and ideals of that culture are at odds with liberal goals and ideals. Kymlicka maintained that these cultures should be supported, not for the sake of the groups themselves but for the sake of the flourishing of individuals. In this way, communitarianism penetrated the heart of liberalism, and group rights entered the liberal lexicon.

As a result, a new multiculturalism was born. It was not a casual recognition of the fact of plurality (especially in immigrant societies such as Canada and the United States) but a new understanding of liberal society as composed of a plurality of tightly knit communities with shared values, religion, and conception of the morality. These communities have a status in liberal society that goes beyond the freedom of association. They have the right to demand recognition, the right of self-determination, and even the right to financial support from the state to preserve and promote their distinctive culture. Some of the provinces in Canada provide public funds for religious schools of any faith—Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist. There is no doubt that the religious indoctrination to which these children are exposed flies in the face of the liberal values enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is nothing short of suicidal for a liberal state to be funding the illiberal indoctrination of its children and future citizens.

The fact is that these illiberal, insular, religious cultures, which the liberal state is obligated to recognize and indulge, cannot sustain themselves without the coercion and oppression of individuals—usually women and children. In response to this criticism, those who promote this new multicultural brand of liberalism claim that individuals are free to exit these communities if they find them oppressive and join the greater liberal society.

This response makes two fallacious assumptions. First, it assumes that a robust and vigorous liberal society will always be there to embrace individual refugees escaping their group oppression. Where liberal values have no primacy, how can we expect a society to have a robust liberal center? The reason that liberals are attracted to multiculturalism is that they (falsely) believe that liberalism has no conception of the good, no core, no vision, and no conception of individual excellence. It is a blank slate—it is as neutral as it is

flaccid.[6] Second, it assumes that the exit ramps from these oppressive enclaves are accessible and not booby-trapped. Just ask women who have tried to escape the polygamous sect in Bountiful, British Columbia. Or ask Aqsa Parvez, who was killed by her father upon finding out that she was in the habit of removing her hijab when she arrived at school. Or ask Omar Khadr if he chose to fight for the Taliban in Afghanistan and end up in Guantanamo Bay (Drury 2012b).

The concept of rights was devised to protect individuals from the oppressions of society and its endless demand for conformity. The new multiculturalism allows the group to usurp the concept of rights and use it against the individual—all in the name of freedom of religion. Surely, the children oppressed by the religions of their parents are not free—they are (p. 296) not free to learn to think and choose their religious affiliation when they reach the age of maturity and can make an intelligent choice. This is the very least that the liberal state owes its children.

One thing is clear. The new multiculturalism allows religion to re-enter public life from the back door and assert its power once again. No one has been more enthusiastic about this new paradigm than Charles Taylor. In *A Secular Age*, the Canadian philosopher claims that the history of the West has been a transition from religiosity and enchantment to secularism and its attendant disillusionment and disenchantment. In a stunning sleight of hand, Taylor sets out to redefine both liberalism and secularism to fit the new paradigm. He distinguishes between two models of *laïcité*, or secularity. He calls one the "Rigid Control Model" and the other the "Diversity Model." The Rigid Control Model insists on controlling and containing the role of religion in public life; it insists on a rigid separation of church and state; it insists on the neutrality of the public space where religion is concerned. Taylor associates the Rigid Control Model with Turkey and France. He tells us that keeping religion out of the public space cannot be accomplished without trampling on freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and freedom of speech. He paints secularism (*laïcité*) as if it were a totalitarian regime.

Instead, Taylor offers a new version of secularism that is supposedly not autocratic. Based on the Diversity Model, this new secularism refuses to remove the Christmas tree from the public space; it refuses to leave the latter totally naked. Taylor is convinced that the Diversity Model will save liberal society from the disenchantment of secularism. In my view, the claim that the Diversity Model is a kinder, sweeter version of *laïcité* is a sleight of hand. The whole arrangement is meant to highlight the legitimacy, importance, and centrality of religion in the lives of individuals and groups. There is nothing secular about it.

In a lecture delivered to the American Political Science Association, held in Toronto in 2009, Taylor proposed the idea of a religious version of Bill 101 (the bill that protects the French language in the French Canadian province of Quebec by insisting that signs on businesses must be in French, immigrants must send their children to French schools, and the like). He surmised that if language can be protected, why not religion? In response to this bizarre and abhorrent idea, Taylor needs to be reminded that religions are

not languages. They are a set of ideas about the right, the true, and the good. To protect them is to silence all intelligent disputes and conversations about truth and goodness. It would be a death sentence for intellectual life. We may as well close our institutions of higher learning, not to mention our satirical magazines.

A religious bill of rights would criminalize any mockery of religion that might offend the devout. This would no doubt avoid the Danish Cartoon crisis of 2005 or the murder of the satirical cartoonists of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine of 2015. In his address to the American Political Science Association, Taylor declared that he was dismayed and appalled by the offensiveness of the Danish cartoons. In fact, the cartoons that were in poor taste were not published by the magazine but used by Muslim extremists to rile Muslim hooligans. The ones published by the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten,* were delightful and hilarious. Instead of a religious bill of rights, Muslims who immigrate to the West must be warned that all religions are targets of mockery, according to secular traditions.

Taylor prefers a world in which all religions are subjects of reverence. But the inclination to take religion too seriously is a recipe for catastrophe. A society in which the mockery of religion is common practice is healthier because laughter undermines the fanaticism and (p. 297) violence that religious seriousness inspires. Moreover, the mockery of religion provides opportunities for discussion and debate. These opportunities must be seized by intelligent people of good will who are genuinely interested in understanding the faiths of their fellow citizens. Wasn't the Prophet Mohammed a warrior? Isn't there a difference between a warrior and a terrorist? Is it not the case that warriors do not slaughter the helpless and unarmed but only fight other warriors? How can those who slaughter the vulnerable and defenseless claim to act in his name? Wasn't Aisha nine years old when Mohammed married her? How can a forty-year-old man marry a nine-year-old? With so many suicide bombers, is there a chance that heaven might run out of virgins? The Islamic heaven seems to be designed for men; do women have any chance of getting into heaven? Instead of being indignant, Islamic scholars should answer some of these questions in public or popular forums. But in a climate where religion is to be respected, these questions will offend the devout; the very asking of the questions will run afoul of the "respect" that Taylor believes religion is due.

Taylor's dream of a religious bill of rights guarantees a plurality of mutually exclusive solidarities without any opportunities for mutual understanding. Uncomprehending respect for religion is likely to backfire. Far from promoting mutual respect, it is likely to promote mutual hatred and contempt, which are impediments to any hope for social harmony in a multireligious society. The question is: For how long can the thin veneer of hypocrisy required by the politics of recognition keep the mutual hatred and contempt from erupting into religious violence?

As conceived by Taylor, multiculturalism allows religion to re-enchant the public sphere. But this re-enchantment may backfire. A society defined by religious groups vying for power and privilege may be the furthest thing from the solidarity that Taylor seeks. Moreover, a religious bill of rights would muzzle all legitimate criticism of religion. It would

threaten the freedom from priestly power that was the singular achievement of the Enlightenment. In the modern predicament, it would not be the power only of the priests that will hold us captive but also of Shamans, Imams, and other pretenders.

The idea of a religious bill of rights raises the nightmarish specter of blasphemy laws, which several Islamic countries, such as Pakistan, are eager to see adopted by the United Nations. It would guarantee the universality of bigotry, ignorance, and injustice. Far from being a brave new world beyond the horizon, as Taylor assumes, the new *laïcité* would reinvent dark times. What is stunning about Taylor's achievement is that he has managed to convince the academy that his Diversity Model is the new face of *secularism* and *liberalism*.

# The Betrayal of Secularism: A Letter

What follows is an imaginary letter written by a personification of secularism or *Laïcité*. The French term has a more strident, manly aura, akin to French secularism. The letter is addressed to his beloved friend, Liberty.

> Dearest Liberty,
>
> Nothing I say in this letter can change the fact that we are natural allies and that I remain your true and devoted friend. Nevertheless, you have unwittingly betrayed me, and I fear that the results may be disastrous for you and the world. The purpose of my letter is not to scold you or to express bitterness or disappointment. I am writing to make you aware of your perilous (p. 298) predicament, in the hope that you might see your way more clearly out of the fog. I continue to believe that, together, we can mitigate the horrors of religion and rescue the world from what has been an endless source of violence and misery.
>
> There is no doubt that you have had a long and glorious history. You have been a force of for the transformation of society. You have inspired the English Revolution of 1688, the American Revolution of 1776, and the French Revolution of 1789. You have triumphed over tangible evils of the feudal age—arbitrary government, ascribed status, and religious conformity. You succeeded in replacing absolute sovereignty with limited government and the rule of law. You succeeded in replacing ascribed status with the idea of careers open to talents. You succeeded in replacing religious conformity with religious freedom; Christians are no longer being burned alive or tortured till they confess their heterodox beliefs; nor do they watch their children tortured till they bear witness against them.[7] These are impressive accomplishments. Your achievements notwithstanding, you have lost your way.
>
> You seem to be suffering from an identity crisis. You have allowed your enemies to define you. Your wise insistence that the state should be neutral vis-à-vis religions has been mistaken for an empty banality devoid of character or any conception of individual excellence, but that is not true. You have some clear conceptions of hu-

man excellence, but you do not insist that everyone needs to conform to them; nor do you deem it a sin for people to reject them. John Stuart Mill gave voice to one of your ideals when he contrasted the “passive character” that is often admired by the religious, with the “active character” (Mill 1910: 211f). Mill defended the latter against the passive acquiescence that is encouraged by the religious. He thought that the active character is inclined to take responsibility for his condition and to strive to improve it. In contrast, the passive character surrenders to fate without making any effort to improve his lot or that of his neighbors. Mill worried that the passive character is inclined to be envious and rancorous.

Far from being an empty vessel, indifferent to excellence, your devotion to individuality has been about nothing but the cultivation of individual excellence. You have not only celebrated the active type but also the authentic individual who is true to himself. Far from being a posture of selfish self-absorption as Taylor (1991) maintains, the ethic of authenticity is a celebration of the ancient virtue of courage. It requires courage for individuals to be true to themselves. It requires courage to stand alone, against the group and its demands for conformity. Breaking with one’s group requires courage of one’s convictions. To be authentic demands strength of character, for it will inevitably involve ostracism and alienation. Individuality is not a natural or given fact; it is an ideal to be achieved. It can only be achieved by a conscious and active personality.

Thanks to Charles Taylor and others, the development of character has been replaced by the quest for identity. However, there is an important difference between character and identity. Identity is given and inescapable, since it is a function of one’s birth, ethnicity, and language. It is like fate; there is nothing that one can do about it except surrender or engage in the meaningless and potentially deadly politics of identity. There is nothing we can do about the fact that some people are pink and some are brown or black. These are not political because they are not negotiable. However, if some people vote for conservatives and others vote for socialists, then we have something to argue about (this point has been better made by Mouffe 1993). Only then do we have politics in the form of reason and discourse, not mutual annihilation or hypocritical respect or “recognition,” as Taylor would have it.

In contrast to identity, character is developed or cultivated. Whereas character belongs to persons as individuals, identity belongs to persons as members of a group. This is not to say that parents, schools, and communities play no role in the development of character. Nevertheless, character is an achievement of individuals, to be attained by education and self-knowledge. In other words, the acquisition of identity is passive, whereas the cultivation of character is an active achievement. By replacing the primacy of character with that of identity, something important is lost.

(p. 299) Once we are defined as members of a group, it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid being implicated in the criminal activity of others within the group. The transgressions of one person are likely to implicate the whole community. We find ourselves in the dreadful predicament of Anne Frank under Nazism. Why is it, she asked, that when a gentile commits a crime only he or she is guilty, but when a Jew commits a crime, then all the Jews of the world are guilty? The primacy of identity over character supports the concept of collective guilt, which afflicts Muslims in our time. We constantly hear of Muslim terrorism, in which all Muslims are implicated.

In your wisdom, you have made every effort to rob politics of its enchantments, so that people can be left alone to enjoy their own enchantments—music, art, literature, love, dancing, and even religion, if need be. Nevertheless, your enemies have accused you of disenchanting the world. They have painted you as an empty vessel—a champion of the unencumbered self, devoid of character, and incapable of friendship. You have made the colossal error of agreeing with their characterization and allowing them to re-enchant the world with the same grisly religions we have seen before. Western modernity is appalled at the barbarity of the "Islamic State" with its hideous beheadings and gruesome burnings alive. The West has forgotten that this sort of savagery was routine for hundreds of years when the Church had temporal power. Burning people alive was a spectacle, an *auto-de-fé*—an "act of faith." Those who were burnt alive, sometimes in large groups, were merely paying their due "penance" for their sins. We are seeing a return of the same religious cruelty in the form of the Islamic State. How enchanting is this grisly brutality? How enchanting was the world of the Inquisition? How dare your enemies accuse you of disenchanting the world? What price are they willing to pay for their cozy collectivity?

Despite your self-effacement at home, your conduct abroad has been nothing short of imperious. Around the world you are the poster-child of American foreign policy—bombing strange people in strange lands to liberate their women, educate their children, and bestow on them liberal democratic constitutions. This is a terrible mistake; it has its source in your inability to accept yourself as one ideal among others. You have become an international evangel, seated on the right hand of justice. You have donned the absolutism of the religious creeds that together we were determined to drive out of politics. This has led some to say, not without reason, that secularism is just another religion. As long as you are perceived as another bit of dogma, you will be ill equipped to deal with the rising tide of religious extremism around the world.

Gone are the days when you were the liberator. The power, hegemony, and technological violence of the United States have turned you into the oppressor in the eyes of the world. The drones and hellfire missiles are seared into the imagination of the world—so are the innocent children that they incinerate. To say that you are unpopular is an understatement—you have become contemptible in the eyes of the

world, especially the Muslim world. The worst thing about this predicament is that it has allowed Islam to assume the mantle of the anticolonial liberator. In the twenty-first century, Islam has become what Marxism used to be—an apocalyptic ideology of emancipation. Conversion to Islam has become a badge of honor—solidarity with the oppressed against the forces of evil, exploitation, and colonialism. The brutality of Islamic violence is overlooked; the journalists who are beheaded are dismissed as parts of the propaganda machines for the global tyranny of the West. All of this does not auger well for the world. Humanity must brace itself for a new religious bloodbath. You, my dearest liberty, cannot play a positive role in this impending disaster unless you muster the courage to stand up to religion at home. But you should avoid playing a military role—ideology cannot be defeated with bombs. You should aim to inspire. Only then is there a chance that your siren song might rise again from the ashes.

I remain forever,

Yours Truly,

*Laïcité*

## Bibliography

Aquinas, T. 1981. *Summa Theologica*. 5 vols. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics.

Cherry, C. (ed.). 1998. *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*, 2nd ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Drury, S. 2004. *Terror and Civilization: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Drury, S. 2008. *Aquinas and Modernity: The Lost Promise of Natural Law*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Drury, S. 2012a. "Is Freedom of Religion a Mistake?" *Free Inquiry* 32(1):19, 44–45.

Drury, S. 2012b. "Omar Khadr and the Perils of Canadian Multiculturalism." In *Omar Khadr, Oh Canada*, edited by Janice Williamson, 412–424. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Gibbon, E. 1952. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Viking.

Hamilton, E. 1942. *Mythology*. New York: Little, Brown.

Hobbes, T. 1651. *Leviathan*. Edited by C. B. Macpherson. Repr. Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1985.

Kymlicka, W. 1989. *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lea, H. 1955. *A History of the Inquisition*. 3 vols. New York: Russell & Russell.

Locke, J. 1689. *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Edited by James Tulley. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983.

(p. 301) Locke, J. 1690. *The Second Treatise of Government*. Repr. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952.

Mill, J. 1859. *On Liberty*. Repr. New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1956.

Mill, J. 1910. *Considerations on Representative Government in Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Representative Government*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons.

Mouffe, C. 1993. *The Return of the Political*. New York: Verso.

Pharr, C. (trans.). 1952. *Theodosian Code*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sandel, M. (ed.). 1984. *Liberalism and Its Critics*. New York: New York University Press.

Smart, N. 1969. *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. New York: Scribner's.

Taylor, C. 1991. *The Malaise of Modernity*. Toronto: Anansi Press.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Thucydides. 1954. *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*. Translated by Rex Warner. New York: Penguin.

## Notes:

(1.) In my article "Vanquishing Evil" in *Free Inquiry* (December 2014/January 2015), I defend an antimoralistic posture where politics is concerned.

(2.) Some of the earliest heretics were Arians of the fourth century whose only crime was being logical; for they maintained that Jesus could not be both God and the Son of God at the same time. The Albigensians were massacred in the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) despite their piety, for they knew enough about the Bible to know that a Pope adorned in jewels and crowned with gold was no representative of Christ.

(3.) Thomas Aquinas's defense of the Inquisition is an example of how otherwise decent and intelligent people can be made vile and callous by their religion (Drury 2008: ch. 3).

(4.) I make the case against freedom of religion in Drury (2012).

(5.) See Michael Sandel (1984), especially the introduction by Sandel and essays by Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre.

(6.) There is no doubt that influential but arid liberal writers such a John Rawls (1971) regard the liberal state as neutral vis à vis the plurality of conceptions of the good. This vaunted neutrality is highly exaggerated for reasons I explain later. Rawls distinguishes between the right and the good. He thinks that the liberal state must be neutral regarding the plurality of goods and ways of life within the confines of what is right—that is, the principles of justice.

(7.) Pope Innocent IV made torture an official policy; his papal bull "Ad extirpanda" (1252) allowed Dominican Inquisitors to torture boys of fourteen and girls of twelve years of age. See Lea (1955: vol. 1, 337f).

**Shadia B. Drury**

Shadia B. Drury is Professor Emeritus at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada. Her books include Leo Strauss and the American Right, Terror and Civilization: Christianity, Politics, and the Western Psyche, and Aquinas and Modernity: The Lost Promise of Natural Law.

# Religious Freedom in a Secular Society

Roger Trigg

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.19

## Abstract and Keywords

In the West, the distinction between the forms of secularism in France and the United States is instructive. The attitudes and legal approaches of both have their roots in the European Enlightenment, but their treatment of religion is significantly different due to their distinctive views on human reason. The first takes reason to be intrinsically liberating. Its watchword is human freedom and autonomy, but it takes these as given, just as it assumes a fundamental equality among all people. The second understands reason, freedom, and equality within a religious context. Freedom is God-given and must be respected as such, so freedom of religion must be recognized. Beyond these two positions, aggressive secularism regards all religious claims as beyond reason or even irrational and potentially dangerous. That kind of secularism can never achieve the neutrality to which aspires and always creates second-class citizens out of some religious believers.

Keywords: secularism, Enlightenment, freedom, state neutrality, religious liberty, equality, rights

THE secularist project can be interpreted and put into practice in many different ways. A common motive, however, is the need to manage disagreement about religion in a society. The latter can take the form of rivalry between different religions or versions of the same religion. It can also constitute an attempt to deal with fundamental disagreement about the worth of all religion. Some forms of secularism start with the assumption that religion, as such, is harmful and must be rigidly controlled. At its extreme, this attitude can result in an explicitly atheist society, that of its nature becomes totalitarian, because of its need to control some of the most fundamental beliefs its citizens may have.

Different countries with varying religious backgrounds claim to have a secular foundation. Turkey, with an Islamic background, and India, with a Hindu one, fall into this category. In the Christian West, however, the distinction between France and the United States is instructive. The attitudes and legal approaches of both have their roots in the European Enlightenment, but their treatment of religion is significantly different.

# Two Enlightenment Influences

France has a policy of what it terms *la laïcité*. It stems from the overthrow of the *ancien régime*, which was not only monarchist but in thrall to the authoritarian structures of the Roman Catholic Church. The French Revolution at first tried to remove all religious influence, converting churches to "Temples of Reason." The modern dispensation under which France no longer defines itself as a Catholic country dates from the law of 1905, when *laïcité* took firm root in French institutions.

Religion was to be treated as a private matter and the public square swept free of any religious presence, let alone positive religious influence. The banning of Islamic dress such as the headscarf, coupled with ban on wearing large religious insignia such as crucifixes, is an example. The banning of symbols is, however, more than symbolic. It is evidence of a determined and more wide-ranging policy. The institutions of government in general, and education in particular, are insulated from any semblance of religious authority. Specific religious (p. 303) education in French state schools is regarded as a potential challenge to the secular character of the state. State ceremonies are not going to have a religious character, in contrast to many of those in the United Kingdom.

The French Enlightenment in the eighteenth century took on a decidedly atheist and materialist tinge. Religion was seen as the enemy of reason and hence of freedom itself. The idealist slogan of the French Revolution—*liberté, égalité, fraternité*—which can still be seen emblazoned on French government buildings was thought to proclaim the new spirit of a new age. Yet it remains a paradox that each of those principles had Christian roots. Most strikingly, the notion of brotherhood hardly makes sense outside a theistic framework with belief in a common Father. Similarly, the idea of equality surely has to derive from an idea that we are equal in the sight of God and that of freedom from a Christian notion of free will. Given that historical root, a perennial question is whether those concepts can make sense, let alone survive and flourish outside the religious framework that lay at their origin.

The American approach to secularism took a different course, although it crystallized at much the same time as the French Revolution. Above all, the founders of the United States, such as Thomas Jefferson, had a significantly different view of the source of human reason. Jefferson was particularly influenced by a philosopher of a century before, John Locke, the British empiricist. The latter can certainly be viewed as an apostle of the Enlightenment, although in this case in its early form. Locke was particularly influenced by the Cambridge Platonists, a group of philosophers and theologians who were among those involved in the founding of the Royal Society in London in 1661. For them, as much as for the later advocates of reason in France, human reason was of central importance, and faith in its capabilities fuelled the rise in empirical science. Newton was a scholar at Cambridge University and was influenced by them. These thinkers did not view reason as inimical to religious belief but instead adopted as their slogan: "reason is the candle of the Lord." The phrase was used several times by Locke (see 1690 [1924]: 722f). It grounded human reason, however imperfect, in the creation of humans in God's image.

Reason was seen as validated by God. Echoes of this idea that reason, and indeed rights, are validated by God can be heard in the famous words of the American Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal” and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.

The difference to the two approaches to human reason is profound. One sees reason as intrinsically liberating. Its watchword is human freedom and autonomy, but it takes these as given, just as it assumes a fundamental equality of all humans without giving any justification. The Lockean approach is more nuanced. While extolling reason, freedom, and equality, it tends to understand them within a theistic context. For example, Locke firmly believed, as a practicing Christian, that God wanted worship and service to be freely given, not compelled. He comments that the way to salvation is not any “forced exterior performance, but the voluntary and secret choice of the mind” (1689 [1997]: 138). Outward conformity was not enough from a theological point of view, and he could not accept that God would approve of what was obtained through force rather than voluntary choice. Freedom was God-given and had to be respected as such. In particular, freedom of religion had to be recognized, because God, at least according to Christian theology, wanted sincere devotion.

The French path to *la laïcité* in the eighteenth century was rather different. It took a path that was independent from religion. An official report titled *Laïcité et République* on this subject to the French President, composed by La commission de réflexion sur l’application du principe de laïcité dans la République, stated that *la laïcité* is a “republican principle (p. 304) constructed by history” and indeed constitutive “of our collective history” (Stasi 2003: 25). It went on to refer to the influence of the Enlightenment (*les Lumières*) and pointed out that the French Revolution marked the birth of the modern concept of *la laïcité*. The French word carries nuances that are difficult to convey in English, but the idea of secularism is very much to the fore, and that is how the word is often translated. Yet the reference to “laity” implicit in the word certainly suggests an anticlerical and even antireligious bias. The message that comes across is that the state is the ultimate authority and can decide what rights to allow its citizens. It wishes to maintain an “absolute neutrality” with regard to all religion and will accept religious freedom only insofar as it does not conflict with the demands of the official policy of secularism.

# Religious Freedom and Democracy

The American approach to religious freedom is quite different. The “free exercise” of religion is protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution. As a result, religious liberty is often proclaimed as America’s “first freedom,” and it is often argued that its appearance first in the Bill of Rights is no coincidence. James Madison, along with other Founders, was in no doubt that religious freedom was central to the proper exercise of all democratic freedoms. Madison had been much influenced, as was Thomas Jefferson, by the rigid way in which the establishment of the Church of England was enforced in their native Virginia when it was still a colony (Trigg 2012: 72f). Local landowners, such as

George Washington himself, served on the church vestries, and they were used as organs of local government, as well as the administration of the Church. The growing population of Presbyterians, Baptists, and then Methodists was effectively marginalized as citizens while being compelled to pay taxes to support the official Church. The 1689 Act of Toleration passed at Westminster seemed to have little effect in Virginia, and the policies toward America from Britain were a constant source of tension, culminating in the Revolutionary War of Independence.

For Madison and many other colonial leaders, everything had to be traced back to the freedom that was the natural right of every human being. It was not the gracious grant of a tolerant society. A state that was tolerant at one time may very easily withdraw its toleration at another for political reasons. “Toleration” implied an authority that could decide how much freedom could be allowed and which beliefs could safely be accommodated and which could not. For Madison, “before any man can be considered as a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the universe” (Church 2004: 61). No doubt Madison was trying to be as inclusive as possible with his theism and does not invoke a specifically Christian view. Even so, he was basing his defense of religious freedom on a theological vision of the relationship of humans to God.

This means that our obligations to God must precede any to the state of which we are a citizen. Yet that position immediately challenges the authority of the state, in a way that must be anathema to any totalitarian regime. Sometimes religious authorities have claimed to be acting on behalf of God and in virtue of that claim power for themselves. Such a regime has been called a theocracy. As that term refers to rule by God, it raises the question as to whether the authorities really are able to reflect the will of God and are not following a constant temptation for humans to grab as much power and prestige for themselves as possible. (p. 305) More liberal societies, following the views of philosophers such as Locke, have stressed the importance of the individual conscience and have put in place protections for those who may find themselves in positions where they could be required to go against their fundamental religious beliefs. Even if the state is forced to accept limits on its own jurisdiction, in that situation it still recognizes the special force of religious considerations in the beliefs and practices of its citizens. A failure to take religion seriously in public life may even strike at the very roots of democracy. Religious concerns and obligations are always at the root of what individuals consider most important in their lives. For most atheists, too, the fact that they deliberately have rejected any religious belief must itself be of central importance. Religious belief, or the lack of it, is intimately linked with the way people live their lives. If it makes no difference to some, such people seem to have no clear belief. Religion deals with what is of ultimate concern.

A democracy in which religious practice is restricted precisely because it is religious is a sham. Democracies depend on the judgment of their individual citizens and the ability of those citizens to advocate what they think is wisest and best for their country. That will be influenced by their most fundamental judgments about what is worth pursuing and what enables their fellow citizens to flourish and escape terrible harms. That in turn depends on their understanding of what is good and bad for humans. They need an implicit,

or explicit, concept of human nature and what is conducive to its good. That has to be linked with judgments about the place of humans in the scheme of things, bringing theistic considerations into play. Whether we were or were not created by God for a purpose, and whether each individual has an intrinsic dignity because of that, are questions coloring everything else.

Some would still dismiss religion as the idiosyncratic interest of a few, to be ignored in wider society. The fact that some may worship in a church on Sunday (or a synagogue, a mosque, or wherever on other days) may, it is said, tell us something about their interests but is of no greater relevance to the rest of us than the fact that some play golf every Sunday morning. This is to deny that religion is in any way "special" and that acting out of a religious conscience is of any greater moment that acting for any other reason of conscience, such as vegetarianism.

Why should religion be regarded as special, beyond the fact that it is important for those who have a religious faith? A democracy that cares for the interests and desires of all its citizens equally may well take into account that some of them value their religion. A democracy does so because some citizens care about religion, just as it will take into account the passion of some of its citizens for soccer. This is not a matter of government engagement with religion or agreeing that religion has truths applying universally, but democracy should find that religious citizens may have insights valuable for the whole community. What democracies often focus on is the fact of belief, not the content. Yet for believers who want to contribute to public debate, and live according to what their religion preaches, it is what the religion is about that matters, not just the fact that it is their religion. They want to join in public debate and tell others about what they think is important.

Modern governments may want to disengage themselves from any particular religion because they want to respect diversity and embrace "pluralism," Democracy as a system assumes the existence of divergence, not unanimity. It is a device for managing disagreement. Yet its mechanisms in the modern world have at times seemed inadequate. The "dictatorship of the majority" is a real danger. What is the fate of minorities under such a system? When what is stake is who should form a government, everyone has to accept that one side (p. 306) will win, and there will be losers. When matters of conscience come to the fore, are we similarly to accept that there must be one law for all, and that is simply decided by majority vote, with no consideration for minority objections?

A secular approach might want to subsume all conscientious objections into one category, discounting those that are perceived as founded on religious belief. It might feel that that is fairer to all citizens, religious and nonreligious. All should be treated equally, in pursuit of what some see as "equal liberty." In that case, a religious conscience would be seen as no more, or less, important than a secular one. Conscientious objection to killing even in time of war, resulting in a refusal to serve in the armed forces of a country, can be respected as much stemming from a humanist position as a religious one. In one sense, that is quite right, but the danger is that the very idea of conscience can become so attenuat-

ed by covering too many things that people may sincerely believe and want to act on. It cannot then be respected as a trump card to be produced in order to justify ignoring a law applying to everyone.

The wider the term “conscience” is stretched, so that it covers anything thought important by anyone, the less meaningful it becomes. If the content of a commitment is discounted, all that then matters is the sincerity with which a belief is held. Yet as people can have sincere and strongly held beliefs about most anything, mere sincerity provides a fairly vacuous criterion with which to sift out different objections to laws. A secularism that tries to discount religion will in the end place less weight on the fact of conscience as such. It will no longer be able to separate out the crucially important cases of conscience, exemplified by religion (and its denial), from the spreading penumbra of ever less convincing cases where people do not like a law and do not want it to apply to them.

It is no coincidence that a state that does not respect religion as a separate category will tend to want to enforce its laws equally on everyone and be impatient with claims of conscience. The latter can too often be viewed as indistinguishable from objections to the democratically expressed will of “the people,” As such they cannot be accommodated, it will be thought, without putting in jeopardy the view that all are equal before the law and must be treated in the same way in similar situations without exceptions. Yet being forced to go against not just political or other views but one’s most basic views about how humans must behave can easily be seen as creating a substantial burden on the believer that most people do not carry.

The role of minorities in a democracy is important. That does not just apply to minority religions, cultures, and other groups. It is also important to protect any views that at a given time are held by a minority. All must be able to contribute to public discussion, and the people holding them must be respected. That is part of what is meant by taking human dignity seriously. Yet secularist efforts to sweep religion out of public discussion, and to assume that “public” reasons can never be religious reasons, marginalize religion by rendering it a private matter.

Part of what is at stake here is an argument about the epistemological status of religion. The spirit of logical positivism, made fashionable by the so-called Vienna Circle before World War II, has lived on. The Vienna Circle had what it termed a “scientific world conception,” according to which only science could set the standard of what was meaningful let alone capable of claiming truth. What was not susceptible to scientific test, and the production of scientific evidence, could not register as a meaningful statement. As a result, all metaphysical statements, even those that might underpin science, were proscribed as essentially nonsensical (Trigg 2015). Although logical positivism no longer has much acceptance (p. 307) among philosophers, its preoccupation with science has had an enormous influence. Public reason is too often associated with what science can validate. Moral, religious, and aesthetic judgments can easily be dismissed as “subjective,” telling us more about the person holding them than the world we are facing. It is pointed out that there are agreed methods for settling scientific disputes, but none in the religious

arena. “Faith” is hence separated from “reason.” This association of reason with what can be established through science, and explained in a way that can gain public acceptance, effectively pushes religion outside the sphere of rational discussion and public debate. That push goes very well with an aggressive secularism, which regards all religious claims as not just beyond reason but even going against normally accepted canons of reason. Religious beliefs are seen as intrinsically divisive, with no way of resolving those divisions. They can then easily be dubbed “irrational” and positively dangerous if permitted entry into the public square.

The prioritization of science is explicitly brought into the picture by some who query why the law of the land should make any special provision for religion. An American legal philosopher, Brian Leiter, argues that governments should make no special provision for a religious conscience nor allow exemptions from general laws on grounds of grounds of religious belief. He says that “it is not obvious why the state should subordinate its other morally important objectives—safety, health, well-being, equal treatment before the law—to claims of religious conscience” (2013: 103). His position is obviously supported by his accompanying claim that “religious beliefs, in virtue of being based on ‘faith,’ are insulated from ordinary standards of evidence and rational justification, the ones we employ in both common sense and in science” (34). He infers that when arbitrary claims, made without possible justification, demand exemptions or special treatment from the law, those claims do not deserve to be taken seriously in public debate. Leiter relies on a highly contentious picture of the place of religion. Most religious believers think that their beliefs are beliefs about what is true, and not mere expressions of private taste or emotion (Trigg 2014). They are based, many think, on a rational understanding of human nature and its place in the ultimate scheme of things. Logical positivists may have been treading in the footsteps of the later Enlightenment, with its inbuilt revulsion to religion as such. The decision to make science the arbiter of human rationality certainly goes against the Lockean view that reason is itself set up by God in human minds as a natural faculty, which can be relied on, at least to some extent, because it reflects in a small, flickering way (like a candle flame) the mind and reason of God.

# State Neutrality?

Should the law of a land take account of religion and even give special respect to those who wish to remain faithful to the obligations of their religion? Should it, on the other hand, simply treat all its citizens equally whatever their beliefs? The second alternative may mean that religious believers of various kinds have to conform to the secular standards of a secular law imposed by an avowedly secular society. That is the French way, and France is in fact the only European country to have explicitly “consecrated” the principle of secularism in its constitution (Stasi 2003: 71). The use of the term “consecrate” is an odd one in that context. It suggests that even in repudiating religious influence on the public stage, religious ideas cannot be wholly excluded even if they become transmuted into a secular guise.

(p. 308) Behind the French alternative lurks the notion of neutrality: the state is neutral between all religions (and none). The state somehow stands above them and detached from them. The state could easily come to see itself as itself the embodiment of Reason, once it has been detached from any theological base. It may even regard itself as a benevolent referee standing between opposing ideas. Yet opposed ideas never compete in a vacuum. A secular state has itself to stand for something, as clearly the French Republic does, when it echoes the principles of the French Revolution. By definition it cannot regard itself subservient, or even accountable to, any deity, let alone the Christian God. Therefore it has to set itself up as the final authority, graciously recognizing (or creating) rights as it pleases. Unlike the United States, it cannot see itself as "one nation, under God," as the Pledge of Allegiance puts it.

According to the French Commission that composed *Laïcité et République*, the neutrality of the state is the principle requirement (*la premiere condition*) of secularism. All citizens are to be treated equally, whatever their religion, and the public space of government and public administrators have to be seen to exercise a strict neutrality toward religion in their public duties. "Republican principles" have to be respected so that in public service the agents of the state can give no sign of any views about religion and certainly not wear any religious insignia or dress. Wearing a cross or headscarf would thus be forbidden. Arguments about the right to manifest one's religion in this way always stand proxy for more fundamental issues. What principles are to guide government policy? Those derived from religion are clearly proscribed.

While the neutrality of the law is a fundamental part of justice, a wider-ranging neutrality raises large questions. Law must be administered "without fear or favour," and it would be monstrous to treat Muslims differently from Christians or atheists in yet another way. The idea of the basic equality of all before the law is a constituent part of justice. Does this mean that in order for all citizens to be held as truly equal, all citizens must expect their beliefs to be equally respected by the state? Does the distancing of the state from religious views, for example, mean that the state attributes equal dignity to all its citizens and values all religious and nonreligious views equally? Is a secular state fairer to its citizens than one that is religiously aligned? It is easy to assume that neutrality brings the detachment that is requisite for true justice. However, that assumption only throws into confusion the issue of how people should be treated in a country with these principles at work.

For a state to be truly "neutral," it would not be able to uphold any principles, because otherwise it would appear that it is being unfair to citizens who do not share some of them. Even an adherence to secularism, and detachment from all religion, is clearly a substantive principle. It is animated in France, as we have observed, by very definite ideals with a clearly delineated historical origin. What about Catholics in France of a traditionalist disposition who would like to see greater recognition given to the Roman Catholic Church, and its principles, in the affairs of state? Right or wrong, they may feel marginalized in a secular state, where they are forced to keep their religion to themselves, particularly when serving in a public capacity. They are in no different position

than that of fervent atheists in a country where more official recognition is given to religion.

The issue is that, even when people are equal before the law and no one is treated as a second-class citizen, the question still remains as to what kind of country the citizens are living in. No one can expect their nation to be organized exactly in accordance with their beliefs. As already mentioned, the whole point of democracy is that it tries to mediate between the varying desires and beliefs of its citizens so that rational decisions can be made. Disagreement is (p. 309) likely to remain. No one supposes that the citizens who are on the losing side, and in political opposition, are any less citizens, let alone second-class citizens, than those in the majority on a particular occasion. Because of the nature of democracy, it is crucial not just that minorities be respected but that the individual conscience of each be nurtured and cherished. Just because certain policies cannot gain broad agreement does not mean that the consciences of those advocating them should not be respected. Those citizens in the minority still have the potential to contribute to the common good and may win the day on another occasion. Democracy cannot thrive through extinguishing unpopular or unfashionable views. One of its problems is that fashions can all too easily come and go. A stable society needs an appeal to principle, and principles do not fade away just because enough people do not embrace them at a given time. The rejection of one principle should occur in the name of another. Yet that means that neutrality is an illusion. A state has to commit itself to one approach or another, simply because governmental paralysis is not a practical option. The application of principle also results in greater consistency for government action over time.

Despite these sound considerations, both philosophers and policymakers try to set up neutrality as an intrinsic element in a secularist approach. In the European sphere, the French secularist emphasis has been pronounced in the development of the European Union. The French were among the most vociferous in objecting to any reference to the Christian foundations of Europe, despite the wishes of countries such as Poland. As a result, in the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union in 2009, the Preamble eschews any mention of Christianity. It simply states that it draws inspiration “from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe.” It rather curiously goes on to enumerate universal values which “have developed.” If values exist universally, it is hard to see how they could have changed or developed. Otherwise the values as they are now could once not have been universal, if they had existed at all. Either they are just what happens to be valued in a particular place and time or they are built into the scheme of things as “natural” rights. The European Union appears to want it both ways, holding that such values include “the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.”

The list may appear reminiscent of rights “endowed by their Creator,” but they are not grounded. Indeed, it looks as if they might be unjustifiable, because their recognition has only happened due to so many arbitrary factors to Europe’s past. They are the result of history, or even current sociological trends. Even so, they appear to provide a list of rather substantive rights and principles, and their neutrality is far from apparent. Belief

in freedom or in equality are not universally recognized. They may be an integral part of modern Europe politics, but that does not negate the fact that they offer a distinctive moral and political approach. A neutral state would have to be neutral about such principles. What is the status of citizens who are disinclined to believe in equality and may even believe in the superiority of one group of people over another? Are they second-class citizens, or are they incapable of being citizens? Their views may be repugnant, but that only makes the same point: that nations upholding definite principles, principles that may be right, would not be neutral at all.

The Canadian political philosopher and social theorist Charles Taylor is adamant that "the question of secularism must be approached within the broader problematic of the state's necessary neutrality toward the multiple values, beliefs, and life plans of citizens in modern societies" (Maclure and Taylor 2011: 11). Yet again it is important to distinguish between two matters. There is the freedom of people to live as they choose by the fundamental principles (p. 310) to which they are committed. This freedom is a necessary feature of any democratic society. There is also the question of the justification of those principles. The state's neutrality means that it should not use the force of law to impose its own favored viewpoint on recalcitrant citizens. One can be a good citizen while departing from the general consensus. Using an older religious manner of speaking, a free society could make room for "nonconformists" even when the state prefers or establishes a mode of religion that they cannot accept.

# Secularist Principles

The secularist may still protest. Why should a state set certain standards that make some citizens feel that their views are departures from the norm, even if they were tolerated? For the Founders in the United States, this form of toleration was not itself enough. It was not the free exercise of religion, since what was "tolerated" suggested a lack of recognition of genuine freedom. It was something to be allowed, and what happens to be allowed could also be later prohibited by the same authority. That contingent toleration is not a recognition of a natural right to freedom of religion but rather a tacit assertion of the ultimate authority of the state, which is manifested in a potentially threatening manner.

During the Revolutionary period, James Madison of Virginia advocated the complete dismantling of the religious establishment of the time there, that of the Church of England. He argued even against any general support by the new state Virginia for all Christian teachers. Widening the establishment, or even the scope of state recognition of religion, was not for him a recognition of true individual freedom. The government was still in control. He trenchantly asked, "Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other sects?" (Church 2004: 63). Indeed, it might be argued that once a state has assumed for itself the power to determine which religions are, or are not, officially approved, there is in principle nothing to stop its pro-

gression down a very slippery slope to the totalitarian enforcement of a particular religious, or antireligious, point of view.

This latter point, however, brings us back to the question of the nature of a secularist stance. Can it, even in principle, embody any form of neutrality? Taylor's position is that, given great diversity of belief in a pluralist society, "the state must avoid hierarchizing the conceptions of the good life that form the basis of citizens' adherence to the basic principles of their political association" (Maclure and Taylor 2011: 13). That is the classic liberal position in political philosophy, and it gained the most attention through the work of John Rawls. Maclure and Taylor conclude by asserting that "in the realm of core beliefs and commitments, the state, to be truly everyone's state, must remain 'neutral.'" They say that "since the state must be the state for all citizens, and since citizens adopt a plurality of conceptions of the good, the state must not identify itself with one particular religion or worldview" (20). They explain that this is the reason that the "state must be separate from religion."

This last point echoes the well-known phrase "separation of church and state," which has had a major influence on American Constitutional thinking, although the phrase itself does not occur in the US Constitution. The First Amendment prohibits the government's establishment of religion. Maclure and Taylor (2011) consider the principle of separation to embody far more than the refusal to give particular recognition to any particular (p. 311) religious denomination. It does rule out, for example, any possibility of Anglican bishops in the US Senate, on the model of the British House of Lords. Yet the word used in the First Amendment is not "church" but "religion," and that is a far broader thesis. Refusing favoritism for individual Christian denominations is not the same thing as the separation of religion from the public sphere, as is found in the French model. Maclure and Taylor are writing in Quebec, Canada, where the French example is likely to be influential. Even so, their secularism is striking. They say that secularism has to rest on two major principles: "equality of respect and freedom of conscience" (2011: 20). These seem to be important principles, though one issue is the focus on equality of respect. We have already stressed the importance of the principle of equal importance for all citizens before the law. That, however, cannot mean that we respect equally every view they happen to hold. Democracy may involve listening to citizens carefully and certainly letting all of them argue their case. It cannot involve thinking that each view is as valid as any other. There is too easy a step from the sound idea that that each citizen has an innate dignity that has to be respected to the mistaken idea that any criticism of the views they hold is an offense against that dignity. Taking that step implies that we must suppose that it does not matter what beliefs someone has, as there is no such thing as being mistaken, which degenerates into the subjectivist position that whatever seems right to individuals is right for them, and one cannot speak at all about anyone being right or wrong.

People are equal, but beliefs are not. If we truly take freedom of conscience seriously in a democracy, we have to recognize the right of those to espouse views with which we profoundly disagree and refuse to hold ourselves. Freedom is worthless if it just means the freedom for everyone to agree with each other. True freedom involves difference and di-

versity. In that sense, it involves the mutual respect for the right to hold views that differ from the conventional and the fashionable. The problem for mutual respect arrives when it has to be recognized that even in a free and tolerant society, limits on what can be permitted must be set. Human sacrifice in the name of some religion could never be allowed, for example, and no appeal to conscience, let alone a religious one, could justify that.

In pursuit of the "equal moral value or dignity" of all citizens, and the need for them to be respected, Maclure and Taylor place great store on the state's neutrality to "all religious and secular movements of thought" (2011: 20). Yet we have seen that a state trying to be neutral toward any and every conception of the good is rudderless. It can produce no principled reason even for upholding basic principles of democracy. Why should equality and freedom loom large? How could talk of the equal moral value or dignity of all citizens serve as a neutral starting point? That already expresses a substantive conception of what is good. Moreover, a reference to the intrinsic dignity of all expresses a characteristically religious, even Christian, viewpoint. That is not say that human dignity only makes sense from a particular religious point of view. It is to say that religious beliefs have provided a powerful impetus to belief in it. Perhaps the secularist hope is that, as with values of the French Revolution such as "fraternity," we can discount the manner in which such convictions were produced. Once we have them, it may be thought, they can appear self-evident, and their origins become irrelevant. This hope is not enough. Either such beliefs are universally self-evident or they have to be argued for. We dare not rest on the assumption that what happens to seem obvious at the moment will remain so. The values of democracy always have to be argued for and justified. The equal moral worth of all humans can all too often be called into question.

(p. 312) State neutrality is an illusion. The pursuit of secular neutrality toward religion, involving the total detachment of the state from all religion and the purging of the public square of any religious presence, must itself be motivated by a powerful vision of the common good. It can become self-contradictory, when it invokes principles that could easily have a religious basis in order to remove religion from the scene. Without religious reasons for respecting human dignity, equality, and freedom, it might be hard to provide resources for passing on these values to future generations. Even if a society proves successful in doing that, it is hardly staying neutral about the kind of society it wishes to see.

Again, it might argued that those who dissent from an official doctrine purveyed by the state are "second-class citizens," so therefore the State must have no official doctrine. Yet we have just seen that a form of secularism that stands back from all religion in the interests of "human dignity" is in fact pursuing a very definite vision of the common good. Its official doctrine may appeal to abstract principles of equality and freedom, stressing an individualism that many non-Western societies might reject. In so doing, it has to disagree with those of its citizens who could have a different, perhaps more collectivist, vision. But that disagreement simply leaves them in a second-class status as citizens with fewer rights.

# Freedom for Religion?

Secularism, even its most benign aspect in a democracy, can never achieve the neutrality to which aspires. No view that rules out alternatives can ever be neutral. If one wants a view that does not do that, one is seeking a totally vacuous position that says nothing. By definition, a secularist view takes up a particular approach to the place of religion in public life by declaring that it has no such place. The idea of the separation of church and state pursued in the United States has not proved as extreme. It gives opportunities for all types of religious belief, and not just one favored version, to gain public influence. Presbyterians have had as much right as Anglicans to allow their religious faith to influence their public actions. This required that the public space had to be cleared to allow a proper freedom *for* religion. It could not be the province for a monopoly, and indeed the American Founders believed that their policy would aid religion in general. Both Jefferson and Madison were vociferous in complaining that official establishment has led to complacence and atrophy within the Anglican Church in Virginia.

Many debates in the United States over questions about the official recognition of expression of religion occur between a more aggressive secularism and those who hold to the traditional American view that the government should be open to all religion. The latter generally take a welcoming and supportive stance toward the idea of religion underpinning the country and its government institutions. They are happy to see “In God We Trust” on their coins. Other, more thorough-going secularists do not want just to see the acceptance of different Christian denominations and, indeed, different religions making their impact in the public arena. They want something much more like the French model enforcing freedom *from* religion. In the French case, that ideal had definite historic roots with an explicit rejection of traditional religious authority and its harms. The common good, it was thought, was not upheld by the religious conscience but was threatened by it.

(p. 313) This form of secularism involves more than a distancing of the instruments of government from any specific religious identity. Religion is taken to be divisive and possibly even antagonistic against the state. Insofar as a religion refuses to accept the supreme authority of the state but subjects itself to a higher (divine) law, there is some reality to that antagonism. The irony is that, unless this conflict degenerates into a mere power struggle, the principles to which secularism appeals, particularly in the French context, gain more salience in a religious context. Indeed, as we have seen, it becomes questionable how far they can be justified outside of that context. Even more to the point, however, is the fact that secularism within a democratic context has to appeal to the importance of human freedom. That was, not surprisingly, one of the three great principles of the French Revolution. Freedom of conscience must clearly be an important constituent part of freedom. Yet a basic principle of a strong form of secularism is that the religious conscience must be restricted down to something personal and private, with no influence in the public realm. In the name of freedom, freedom has to be restricted in a fairly sweep-

ing way, so that many citizens are unable to publicly express the views and values that are most important to them.

How has this paradoxical state of affairs been reached? Some would fear the idea of the State as the supreme authority, answerable to nothing except the will of the people (which changes over time). Others would welcome state supremacy. Faced with what they perceive as the absolutism of religious fundamentalism and "extremism," they interpret appeals to religious law only as a defiance of the law of the land, a defiance inimical to democracy. One legal writer on threats to national security says that "an individual accused of violating state law should find little recourse or comfort in claiming that he or she was adhering to religious law" (Guiora 2013: 16). When a country is faced with suicide bombers and the like, that may seem reasonable. This writer goes on to enunciate a dangerous principle, affirming that the "essence of civil society is the primacy of civil law rather than religious law" (15). He may have in mind the judgment that Islamic *sharia* law should not be allowed to take precedence over national law; there must be one law for all. As he states his principle, unfortunately, it sounds as if religious conscience must be ignored by civil lawmaking. This is reminiscent of the pronouncement of the Council of Europe, with the encouragement of French and Spanish secularists, that "states must require religious leaders to take to take an unambiguous stand in favour of the precedence of human rights, as set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights, over any religious principle" (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly 2007: para. 17). Since freedom of religion or belief is a basic human right acknowledged in the Convention, the contradictory nature of this statement is clear. Human rights as such cannot trump religion, since the freedom of religion is itself one of the rights. The bias to an aggressive antireligious secularism is evident.

A secularism that expels religion from the public sphere, without allowing it a voice in democratic debate, regards religion as a danger and a threat to civil society. Religion, it decides, has to be controlled by the state and be subservient to it. That secularism may at times masquerade as neutrality, but a "naked" public square, swept clean of all religious encumbrances, is a friendlier place to the atheist than to the religious believer. This is neutrality aligned against religion. Certainly, not all religious belief and practice is good. There is so much diversity to religion that the supposition that all of it is beneficial to society is as unhelpful as condemning all religious expression. That diversity in fact provides all the more reason for exposing it to public debate and rational examination.

## (p. 314) Conclusion

The idea that "rights" must override "religion" ignores the fact that a prime motivation for talking of such rights and the human dignity from which they spring is a religious view of humans and their place in the world. The nonreligious may be motivated by other considerations, but it is madness for a state to ignore a prime source of support for the principles of democracy. The idea of human dignity, encapsulating a commitment to the unique worth of each individual person, has always been at the root of any agenda con-

cerning human rights. This idea of dignity can not only be justified in religious terms, because it also makes little sense to speak of dignity if people are prohibited from publicly expressing their most basic understandings about what is important in life.

There is much evidence to suggest that religion, so far from being the private hobby of a few, is deeply rooted in characteristic features to the way human beings think about the world. Religious belief is “natural” (Trigg and Barrett 2014: ch. 12). Religion comes easily to us even if we try to shake it off as we become more sophisticated. This can explain the apparent universality of religious belief and practice in human history. If that is the case, any aggressively secular campaign to expunge traces of religion from public life is likely to fail in the long run. Instead of trying to free everyone from the “shackles” of religion, it is more realistic to make space for religion in the polity. Religious claims can never override every other consideration. There can, and should, always be scope for a reasonable accommodation of their presence.

## Bibliography

Beaman, Lori (ed.). 2012. *Reasonable Accommodation: Managing Religious Diversity*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Berlinerblau, Jacques. 2012. *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Biggar, Nigel, and Linda Hogan (eds.). 2009. *Religious Voices in Public Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Church, Forrest (ed.). 2004. *The Separation of Church and State: Writings on a Fundamental Freedom by America’s Founders*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. 2007. “State, Religion, Secularity and Human Rights.” Recommendation 1804. In *Recommendations and Resolutions adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in the Field of Media and Information Society*, 124–126. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Guiora, Amos. 2013. *Freedom from Religion*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leiter, Brian. 2013. *Why Tolerate Religion?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Locke, John. 1924. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Edited by A. Pringle Pattison. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1690)

Locke, John. 1997. “An Essay on Toleration.” In *Locke: Political Essays*, edited by Mark Goldie, 134–159. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1689)

Maclure, Jocelyn, and Charles Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

(p. 315) Nussbaum, Martha. 2008. *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality*. New York: Basic Books.

Peterson, Merrill D., and Robert C. Vaughan (eds.). 1988. *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom: Its Evolution and Consequences*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Steven D. 2014. *The Rise and Decline of American Religious Freedom.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Stasi, Bernard. 2003. *Laïcité et République. Rapport au Président de la République*. Paris: La Documentation Française.

Sullivan, W., E. Hurd, S. Mahmood, and P. Danchin (eds.). 2015. *Politics of Religious Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Trigg, Roger. 2007. *Religion in Public Life: Must Faith Be Privatized?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Trigg, Roger. 2012. *Equality, Freedom and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Trigg, Roger. 2014. *Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Trigg, Roger. 2015. *Beyond Matter: Why Science Need Metaphysics?* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Trigg, Roger, and Justin L. Barrett (eds.). 2014. *The Roots of Religion: Exploring the Cognitive Science of Religion*. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate.

Viteritti, Joseph. 2007. *The Last Freedom: Religion from the Public School to the Public Square*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

**Roger Trigg**

Roger Trigg is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Warwick, and a Senior Research Fellow of the Ian Ramsey Centre. He also is Associate Scholar with the Religious Freedom Project of Georgetown University's Berkley Center. His recent books are Equality, Freedom and Religion; Religion in Public Life; Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions; and Beyond Matter: Why Science Needs Metaphysics.

# Communicative Reason and Religious Faith in Secular and Postsecular Contexts

Jacob Goodson

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.20

## Abstract and Keywords

The German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas has shifted his position of defending secularism to now defending postsecularism This chapter describes Habermas's usage of the terms "secularity," "secularism," and "postsecularism" and explains how Habermas's usage of these three terms is best understood in relation to his philosophical theory of communicative rationality. The shift from secularism to postsecularism is based on the fact that the latter allows for better communication between religious believers and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century. Habermas argues that the secular academy has responsibilities toward the positive aspects of religious faith as well as the negative aspects found in religious fundamentalism and religious-based violence.

Keywords: Habermas, secularism, communicative rationality, secularization, postsecularism, religious faith, religious fundamentalism

THE German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas issues two claims about secularity: "First, traditional worldviews and objectivations lose their power and validity *as* myth, *as* public religion, *as* customary ritual, *as* justifying metaphysics, *as* unquestionable tradition" (1970: 98). Within secularity, these features of the "traditional worldviews" get "reshaped into subjective belief systems and ethics which ensure the private cogency of modern value-orientations" (98–99). Secularity requires "traditional worldviews" to become privatized and subjective.

Habermas's second claim about secularity is this: "Second, they [traditional worldviews] are transformed into constructions that do both at once: criticize tradition and reorganize the released material of tradition according to the principles of formal law and the exchange of equivalents (rationalist natural law)" (1970: 99). Secularity provides a constant critique of traditional beliefs and ways of life, but it employs traditional categories in order to find working principles for political and societal purposes. The constant critique of traditional beliefs and ways of life are not dismissive, in a wholesale way, of religious tra-

ditions; rather, secularity keeps a check on what is useful and nonuseful from religious traditions for the majority of the population.

This chapter describes Habermas's usage of the terms "secularity," "secularism," and "postsecularism" and explains how Habermas's usage of these three terms is best understood in relation to his philosophical theory of communicative rationality. The shift from secularism to postsecularism is based on the fact that the latter allows for better communication between religious believers and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

# Secularity, Secularism, and Postsecularism

Habermas identifies secularism as the societal process of making decisions with as much impartiality as possible. He writes that secularism requires offering judgments "that can (p. 317) be impartially justified in the light of generally accessible reasons, in other words, that can be justified equally toward religious and nonreligious citizens and citizens of different confessions" (2008: 122). Impartiality concerns decisions and judgments; partiality concerns persons. When there is a conflict between a person's religious convictions and impartial decisions and judgments, then laws and policies must be developed and understood according to the impartial decisions and judgments (see Habermas 2008: 129). This is neither problematic nor violent toward religious believers provided that religious citizens are "supposed to … accept the constitution of the secular state" (Habermas 2008: 129). Secularism allows for impartiality, and the impartiality achieved through secularism provides its own justification for secularism.[1] One way to narrate Habermas's philosophical development is to say that, at one point, he held the position described here but no longer believes it (Thomassen 2010: 154–157). Another possible interpretation of Habermas's philosophical development is to recognize that this argument is John Rawls's defense and understanding of secularism—which provided a constant and reliable conversation partner for Habermas but was never explicitly adopted by Habermas.[2] For present purposes, there is no requirement to defend one interpretation against the other. What matters here is to reflect upon the shift from secularism to postsecularism.

For Habermas, postsecularism names "an awareness of what is missing" (2010: 15–23). Akin to Immanuel Kant's account of the limitations of reason in the name of reason, Habermas's postsecularism limits secularism in the name of secularity. Usually, Habermas does not tell personal stories as part of his philosophical arguments. In "An Awareness of What Is Missing," however, readers are stunned by the insights that Habermas provides based upon the narrative—and his reflections on that narrative—of Max Frisch's funeral. During this funeral, Habermas tells us, Frisch has written out some words spoken by his widow. Frisch thanks the congregation of St. Peters in Zurich for the hospitality of his coffin without requiring the use of "Amen!" Struck by these words in this particular setting, Habermas reflects on this narrative: "the ceremony [is] a paradoxical event which tells us something about secular reason, namely that it is unsettled by the opaqueness of its … apparently clarified relation to religion" (2010: 16). He continues, "At the

same time, the church … also had to overcome its inhibitions when it allowed this ceremony, given its secular character 'without an 'amen,' to take place within its hallowed halls" (16). Habermas concludes, "The philosophically enlightened self-understanding of modernity stands in a peculiar dialectical relationship to … theological self-understanding" (16). This theological self-understanding intrudes "into this modernity as the most awkward element from its past" (16). This experience of Frisch's funeral leads Habermas to this distinction: secularism names the process where religious believers and secular citizens talk *about* one another whereas postsecularism names the process where religious believers and secular citizens talk *with* one another. In order to talk *with* one another, Habermas proposes: (a) "the religious side must accept the authority of 'natural' reason as the fallible results of the institutionalized sciences and the basic principles of universalistic egalitarianism in law and morality" (2010: 16); (b) "secular reason may not set itself up as the judge of concerning truths of faith, even though in the end it can accept as reasonable only what it can translate into its own, in principle universally accessible, discourses" (16).

In his dialogue with Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), Habermas writes:

> The expression "postsecular" does more than give public recognition to religious fellowships in view of the functional contribution they make to the reproduction of motivations (p. 318) and attitudes that are societally desirable. The public awareness of a post-secular society also reflects a normative insight that has consequences for the political dealings of unbelieving citizens with believing citizens. In the postsecular society, there is an increasing consensus that certain phases of 'modernization of the public consciousness' involves the assimilation and the reflexive transformation of both religious and secularist mentalities. If both sides agree to understand the secularization of society as a complementary learning process, then they will also have the cognitive reasons to take seriously each other's contributions to controversial subject matters in the public debate. (2006b: 46-47)

First, postsecularism ought to go beyond mere recognition that religious believers remain within modern, secular society. Second, postsecularism ought to seek "assimilation," "consensus," and "reflexive transformation" for both religious and secular citizens. Third, agreeing upon secularization as a "complementary learning process" leads to a higher quality of disagreements pertaining to "controversial subject matters in the public debate." Although the grammar of Habermas's sentence reads as a conditional statement (if *x* then *y*), his argument works only when we take it as a biconditional statement (*x* if and only if *y*): if and only if religious believers admit to secularization as a "learning process," then the disagreements on controversial issues will achieve a higher quality. While postsecularism displays "an awareness of what is missing"—that is, the presence, positions, and reasons of religious believers—religious believers also *must* display an awareness of secularization.

This chapter proceeds along the lines of the good, the bad, and the ugly. After explaining Habermas's theory of communicative rationality, I then offer the following investigations: Habermas's defense of religious faith (the good); his reflections on religious faith in its extreme form of religious fundamentalism (the bad); and his criticisms of both religious-based violence (the ugly) and the American response to religious-based violence found in the "War on Terror." The chapter concludes by explaining Ratzinger's theological endorsement of postsecularism, which we find in his engagement with Habermas in *The Dialectics of Secularization*.

# Communicative Action versus Communicative Reason

The theories of communicative action and communicative rationality are related by an adjective, but, ultimately, they have differing functions and divergent purposes (Edgar 2006: 21–26). Scholarship on Habermas's theories of communicative action and communicative rationality tends to use these phrases interchangeably, which is a mistake. I find that there are three key differences: (a) communicative action concerns and describes the everyday life or ordinary experiences of present-day citizens; (b) communicative action is context-dependent whereas communicative rationality is an obligation or responsibility of the most intellectual or "rational" citizens—especially scholars in college and university settings; and (c) communicative rationality, not communicative action, leads to and requires discourse ethics.

(p. 319) Habermas's theory of communicative action and his theory of communicative rationality are not interchangeable phrases; readers can have one without the other, and the theories do not necessarily depend upon one other. Communicative action concerns how two or more individuals relate to one another in everyday (nonacademic) interactions—namely through body language and patterns of speech. Communicative rationality is a philosophical theory that seeks to explain (a) the peacefulness of argumentation involving both disagreements and agreements and (b) the logical tools required to repair broken forms of argumentation and engagement (see Goodson 2011). Communicative action addresses what people do within society, whereas communicative rationality advances debates concerning the role of objectivity and reason in the natural sciences versus the social sciences. According to Habermas, the natural sciences generate monological-based claims developed through instrumental reason whereas the social sciences proceed along a course closer to the hermeneutical task where there is a necessary give-and-take through argumentation, conversation, and debate. The intersubjectivity of communicative rationality leads to temporary judgments of objectivity. Objectivity is not defined in an Aristotelian sense of correspondence with objects but as the result of a long process of argumentation and scholarly debate where there is a "better argument" that can be considered final—and, therefore, temporarily objective—until the next generation of scholars reopen investigation. The natural sciences need the argumentative and communicative

methods found within the social sciences, and the social sciences ought to be more serious about in-depth and purposive investigations.

Communicative reason leads to Habermas's theory of discourse ethics in order to maintain standards of goodness and truthfulness within the process of argumentation, conversation, and debate (see Habermas 2001: 76–88). Communicative action relies more on the claims and methods of traditional moral theories than it does on discourse ethics. In his early work, the notion of "the ideal speech situation" functioned as the ultimate standard for communicative rationality; this notion of an ideal standard does not remain in his later thinking.

Habermas again takes a decidedly Kantian turn in his discourse ethics and seeks to apply both "the dignity test" and "the universalization test" to communicative reason. The dignity test guides the theory of communicative rationality because it reminds participants to not use other interlocutors as a means to your own intellectual end. The universalization test serves the theory of communicative rationality because it leads to moral consensus: a moral decision is valid if and only if every individual affected by the decision consents to it in some way. (Habermas remains somewhat vague concerning what he means by "consent" here.) The dignity test relates to the other participants in the process of communicative reason while the universalization test reaches those within society that academic decisions will impact—both in the present and in the future. The role of the universalization test explains why Habermas cares so much—in his twenty-first-century writings—about religious believers and theological reasoners: they, too, have to be able to consent to the conclusions and findings of the process of communicative reason.

One of the difficulties of reading Habermas's work is that he fails to distinguish between communicative action and communicative reason. At times he uses them interchangeably while providing neither explanation nor justification for doing so. Within the contexts of secularity and postsecularism, however, communicative rationality becomes the more complex of the two.

## (p. 320) The Theory of Communicative Rationality

Communicative rationality serves as a correction to subject-centered rationality (Habermas 1990a). What is the correction? In Habermas's words:

> The change of paradigm from subject-centered to communicative reason … encourages us to resume … the counterdiscourse that accompanied modernity from the beginning. … It must be made clear that the purism of pure reason is not resurrected again in communicative reason. (1990a: 301)

Communicative rationality builds from the arguments that comprise Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* but avoids Kant's own subject-centered epistemology.

The college or university setting becomes the primary context where communicative reason is achieved and modeled. Habermas writes:

> "Rationality" refers in the first instance to the disposition of speaking and acting subjects to acquire and use fallible knowledge. … Subject-centered reason finds its criteria in standards of truth and success that govern the relationships of knowing and purposively acting subjects to the world of possible objects or states of affair. By contrast, as soon as we conceive of knowledge as communicatively mediated, rationality is assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants in interaction to orient themselves in relation to validity claims geared to intersubjective recognition. Communicative reason finds its criteria in the argumentative procedures for directly or indirectly redeeming claims to propositional truth, normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic harmony. (1990a: 314–315)

We can infer from this passage that the task or vocation of the academic professor concerns maintaining constant communication among and between disciplines.

Scholars in the natural sciences ought to maintain their goals for "propositional truth" and "normative rightness" but should do so in a communicative relation to scholars working in the social sciences. Scholars in the social sciences should continue their examinations of "subjective truthfulness" and "aesthetic harmony" but should do so in a communicative relation to scholars working in the natural sciences. One of the goals of academic life, therefore, is to achieve a coherent, consensus-building, and unifying discourse where scholars are freed from their own subjectivities and work toward particular conclusions reached through the process of communicative rationality. In order to achieve this goal, scholars need to (a) cultivate a "decentered understanding of the world" and (b) participate in the process of a "pragmatic logic of argumentation" where research, teaching, and writing lead to normative judgments of which can be shared through the particular conclusions reached through the process of communicative rationality across disciplines.

The specific role of the philosopher, within academic life, is to serve as an interpreter between the natural sciences and the social sciences (Habermas 1990b). The role of the "public" intellectual, or "public philosopher," is to translate the conclusions and results from the natural sciences to the greater public—and perhaps for purposes of public policy. Secularity must be the ground for the philosopher to do his or her job well, because the translation assumes neither metaphysical nor religious foundations. Within postsecularism, however, (p. 321) the translation must remain open to religious interpretations. Secular citizens and thinkers ought to view these religious interpretations as an important part of the process of communicative rationality and not shut down the contributions made by religious citizens and thinkers. Although the primary context for communicative reason is the college or university setting, it reaches beyond the academy as well:

> Communicative reason makes itself felt in the binding force of intersubjective understanding and reciprocal recognition. At the same time, it circumscribes the universe of a common form of life. Within this universe, the irrational cannot be separated from the rational in the same way as, according to Parmenides, ignorance could be separated from the kind of knowledge that, as the absolutely affirmative,

> rules over “nothing” … [M]istakes, crimes, and deceptions are not simply without reason; they are forms of manifestation of the inversion of reason. The violation of claims to truth, correctness, and sincerity affects the whole permeated by the bond of reason. There is no escape and no refuge for the few who are in the truth and are supposed to take their leave of the many who stay behind in the darkness of their blindness, as they day takes leave of the night. Any violation of the structures of rational life together, to which all lay claim, affects everyone equally.
>
> (Habermas 1990a: 324–325).

Since the terrorist attacks in America on 11 September 2001 (Borradori 2003: 25–81), Habermas has reached beyond the academy in order to perform his own observations from this passage with serious and sobering reflections on religious faith, religious fundamentalism, and religious-based violence. Habermas sets a norm, for academic philosophers, to reach beyond the academy and think about religious traditions and theological reasoning as part of the philosophical task in the twenty-first century.

# The Good: Religious Faith in Postsecular Contexts

Although Habermas seems to initially endorse Søren Kierkegaard’s radically subjective view of faith at the beginning of *The Future of Human Nature* (Habermas 2003: 1–15; Junker-Kenney 2011: 129–131), his positive view of religious faith mostly concerns what religious traditions offer to the secularity. In the conclusion to *The Future of Human Nature*, Habermas advances three proposals concerning faith within public and secular life. These three proposals constitute Habermas’s descriptions of the practices involved between religious believers and nonreligious citizens within postsecular contexts.

First, Habermas observes that only religious believers are expected to (a) divide their identities into public and private, and (b) translate the language and logic of their religious convictions into the language and logic of secularity to create sympathy for their proposals and views beyond their religious community (2003: 109). We should not celebrate this fact about modern, secular life because it places religious believers at a disadvantage in public contexts. Habermas argues that nonreligious citizens ought to find ways to reduce the disadvantages imposed on religious believers: “only if the secular side, too, remains sensitive to the force of articulation inherent in religious languages will the search for reasons that aim at universal acceptability not lead to an unfair exclusion of religions from the public sphere” (p. 322) (2003: 109). If religious faith continues to cause a split identity for religious believers within secular life, then secular life will suffer for it. Habermas concludes this first proposal with both deontological and utilitarian arguments for why secular life must be more inclusive of taking seriously the faith of religious believers. Deontologically, secular life should not automatically exclude those speakers and writers who present their arguments and proposals from their particular faith perspectives because we must treat every citizen with absolute dignity. Habermas also presents a

utilitarian argument for why we ought to include religious faith within communicative rationality and public debates: the failure to include faithful religious believers within secular life diminishes the common good because it eliminates helpful and interesting arguments—what Habermas labels as "resources of meaning" (Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Second, secular reasoning loses substance in its thinking when it simply translates religious reasoning from the language of faith to a more generic and allegedly universal vocabulary (see Habermas 2003: 110). Habermas finds that "something was lost," for instance, when "sin was converted to culpability, and the breaking of divine commands to an offense against human laws" (2003: 110). When religious ideas are reduced to secular euphemisms, they lose their meaning and resonance. He desires to reflect upon the language and logic of faith and how it shapes religious reasoning in substantive ways. Habermas acknowledges that faith creates meaning in ways that nonreligious reasoning simply cannot achieve (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Third, Habermas argues that all citizens within secular life have an obligation to read and study traditionally sacred texts (Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Qur'an) for purposes of comprehension and profundity: not necessarily through the lens of religious faith (see Habermas 2003: 114) but in order to engage with the reasoning of religious believers (see Adams 2006: 234–255). The point of his proposal concerns how nonreligious citizens can maintain their "distance from religion without closing [their view] to the perspective it offers" (Habermas 2003: 113). Traditionally sacred texts ought to be read and studied by all citizens within secular societies (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

Habermas argues that, for religious believers, faith should not be about *self*-assertion but *faithfulness* to one's religious tradition. Religious traditions provide the faithful with particular ways of reasoning about their everyday lives. The faithful should not seek for the nonreligious within secular life to agree with them, but both religious and nonreligious citizens in secular contexts ought to expect and seek communicatively rational engagements with one another. Nonreligious citizens, within secular life, can and should engage with religious believers on their terms if those terms are made explicit and held to public standards of reasoning, and religious believers within secular life can and should engage with nonreligious citizens if those terms also are made explicit. For both types of citizens, reasoning from traditionally sacred texts allows for this communicatively rational engagement because interpretations of passages found within traditionally sacred texts can and should be offered in self-critical, self-evaluative, and self-reflective ways. Interpretations of passages found within traditionally sacred texts discourage speech-acts of self-assertion. Finally, religious believers cannot and should not expect others to base their convictions on faith alone; the nonreligious, within secular life, cannot and should not dismiss traditional claims involving faith as a prerequisite for the beliefs and convictions of the citizens who are religious believers (see Goodson 2013: ch. 3).

## (p. 323) The Bad: Religious Fundamentalism

Habermas finds that the kind of religious fundamentalism we have in the world today is a "modern phenomenon," by which he means that it is a particular kind of reaction unique to modern secularity. He thinks that it is a mistake to call premodern movements or modes of thinking "fundamentalist." In principle, he has no objection to religious traditions promoting or turning toward their spiritual or theological sources. Rather, religious fundamentalism becomes problematic because it fails to be "self-reflexive" and neglects to "distinguish between religion, secular knowledge, and politics" (Habermas 2006a: 12). Religious fundamentalism, exclusive to secular knowledge and secular politics, is contingent on the mainstream existence of modern secularity. Habermas writes:

> We use [the adjective fundamentalism] to characterize a mindset that stubbornly insists on the political imposition of its own convictions and reasons, even when they are far from being generally acceptable. This holds especially for religious beliefs. However, we should not confuse dogmatism and orthodoxy with religious fundamentalism. Every religious doctrine rests on a dogmatic kernel of belief. (2006a: 10)

Religious orthodoxy "only becomes fundamentalist when the guardians and representatives of the true faith ignore the epistemic situation of a pluralistic society and insist—even to the point of violence—on the universal validity and political imposition of their doctrine" (2006a: 10).

What is the proper response to religious fundamentalism? Philosophically, the proper response is for those citizens within the secular West (Europe and the United States) to *not* respond to fundamentalism in the reactionary ways that characterize the fundamentalist response to secularism. "For only the egalitarian individualism of a rational morality that demands mutual recognition, in the sense of equal respect and reciprocal consideration for everybody, is 'universalistic' in the strict sense" (Habermas 2006a: 23–24). His proposal concerns a notion of "tolerance." When Giovanna Borradori asks Habermas if the categories of "friendship" and "hospitality" are better, morally, than the notion of "tolerance"—because of the condescending and paternalistic nature of "tolerance"—Habermas never addresses the categories of "friendship" and "hospitality" in his answer. Habermas addresses fundamentalism in strictly political terms, not on ethical nor moral terms. Habermas says:

> The policies of the present … US government are guided by the image of a unipolar world on which superpower hegemony alone can avert the risks of fundamentalism … and impose political and economic modernization throughout the world. The European states have to choose between accepting the place within the framework of a "coalition of the willing" which Washington assigns its allies on this scenario and reinforcing the collective decision-making power of the EU [European Union] with the aim of promoting a 'reconstruction of the West' under conditions of relative importance. (2006a: 74–75)

Fundamentalism must be handled politically, not morally, according to Habermas. Friendship and hospitality are moral categories; for Habermas, tolerance is the best that we can do. Habermas seems to think that a moral approach would be too reactionary, rather (p. 324) than distant and reasoned, which might lead us to respond with the same problematic zeal found within fundamentalism.

When addressing fundamentalism, from a strictly political perspective, we must keep in mind two different but equally important points. Habermas writes:

> On the one hand, we must take a clear stand against fundamentalism, including Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, and, on the other, we must acknowledge that fundamentalism is the child of disruptive processes of modernization in which the aberrations of our colonial history and the failures of decolonization played a decisive role. (2006a: 111)

First, religious fundamentalism does not apply to Islam alone within the twenty-first century; we must become alert to Christian and Jewish forms of fundamentalism as well. Second, we ought to recognize the missteps of colonialism—which allowed for contexts of oppression and suffering for those who now find comfort in the causes of "religious fundamentalism." Once we keep in mind these two important points, then we can consider the political options that we have for moving forward within the twenty-first century (Aguirre 2012: chs. 5–7).

# The Ugly: Religious-Based Violence

The bad turns into the ugly: religious fundamentalism often fuels religious-based violence. When this occurs, Habermas argues that we are faced with two political options for addressing religious-based violence: either (a) through military strategy and empire-like ambition, as demonstrated by the United States' response to the religious-based violence of Al-Qaeda, or (b) through a collective union—modeled on the European Union—that polices religious fundamentalism when that fundamentalism turns into "terrorism" through the violation of human rights and societal peace. Habermas thinks these are the options available to us, in the twenty-first century, for addressing and negotiating religious-based violence.

According to Habermas, there are three central problems with the military response carried out by the United States' War on Terror (see Bush 2001: 65–73): (a) the targets are always on the move: if there are no specific targets, then traditional military strategies cannot be successfully applied to fighting terrorism; (b) as an ideology, or an "ism," terrorism and the threats it poses are not concrete enough to frame them for clear political thinking about terrorism: the threat of terrorism is not concrete enough to address it as a problem that can be solved by one nation-state on its own; and (c) any War on Terror would be an unconventional war: the fight is against a "network," not a "nation-state." Habermas's response to the language of the War on Terror begins with these remarks:

> The global terror that culminated in the September 11 attacks … exhibits the anarchistic traits of an important revolt against an enemy that cannot be defeated in any pragmatic sense. Its only possible effect is to shock and alarm the government and population. Technically speaking, our complex societies offer ideal opportunities for concerted disruptions of normal activities because they are highly susceptible to interferences and accidents. These disruptions can produce major destructive effects with a minimum of effort. Global terrorism is extreme both in its lack of realistic goals and in its cynical exploitation of the vulnerability of complex systems. (2006a: 13–14)

(p. 325) The complexity of the modern, globalized world makes Western society susceptible to attacks by terrorist networks. While the ultimate goals of terrorist networks remain "unrealistic," the possibility of arbitrary attacks continues to be a real threat. Habermas calls these random attacks "cynical" because, while the attacks are intended to make political and theological statements, by design they are not reparative but destructive.

Habermas distinguishes between terrorists and what he calls "ordinary criminals." Terrorism "differs from private matters in that it merits public interest and demands a different kind of [moral] analysis from that of murder committed out of jealousy, for example" (2006a: 14). If terrorism differs from ordinary crime based on the involvement of political and public interests, then does our moral analysis of terrorism require thinking in terms of war? Habermas answers this question by saying that he considers "Bush's decision to call for a 'war against terrorism' a serious normative and pragmatic error" (14). The normative error Bush's declaration committed was that it elevated the "criminals to the status of enemies in war," and the pragmatic error is "one cannot conduct a war against an elusive 'network' if the term 'war' is to retain any precise meaning" (14–15). According to Habermas, the category of terrorist fits somewhere between "ordinary criminals" and "enemies in war." He still calls them "criminals" but recognizes that, because of the political and public interests involved, they are more than "murderers." This "more than," however, does not warrant equating them with enemies at war, political soldiers, or warriors.

Habermas thinks of terrorism in terms of how it disturbs the peacefulness of society through the disruption of our norms of communication. Habermas claims, "if violence begins with disruptions in communication, once it has erupted it is possible to determine what went wrong and what needs to be repaired" (2006a: 15–16). Habermas finds that terrorism requires careful and serious political analysis. He disdains any Rambo-like approach to terrorism where solutions are found in making "tough heroes." According to Habermas, a correct response to terrorist activity should not further disrupt the norms of communication; ultimately, responses to terrorism need to repair the disruptions of communication and rationality caused by terrorist attacks rather than continue those disruptions—or, worse, create further disruptions. This is a case in which the distinction between communicative action and communicative rationality plays out in politics: communicative rationality comes to the rescue when disruptions occur in communicative action.

Traditionally, just war theory provides the reasons and strategies for responding to religious-based terrorism. Just war theory cannot and should not be employed in secular and postsecular contexts, according to Habermas. Concerning the problems of just war theory, Habermas's argument can be summarized as follows: (a) because the War on Terror is not a war, terrorism should be addressed as a police action rather than through military strategies (however, terrorists should not be treated as "ordinary criminals"); (b) working toward "a globally inclusive commonwealth" will require thinking of all conflicts as "internal" problems, rather than external ones, and this will mean the abolition of war in the twenty-first century; therefore (c) just war theory is neither applicable nor viable for addressing conflicts in the twenty-first century.

Habermas thinks that we should develop an international police force to address twenty-first-century conflicts rather than make decisions prescribed by just war theory. The European Union provides a model for how international law, without its shared foundations with just war reasoning, can be realized.[3] Habermas makes the case that since 1928, the *jus ad bellum* (justifications for going to war or the reasons based on justice for declaring (p. 326) war) have lost their validity for thinking about war. Where we find ourselves now, according to Habermas, is that we think of war in terms of legal and illegal wars—as opposed to just and unjust wars—which Habermas finds as a promising development (see Habermas 2006a: 102). Just war theory provides a *moral* framework for thinking about war, which means that just war theory is neither needed nor viable in the twenty-first-century postsecular context.

What replaces just war theory? In order to answer this question, Habermas turns toward Immanuel Kant's proposal for "perpetual peace." According to Habermas, Kant claims that the "abolition of war is a command of reason" (2006a: 121). If this claim is right, then in addition to no longer being viable, the just war tradition blocks the command of reason by keeping us from "securing peace." While the just war tradition claims to encourage and exercise practical reasoning, it actually discourages practical reasoning by Kantian standards. Habermas writes, "Practical reason first brings the moral veto to bear against systematic killing" (2006a: 121). Just war reasoning is not a legitimate form of practical reasoning since it encourages and/or leads to acts of killing. Within the just war tradition, practical reasoning mandates solving problems of oppression and violence through "systematic killing"—which is not a valid exercise of practical reasoning on Habermas's and Kant's terms.

Within the twenty-first century, just war assumptions concerning the externality of problems become obsolete. The just war tradition puts forth the argument that war is necessary for addressing external problems: the problems located in other nation-states. Within the twenty-first century, however, we are moving toward "a globally inclusive commonwealth." In such a commonwealth, there are no "external" problems; problems only occur within the functioning commonwealth of nations. Consequently, all problems are handled as internal problems—which nation-states address through the use of a police force. Habermas concludes: "What had hitherto been military conflicts would assume the char-

acter of police actions and operations of criminal justice" (2006a: 123). We no longer need militaries, only an international police force.

Habermas's final argument against just war theory returns to his earlier reflections on the problems with the language and logic of "the war on terrorism." He argues:

> What is new is not the terroristic intent, nor even the type of attack. … The novelty lies in the specific motivation, and even more so in the logistics, of this form of privatized violence which operates globally but is only weakly networked. The "success" achieved by the terrorists in their own eyes since September 11, 2001 can be explained by a variety of factors, two of which merit particular attention: first, the disproportionate resonance with which the terror meets in a highly complex society suddenly aware of its own vulnerability, and, second, the incommensurate reaction of a highly armed superpower that deploys the technological potential of its army against non-state networks. The terrorists' calculation aims at a "success" in direct proportion to the anticipated "military and diplomatic, domestic-legal and social-psychological consequences of the attacks." (2006a: 172)

The implication of this argument is that just war reasoning is not equipped to fight against the forms of "privatized violence" that terrorist attacks embody. By definition, just war reasoning cannot handle privatized violence because it deliberately addresses *bellum* instead of *duellum*. Perhaps this tension calls attention to a more fundamental problem with just war reasoning: some of the most complex and intractable conflicts are responses to "private" organizations and not between nation-states. If just war reasoning does not provide us with a (p. 327) way to think about the suffering inflicted by private organizations, then it becomes obsolete in the globalized twenty-first century.

According to Habermas, there are two conditions necessary for the potential for peace in the global world depends on two steps: (a) "the Kantian project [toward international peace] can only continue if the US [United States] returns to the internationalism it embraced after 1918 and 1945 and once again assumes the role of peacemaker in the evolution of international law toward a 'cosmopolitan condition'" (2006a: 117); (b) all nation-states ought to recognize their sovereignty, not in terms of a possession of power for waging war but in terms of a "self-obligation of peaceful[ness]" through sovereignty (157).[4]

For perpetual peace to become "permanent world peace," we should seek for "the complete constitutionalization of international relations" (Habermas 2006a: 121). Both Habermas and Kant, however, remain skeptical about the functionality of "a world republic"—which is why Kant defended, in his time, the notion of "a league of nations" (see Kant 1983: 107–140). Habermas, however, criticizes Kant's notion of "a league of nations" and turns toward the development of the United Nations as a more realistic alternative because in its conception the United Nations intended to be inclusive: "In contrast with the structure of a League of Nations composed of a vanguard of states that already possess liberal constitutions, the United Nations was designed to be inclusive from the begin-

ning" (Habermas 2006a: 165). The United Nations remains the best we have, according to Habermas, for peace among the nations.

Finally, in an interesting turn of moral logic, Habermas approvingly says that the United Nations embodies "the 'unity of nations,'" found in the work of the late medieval/early modern Roman Catholic just war theorists Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez (see Habermas 2006a: 165). According to Habermas, the United Nations aims to serve as a political body that realizes the constitutionality necessary for achieving perpetual peace. Furthermore, the United Nations will provide the strategies and tools required for addressing conflicts around the globe through an international police force. Habermas expects nation-states to begin large-scale demilitarization efforts and contribute energy and funds to the policing efforts of the United Nations. While violence will remain in the world, the promised result will be a world without war.

# A Theological Endorsement of Postsecularism

*The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* accessibly presents a process of communicative rationality through the written arguments of Habermas and Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). In this final section, I focus on Ratzinger's contributions to this dialogue as a way to introduce both a theological endorsement of postsecularism and a theological response to secularization.

In his dialogue with Habermas, the first question that Ratzinger addresses is: What is the task of philosophy within postsecular contexts? Habermas's answer to this question was to reiterate that philosophers play the role of "interpreter" among and "stand-in" between academic disciplines, as well as philosophers translating the content of the natural sciences (p. 328) to the ordinary language of the greater public (see Habermas 2006b: 38–39). Both of these tasks contribute to the ongoing process of communicative rationality (see Junker-Kenney 2011: 67–80). Ratzinger argues that it remains

> the responsibility of philosophy to accompany critically the development of the individual academic disciplines, shedding a critical light on premature conclusions and apparent 'certainties' about what man is, whence he comes, and what the goal of his existence is. To make the same point in different words: philosophy must sift the non-scientific results with which it [philosophy] is often entangled, thus keeping open our awareness of the totality and of the broader dimensions of the reality of human existence—for science can never show is more than partial aspects of this existence. (2006: 57)

Ratzinger shares Habermas's understanding that the task of philosophy concerns navigating and negotiating the different proposals that come from various academic disciplines. For Ratzinger, philosophy constantly reminds other disciplines of the limitations regarding the types of knowledge that they produce. Philosophy also filters nonscientific results

from scientific results ensuring a balance between the scientific and nonscientific claims that help us describe “the reality of human existence.”

One implication of Ratzinger’s reasoning is that the claims made from religious studies and theology likewise must be accountable to the sifting of philosophy. If this implication is an accurate representation of Ratzinger’s thinking, and I think that it is, then there is surprisingly very little difference between Habermas’s well-developed theory of communicative rationality—and philosophy’s role within the twenty-first-century academy—and Ratzinger’s own thoughts concerning the role of philosophy within the twenty-first-century academy. In his book titled *God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*, Ratzinger argues that biblical interpretation ought to ground itself in a proper science of interpretation (see Ratzinger 2008: 91–126). Ratzinger identifies quantum theory as the field of science that provides the proper foundation for interpretation and contends that philosophy can help navigate these unchartered waters between biblical interpretation and quantum theory (see Ratzinger 2008: 91–126; see Goodson 2015: ch. 3). This surprising claim suggests even further that Ratzinger requires philosophy to mediate the arguments made by theology.

The second question addressed by Ratzinger in his dialogue with Habermas is: What is the task of politics within secular contexts? Ratzinger claims that it “is the specific task of politics to apply the criterion of law to power, thereby structuring the use of power in a meaningful manner” (2006: 58). Ratzinger’s reflections on this answer should complicate the urge for practicing Roman Catholics, in the context of secularized America, to join the Tea Party movement:

> It is not the law of the stronger, but the strength of the law that must hold sway. Power as structured by law, and at the service of the law, is the antithesis of violence, which is lawless power that opposes the law. This is why it is important for every society to overcome any suspicion that is cast on the law and its regulations, for it is only in this way that arbitrariness can be excluded and freedom can be experienced as a freedom shared in common with others. Freedom without [government and] law is anarchy and, hence, the destruction of freedom. (2006: 58)

Ratzinger thinks that the primary goal of politics is to strike the proper balance between law and power. Ratzinger raises the interesting political question: “How does law come into (p. 329) being, and what must be the characteristics of law if it is to be the vehicle of justice rather than the privilege of those who have the power to make the law?” (2006: 59). He responds to his own question by arguing that the “law must be, not the instrument of the power of a few [especially the wealthy], but the expression of the common interest of all,” which “seems … to have been resolved through the instruments whereby a democratic will is formed in society, since all collaborate in the genesis of the law” (59). Ratzinger’s arguments are much closer to Habermas’s political philosophy than the neoconservative worry pertaining to the constant and necessary corruption of power.

Like Habermas, Ratzinger maintains that democracy is the best form of politics. In Ratzinger's words: "[A]s a sheer matter of fact, the guarantee of a shared collaboration in the elaboration of the law and in the just administration of power is the basic argument that … democracy [is] the most appropriate form of political order" (2006: 59). True social democracy, which develops and maintains the proper balance between law and power, remains difficult to achieve but well worth the pursuit (see Ratzinger 2006: 59–61). Unlike Habermas, Ratzinger actually displays less optimism about the promise of late medieval and early modern Roman Catholic arguments concerning natural law and the "law of the nations." Habermas argues that the United Nations embodies the argumentative goals of de Vitoria and Suarez concerning how natural law reasoning leads to law shared by "the nations." Ratzinger claims that the Roman Catholic Church mistakenly has used natural law reasoning as a blunt instrument (see Ratzinger 2006: 69). Ratzinger eschews natural law reasoning, within politics, which signals his contribution to this post-secular dialogue (see Ratzinger 2006: 67–72).

As a conclusion to his dialogue with Habermas, Ratzinger agrees with Habermas's proposal for postsecularism—especially Habermas's emphasis on (a) "the willingness to learn from each other" and (b) imposing "self-limitation on both sides" (Ratzinger 2006: 77). Ratzinger challenges religious believers to allow their beliefs "to be purified and structured by reason" (77). Furthermore, he contends that postsecularism mandates both Christian theology and secular rationality to discover and/or invent concrete practices of "intercultural" inclusion in order to avoid "succumbing to a false [sense of] Eurocentrism" (79).

In his most recent book, *A Reason Open to God*, Ratzinger distinguishes between "healthy secularism" and the "internal secularization" of Europe. While he does not employ Habermas's phrase "postsecularism" in *A Reason Open to God*, it seems that his own phrase "healthy secularism" points toward the same features of postsecular contexts. Ratzinger writes, "The healthy secularism … does not in fact imply closure to transcendence or a false neutrality with regard to those moral values that form" one's religious faith (2013: 161). Not all forms of secularism, however, are "healthy": according to Ratzinger, the "internal secularization" of Europe remains a threat to religious faith as understood by the Roman Catholic Church (see Ratzinger 2013: 189).

Secularist contexts invite disengagement between citizens who are religious believers and those who identify as nonreligious. Both Habermas and Ratzinger have become discontent with this fact about secularism. What Habermas calls postsecularism allows, encourages, and invites deeper and more substantial engagements between religious and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century. Ratzinger finds himself in agreement with Habermas's postsecular vision for the globalized world of the twenty-first century. Therefore, postsecularism provides the proper context for the process of communicative (p. 330) rationality to occur between religious believers and nonreligious citizens in the globalized world of the twenty-first century.

# Acknowledgments

Morgan Elbot and Quinn McDowell served as research assistants for this chapter, and their work contributed both helpful summaries and original insights into the literature. Morgan also offered several editorial comments and suggestions, and she prepared some of the sections for publication. I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Woodburn for his careful editorial comments and stimulating questions on earlier drafts. Rev. Geoff Boyle, Rev. Peter Jacobson, and Rev. Phil Kuehnert provided attentive and charitable responses to the arguments presented here. As usual, John Shook makes me a better thinker and writer than I imagine for myself.

## Bibliography

Adams, Nicholas. 2006. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Aguirre, Javier. 2012. “Postmetaphysical Reasoning and Postsecular Consciousness: Habermas’s Analysis of Religion in the Public Sphere.” PhD diss., Stony Brook University, New York.

Borradori, Giovanna (ed.). 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bush, George W. 2001. “Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress.” In *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush, 2001–2008,* 23–36. **http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf**.

Edgar, Andrew. 2006. *Habermas: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.

Goodson, Jacob. 2011. “What Is Reparative Reasoning? Jürgen Habermas’s Philosophy, Practical Reasoning, and Theological Hermeneutics.” *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 10(2). **http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/volume-10-no-2-december-2011-public-debate-and-scriptural-reasoning/what-is-reparative-reasoning/**.

Goodson, Jacob. 2013. “Can Christian Theologians Reason Post-Metaphysically? Jürgen Habermas and the Semblance of Intellectual Virtue.” In *Groundless Gods: The Theological Prospects of Post-Metaphysical Thought*, edited by Eric Hall and Hartmut von Sass, 75–95. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick.

Goodson, Jacob. 2015. *Narrative Theology and the Hermeneutical Virtues: Humility, Patience, Prudence*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1970. *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics*. Translated by Jeremy Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1990a. “An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative verses Subject-Centered Reason.” In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures,* translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, 294–326. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1990b. “Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter.” In *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson, 1–20. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2001. “Remarks on Discourse Ethics.” In *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics,* translated by Ciaran Cronin, 9–111. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2003. *The Future of Human Nature*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2006a. *The Divided West*. Translated by Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2006b. “Pre-Political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?” In *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, translated by Brian McNeil, 19–47. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.

(p. 332) Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. “Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the ‘Public Use of Reason’ by Religious and Secular Citizens.” In *Between Naturalism and Religion,* translated by Ciaran Cronin, 114–147. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2010. “An Awareness of What Is Missing.” In *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*, 15–23. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Junker-Kenney, Maureen. 2011. *Habermas and Theology*. London: T&T Clark.

Kant, Immanuel. 1983. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. Translated by Ted Humphrey. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 2006. “That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-Political Moral Foundations of a Free State.” In *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion,* translated by Brian McNeil, 53–80. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 2008. *God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius Press.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 2013. *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education, and Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

Smith, James. 2014. *How (Not) to Be Secular*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Thomassen, Lasse. 2010. *Habermas: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Bloomsbury.

## Notes:

(1.) For a quite different description of secularism, consult James Smith's rendering (2014: ch. 4).

(2.) This argument is found in Habermas's essay, "Religion in the Public Sphere," which is an extended discussion of John Rawls's political philosophy that ends with Habermas distancing himself from Rawls's defense of secularism. Habermas says, "Rawls developed his 'Theory of Justice' into a 'Political Liberalism' because of his growing recognition of the relevance of the 'fact of pluralism.' He deserves the immense credit of having addressed the political role of religion at an early date. Yet these very phenomena can trigger an awareness of the limits of normative arguments in a supposedly 'free-standing' political theory. For whether the liberal [and secularist] response to religious pluralism can be accepted by the citizens themselves as the single right answer depends not least on whether secular and religious citizens, from their respective points of view, are prepared to accept an interpretation of the relationship between faith and knowledge that first makes it possible for them to treat one another in a self-reflexive manner in the political arena" (Habermas 2008: 147).

(3.) Habermas writes: "the EU [European Union] is itself an example for how the European nation-states have come to terms in a productive way with their belligerent past. If this project, which has now entered the phase of constitution-making, is successful, the EU could even serve as a model for 'government beyond the nation-state'" (2006a: 54).

(4.) In the section titled "Peace as an Implication of Law-Governed Freedom" (Habermas 2006a: 121–123), Habermas elucidates the Kantian project of perpetual peace: "For Kant …, law is not merely a suitable *means* for establishing peace between states; rather, he conceives of peace between nations from the beginning in terms of legal peace" (121). Habermas continues his explication of Kant's philosophy: "From Kant's republican perspective [by "republican," Kant means representatives of the people who maintain legal order], there is instead a conceptual connection between the role of law in promoting peace and role of a legal condition that citizens can accept as legitimate in promoting freedom" (121). This means, from Habermas's perspective, that the project of "perpetual peace" is commanded by "practical reason" because there is a "cosmopolitan extension" of conditions concerning "civil liberties" being "secured within the constitutional state" (121). Because perpetual peace is commanded by practical reason, sovereignty obligates nation-states to seek out and work toward international peace. Therefore, the "cosmopolitan condition" simply requires "the condition of peace made permanent" (121).

**Jacob Goodson**

Jacob L. Goodson is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Southwestern College in Kansas. He is the General Editor for The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning. He coedited Rorty and the Religious: Christian Engagements with a Secular Philosopher, and

authored Narrative Theology and the Hermeneutical Virtues: Humility, Patience, Prudence.

# Secularisms or Liberal-Democratic Constitutionalism?

Veit Bader

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.21

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter begins with the concepts “secular,” “secularity,” “secularization,” and “secularism” and summarizes core results of social science studies into the changing role of religions in contemporary societies, Then it discusses problems with the construction of models of the governance of religious diversity in the social sciences and presents some empirically grounded normative models of relations between (organized) religions and societies, cultures, politics, law, and the state in order to draw some normative lessons. The chapter provides a critical discussion of first- and second-order normative principles that should govern the these relations. For rich empirical descriptions and explanations in the social sciences, grand narratives or umbrella concepts such as secularization, secularism, and postsecularism fail to capture different complexities, configurations, and trade-offs. The different meanings of “the principle of secularism” are discussed and a proposal to replace them by rights and principles of liberal-democratic constitutionalism offered.

Keywords: secularism, secularization, religious diversity, rights, liberalism, democracy

SECULARIZATION theory, as a companion of the grand narrative of modernization, was not questioned much in the social sciences for a long time. It also has been taken for granted in the few studies in political theory and political philosophy on the changing relations between (organized) religions and societies, cultures, politics, law, and the state (RSS) in modern society. The modern state has been viewed as a “secular/secularist” state, and the principle of “secularism” has been seen as its appropriate normative foundation. In the past two decades, matters have changed rather dramatically. In sociology, and the social sciences more broadly, a new view has emerged, of the demise of the secularization-theory (Peter Berger) and its replacement by rival grand narratives such as the return of religion, the mushrooming of religious diversity, or postsecularism. In normative disciplines such as law and constitutional theory, political theory, and political philosophy, there has been an explosion of studies on a wide variety of issues regarding RSS. They range from hard cases in which types of religious freedoms are in tension with each other and with other basic human rights to life, liberty, security, equal treatment, and nondis-

crimination, to softer cases and highly dramatized symbolic issues (Bader 2007b: chs. 4 and 5). Competing models of normative secularism and postsecularism are also now discussed.

This chapter criticizes such grand narratives by applying my strategy of disaggregation (Bader 1991: 21–27, 2007a: 875–879) to increase conceptual and theoretical clarity. I start with brief remarks on the concepts secular, secularity, secularization, and secularism; I summarize the core results of social science studies into the changing role of religions in contemporary societies; and I discuss problems with the construction of models for the governance of religious diversity in the social sciences. I then present some empirically grounded normative models of RSS relations and draw some normative lessons. Finally, I turn to a critical discussion of first- and second-order normative principles that should govern the RSS relations. For rich empirical descriptions and explanations in the social sciences, grand narratives or umbrella concepts such as secularization, secularism, and postsecularism fail to capture different complexities, configurations, and tradeoffs, or so I want to show (Bader 2007a). (p. 334) I distinguish different meanings of "the principle of secularism" and propose to replace them by rights and principles of liberal-democratic constitutionalism (LDC; Bader 2010, 2012b).

# Secularization, Secularism, or Postsecularism?

We must ask the question: Do we live in secular/secularist or postsecular societies and/or states? I take secular to be "nonreligious" as distinct from but mutually constituted by "religious"; secularization as a process of transformation of societies, cultures, and/or state-institutions; and secularism as a cognitive and normative worldview or knowledge regime, as normative-ideological state-projects, as different normative models of "separation" and as different models of differentiation of religion, ethics, morality, and law (Casanova 2011: 54; Taylor 2011). My focus is on secularization and secularism.

The sociological secularization thesis (see Bader 2007b: ch. 1, 2011c), at the basis of the principle of secularism, has been understood in four different, interconnected ways, which have not always been analytically distinguished (Casanova 1994, 2011: 60–66). They are secularization as *decline,* as *individualization,* as *privatization of religion* in modern societies, and as *separation of politics or states from (organized) religions (churches).*

There is no general *decline* of religious beliefs, practices, or membership in religious organizations, certainly not on a global scale, and hardly at all in Western or modern societies, so a generalized decline thesis is theoretically weak and empirically indefensible. Yet this is also true of the generalized counterthesis of the "return" or "revival of religion"[1] since religion is not in decline. There are country-, region-, and institution-specific changes in belief, practice, and organization occurring along with increasing religious diversity.

On a global scale, monotheistic religions are competing with each other, engaging in aggressive missionary and proselytizing campaigns, while they are competing with polytheistic and nontheistic world religions and their export/import to "the West." Increasingly, animistic and spiritualist "tribal" religions are also going global and religious syncretism is rising, particularly in Latin America and Africa. This situation of a more or less peaceful coexistence of divergent types of religions may be summarized as a development "from hegemony to pluralism" (Bouma 1999; Martin 1990: vii, 293f; Luhmann 2000: 141, 341f; Taylor 2007: 437). Within Western Christian or Judeo–Christian state-societies, one also finds competing monotheisms, intensified reactive Protestant and Orthodox fundamentalisms within Christianity, as well as varieties of Islam as the old foreign "enemy" and the new "enemy" from within. Eastern world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen), new age sects and spirituality (Woodhead 2010), native peoples and their religions, and many forms of syncretism are flourishing. Political, cultural, and religious boundaries are increasingly porous or disappearing (Lewitt 2007). Under these conditions of contested globalization, awareness of religious diversity has grown together with a critical sensitivity to contested ideas about civilization evolution and (implicit or explicit) imperialist or Eurocentric definitions and descriptions of religion. These developments have also contributed to a reconsideration of traditional (monotheistic or theistic, belief-centered, textually codified or dogmatized, and more or less hierarchically organized) concepts of religion.[2]

(p. 335) Secularization as *individualization* has often been confounded with a thesis about the inevitable privatization of religion, yet the first does not necessarily include the latter. The individualization thesis has three different meanings. First, a shift from practice to belief-centered religiosity—all religions, bluntly speaking, inevitably lose their collective and ritual aspects as a consequence of "modernization" and follow the path of radical (i.e., not episcopal) Protestantism. Second, religions are increasingly "subjectified": the core of religiosity becomes individual expression, authenticity, and identity. Third, religious belonging is regarded less as a matter of fate and more as a voluntary and contingent individual choice from competing religious and nonreligious options. Only the last aspect, if freed from the ideology of unconditional "individual freedom" or "autonomy," may survive critical scrutiny, and only if it is clearly distinguished from the privatization thesis.

The inevitable *privatization* of religion is theoretically and empirically implausible because of four tendencies (Wallis and Bruce 1992). (1) the cultural defense of minority religions in countries that have a dominant majority religion. (2) the threatened religious identity in cultural transitions (through industrialization, urbanization, and migration). In both cases collective religious identities serve as markers of cultural and religious difference as well as resources for organization and mobilization. (3) Under conditions of serious power asymmetries "privatization" is a "strategy of predominant majorities to assimilate minorities hidden under the guise of 'neutrality' and 'modernity.' This socio-logic of power asymmetry is absent in most sociology of secularization" (Bader 2007b: 45). It is also visible in international relations between states and religious majorities and minorities in the global arena. (4) This alleged privatization is contradicted by the right-wing va-

riety of “public religion,” such as conservative or fundamentalist Christianity in its Catholic and Orthodox (Stöckl 2014) and Evangelical versions, as well as by the liberal variety of public religion (such as Anglican and Lutheran Protestantism). Resistance to privatization and deprivatization are viable, modern options.

If there is neither a general decline nor return of religion, and if religion is not subjectified or individualized and not privatized, isn’t there at least an inevitable *complete separation* of politics and state from church, the fourth meaning of secularization? It is symptomatic that even critics of the first three interpretations accept that a “complete separation of church and state” in the long run is an “irresistible trend” in modern societies.[3] In the long run we are all dead, but in the meantime we have to acknowledge that “strict separation” is a powerful myth (Bellah 1970), not existing even in self-proclaimed “strict separation” countries such as the United States, let alone in France or Turkey. Instead, the constitutional, legal, administrative, and political regulations of religions in Europe vary widely (Bader 2007a, 2007b: 53–61). Constitutional laws range from stronger or weaker versions of establishment of one or two state or national churches to dis- and non-establishment. Constitutional reality diverges more or less drastically from formal regulations. Among scholars in Europe it is common practice to distinguish at least three recent patterns: countries with a state or national church, strict separation countries, and countries with variable degrees of cooperation between governments and (organized) religions (see Bader 2003b, 2007b; Stepan 2011; and later discussion here). The legal status of religions ranges from no special treatment through minimal treatment on to wide and deep legal recognition and regulation. While all states have to guarantee the autonomy of (organized) religions from state regulation and interference in their internal affairs, their rules and practices differ considerably. All liberal states finance religions at least indirectly by means of tax exemptions, but (p. 336) some also use general subsidies or vouchers. Some states finance religions directly by paying salaries or other costs, giving religion-specific subsidies, and even imposing modern varieties of “church taxes.” Most European states finance (and regulate) faith-based educational institutions either directly or indirectly (including the United States since the *Zelman* ruling), and all states finance (and regulate) faith-based care and social service institutions. Regulations and practices of religious instruction and the position of teachers in governmental schools also differ widely; the same holds for chaplains and for admission rules for religious teachers and ministers of religions. In addition, we see a huge diversity of contradictory constitutional, legal, administrative, and cultural arrangements and policies even within states having liberal-democratic constitutions. As a consequence, we have to reconceptualize separation as a minimal differentiation between state and (organized) religions (the “twin tolerations” or the famous “two autonomies” of state from “churches” and “churches” from the state) by specifying minimal thresholds of institutional, organizational, and role differentiation.

For historical and synchronic comparisons it may be useful or even necessary to construct patterns of the separation of state and religion or “models of governance” or, more narrowly, of the “governing” or the “management” (Bouma 1999, 2004; Taylor 2007) of religious diversity.[4] One should, however, clearly take into account the following points. (1) These relationships, given all “path dependencies” and “institutional inertias” are neither

stable over time nor do they follow evolutionary necessities. (2) The units of comparison cannot be just territorial such as regions (containing more than one polity or cutting across polities) or polities (empires, [nation-] states, or supra-national polities) as they can also focus on specific "dimensions" (e.g., not only constitutional, legal, administrative, and judicial but also political, social, and cultural) or on specific contested issues (e.g., the headscarf, family law, etc.). (3) If the focus is on polities, one should avoid two prominent dangers: making the units internally more homogeneous than they actually are and focusing exclusively on constitutional or legal regulations of "church–state relations" (as is so often predominant amongst lawyers and political theorists). (4) Models should be more than one-case narratives while not exploding the number of cases (of areas, of issues, of dimensions). One has to balance parsimony/consistency and historical sensitivity/empirical fit.[5] (5) In my view, it is rather misleading to label these empirical and explanatory models of governance of religious diversity as "modes of secularism" as is so often done,[6] because secularism as a cognitive ideology or a normative principle or a constitutional structure cannot indicate all the dimensions to full-scale empirical descriptions or explanations of actual affairs and changes in governance/government of religious diversity.

Before turning to a normative discussion of such models in the next section, let me briefly indicate why I think that *postsecularism* as it stands is not a productive empirical research project in all these regards. First, it is difficult to pin down its meaning and its core because empirical and normative statements are often not clearly distinguished, leaving it often unclear whether supposed actual changes refer to predominant institutions and/or "attitudes of a large population" or only to a shift away from one's "own, previously more doctrinaire secularism" (Calhoun et al. 2011: 18ff) held by the theorists using the term (see later discussion of Jürgen Habermas). From an empirical perspective, its core seems to be the changed conditions of "attitudes, beliefs, and theories" corresponding with Taylor's third model of secularism predicated upon the rise of a "humanist alternative," the rise of "actual unbelief," and the "pluralization of alternatives regarding religious belief and practice" (Taylor 2007, 2011; (p. 337) he does not use the term "postsecularism"; see Mozumber 2011: 27f). Second, the "descriptive account of a post-secular society" (Habermas 2008) often shares the central dogmas of the secularization thesis,[7] particularly the strict separation assumption, or it is left highly ambiguous.[8] If the core of the postsecularism diagnosis does not, or is not even meant to indicate changes in the structural conditions or arrangements of societies or states, but rather refers to empirical changes in mentalities or in public consciousness, or in prevalent "rationalistic metaphysics," one still looks in vain for any empirical evidence of the supposed changes.[9]

Instead of reproducing secularist or postsecularist speculations, we should stop talking about religion in the singular and instead analyze religions within their contexts (Asad 1993, 2003). Religion is not generally subjectivized or privatized, and state and (organized) religions are not strictly separated. Neither societies nor states are completely secularized. Finally, "religion is the twin of the secular," as Asad has repeatedly said, but neither is "religion unique to the West" nor, more importantly, is a "secular state" or the

"secularity of the state" a Western invention,[10] which then has been exported to the rest of the world, as so many postsecularists claim.

If we cannot learn much from sociological postsecularism, what can and should we learn from sober sociology in a prescriptive perspective upon the governance of increasing religious diversity? Four issues seem particularly pressing.

First, the huge difficulties of defining a more neutral and less biased concept of religion cannot be resolved by dropping "religion" altogether or replacing it with "culture" neither in comparative research nor in the actual practice of jurisdictions (see Bader 2007b: 36f, 2012b: 6f).

Second, the increasing religious diversity or pluralization of the religious landscape globally and within Western states seems to be accompanied by an increasing fragmentation of organized "high" religions, placing pressure on existing forms of institutionalization of religions and their "management" by the state (Bouma 1999, 2004), especially on the rigid versions of "selective cooperation between Church and State" or on religious "corporatism" in some European countries (Bader 2003a, 2007b; see also Bhargava 2011; Stepan 2011).

Third, if, and to the degree in which membership in religious organizations (e.g., in churches of the big Christian denominations) is declining, then this fact prima facie erodes their representativity and their relative power position in existing arrangements. Yet, if one compares organized religions not with a nostalgically idealized past but with contemporary competitors like "humanist" organizations and "secularist counter-organizations" and with political parties in particular, then the decline of the latter "has been far more severe than anything suffered by the churches. If the contest between religion and secularization is one between organizations and articulated systems of belief, then religion rules undisturbed. Its 'enemy' is not aggressive laicism but indifference" (Crouch 2000: 273; see also Crouch 2004; Bader 2014a).

Fourth, if, and to the degree in which, religions (old or new) would really subjectivize, would stop raising any collective claims publicly and politically, and really become "invisible"—if, in other words, they lose their organizational and mobilizational capacities or explicitly choose to be completely privatized—then their individual "voice" would be "noise." In the extreme, such a scenario may result in the absence of any, or of specifically organized, religious voices, as well as of "secularist voices" and, eventually, in the more (p. 338) or less complete indifference of atomized and privatized individuals. If people choose so under conditions of not too serious inequalities and of full freedoms of political communication (including guarantees of associational autonomy), then that could fundamentally change the social, cultural, and prepolitical conditions of liberal-democratic politics and states—but it would not be an issue of fairness. Instead of trying to find remedies or therapies in "religion" (in the singular) by defending "Religion as Truth" or "Religion as Common Good,"[11] we should talk about specific religions and instead defend the open character of pluralist democracies regarding all competing symbolic universes and help to ensure that competing conceptions of the good (in beliefs and practices) are conducive

to, or at least not inimical, to the LDC that does not depend on any singular foundational theory.

# Empirically Grounded Normative Models

Normative institutional and policy models of religious governance are meant to spell out "what institutions and policies ought to look like." Yet these ideals are abstracted from and only "loosely connected with empirical patterns, and these references give the normative discussion some empirical grounding" (Bader 2007b: 201, 2012a in debate with Wohlrab). As with empirical models, in their construction one has to confront balances between consistency and empirical fit.

Two axes have been often used for their construction: "establishment" (not only constitutional but also legal, administrative, political, and cultural) and "institutional monism or pluralism." Combining them, there are five relevant models of religious governance (Bader 2003a, 2003b, 2007b). Strong establishment (SE) combines constitutional establishment with legal, administrative, political, and cultural monism (a religiously monistic nation; examples are Greece, Serbia, Israel, Iran, IS Caliphate). Weak constitutional establishment (WE) combines legal monism with some administrative pluralism, restricted political pluralism, and hesitantly recognized cultural pluralism (Norway, Denmark, England, Scotland). Plural (constitutional) establishment (PE) combines legal with administrative, political, and recognized—but restricted—religious pluralism (Finland). Nonconstitutional pluralism (NOCOP) combines restricted legal pluralism with administrative, political pluralism, and recognized—but restricted—religious pluralism (Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Spain, Australia) or wide and deep religious pluralism (India, Indonesia, Senegal). Nonestablishment and private pluralism (NEPP) combines strict constitutional, legal, administrative, and political separation with unofficially recognized religious pluralism (United States, France). The most relevant ideal models are NOCOP and NEPP, and the most important dividing line may be between religious institutional pluralism's recognition of some forms of selective cooperation between state and organized religions (WE, PE, NOCOP) and strict separationism, because the distinction between constitutional establishment(s) and nonestablishment may practically not be as crucial as legal theorists think.

The two models that are explicitly defended as ideals and, unfortunately, predominate in the debate are NOCOP (based on the existing neocorporatist or pillarized regimes of selective cooperation in Europe)[12] and NEPP (American denominationalism, less so on idealized (p. 339) French republicanism; consult Bader 2007b: 204–210, 2009a). Neocorporatist regimes officially recognize religions but they do so in an unfair, exclusivist, and rigid way to privilege older majority religions, whether "established" or not, at the disadvantage of newer minority religions. Their inbuilt majority bias and their institutional inertia prevent a smooth and adequate accommodation of the morally and legally legitimate institutional and policy claims by new minority religions. Corporatist regimes are unfair, and they are not the only alternative. In all these regards American denominationalism is

clearly normatively preferable. It is a "nonestablishment" regime, and it is clearly much more friendly toward (newer and smaller) religious minorities and displays a much higher degree of religious diversity (both are no small achievements!) than French secularist republicanism and corporatist European regimes. Yet, American denominationalism has its well-known downsides. The guarantee of exit rights is not accompanied by the provision of meaningful exit options, particularly not for vulnerable minorities. The absence of a minimally decent welfare system contrasts starkly with many European regimes. American denominationalism is known for the huge but informal impact on politics of socially and culturally established (Protestant) religions. Systems that restrict interest representation to informal ways of influencing governments through network building, lobbying, and so on do give de facto privileges to older and larger established religions because they have vast and unchecked advantages in terms of power resources and strategies. The counterproductive consequences of a strict legal public–private split and the relegation of religions to the "private sphere" of "civil society" (often combined with "a wall of separation" and strict "deferentialism"[13]) are also evident from the American treatment of political parties as purely private organizations without any public funding. This rigid public–private split is also counterproductive when it comes to all kinds of welfare and social services (Minow 2000) and to new experiments in education (Liebman and Sabel 2002).[14]

Happily, we need not choose between these two models, neither in the real world nor when it comes to realist utopias. The "respect all, positive cooperation, principled distance model" as an ideal type drawn from India, Senegal, and Indonesia (see Stepan 2011: 127f; Bhargava 2007, 2009) combines nonestablishment or "principled distance" (Stepan 2011: 134f)—something different from equidistance, particularly from deferentialist interpretations of a "wall of separation"—with respect for majority and minority religions in the public sphere and much greater religious diversity as compared with the other models (127f. See also a revealing comparison of paid religious holidays: Stepan 2011: Table 5.3) and the explicit positive accommodation or cooperation between government and religion in educational, welfare, and social services (131ff).

In all these regards there is no substantive difference between this idealized alternative non-Western model of "secularism" and my proposal of associational governance of religious diversity as a preferable realist-utopian mode of governance under the conditions of broad and deep religious diversity.[15] Its main advantage, in my view, is that it is built into an elaborated theory and tradition of *associative democracy*, the most sophisticated theory of democratic institutional pluralism (on associative democracy generally, see Hirst 1994; Bader 2001, 2007b: 185–200). There is, however, an important conceptual difference because, as already mentioned, I think it is highly misleading to label these diverse models of governance of religious diversity as "models of secularism" and, more important, to discuss the respective constitutional and moral principles needed in order to evaluate these models in terms of "secularism."

## (p. 340) Normative “Secularisms” or Liberal-Democratic Constitutionalism?

From the perspective of liberal democratic politics and normative theory (including political philosophy, constitutional law, and jurisprudence), the important question is clearly not whether society and the state are fully secularized or secular and completely “separated” from religions. We know that the emerging secular state has not been a “liberal,” let alone a “democratic” state (Hunter 2009; Kaplan 2009). We also know many examples of recent secular states that have grossly violated not only minimal standards of liberal democracy but also of any minimal morality. For explaining what these moral standards require, the meta-narrative of secularization and secularism is misleading.[16] It should be delinked from “liberalism and democracy” (Casanova 2007), and it should be replaced by “priority for liberal democracy” (Bader 1999, 2007b) or by “liberal-democratic constitutionalism” (Bader 2010). It is not decisive whether a state is secular, but what matters is whether it is decent and/or liberal-democratic.

For more than a decade now, the heated debates over secularization and secularism in the social sciences and also increasingly in political theory and philosophy have infected legal theory, constitutional law, and comparative constitutionalism. It may be too late to ban the word secular or remove secularism from our cultural vocabulary. On the other hand, the argument that “too many controversies have already been stated in these terms” seems unconvincing to me.[17] For the purposes of constitutional law and jurisprudence, my proposal to drop all normative concepts of secularism or “multiple secularisms” (Stepan 2011: 115) is motivated by the conviction that we would be better able to state and to economize our moral disagreements and to resolve the substantive constitutional, legal, jurisprudential, and institutional issues and controversies.

With regard to the “constitutional status of secularism” we can discern three distinct positions (Bader 2010), all sharing the argument that “secularism . . in most liberal democracies … is not explicitly recognized in the constitutional text or jurisprudence” and that it has “no clear standing among constitutional values” either: it is “not clear which established constitutional category secularism fits into or what is the underlying value behind it” (Sajó 2008: 617). The first position, defended by Sajó and other aggressive secularists, tries to overcome the absence of secularism in most liberal-democratic constitutions and to streamline their messiness by developing a “more robust theory of constitutional secularism” to remedy the fact that “most democracies are without a strong normative theory or practice of constitutional secularism,” to present a “clear agenda” and a “coordinated action plan” in order to “defend” vulnerable constitutions against the threats of (“strong”) religions. The second position proposes to fully contextualize secularism in normative theory and constitutional law by developing theories of alternative secularism(s): “inclusive,” “passive,” “moderate,” “evolutionary,” “weak,” “tolerant,” “liberal,” “benevolent,” “ameliorative,” or “principled distance secularism,” *laïcité plurielle* (or positive, *de gestion, bien entendue*), all in opposition to “exclusive,” “assertive,” “aggressive,” “strong,” “intoler-

ant," "statist," "hostile," or "malevolent" secularism (see the writings of Bhargava, Stepan, Taylor, Modood, Jacobsohn, An-Na'im, and Willaime, among many others).

(p. 341) The third, rather radical position is to criticize both secularism(s) and postsecularism(s). Happily, postsecularism has until now only marginally infiltrated legal and constitutional thinking, as far as I can see (consider Secularisms 1, 11, and 12 listed later in this chapter), so I can focus on the main reasons why I think we should drop secularism from our constitutional language. Secularism is not only, obviously, a very complex, polysemic, and—like all our basic concepts—essentially contested concept but also a "fuzzy," chameleonic, highly misleading, or "cacophonous" concept. If we are able to discuss the substantive issues of state–religion relations with less vague concepts, then we should do so, instead of translating everything into the language of secularism. Furthermore, constitutions and constitutional jurisprudence provide for such concepts both in terms of rights or first-order principles and in terms of "underlying values" or second-order principles. The absence of secularism in most liberal democratic constitutions demonstrates this clearly.[18] Secularism "is not a necessary concept for the analysis of democracy" (Stepan 2011: 115). Additionally, as already discussed, the really important substantive issue is not whether states and politics are modern or secular, whatever that may mean, but rather whether they are liberal-democratic. In other words, do they live up to the requirements of minimal morality, or more demanding but still minimally liberal and minimally democratic morality, and do they take seriously what this means in terms of constitutional and institutional arrangements and politics/policies? Restating this in the language of systems theory, from the perspective of constitutionalism the important leading distinction (*Leitdifferenz*) is not secular/secularist versus religious but instead liberal versus nonliberal and democratic versus nondemocratic. This restatement allows the research into and detection of incompatibilities between self-declared secular as well as religious regimes, practices, and ideologies, on one hand, with liberal and/or democratic ones on the other hand. The principle of constitutional secularism does not facilitate investigations, because it conceptually eliminates deep and serious tensions between secularism and LDC (e.g., in Turkey). Finally, "constitutional secularism" tends to hide from view structural tensions inherent in LDC between liberal constitutionalism (Rechtsstaat, rule of law, the older notion of constitutionalism) and democracy ("modern" versus "ancient" democracy), and it undermines reasonable balances amongst the two in general,[19] particularly in cases of militant democracies such as Turkey and India.

Secularism denotes, as already mentioned, a family of concepts such as secular, secularity, secularization, and secularism with regard to institutions, social processes, politics, principles, ideologies, and meta-narratives. In order to understand these different meanings and their relationships, we have to disaggregate or disentangle this cluster, and in doing so we have to use ordinary constitutional or legal language instead of treating them as a more or less poor proxy of secularism. In a detailed analysis and criticism of Indian and Turkish constitutions and jurisprudence, I have distinguished twelve different meanings of secularism (Bader 2010). This analytical taxonomy, which could also be derived from constitutions and court rulings in other countries, serves a dual aim. It helps to clarify our semantic understanding, it allows us to explicate normative principles, and it per-

mits us to discuss our normative disagreements about LDC point by point instead of mixing everything up. I now proceed from discussing rights and institutions on to principles and to meta-narratives or deep justifications.

# (p. 342) Meanings of Secularism

### Secularism 1:

"Secularity of the state" or the autonomy of the state from (organized) religions. Any decent, and a fortiori any minimal liberal, state requires a certain threshold of institutional, organizational, and role autonomy, and it must be incompatible with "theocracy" and a replacement of state-law by an all-encompassing "religious law." This may be the least contested meaning of secularism. Yet it is also obvious that Western states in early modernity have not been secular, none of today's existing states are strictly secular, and so-called "secular states" or "amoral secular states" (Bhargava 2011:97) such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Cambodia under Pol Pot, Iraq under Saddam, or Libya under Khaddaffi have violated minimal morality as often or even more so than so-called religious states. The "secularity" of the state is not the same as a normatively praiseworthy secularism. The tricky issue is to spell out the minimal threshold of differentiation of state or even of politics from religions because strict separation is, as we have seen, a non-starter, and "there are many varieties of secularism that can satisfy the twin tolerations" (Stepan 2011: 114).[20]

### Secularism 2:

Equal associational freedoms and collective toleration. LDC requires not only this "first autonomy" but also a "second autonomy" of (organized) religions from the state, which is extensively violated by self-declared modernizing or modern "secular states" (such as France and Turkey) through massive state supervision and control of religion. This version of Secularism 1 is inimical to external and associational religious freedoms and clearly incompatible with liberal constitutionalism of type 1. Collective toleration and associational freedoms, on the one hand, are not modern, liberal inventions. Yet, on the other hand, liberal constitutionalism in addition requires equal legal associational freedoms and nondiscrimination, which have not been fully guaranteed in preliberal arrangements, such as the millet system of the Ottoman Empire.

### Secularism 3:

Freedom of conscience and individual religious freedoms. The protection of freedom of conscience and of individual religious freedoms—to belief and practice any religion or none at all—from the state, majorities (secular as well as religious), and all minorities (and their organizations) is a specifically modern requirement of liberal constitutionalism of type 2. Yet, individual and associational religious freedoms are often in tension with each other, and this inherent tension between liberal constitutionalism 1 and 2 or, in more common language, this conflict between individual and collective religious rights, is often neglected or downplayed in three ways: first, by declaring religious freedoms to primarily

be a “matter of individual conscience in the private sphere” and neglecting or severely curtailing external and associational freedoms; second, by massive and illegitimate state intervention in the internal affairs of religious associations even in core issues of belief and practice; and third, by doctrines and practices of unconditional or absolute deference that do not even protect the most basic rights of minors, women, and dissenters within majority or minority religious groups and organizations.[21]

### Secularism 4:

Protection of religious minorities against unbound democratic majoritarianism. Liberal constitutionalism, in addition, requires the protection of individual and (p. 343) associational civil rights and of minority-rights. As such, it is incompatible with unbound democratic majoritarianism quite generally, since LDC is constitutional democracy or limited government, not just majority rule. This liberal constitutionalism of type 3 is particularly important in two situations: (a) in cases of aggressive secular majorities—and even more so in cases of aggressive secular ruling elites not forming majorities (as in Turkey)—threatening to seriously restrict equal religious freedoms of religious majorities and minorities; and (b) in countries with potentially or actually totalitarian and illiberal religious majorities that threaten—by majority decision—to restrict equal freedoms from religion. By freedom from religion, what is meant is the freedom of secular or nonreligious people to not believe in and practice any religion, as well as the freedoms of minorities in their religions. “Liberal democracy” is a fairly late historical and theoretical compromise between “freedom” and “democratic equality” that fosters internal tensions. Calling it just “democracy” (Stepan 2011, among many) does not allow the identification of these tensions clearly.

Before turning to democratic constitutionalism, let me highlight again that these four pillars of liberal constitutionalism are phrased here in traditional constitutional language. Calling them “Secularisms 1–4” clarifies nothing and overlooks the tensions and incompatibilities between liberal constitutionalism and (some varieties of) secularism.

### Secularism 5:

Popular sovereignty and protection against political discrimination: political secularism or secular democracy. Modern democracy, diverging from ancient and classical liberal democracy, stands for *vox populi vox dei*, for the equal political status of all citizens and for equal political rights in opposition to all ascriptive discriminations, particularly on religious grounds. This is often called “political secularism” or “democratic secularism.” As in the case of the secularity of the state, one can call any democracy that does not discriminate on religious grounds a “secular democracy.” Modern democracy is thus secular by definition, indicating “popular sovereignty”: the condition that all defenders of absolute truth claims, religious as well as secular or “scientistic,” have to accept their mutual situation that their “truths” are treated as “opinions” when it comes to democratic decision-making. Yet, identifying secularism with democracy, or declaring their deep harmony, makes it impossible to detect and investigate serious tensions. In my view, secularism can be and actually is inimical to modern, democratic constitutionalism at least in four re-

gards; ironically, all of these serious restrictions of democracy are legitimized as necessary for defending democracy. First, modern democracy requires a free and equal political process and multiparty competition, and these minimal institutional requirements of democratic constitutionalism 1 have often been violated by secularism as an aggressive, elitist strategy of "modernization" (e.g., by "Kemalist secularism"). Second, more or less massive restrictions of the freedoms of political association, prohibition of "religious" political parties, and the dismissal of elected representatives, assemblies, and even elected (state) governments by militant democracies such as Turkey or India (Bader 2010: 22–24, 2015) are also inimical to this second core element of democratic constitutionalism. Third, free speech, its third core element, is often violated or seriously restricted by secularist restraints (see Secularism 6). And fourth, many varieties of foundationalist secularism (Secularisms 10–12) are inimical to its fourth core element, the pluralist, nonfoundational character of modern democracy.

### Secularism 6:

Freedoms of political speech or "exclusivist secularism". Freedoms of political communication, particularly political speech, are the core of a liberal understanding of (p. 344) modern democracy as opposed to elitist, majoritarian, or statist restrictions. Restrictions of "public reason" or political speech by excluding "religious reasons" go far beyond legitimate restrictions on grounds of incitement to violence and serious discriminatory speech (Bader 2013b). "Exclusivist" secularism (in politics, law, constitutional jurisprudence, or philosophy) is incompatible with *liberal* democracy (Bader 2008). Invoking "inclusive secularism" does not clarify the issue: at stake is not the secular or the religious character of speech but whether or not it presents a "clear and present danger" or seriously discriminates against others. It is remarkable that Habermas and Taylor, the two most prominent political philosophers associated with normative postsecularism, still defend varieties of secularist reason restraints. Habermas (2008; see Bader 2010: 15–17) repeats an only slightly modified version of his earlier exclusivist secularism: "secular foundation," a "secular metaphysics," and "secular reasoning." In his view, LDC and liberal-democratic constitutions/states presuppose "a secular self-understanding of Modernity" (Habermas 2008: 19). Hence religious citizens "are expected to appropriate the secular legitimation of constitutional principles" (19) instead of subscribing to the principles of LDC for whatever reason so long as they do subscribe. And this "postsecular" but still "secular" metaphysics is then connected to a very specific "learning process" requiring a shift from a "traditional to a more reflective form of religious consciousness," following the model of "the post-Reformation change in epistemic attitudes." This whole story is concluded by the blunt statement that "many Muslim communities still have this painful learning process before them" (18).[22] It comes not as a surprise that Habermas has only slightly modified his secularist and rationalist "public reasons restraints" (Habermas 1995, 2001) while repeating the core idea of a "filter between the informal political communication and opinion formation" and the "formal agendas" of "institutionalized decision-making (in parliament, court, government and administration)" "through which only translated, i.e. secular contributions may pass."[23] This also includes the old idea that religious reasons have to be "translated" into secular ones because only this is "a language that all the citi-

zens understand" (see 18–21 for this "institutional translation proviso"). So, in sum, the metaphysics has to be secular, the justifications of constitutional principles have to be secular, the LDC and liberal-democratic constitutions have to be secular, and any liberal democratic state has to be a secular state. Only with regard to political communication and opinion formation are "religious persons … permitted to take part… even if they use religious language." The "democratic state must not pre-emptively reduce the polyphonic complexity of the diverse public voices because it cannot know whether it is not otherwise cutting society off from scarce resources for the generation of meanings and the shaping of identities" (20). This is still much less than even John Rawls allowed for (Bader 2008: 115–130). In the end, there is not much pressure or expectations placed on "secular citizens" despite the heated debate whether the "onus" of translation falls on "religious" or "secular citizens" or both, and whether this is fair.[24] Instead of these refined exclusions, all citizens should learn the language of toleration (here as a stand-in for a decent or minimally moral state) and the more demanding but still minimalist language of LDC, which both are beyond the religion/secular divide (see later discussion).[25]

### Secularism 7:

A social or a "socialist" state. Many constitutions require the state to be a "social" state or even a "socialist state" (India), but what has this to do with secularism? On one hand, one might say that the guarantee of basic subsistence rights (not just "charity") to all citizens/residents should not allow for religious or all other ascriptive discriminations or (p. 345) exclusions. Yet, on the other hand, LDC seems compatible with a wide institutional variety of welfare regimes (mixed regimes and faith-based providers amongst them), whereas secularism would require state provision only to the exclusion of faith-based welfare provisions.

### Secularism 8:

"Strict separation"? "Strong" or "moderate," "benevolent," "ameliorative" secularism? In terms of *institutional arrangements*, the principle of secularism seems void and indecisive, allowing for both strict separation as a nonexistent utopia ("strong secularism") as well as various existing or alternative forms of selective cooperation between states, politics, and (organized) religions (see previous discussion). Does, for example, LDC require "one state-law only" for all citizens/residents, as "strong, aggressive, hostile secularism" holds?[26] Or is LDC compatible with limited opportunities for religious legal pluralism concerning such matters as marriage and divorce law, constrained by freedom of entry and exit from a religion, by voluntary choice of the respective law, by limited scope, and by state guarantees of basic interests and rights (as defenders of a whole variety of weaker versions of secularism suggest)?[27]

### Secularism 9:

"Strict *neutrality*" or "relational/inclusive neutrality," "principled distance"? "Strict *equality*" or fairness as even-handedness? *Second-order principles* (often called "values" by some, such as Bhargava) are unavoidable yet highly abstract and indeterminate meta-rules (expressing something like the "constitutional creed" or "faith"), which may help in-

terpret and balance conflicting legal principles and rights. The issue is whether secularism in general (or "secularism-as-strict-neutrality" and "strict, difference blind equality") are the right principles in this regard or should rather be reconceptualized as "relational" or "inclusive neutrality," as "difference-sensitive equality," and as "fairness as even-handedness" in cultural and religious matters (as I have argued in Bader 2007b: 82–89, with Carens, Bhargava, and others).

### Secularism 10:

"Ethical" secularism. Although modern, pluralist democracy cannot be strictly antiperfectionist, it should be as "antiperfectionist" as possible (Bader 2007b: 74–79). It should not explicitly privilege a specific way of a good life (practices and virtues, not only beliefs), such as a comprehensive liberal ethics or a secular or humanist ethics as a supreme way of life. Comprehensive moral liberalism (as distinct from "political liberalism") or "ethical secularism" (as declared by the Turkish Constitutional Court)—distinct from "political secularism"—is surely incompatible with LDC.

### Secularism 11:

"Foundational" or "justificatory secularism". LDC does not require any deeper, metaphysical, philosophical, or theological normative foundation. Modern, pluralist liberal democracy is an open project helping to prevent the political form of a society from serving as the realization of a transcendent vision or an "ultimate philosophical foundation." "Secularism" has had such visions—such as the exclusivist claim of an "independent political ethics mode" (from Bayle and Spinoza to Habermas)—and taken parochial forms (as secularist or humanist "Enlightenment exclusivism"), which are, potentially or actually, inimical to LDC.

### Secularism 12:

A generalized "meta-narrative" or "symbolic universe". LDC thrives in a context of competing symbolic universes (i.e., overarching cognitive and normative views (p. 346) of cosmos, nature, and society). Constitutionalizing secularism as a meta-narrative of "rationalism, science, modernization, or civilization" (as in Turkey or India) is incompatible with the open character of pluralist democracies and, potentially or actually, with religious freedoms. It seduces constitutional courts to declare "rationalism" or "scientism" as a general foundation and/or universally accepted "ideal," to portray all religion as dogmatic and inimical to humanity, civility, freedom, and democracy and to speculate on the "true," "essential" meaning of religions by declaring all contrary official statements of religious parties and representatives as a "pretext." Hence, replacing secularism with LDC should not be misunderstood as a replacement of one ideology ("secularism") with another equally cacophonous or ambiguous one ("liberalism").[28] LDC is not a foundational ideology or philosophy but a meta-constitutional and meta-legal ideal[29] containing the constitutional essentials or the core of the various and differing articulations of rights and principles in liberal-democratic international or regional conventions and in state constitutions. It is "nonfoundationalist" and compatible with many competing theories of the rule of law

and of democracy, but it does not depend on any of them, including “political liberalism” (Bader 2009c: 559, 567f.).

# Conclusion

Appeals to the principle of secularism do not help to clarify but rather mystify normative disagreements regarding the difficult contextual tasks of weighing or balancing tensions of constitutional principles and conflicting rights. All attempts to do so terminate in boundless ambiguities and an inflation of competing varieties of secularism that are incompatible with each other. The difficult tasks ahead should instead be these (listed in reverse order, starting from “meta”-levels).

First, we should engage comparatively with, non-Eurocentric perspectives in order to (a) locate the content or substance of a minimal morality (not a morality outside of history but one changing over time), (b) specify a more demanding but still minimal liberal-democratic morality and constitutionalism, (c) identify the tensions between them and discuss important reality checks, and (d) provide for what I have called a “non-infringement proviso” (Bader 2007b: 81) favoring a “tolerable liberal-democracy” instead of fashionable “muscular” democracies or aggressive secularisms. A discussion of the most appropriate procedure may strengthen serious doubts regarding “deliberative consensus” or even a weaker “overlapping consensus” and may require a rethinking of broad, global “common ground” strategies or reasoned compromises (Horton 2011; Bellamy 1999; Bader 2011d, 2013a). Hopefully, the result may turn out to be a “moderate universalism” as opposed to the radicalized contextualism of “it’s all politics” and the deafening normative silence amongst genealogists and “post”-theorists of all sorts.

Second, we should engage in a serious debate about competing interpretations and reconceptualizations of second-order principles in political philosophy and constitutional law.

Third, and most important, we should analyze and research in detail the serious conflicts or basic tensions between first-order principles or basic rights with regard to various fields and issues, in order to develop the perspective of a moderate contextualism and the arts of reasonable balance, accommodation, and finding exemptions and their limits. (Modest (p. 347) beginnings are seen in results of the RELIGARE research project at www.religareproject.eu/.) This is obviously an urgent and vast task, but not one completely out of reach.

## Bibliography

An Na’im, A. 2008. “The State Cannot Be Islamic, What Does Being Secular Mean?” Paper presented at the conference on Religion, Secularism and Democracy in Istanbul (6–9 July).

Asad, T. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Bader, V. 1991. *Kollektives Handeln.* Opladen, Germany: Leske + Budrich.

Bader, V. 1999. “Religious Pluralism. Secularism or Priority for Democracy?” *Political Theory* 27(5), 597–633.

Bader, V. 2001. “Problems and Prospects of Associative Democracy.” In *Special Issue: Associative Democracy—The Real Third Way?*, edited by P. Hirst and V. Bader. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 4(1), 31–70.

Bader, V. 2003a. “Religions and States. A New Typology and a Plea for Non-Constitutional Pluralism.” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5(1), 55–91.

Bader, V. 2003b. “Religious Diversity and Democratic Institutional Pluralism.” *Political Theory* 31(2), 265–294.

Bader, V. 2004. “Contextualized Morality and Ethno-Religious Diversity.” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 7(2), 107–115.

Bader, V. 2005. “Associative Democracy and Minorities within Minorities.” In *Minorities within Minorities*, edited by A. Eisenberg and J. Spinner, 319–339. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bader, V. 2007a. “Regimes of Governance of Religious Diversity in Europe. The Perils of Modelling.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(6), 871–887.

Bader, V. 2007b. *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bader, V. 2008. “Secularism, Public Reason or Moderately Agonistic Democracy?” In *Secularism, Religion, and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. Levey and T. Modood, 110–135. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bader, V. 2009a. “Governance of Religious Diversity: Research Problems and Policy Problems.” In *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity*, edited by M. Koenig and P. Bramadan, 43–72. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Bader, V. 2009b. “Legal Pluralism and Differentiated Morality: Shari’a in Ontario?” In *Legal Practice and Cultural Diversity*, edited by R. Grillo, R. Ballard, A. Ferrari, A. J. Hoekema, M. Maussen, and P. Shah, 49–72. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate.

(p. 350) Bader, V. 2009c. “Reply.” *Ethnicities* 9(4), 566–570.

Bader, V. 2010. “Constitutionalizing Secularism, Alternative Secularisms or Liberal Democracy? A Critical Reading of Some Turkish, ECtHR and Indian Supreme Court Cases on ‘Secularism.’ ”*Utrecht Law Journal* 6(3), 8–35.

Bader, V. 2011a. “Associational Governance of Ethno-Religious Diversity in Europe. The Dutch Case.” In *Citizenship, Borders, and Human Needs*, edited by R. Smith, 273–297. University Park: Penn State University Press.

Bader, V. 2011b. “Beyond Secularisms of all Sorts.” Immanent Frame. **http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/10/11/beyond-secularisms-of-all-sorts/**.

Bader, V. 2011c. “Religion and the Myths of Secularization and Separation.” RELIGARE Working Paper No. 5. **http://www.religareproject.eu/content/religion-and-myths-secularization-and-separation**.

Bader, V. 2011d. “Religions, Toleration, and Liberal Democracy: A Theory of Doctrinal, Institutional, and Attitudinal Learning.” In *Democracy, Religious Pluralism and the Liberal Dilemma of Accommodation*, edited by M. Mookherjee, 17–46. Dordrecht: Springer.

Bader, V. 2012a. “Normative or Empirical Comparisons?” Immanent Frame. **http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2012/01/09/normative-or-empirical-comparisons/**.

Bader, V. 2012b. “Post-Secularism or Liberal-Democratic Constitutionalism?” *Erasmus Law Review* 5(1), 5–26.

Bader, V. 2013a. “Excluded, Included or Foundational? Religions in Liberal-Democratic States.” In *Religion in a Liberal State*, edited by G. D’Costa, M. Evans, T. Modood, and R. Rivers, 135–163. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bader, V. 2013b. “Free Speech or Non-Discrimination as a Trump? Reflections on Contextualised Reasonable Balancing and Its Limits.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40(2), 320–338.

Bader, V. 2013c. “Individual and/or Associational Autonomy? Associative Democracy and the Freedoms of Entry and Exit.” In *On Exit: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Right of Exit in Liberal Multicultural Societies*, edited by D. Borchers and A. Vitikainen, 116–139. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bader, V. 2013d. “Moral Minimalism and More Demanding Moralities. Some Reflections on ‘Tolerance/Toleration.’” In *Tolerance, Intolerance and Respect: Hard to Accept?*, edited by J. Dobbernack and T. Modood, 23–51. Houndmills, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bader, V. 2013e. “Priority for Liberal Democracy or Secularism?” In *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by A. Berg-Sørensen, 43–68. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate.

Bader, V. 2014a. “Crisis of Political Parties and Representative Democracies. Rethinking Parties in Associational, Experimentalist Governance.” In *Special Issue: Parties, Partisanship and Political Theory*, edited by M. Bonnotti and V. Bader. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 17(3), 310–336.

Bader, V. 2014b. “Neo-Republicanism or Critical Republicanism on Religion and Public Life: Some Critical Remarks.” Paper presented at a workshop on Religion and Public Life at Queens University Belfast (15–16 May).

Bader, V. 2015. “Religious Political Parties in Europa and India.” In *Secularism, Religion and Politics: Concepts and Contexts in India and Europe*, edited by P. Losonczi and W. van Herck, 107–132. New Delhi: Routledge.

Bader, V., K. Alidadi, and F. Vermeulen. 2013. “Religious Diversity and Reasonable Accommodation in the Workplace in Six European Countries.” *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 13(2–3), 54–82.

(p. 351) Bader, V., and M. Maussen. 2015. “Non-Governmental Religious Schools in Europe: Institutional Opportunities, Associational Freedoms and Contemporary Challenges.” *Journal of Comparative Education* 51(1), 1–21.

Balagangadhara, S. N. 1994. “*The Heathen in His Blindness*”: *Asia, The West, and the Dynamic of Religion.* Leiden: Brill.

Bangstad, S. 2009. “Contesting Secularism/s: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad.” *Anthropological Theory* 9(2), 188–208.

Bangstad, S. 2011. “Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism after Virtue.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 28(3), 28–54.

Bellah, R. 1970. *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. New York: Harper and Row.

Bellamy, R. 1999. *Liberalism and Pluralism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Bhargava, R. 1998. “Introduction.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by R. Bhargava, 1–30. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2004. “A Comparative Study of the Successful Management of Religious Diversity: Melbourne and Hong Kong.” *International Sociology* 19(1), 5–24.

Bhargava, R. 2007. “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism.” In *The Future of Secularism*, edited by T. Srinivasan, 20–58. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2009. “Political Secularism: Why It Is Needed and What Can Be Learnt from its Indian Version.” In *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. Levey and T. Modood, 82–109. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bhargava, R. 2011. “Rehabilitating Secularism.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 92–113. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bouma, G. 1999. “From Hegemony to Pluralism: Managing Religious Diversity in Modernity and Post-Modernity.” *Australian Religion Studies Review* 12(2), 7–27.

Bouma, G. 2004. “A Comparative Study of the Successful Management of Religious Diversity: Melbourne and Hong Kong.” *International Sociology* 19(1), 5–24.

Bruce, S. 2011. *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Calhoun, C., M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen (eds.). 2011. *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carens, J. 2000. *Culture, Citizenship and Community.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Casanova, J. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Casanova, J. 2001. “Civil Society and Religion.” *Social Research* 64(4), 1041–1080.

Casanova, J. 2007. “Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: An EU/US Comparison.” In *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*, edited by T. Banchoff, 59–84. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casanova, J. 2011. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 54–74. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cook, M. 2007. “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion.” *Constellations* 14(2), 224–238.

Crouch, C. 2000. *Social Change in Western Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crouch, C. 2004. *Post-Democracy.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Fox, J. 2006. ‘World Separation of Religion and State Into the 21st Century’. *Comparative Political Studies* 39(5),537–569.

(p. 352) Green, P. III, B. Baker, and J. Oluwole. 2013. “Having It Both Ways: How Charter Schools Try to Obtain Funding of Public Schools and the Autonomy of Private Schools.” *Emory Law Journal* 63(2), 303–337.

Habermas, J. 1995. “Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason.” *Journal of Philosophy* 92(3), 109–131.

Habermas, J. 2001. *Glauben und Wissen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Habermas, J. 2008. “Notes on a Post-Secular Society.” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25(4), 17–29.

Hayek, F. 1960. *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hirst, P. 1994. *Associative Democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Horton, J. 2011. “Modus Vivendi and Religious Conflict.” In *Democracy, Religious Pluralism and the Liberal Dilemma of Accommodation*, edited by M. Mookherjee, 121–136. Dordrecht: Springer.

Hunter, I. 2009. “The Shallow Legitimacy of Secular Liberal Orders.” In *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. Levey and T. Modood, 27–54. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Jacobsohn, G. 2003. *The Wheel of Law: India’s Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Jansen, Y. 2011. “Postsecularism, Piety and Fanaticism: Reflections on Jürgen Habermas.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37(9), 977–998.

Kaplan, B. 2009. *Divided by Faith*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Koenig, M. 2003. “Staatsbürgerschaft und religiöse Pluralität in post-nationalen Konstellationen.” PhD diss., Marburg University, Germany.

Kumm, M. 2012. “Constitutionalism and Experimentalist Governance.” *Regulation and Governance* 6(3), 401–409.

Laborde, C. 2008. *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laborde, C. 2014. “Equal Liberty, Nonestablishment, and Religious Freedom.” *Legal Theory* 20(1), 52–77.

Laborde, C. 2016. “Liberal Neutrality, Religion and the Good”. In *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy,* edited by J. Cohen and C. Laborde, 249–272. New York: Columbia University Press.

Leezenberg, M. 2010. “How Ethnocentric Is the Concept of the Postsecular?” In *Exploring the Postsecular: The Religions, the Political and the Urban*, edited by A. Molendijk, J. Beaumont, and C. Jedan, 91–112. Leiden: Brill.

Levitt, P. 2007. *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York: New Press.

Liebman, J., and C. Sabel. 2002. “A Public Laboratory Dewey Barely Imagined: The Emerging Model of School Governance and Legal Reform.” *Journal of Law and Social Change* 23(2), 183–304.

Luhmann, N. 2000. *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Martin, D. 1978. *A General Theory of Secularization*. New York: Harper and Row.

Martin, D. 1990. *Tongues of Fire*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Minkenberg, M., and Anja Hennig. 2014. "God and Caesar in Motion. Changing Boundaries between Religion and Politics in a Pluralizing World." Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder. **http://www.borders-in-motion.de/-/god-and-caesar-in-motion-changing-boundaries-between-religion-and-politics-in-a-pluralizing-world**.

Minow, M. 2000. "Partner, Not Rivals?" *Boston University Law Review* 80(4), 1060–1094.

(p. 353) Modood, T. 2010. "Moderate Secularism, Religion as Identity and Respect for Religion." *Political Quarterly* 81(1), 4–14.

Mozumder, A. 2011. "Interrogating Post-Secularism." Master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Parmaksiz, U. 2014. "Making Sense of the Postsecular: A Normative and Analytical Assessment." Thesis synopsis, SPAIS University of Birmingham, U.K.

Robertson, R. 1987. "General Considerations in the Study of Contemporary Church–State Relationships." In *Church–State Relations*, edited by T. Robbins and R. Robertson, 5–12. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Sajó, A. 2008. "Preliminaries to a Concept of Constitutional Secularism." *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 6(3–4), 605–629.

Shabani, O. 2011. "The Role of Religion in Democratic Politics: Tolerance and the Boundary of Public Reason." *Religious Education* 106(3), 332–346.

Stepan, A. 2000. "Religion, Democracy and the 'Twin Tolerations.'" *Journal of Democracy* 11(4), 37–57.

Stepan, A. 2011. "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 114–144. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stöckl, Kristina. 2014b. *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights*. London and New York: Routledge.

Taylor, C. 1998. "Modes of Secularism." In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by R. Bhargava, 31–53. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. 2009. “Foreword: What is Secularism?” In *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. Levey and T. Madood, xi–xxii. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. 2011. “Western Secularity.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer and J. VanAntwerpen, 31–53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Temperman, J. 2010. *State–Religion Relationships and Human Rights Law: Towards a Right to Religiously Neutral Governance*. Leiden: Brill.

Wallis, R. and Bruce, S. 1992. “Secularization.” In *Religion and Modernization,* edited by S. Bruce, 8–30. Oxford: ClarendonPress.

Willaime, J. 2004. *Europe et Religions.* Paris: Fayard.

Wohlrab-Sahr, M. 2012. “Multiple Secularities and Their Normativity as an Empirical Subject.” The Immanent Frame. **http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2011/12/13/**.

Woodhead, L. 2010. *A Sociology of Religious Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) As defended, for example, by Robertson (1987). See Woodhead (2010) and criticisms by Bruce (2011). See also Calhoun et al. (2011).

(2.) The well-known and legitimate criticism of “essentialism,” “evolutionism,” and “Eurocentrism” and Western-Christian bias (see Asad 1993, 2001), however, does not mean that one would have to drop any concept of religion for comparative purposes or to resolve religion into a broad and unspecified concept of “culture,” as is commonly proposed in the postsecular, postcolonial, or cultural studies literatures (Balagangadhara 1994). On my conception of religion, see Bader (2007a: 36–39, 2012b: 6–11). For my criticism of the limitations to genealogical approaches and treating “religions” as “cultures,” see Bader (2011c, 2012b: 9).

(3.) See Casanova (1994: 213, 2011: 55, calling this “relatively uncontested”), Martin (1978), Luhmann (2000), Fox (2006: 563), and my criticisms (Bader 2007a: 46–48).

(4.) See Bader (2007b: 875–879) for the virtues and perils of modeling.

(5.) See Bader (2012a) for my discussion with Wohlrab. On productive empirical and explanatory models, see Minkenberg and Henning (2014).

(6.) By Taylor (1998, 2007), for example, and in the multiple-secularism literature; see chapters by Casanova, Stepan, and others in Calhoun et al. (2011).

(7.) See my criticism (Bader 2012b: 13f) of Habermas, who does not distinguish between “a secular society” and a “secular state,” ascribes to “Europe” secular societies treating

the United States as the norm, claims that religions decline globally, and, most important, sticks to “strict separation as a functional necessity.”

(8.) Habermas (2008) claims that “public consciousness” has to “adjust itself to the continued existence of religious communities in an increasingly secularized environment” and to “predictions concerning the future role of religions”—a “secularist certainty that religion will disappear worldwide,” “religion maintains a public influence and relevance,” or is even “gaining influence.”

(9.) For comparative social science research about kinds of secularisms and postsecularisms as political fighting terms, see Casanova (2001, 2011).

(10.) See Robertson’s (1987) central argument that state–church conflicts are unique to the West’s development. A secular state in the sense of a relational autonomy from organized religion is characteristic for the toleration-regimes of Asoka or Akbar in India (Bader 2013a: 144–147; see Taylor 2011: 36 for terminological quarrels), and even secularism “cannot simply be written off as an exclusively Christian and Western doctrine” (Calhoun et al. 2011: 23). See also Bhargava’s (2011) “rehabilitation” for non-Western models of “secularism” as alternative models of relations between religions, societies and the state; see also Stepan 2011.

(11.) See Parmaksiz (2014) on Habermas; see Laborde (2016) versus Dworkin; see Modood (2010) on the “common good” (see my criticism in Bader 2013a: 142–158).

(12.) Often WE, PE, and NOCOP are drawn together and taken to be the basis of a developing model of “moderate secularism” (Modood 2010; see my criticism). Also, Bhargava and Stepan rightly insist on the difference between the “established religion pattern” (2011: 121f) and the “positive accommodation pattern” (123ff) and on the symbolic and also practical importance of constitutional “establishment or non/dis-establishment.”

(13.) See Bhargava’s criticism in this regard (2011: 105f), and Bader (2007a: 204f and chs. 4.3–4.5).

(14.) On charter schools and their ambiguous status between “private” (autonomy) and “public” (costs), see Green et al. (2013) and Bader and Maussen (2015). See also my critical remarks (Bader 2014b) on Laborde’s “critical republicanism” (2008, 2014).

(15.) See Bader (2007a: chs. 7 and 8, 2009b, 2009c, 2011a, 2013e) for detailed explications and discussions of more or less favorable institutional opportunity structures for the realization of this utopia. On my debate with Bhargava and Modood, see Bader (2011b).

(16.) In the context of Western state and nation-building, it has been linked to the following conceptual dichotomies: religious/secular, religious/politics, private/public, traditional/modern, heteronomy/autonomy, and religion/reason (Koenig 2003; Taylor 2011) reproduced in liberal political philosophy (see Bader 1999).

(17.) See Taylor (2009: xi) and Taylor (2011: 36) who says, “probably utopian.” See also Na’im (2008). Stepan shares a “general reservation about the term ‘secularism’” but sticks to the idea that the concept of “multiple secularisms” helps to “identify and analyse the great variations in state-religion-society relations” (2011: 115).

(18.) Only a tiny minority of constitutions declare their governments to be secular: France, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, and the Slovak Republic are in Europe; along with Mexico and India, and some African and most post-Soviet countries (Temperman 2010: 125f). In these countries, their constitutional courts would totally disregard the term “secularism” only with difficulty, but they should not be allowed to block constitutional amendments (as in Turkey). Courts would be better able to explain what they mean without using the term, as I want to demonstrate.

(19.) Bhargava is one of the few political philosophers who states this in terms of “secularism”: “To accept that secularism is a multivalue doctrine is to acknowledge that its constitutive values not always sit easily with one another” but “are frequently in conflict”—there would be no “general a prior rule” or “lexical order” and hence the need for finding “balance” in contexts (2011: 108). Substantively we are in full agreement in this regard.

(20.) In this regard there is a very broad substantive agreement with Bhargava, Taylor, Casanova, and many others.

(21.) On the importance of exit rights and exit options, see Bader (2005, 2013c). On basic tensions and reasonable accommodation in labor law, see Bader et al. (2013). We have noted the important difference between “absolutist deference” or unrestricted associational freedoms of religion and “principled distance” (Bhargava 2011 and Stepan 2011: 134f.).

(22.) For criticism of this view, see Jansen (2011), Bangstad (2009, 2011), and Calhoun (2011: esp. 83–88). See also Bader (2011d: 29–40, 2013d).

(23.) Taylor also insists on a “neutral official language to formulate laws” and reproduces a wall of separation between legal language and language of public discussion. See the criticism of Mozumder (2011: 30f).

(24.) Contrary to the interpretation by Shabani praising this “two-way model” for “altering the asymmetrical burden of reason giving” (2011: 37), it is still myopic and heavily lopsided. Cook also criticizes the “translation requirement,” the equation of the terms “generally accessible” and “secular,” and Habermas’s “secularist interpretation of the principle of neutrality” (2007: 231). However, her replacement model, the constraint of “non-authoritarian reasoning” (rejecting authoritarian conceptions of knowledge and of justification), is much “stricter” and more demanding than my constraints.

(25.) See the empirical and historical criticism by Leezenberg (2010: 111). Yet Leezenberg, like Asad and other genealogists, while criticizing the hidden normativism of “liber-

al secularist and modernization-theoretical approaches," does not spell out his own normative perspectives.

(26.) As the Turkish Constitutional Court declared, endorsed by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights, in the 2003 Refah case.

(27.) See Bader (2009b).

(28.) See my replies to Bhargava's challenges (Bader 2009c, 2011b).

(29.) The "logical status" of liberal constitutionalism over legal positivism and "natural law" is nicely explained by Hayek: "The rule of law is therefore not a rule of law, but a rule concerning what the law ought to be, a meta-legal doctrine or a political ideal" (1960: 206). See also Kumm (2012) and Bader (2013b: 332–333).

**Veit Bader**

Veit Bader is Emeritus Professor of Sociology and of Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He was part of two European FP7 projects, one on Religious Diversity and Models of Secularism in Europe and one on Tolerance, Pluralism, and Cohesion. He authored Democracy or Secularism? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity.

# Multiculturalizing Secularism

Tariq Modood

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.22

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores a proposal that multicultural equality require some type of public multifaithism in a civic context where state–religion connections flourish. An establishment of religion, suitably pluralized, can offer one way forward. It deserves consideration as a practical option, especially if it would be the least disruptive and the least threatening to those for whom establishment is important or those who are uncomfortable with multiculturalism. Given the goal of citizen equality for democracy, this challenge deserves an adequate response: how will ethnoreligious groups receive appropriate recognition unless existing state–religion connections are sufficiently pluralized? By attaining that goal, a multiculturalism in which religion is just one of a number of valued identities and forms of social organization can be recognized as such in a public and political way.

Keywords: multiculturalism, pluralism, democracy, equality, establishment of religion, secularism

TWO states that most people will agree are secular states are the United States and the USSR (when it existed).[1] Of course they are very different states; one was a Communist Party dictatorship, the other a liberal democratic enablement of capitalism. Moreover, they have very different relations with religion. The USSR had a self-declared atheist philosophy and actively suppressed religion, whilst the United States, in a country with vigorous and publicly active Christian churches, has a constitutional “wall of separation,” which is actively, if variably, enforced by its Supreme Court.

What is it that makes these two states exemplars of political secularism? It clearly cannot be the separation of religion and state (the USSR was active in controlling and persecuting churches, mosques, etc.), and for the same reason it cannot be about freedom of conscience, nor can it be the idea that religion is a matter of personal, private belief (religion in the United States is a very public matter).

# What Is Political Secularism?

I suggest that the core idea of political secularism is the idea of political autonomy, namely that politics or the state has a raison d'être of its own and should not be subordinated to religious authority, religious purposes, or religious reasons. This is a one-way type of autonomy, where secularism can be supportive of autonomy of organized religion and freedom of religion too, as in the United States, but it does not have to be. Autonomy does not mean strict separation of the US type. It is consistent with some government control of religion, some interference in religion, some support for religion, and some cooperation with (selected) religious organizations and religious purposes. These are prominent forms of state–religion connections. By "state–religion connections" I am referring to moderate secularism's presence within liberal democratic constitutionalism (on the latter see Bader 2007), where religious authority does not dominate political authority, religious organizations are publicly funded to deliver social services, citizens have options to receive the same services by nonreligious organizations, religion is not privileged in any uniquely special way, and a large range (p. 355) of nonreligious activities such as sport, opera, and banking may also be privileged, albeit each in a different way. Such connections are present in every single western European state, which after all is the seedbed for modern, Western political secularisms. Nevertheless, state control and support of religion must not compromise the autonomy of politics and statecraft: it must be largely justifiable in political terms, not just religious reasons, and it must not restrict (but may support) political authority and state action.

Political secularism is then a value in itself. It is not some kind of "neutrality," nor is its place above the fray of politics. It is something that one can be for or against, or for it under certain conditions, or for certain variations of it. It has no special connection with democracy, which it predates. In the West it has mainly been conjoined with liberal democracy (but not necessarily, as the USSR illustrates), when, amongst other features, it becomes two-way mutual autonomy: the autonomy of both the state and religion is valued and protected in constitutional arrangements. This is a mutual autonomy that Stepan (2000) calls "twin tolerations". Mutual autonomy—but not strict separation—has historically emerged as the liberal democratic version and the one that is most widespread today. For such secularists, religious freedom is one of the most essential and cherished political values. This commitment sometimes blinds them to the fact that religious freedom is not an unlimited good within all versions of secularism—as the examples of how the French and Turkish state control aspects of Islam vividly reminds us. New thinking about political secularism has suggested that secularism is, in its essentials, really about "managing diversity" (Taylor 2010; also Taylor 2014; discussed by Bilgrami 2014). This has a contemporary pertinence—indeed it emphasizes what is central yet underappreciated today—but it cannot be right as a definition of political secularism. If there was no religious diversity in a country or in the world, if only one religion was present, there would still be a question about the relationship between religion and politics, and "political autonomy" would still be a suitable answer.[2]

Moreover, secularism is not an answer to questions about *any* kind of diversity (such as linguistic diversity). It arises specifically in relation to religion, the power and authority of religion, and the challenge it may pose to political rule or, say, equality amongst citizens (Bilgrami 2014). Indeed, one can go further and say that the secular and religion are correlative concepts. If there was no religion in the world, not merely that it had passed away but if it had never existed in the first place so that there was no concept of religion, then secularism would have no reference point and there would be no concept of political secularism. In that sense, secularism is a secondary concept, dependent on the concept of religion. However, once there is a concept of secularism—with advocates, promoters, supportive monarch, armed militants, and so on—then it has a dialectical relationship with religion. Secularism is not merely being defined by engagement with religion. Secularism also intellectually and politically redefines religion to suit secularist values and purposes (Asad 1993, 2003). In this way, in secularist countries what we regard as religion today (an "inner life," a "belief," a private matter) is a much more socially restricted set of activities, relationships, and forms of authority than was the case before secularism's rise to power, or than what prevails in nonsecularist countries today. Once an outgrowth of religious arrangements ("secular" orders of monks were those unconfined to monasteries), secularism has come to define or redefine religion and its proper place in many countries in the world.

This chapter is confined to western Europe (west of what used to be called the Iron Curtain). This region is not typical, and perhaps even exceptional (Berger 1999; Berger et al. 2008). It is the one region in the world in which participation in religious activities (p. 356) (even private prayer) is a minority pursuit as a result not of state ideology or state action but of social change, education, political argument, and the working of liberal democracy. Throughout the twentieth century there has been a process of "secularization," including a decline in religious worship and belief. This process has accelerated over time and across generations and has spread outwards from urban centers to rural areas, from Protestant countries to Catholic countries, and from northwestern Europe to southern Europe. Moreover, the present century has seen no reversal of this trend; indeed, in many places there has been acceleration. Yet, political secularism and its relation to religion has become a vibrant topic, and some scholars and public intellectuals even speak of a "crisis of secularism." What is the character and cause of this agitation and alarm? I contend that it is a product of a concatenation of three independent factors that have contingently come together.

# Western European Moderate Secularism

For many intellectuals, especially political theorists, secularism or Western secularism is understood in terms of the religious-liberty secularism of the United States and/or the equality of citizenship secularism or *laicite* of France. An example of this approach is Bhargava's, where these two secularisms are described as "the most dominant and defensible western versions of secularism" and taken jointly are designated "as the mainstream conception of secularism (2009: 93)." As a matter of fact, neither of these models

approximates particularly closely to church–state relations amongst west European countries beyond France. In Germany, the Catholic and Protestant Churches are constitutionally recognized corporations, for whom the federal government collects voluntary taxes and grants large amounts of additional public monies so that they between them have a larger public welfare budget than the federal state. In Belgium, the monarch presides over a national Council of Religions. Norway, Denmark, and England each have an "established" church, Sweden had one until 2000, and Finland has two (Stepan 2011; cf. Koenig 2009). (The UK also has two state recognized national churches, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, but the latter is independent of the UK state, including of the Scottish state in which it plays no formal role.) Yet, it would be difficult to dispute that these states are not amongst the leading secular states in the world—more precisely, one could only dispute that if one had some narrow, abstract model of secularism that one insisted on applying to the varieties of empirical cases. So, the question is: How are we to characterize the secularisms of western Europe? I have argued that despite their distinctive histories and institutional diversity that I have referred to, these states can be understood as having evolved what I have called "moderate secularism" (Modood 2007, 2010). I sketch this conception in terms of five features:

**1.** Mutual autonomy, not mutual exclusion or one-sided control. This is not distinctive to "moderate secularism," as it is central to US liberal secularism too, and to some extent France as well, although it leans more towards one-sided control.

**2.** Religion is a public good, not just a private good. Organized religion can play a significant role in relation to ethical voice,[3] general social well-being, cultural heritage, national ceremonies, and national identity. This can take various forms, such as having (p. 357) input into a legislative forum on moral and welfare issues; being social partners with the state in the delivery of education, health, and caring services; or, more intangibly, building social capital and the production of attitudes that create, for example, family stability or economic hope. Of course the public good that religion contributes is contextual; religion can, in other contexts, be socially divisive and can lead to civil and international wars. Hence religion can also be a public harm. The point is that religion's contributions are not confined to private lives; they are socially and politically significant in many different ways.

**3.** The national church or churches (organizers of this public good) belongs to the people and the country, not just to its religious members and clergy. All citizens, regardless of membership, can feel that the national church should meet certain national standards not expected of religious organizations in general. For example, when the Church of England's ruling body, the Synod, failed in 2012 to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary to permit female bishops, many secular commentators felt that the Church of England had let the country down, while the absence of female Catholic priests or female imans is not part of a national conversation. The loud criticism by those who are not active Anglicans played a part in the Church's reversal of its decision in 2014. The Lutheran Church in Denmark, as another example, is almost universally thought by Danes to be a central element of Danish national identity, even though only a minority say they believe in its doctrines and even fewer wor-

ship in the church. In these and other "moderate secular" countries, even atheists feel that they have a right to use the national church for weddings and funerals.

**4.** It is legitimate for the state to be involved in eliciting the public good that comes from organized religion and not just to protect the public good from dangers posed by organized religion. If recognized as public goods, then, depending on the circumstances, it may be decided that they are best achieved through some state–religion connections rather than strict separation. This is a contingent matter, but the experience of western Europe is that some connections are better than none. Of course, as has been said, religion can also be a "public harm," since it may serve as a basis for prejudice, discrimination, intolerance, sectarianism, social conflict, violence, and so on, so the state has a responsibility to prevent harm as well as enhance the good (Modood 2010). As with public goods, so with public harms, the interest of the state will not be primarily theological or taking preferential sides for or against one religion regardless of consequences; the state will be motivated by fostering and maintaining tangible and intangible public—or "secular"—goods. The key consideration for the state will not be secular "purity." Instead, the state shall ensure that the means and ends are consistent with, and effectively serve, secular rationales, without constraint by a fetish for "separation." In recent years, concerns about Islamist terrorism and "radicalization" have led states to extol and condemn certain kinds of Islam, to co-opt certain Muslim groups into governance, and to engage in matters of iman training and the schooling of Muslim children.[4] Moreover, if religious organizations are supported with public funds, or tasked by the state to carry out some educational or welfare duties, then the state will want to ensure that they do not compromise key policy goals. That is why religious organizations are increasingly subject to certain legal requirements such as equal access or nondiscrimination—at least in some European states, such as Britain, more so than others such as Germany (Lewicki 2014).

(p. 358) **5.** Moderate secularism can take different forms in different times and places, and not all forms of religious establishment should be ruled out without attending to specific cases. State–religion connections take different forms in different western European countries depending on their histories, traditions, political cultures, and religious composition, which all may change over time.[5] One of the forms it may take is "establishment." Formal establishment is only found in a minority of countries, yet nevertheless it is one of the forms that moderate secularism takes.[6] Even when it does so, I call this complex of norms and practices "moderate secularism" rather than "moderate establishment" (as Dworkin [2006] labels Britain; see also "modest establishment" of Laborde 2013), as secularism is and should be in charge: the place for religion and establishment is dependent on secularist institutions and decision-makers referring to secularist values and principles. Moreover, moderate secularism really exists in practice; it is not just as an ideal. Both in relation to the church–state relations narrowly conceived and in terms of an expansive sociological analysis, governing power lies with secularist institutions, networks, and individuals employing secular identities, interests, and goals. Moderate secularism is

not something to contrast with religion; religion is already a component of it. Moderate secularism is a particular way of relating religion with state power and politics.

# Multiculturalism

In a number of countries since the 1960s, a new way of thinking and organizing minority–majority relations has emerged. Initially associated with the new social movements and identity politics of gender, race, and sexuality, in western Europe it is identified with the institutional accommodation of postimmigration ethnoreligious minorities, which I call "multiculturalism" (Modood 2007). It marks a new conception of equality. Multiculturalism is not just antidiscrimination, the sameness of treatment, and the toleration of "difference" but also a respect for difference. This respect is not simply about equal rights despite differences but about equality as the accommodation of difference in the public space, which is shared rather than dominated by the majority. Instead of creating a sharp distinction between the public sphere of rights and civic relations and a private sphere (of male–female relations, sexual orientation, or religious belief), the public sphere reflects various norms and interests of all.

This genuine equality requires dropping the pretense of "difference blindness" and allows marginalized minorities to also be visible and explicitly accommodated in the public sphere. This equality will sometimes require enforcing uniformity of treatment and eliminating discrimination against (for example) religious affiliation, and it may also require the recognition of distinctive disadvantages (such as measures to increase the number of women in a legislature) or special needs (such as the provision of halal meat in state schools). Finally, multiculturalism as a mode of postimmigration integration involves not just the reversal of marginalization but also a remaking of national citizenship, so that all can enjoy a sense of belonging. In the case of France, there should be a way of being French that Jews and Muslims, as well as Catholics and secularists, can possess (Modood 2007).

(p. 359) The new ethnoreligious diversity presented by Muslims and other post–World War II groups settling in western Europe, should be mentioned here. This is not just about demography but about claims made concerning shared public spaces, keeping in mind that initial claims were made within newly instituted discourses and policy frameworks of race (Britain), ethnicity (Netherlands), and guest workers (Germany). The majority of this postimmigration ethnoreligious population is Muslim, although the shift toward Muslimness was partly facilitated by an evolving and expansive set of identity politics and equality discourses in several countries and multiculturalism in particular, along with the way that Muslim populations are growing and settling down in their countries of migration (and birth, for the second generation). These trends could be said to be part of a more or less global rise in Muslim consciousness, both in relation to religiosity (including public religiosity) and the rise of Muslim identity or Islamist politics. In western Europe, events of

1988–1989, the ‘Salman Rushdie affair’ in Britain and ‘l’affaire du foulard’ in France were particularly pivotal (Modood 2012).

This is an all-too-brief account of a complex set of concepts. While across the world but especially in western Europe, especially since the emergence of international Islamist networks of terrorism and increasing attacks in the West, multiculturalism has become an unpopular idea with politicians and publics. Nevertheless, there is good evidence that multiculturalist policies and accommodations are not being reversed (Kymlicka 2012). Also, a “multiculturalist sensibility” (Kivisto 2012) is growing, as an approach extended from what we might call ethnoracial diversity to ethnoreligious pluralism. The important point is that despite the unpopularity of the term “multiculturalism,” as doubts about certain policies and anxieties about certain minorities continue, mainstream public discourses are also conceiving of this diversity not merely in terms of toleration (putting up with something negative) but the positive inclusion for minorities who do not have to assimilate or conform to the norms and attitudes of the majority. This multiculturalist sensibility did not arise in the context of religious difference, where various regimes of governance, including moderate secularism, have accommodated religious pluralism in limited ways and with limited reference to a concept of equality. Yet this multiculturalist sensibility, the idea that “difference” is not an unfortunate fact to be put up with but a difference worthy of equality and respect, has traveled in different directions from its origins, so that many, not excepting Muslim minorities, now view the field of religious diversity differently.

My argument, then, in relation to the contingencies considered so far, is that current debates about the accommodation of Muslims and Islam in western Europe must be viewed in terms of two conceptual-political complexes: moderate secularism and multiculturalism. Of course my argument is not that this is the only relevant way in which Muslims’ claims upon the public sphere are being responded to (Modood 2012). One way forward, particularly favored by liberal political theorists and commentators, would be to move toward the “separation” of religion and the state on the grounds that the state should be neutral in relation to “conceptions of the good” (Rawls 1971, 1993). This position would be a departure from, rather than a continuity with, traditions of European moderate secularism, yet it can be seen as an extension of trends within European countries in the twentieth century (Modood 2016). Another option would be to reassert that Europe is a Christian continent (as Pope Benedict XVI affirmed) or to claim that specific countries such as Germany or Britain are “Christian countries.” Interestingly, some religious minorities prefer the latter options to what has come to be called “aggressive secularism,”[7] but they are not necessarily the first (p. 360) choice of groups agitating for accommodation. My interest is in a third option, one based on the multiculturalist sensibility of taking difference seriously. This, however, is a sensibility that is open to a number of interpretations. This chapter next considers three alternative interpretations and points out some of their shortcomings. The common problem turns out to be that they have an unsatisfactory conception of multiculturalism and/or moderate secularism.

# Religion Is Not Part of Multiculturalism?

Will Kymlicka rightly argues that the "state unavoidably promotes certain cultural identities, and thereby disadvantages others" (1995: 108), but he excludes religion and ethnoreligious groups from "cultural identities." While his interpretation of multicultural citizenship is primarily directed toward justifying special support or differential rights in relation to language and indigenous people, meeting needs of religious minorities seem to fall within the ambit of the traditional freedoms of worship, association, and conscience. The only additional questions that his political multiculturalism considers in relation to religious minorities are exemptions (such as allowing Sikh men to wear turbans when others have to wear motorcycle helmets), rather than, as in the case of other cultural groups, minority demands for democratic participation, public resources, or greater institutional representation. Kymlicka thinks that the integration of religious migrants such as Muslims has been best achieved in the United States, where no religion enjoys state support but all denominations are allowed to flourish in equality with the rest (Kymlicka 2009: 548).

This last point has also been said by some sociologists to be generally historically true: "[w]ithout the separation of church and state, we believe, the religions imported by past immigration streams could not have achieved parity with Protestant versions of Christianity" (Foner and Alba 2008: 379). Whether this is true regarding Muslims in the United States and western Europe today is not obvious. On the one hand, anti-Muslim hostility is comparable in both regions—for example, the Pew Research Center (2011) found that only 57 percent of Americans have a favorable view of Muslims compared to 64 percent of Britons and French (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Furthermore, the levels of national identification and patriotism amongst immigrants and the second generation is far higher than often assumed (Reeskens and Wright 2014). Interestingly, national identification and patriotism among Muslims in Britain are higher than the population as a whole, despite the fact that Britain has a state church (Wind-Cowie and Gregory 2011).

Regardless of whether US denominationalism or European moderate secularism is better at integrating religious groups, the more fundamental question remains: Why should language be appropriate for multiculturalism but not for religion? Is there some categorical difference between religion and language? A state must, it is argued, use at least one language, and so choices must be made. Which language(s)? How many languages? Complete state neutrality about language is impossible. Fairness therefore dictates that the state does not pretend to be neutral, so it should pursue an alternative strategy. Religion, on the other hand, is optional. It is not necessary to the functioning of the state, and this critique of neutrality does not extend to it. Moreover, citizens can learn several languages, but one would not be a member of several religions at the same time, so a multilingual state is an option while a (p. 361) multireligious state is not. That supplies a further reason why state neutrality in relation to language implies the addition of linguistic options but state neutrality concerning religion only implies disestablishment (Baubock 2003: 43–44).

These arguments fail to save Kymlicka's theory from the charge of an antireligion bias, nor do they make practical sense. First, although Kymlicka's theory does center on language, it extends well beyond language to cover "cultural identities." His theory is meant to protect and empower ethnocultural groups and not merely languages; all cultures contain elements that are no more necessary than religion, and some cultures are centered around religion. Moreover, the idea that a multireligious state is impossible is a misunderstanding. Countries as diverse as Germany and India could be described as being quasi-multi-establishment states. The German state has various institutional and fiscal ways of supporting and working corporately with the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Churches. The Indian state regulates several organized religions and incorporates their principles into law. This state recognition of faith communities is a granting of political or legal status, without meaning that state officials or citizens have to believe in any or all of these faiths. Indeed, consider an even more fundamental case of an either/or exclusivity than the case of religion as presented by Baubock. One cannot be of more than one sex (extreme exceptions prove the rule), but it does not follow that a state in all its laws and policies must be gender-blind. Rather, the state should promote the interests of both sexes, ensuring that differential treatment, where appropriate, can be justified by reference to differential needs while staying consistent with a suitably differentiated concept of equality. States do support much that is not essential to the state's existence, and a multiculturalist state surely is no exception.

# Is Multiculturalism about "Antisecularization," Not Accommodation?

In contrast to Kymlicka's satisfaction with a pre-multiculturalist position on religious diversity, Yolande Jansen (2014) explicitly defends a multiculturalist secularism. With a focus on French *laïcité*, she shows how even in a context of republican universalism, the process of incorporating Jews led French society and the French state to demand that the Jews surrender their communal lives, an extraordinary pressure not experienced by most other French people in the nineteenth or early twentieth century—but again faced by Muslims today. On her interpretation, Jansen's solution is a multiculturalism opposing the ascriptive and stereotypical images that French society creates for groups such as Jews and Muslims, while demanding of individual Jews and Muslims that they publicly distance themselves from these imagined undesirable groups by distancing themselves from their communities.[8] Opposition to such demands upon minorities about how they should live is the multiculturalist opposition to what Jansen calls "secularization." I endorse Jansen's conclusion that such secularization is a form of coercive assimilation incompatible with multiculturalism. This pressure to secularize ethno-religious identities, however, takes an extreme form in republican secularism; and moreover there may be no remedies to it within that form of secularism. Yet moderate secularism, even where it may be susceptible to similar stereotypings of Jews and Muslims, is not intrinsically fearful of religious communities and religion in public life, (p. 362) so it can endorse state support for religious plurality and for resisting assimilation in favor of accommodating minorities. More-

over, a multiculturalism consisting of anti-ascription and anti-assimilation is too modest; a positive, institutional accommodation is crucial to multiculturalism—in just the same way that accommodation is a defining feature of moderate secularism. So, a project of multiculturalizing secularism cannot take its lead from what is possible within republican secularism, and the scope and ambitions of multiculturalism cannot be confined within even a reformed version of this unaccommodating secularism.

Unlike those who think that secularism is inadequately dealing with multiculturalism because it is not similar enough to United States and/or France, Rajeev Bhargava believes that Europe is not sufficiently like India. He argues that religious diversity has been central to Indian secularism, unlike Europe's tradition. Now that Europe is compelled to adjust to religious diversity, it can learn much from India. While this is a useful recommendation, his analysis of European secularism is somewhat problematic. One of his longstanding positions has been that the mainstream conception of political secularism in the West consists of two, and only two, opposed models: the US model and the French model (Bhargava 2009). However, this position is inaccurate since most of western Europe consists of secular states that do not resemble either of those models, because they display their own distinctive model. Bhargava now accepts this view (Bhargava 2013:77; Bhargava 2014a), while continuing to hold the view that European secularism is not sufficiently secular (Bhargava 2014a; also 2014b: 44.)

# Is Moderate Secularism Part of the Problem, Not Part of the Solution?

Bhargava's interpretation of a multiculturalist sensibility has judged that what I have labeled as moderate secularism is "irretrievably flawed"—while it has accommodated Christians, it will not be able to accommodate Muslims.[9] For Bhargava, moderate secularism is part of the problem, not the solution, since it cannot be reformed; specifically, it cannot be multiculturalized (Bhargava 2013: 78), and he adds that this marks a profound disagreement between us (Bhargava 2014b:45). He offers several arguments, but only one can be discussed here. Bhargava claims that the Christian bias inherent to any established religion, something akin to the Anglican Church's establishment in Britain, indicates that even a reformed version will alienate British Muslims.

Cecile Laborde makes a similar argument. She recognizes how the Anglican establishment has relatively little power and holds a largely symbolic significance. Nevertheless, she argues that even when

> establishment is mostly symbolic and cannot be said to put anyone at a serious disadvantage, symbols do matter when the basic identification of citizens with their institutions is concerned … [therefore] Muslims are likely to be alienated by the distinctively Christian religiosity permeating public institutions.
>
> (Laborde 2008: 90-91)

She evokes a conception of citizenship that I share, namely that “all citizens should be able to not to feel alienated by their political institutions in light of their deepest beliefs, and that institutions should consequently be framed with that aim in mind” (Laborde 2013: 84). (p. 363) I actually hold a stronger version of this duty of symbolic recognition: not only must the state not alienate, the state must make positive efforts to ensure that all citizens are able to feel a sense of belonging.

Leaving that aside, I want to stress that Bhargava and Laborde are not simply making a conceptual point about civic status, as their positions are also about how citizens feel about citizenship. That is a valid concern, but both of them claim that British Muslim citizens feel alienated by the Anglican establishment—yet neither Bhargava or Laborde offer evidence of that alienation. Indeed, they ignore evidence about the strong sense of British identification and national pride amongst Muslims in Britain. An analysis of two Citizenship Surveys has concluded, “We find no evidence that Muslims or people of Pakistani heritage were in general less attached to Britain than were other religions or ethnic groups” (Heath and Roberts 2008). This has in fact been the finding of many surveys, including one which concluded that “overall British Muslims are more likely to be both patriotic and optimistic about Britain than are the white British community” (Wind-Cowie and Gregory 2011, 42).

British Muslims do include many vociferous political groups, and they have mounted many arguments, not to mention campaigns, in relation to socioeconomic deprivation, religious discrimination, incitement to religious hatred, various foreign policies, antiterrorist policies, and so on (Modood 2010). So it is the case that Muslims in Britain do seem to feel excluded and alienated by certain aspects of British society and indeed European society in general. Yet there is no record of any criticism by a Muslim group against the Anglican Church’s establishment. On the other hand, many Muslims complain that Britain is too unreligious and antireligious, too hedonistic, too consumerist, too materialist, and so on. Muslims protest far more vigorously about secularist bans on modest female clothing, such as the headscarf (banned in French state schools since 2004) and the face veil (banned in public places in France and Belgium and perhaps in other European countries soon) than they do about “establishment” or Christian privileges.

Muslims and other religious minorities appreciate that establishment is a recognition by the state of the public and national significance of religion. That recognition holds out the prospect of extending state–religion connections. Disestablishment, by contrast, would foreclose that prospect without conferring any benefits to religious minorities. This appreciation of establishment by religious minorities is partly the result of the fact that the Church of England takes its mission to serve the country quite seriously, including the goal of incorporating new minority faith communities into its vision for the country and for the Church’s own sense of its responsibilities (Modood 1997). When Prime Minister David Cameron, during the 2011 Christmas season, said that it should be asserted that Britain is “a Christian country”[10]—the first time a British prime minister had spoken like

that in a long time—it was welcomed by Ibrahim Mogra, the then chairman of the Mosque Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain and later the Assistant Secretary General.[11]

These matters do not argue for the mistaken view that Islamophobia is not an issue in Britain, or that Muslims do not feel alienated in Britain, but only point to the way that these concerns make very little reference to Christianity, let alone the Anglican establishment. My own suspicion is that religious minorities such as Muslims are more likely to be alienated by the kind of secular state that Laborde argues for, one that she thinks is unavoidably more suited to nonreligious citizens than religious citizens (Laborde 2013: 88) and equally alienated by the kind of secular state that actively seeks to reform aspects of Islam as Bhargava advocates (Bhargava 2014b). Bhargava thinks that moderate secularism, which is supposedly (p. 364) unreformable, should be replaced by the diversity-friendly secularism that developed in India. Interestingly, he does not discuss how the Indian state has failed to eradicate the high levels of religious violence in India and failed to protect Muslims from massacres and systematic discrimination (Sutton 2014; Black et al 2014: 2).

To better support the interpretation undergoing criticism in this section, an alternative understanding of alienation may try to appeal not simply to the experiences of religious minorities but to "objective alienation."[12] This objective alienation would be something that can be said to exist even if the sufferers of the alienation were not themselves aware of it. I suppose that this idea parallels something that Karl Marx had claimed about alienation, that it is not simply an experience but a degraded condition of humanity in which the laboring class has no possibility of creativity or self-expression (Marx 1988). The danger—not at all hypothetical—to resorting to a concept of objective alienation involves how it could be used. For example, it could be raised (by French republicans or other secularists) in order to deny the need for confirming evidence that women wearing the Muslim headscarf are oppressed and dominated even when they themselves insist they are not and where no evidence shows that coercion or intimidation is taking place. In practice, that kind of denial can serve as the basis for the civic domination of Muslims through "state paternalism" or at least "educational paternalism" (de Latour 2013). A satisfactory account of objective alienation must explain how to properly handle evidence (and counterevidence), yet those explanations have not been provided by any interpretations I have examined.

Those who argue for US or French types of disestablishment by claiming that contemporary Christian state–religion connections only alienate groups such as Muslims are relying heavily on certain secularist assumptions and not enough on evidence. Secularists concerned with minimizing alienation would do well to first focus on how their secularism results in alienation. Moreover, if I am correct to suggest that Muslims and other religious minorities are seeking equality through their accommodation within something resembling the status quo in Europe, rather than a disestablishment of Christian churches, then we are talking about an additive view of inclusivity, not a subtractive view. Typically, recognition or accommodation for minorities implies that particular social dimensions important to those minorities become *more*, not less, politically significant. Equality move-

ments do not usually pursue diminished political importance for their social subgroups. This is the case with regard to equality movements about race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, class, and so forth. It is difficult to see why equality concerning religion has to be treated differently. Therefore, the multicultural challenge for secularism is not how to de-Christianize Western states but how to appropriately include newly arriving faiths alongside older faiths.

# Conclusion

Multicultural equality requires some type of public multifaithism in a civic context where state–religion connections flourish. In Britain, for example, this does not require the Anglican establishment, nor its equivalent in other countries; but establishment, suitably pluralized, can offer one way forward. It deserves consideration as a practical option, especially if it would be the least disruptive and the least threatening to those for whom establishment is important or those who are uncomfortable with multiculturalism. This chapter (p. 365) has supported this viable option by raising this challenge: How will ethnoreligious groups receive appropriate recognition unless existing state–religion connections are sufficiently pluralized? The answer I suggest does not lie in liberal or republican neutrality but in a multiculturalism in which religion, albeit one of a number of valued identities and forms of social organization, can be recognized as such in a public and political way (Modood 2016).

## Bibliography

Asad, T. 1993. Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Islam and Christianity. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

(p. 366) Asad, T. 2003. Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Bader, Veit. 2007. *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bader, Veit. 2009. “The Governance of Religious Diversity: Theory, Research and Practice.” In *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity*, edited by P. Bramadat and M. O. Koenig, 43–73. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

Baubock, R. 2003. “Public Culture in Societies of Immigration.” In *Identity and Integration: Migrants in Western Europe*, edited by R. Sackmann, B. Peters, and T. Faist, 37–57. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Berger, Peter L. 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Berger, Peter, Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas. 2008. “Religious America, Secular Europe?” In *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variations*, 9–21 Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Berman, B. J., R. Bhargava, and A. Laliberté (eds.). 2013. *Secular States and Religious Diversity.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2009. “Political Secularism: Why It Is Needed and What Can Be Learnt from Its Indian Version.” In *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. B. Levey and T. Modood, 82–110. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2011. “States, Religious Diversity and the Crisis of Secularism.” *Open Democracy* (22 March). **http://www.opendemocracy.net/rajeev-bhargava/states-religious-diversity-and-crisis-of-secularism-0**.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2013. “Can Secularism Be Rehabilitated?” In *Secular States and Religious Diversity*, edited by B. J. Berman, R. Bhargava, and A. Lalliberte, 69–97. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2014a. “How Secular Is European Secularism?” *European Societies* 16(3), 329–336.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2014b. “Should Europe Learn from Indian Secularism?” In *Confronting Secularism in Europe and India*, edited by Brian Black, Gavin Hyman, and Graham M. Smith, 39–58. London: Bloomsbury.

Bilgrami, Akeel. 2014. “Secularism: Its Content and Context.” In *Boundaries of Toleration*, edited by Alfred Stepan and Charles Taylor, 79–129. New York: Columbia University Press.

Black, Brian, Gavin Hyman, and Graham M. Smith (eds.). 2014. *Confronting Secularism in Europe and India*. London: Bloomsbury.

de Latour, Sophie Guérard. 2013. “Is Multiculturalism Un-French? Towards a Neo-Republican Model of Multiculturalism.” In *Liberal Multiculturalism and the Fair Terms of Integration*, edited by P. Balint and S. G. de Latour, 139–159. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave.

Dworkin, Ronald. 2006. *Is Democracy Possible Here? Principles for a New Political Debate.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Ferrari, Silvio. 1995. “Emerging Pattern of Church and State in Western Europe: The Italian Model.” *The Brigham Young University Law Review*, 1995, 421–437.

Foner, Nancy, and Richard Alba. 2008. “Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?” *International Migration Review* 42(2), 360–392.

Habermas, Jurgen. 2006. “Religion in the Public Sphere.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 1–25.

Heath, Anthony, and Jane Roberts. 2008. *British Identity, Its Sources and Possible Implications for Civic Attitudes and Behaviour.* London: Department of Justice, HMSO.

Jansen, Yolande. 2014. *Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: French Modernist Legacies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kivisto, P. 2012. “We Really Are All Multiculturalists Now.” *Sociological Quarterly* 53(1), 1–24.

(p. 367) Koenig, M. 2009. “How Nations-States Respond to Religious Diversity.” In *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity*, edited by P. Bramadat and M. Koenig, 293–322. Kingston, Ontario: School of Policy Studies, Queens University.

Kymlicka, Will. 1995. *Multicultural Citizenship.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kymlicka, Will. 2009. “Historic Settlements and New Challenges: Review Symposium.” *Ethnicities* 9(4), 546–552.

Kymlicka, W. 2012. *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future*. Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.

Laborde, Cécile. 2008. *Critical Republicanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laborde, Cécile. 2013. “Political Liberalism and Religion: On Separation and Establishment.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 21(1), 67–86.

Laegaard, Sune. 2012. “What’s (Un)Problematic about Religious Establishment? The Alienation and Symbolic Equality Accounts.” Paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Equality and Multiculturalism, University of Copenhagen (21 September). **http://cesem.ku.dk/papers/What_s__un_problematic_about_religious_establishment.pdf/**. Accessed in 2016.

Lewicki, Aleksandra. 2014. *Social Justice through Citizenship? The Politics of Muslim Integration in Germany and Great Britain*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marx, Karl. 1988. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Modood, Tariq. 1997. *Church, State and Religious Minorities.* London: Policy Studies Institute.

Modood, Tariq. 2007. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Modood, Tariq. 2010. “Moderate Secularism, Religion as Identity and Respect for Religion.” *Political Quarterly* 81(1), 4–14.

Modood, Tariq. 2011. “Moderate Secularism: A European Conception.” *Open Democracy* (8 April). **http://www.opendemocracy.net/tariq-modood/moderate-secularism-european-conception**.

Modood, Tariq. 2012. “Is There a Crisis of Secularism in Western Europe?” *Sociology of Religion* 73(2), 130–149.

Modood, Tariq. 2013. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Modood, Tariq. 2016. “State-Religion Connexions and Multicultural Citizenship”. In *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy*. Edited by J. Cohen and C. Laborde, 182–203. New York: Columbia University Press.

O’Toole, T., D. N. DeHanas, T. Modood, N. Meer, and S. Jones. 2013. *Taking Part: Muslim Participation in Contemporary Governance*. Bristol, U.K.: Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, University of Bristol.

Pew Research Center. 2011. “Muslim–Western Tensions Persist.” **http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/07/21/muslim-western-tensions-persist/**.

Putnam, Robert D., and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, J. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rawls, John. 1997. “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited.” *University of Chicago Law Review* 64, 765–807.

Reeskens, Tim, and Matthew Wright. 2014. “Host-Country Patriotism among European Immigrants: A Comparative Study of Its Individual and Societal Roots.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37(14), 2439–3511.

Stepan, Alfred. 2000. “Religion, Democracy, and the ‘Twin Tolerations.’” *Journal of Democracy* 11(4), 37–57.

(p. 368) Stepan, A. 2011. “The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 114–144. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sutton, Deborah. 2014. “Secularism, History and Violence in India.” In *Confronting Secularism in Europe and India*, edited by Brian Black, Gavin Hyman, and Graham M. Smith, 113–128. London: Bloomsbury.

Taylor, Charles. 1994. “The Politics of Recognition.” In *Multiculturalism,* 2nd ed., edited by Amy Gutmann, 25–75. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2010. “The Meaning of Secularism.” *The Hedgehog Review* 12(3), 23–34.

Taylor, Charles. 2014. “How to Define Secularism.” In *Boundaries of Toleration*, edited by Alfred Stepan and Charles Taylor, 79–129. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wind-Cowie, Max, and Thomas Gregory. 2011. *A Place for Pride.* London: Demos.

## Notes:

(1.) For the rather Eurocentric view that the Soviet Union was not a secular but only a quasi-secular state because it did not implement religious freedom, see Berman et al. (2013: 8).

(2.) I owe this point to Bhikhu Parekh.

(3.) Habermas (2006) suggests that this is imperative in the twenty-first century. He is, however, mistaken in suggesting that the perception that this is desirable is new to European publics. It may, however, be a relatively new idea for some secularist intellectuals.

(4.) For a study of various aspects of this in England, see O'Toole et al. (2012).

(5.) Despite this statement I have been criticized by Bader and others for lumping together different models of religious governance into one conception of moderate secularism. He, however, is close to my approach when he says "the most important dividing line may be between religious institutional pluralism recognizing some forms of selective cooperation between state and organized religions … and strict separationism" (Bader this volume).

(6.) The western European countries that I say can be characterized in terms of "moderate secularism" are in constitutional-political terms characterized as "selective co-operation" by Ferrari (1995) but are separated by Stepan into the "Established Religion" and "Positive Accommodation" models (2011; 2014).

(7.) Baroness Warsi's speech at The Vatican (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9083045/Baroness-Warsi-decries-Europes-aggressive-secularism.html). See Modood (1997).

(8.) See Laborde (2008): "What defines a minority is precisely its vulnerability to 'identity assignation' by the majority' (10; see also 24). Like Jansen, Laborde too thinks that undoing this domination is not about accommodation but, unlike Jansen, she thinks what is involved is not a critical multiculturalism but a "critical republicanism."

(9.) For a fuller discussion of why I think Bhargava misunderstands western European secularisms, see Modood (2010, 2011), though I note that in "Can Secularism Be Rehabilitated" (Bhargava 2013) he now accepts that western European moderate secularisms are distinct from and additional to his contention that the American and the French models are the mainstream Western models.

(10.) Prime Minister's King James Bible Speech on 16 December 2011 (http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/king-james-bible).

(11.) "David Cameron on Christianity—Views," 18 December 2011 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16231223).

(12.) Laegaard (2012) has usefully made a distinction between alienation and symbolic inequality and argued that it is the latter that is at stake.

**Tariq Modood**

Tariq Modood is Professor of Sociology, Politics and Public Policy and the founding Director of the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship at the University of Bristol.

# Beyond Comparing Secularisms: A Critique of Religio-Secularism

Yolande Jansen

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.23

## Abstract and Keywords

“Religio-secularism” denotes the tendency to understand specific cultural and political conflicts in terms an opposition between religion on the one hand and secularism on the other. Religio-secularism as a cultural-political paradigm tends to obscure the intricacies of political, socioeconomic, cultural-historical, religious, and ideological dimensions of specific situations (and often conflicts) that require complex analysis and evaluation. Religio-secularism, especially when it becomes the primary or exclusive framework for understanding cultural and political conflict, serves as an ideological barrier rather than an illuminating paradigm. Critique of the increasing grip of religio-secularism on political thinking, in contrast to the captivation with “postsecularism,” takes a reflexive attitude toward religio-secularism and its distorted lens through which to view the historical world. Other lenses should be used to survey contemporary events and situations related to religion, and this is particularly so with regard to conflicts over religion, religion in the public sphere, and secularism.

Keywords: religion, religio-secularism, secularisms, Islam, France, Europe

IN public debates across the world today, and especially in Euro-Atlantic contexts, we often hear the thesis that secularism is a plausible answer to the renewed relevance of religion in the public sphere. Secularism, broadly understood, then means that there should be clearly distinguished political and religious fields within nation-states and larger political constellations such as the European Union and that the two fields need to be more or less autonomous. In more demanding versions of secularism, which are closely connected to its classical French and American understandings, these fields need to be strictly separated.

The resurgence of religion as a politically relevant phenomenon has accordingly been traced to the period surrounding the end of the Cold War in the 1980s and 1990s. Key historical events include the Iranian Revolution, the Afghan War, the Rushdie affair, the French headscarf affairs, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the emergence of neoconservatism

and of the religious right in the United States, and religious social movements of various political stripes in South America, the Islamic world, India, and China.

This widely shared thesis is challenged in this chapter. Has there been a more or less global and spontaneous religious resurgence after the end of the Cold War, and has secularism been a relatively consistent and clear answer to that resurgence? A vast interdisciplinary field connecting philosophy, (intellectual) history, sociology, cultural anthropology, religious studies, and literary studies has developed in recent years to raise complex questions for both religion and secularism.

# Questioning Secularism

With regard to secularism, two different ways of raising questions are available. The first has been elaborated by authors writing within the field of modern liberal and republican political thought, the intellectual tradition in which the concept of secularism was coined. Authors connected to this tradition have analyzed a variety of *different secularisms* that are (p. 370) available in different national and regional traditions, and they have evaluated them on the basis of how tolerant or intolerant they are toward religion, how neutral and effective they are in organizing and governing the political field and/or public spheres, or how necessary they are for liberal democracy (Bader 2007). The guiding questions are these: How much secularism, and what kinds of secularism, can be found in diverse global contexts, and how much secularism do we actually need, for what purposes, and do we need it at all? Authors writing within the political theoretical field differentiate, for example, between liberal secularism, theological secularism, narrative secularism, philosophical secularism, political secularism, and moderate secularism. This “multiple secularisms” approach is advanced by scholars such as Tariq Modood (1998), Cécile Laborde (2008), Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure (2011), and many others.

A related yet substantially different approach is familiar to the humanities and cultural anthropology. This approach questions the use of a secular–religious paradigm or framework for understanding issues and conflicts having complex cultural-political dimensions. This approach does not seek types of “good” or “bad” secularism but instead investigates and historicizes the concepts of religion and secularism themselves, and even the secularity–religion distinction itself. Scholars have traced and problematized the connections of both concepts to ideas about belief, faith, culture and reason in modern (post-Reformation) traditions of thought (Gauchet 1985; Asad 1993; Smith 1998;; Derrida 2000; Dubuisson 2003; Masuzawa 2005; Taylor 2007; Nancy 2007; Hurd 2008; Batnitzky 2011; Josephson 2012).

An aspect to these critiques of secularism has been understood, or summarized, in terms of a “postsecularism.” This term is not felicitous, because the genealogy of the concepts of secularism and religion, their interrelations, and their ability to assist in understanding societies and societal conflict are at stake, rather than the goal of going “beyond” secularism. I prefer a term proposed by sociologist Markus Dressler (2014), who has introduced the notion of “religio-secularism.” Religio-secularism is characterized by the usage

of key terms—religion, secularity, and secularism—as if they were adequately defined and stable, analytical terms, and as if the boundaries between them were stable. Religio-secularism, when it is typically used, serves as a largely unquestioned and exclusive framework for understanding contemporary cultural-political conflicts all over the world having religious dimensions and other dimensions as well—socioeconomic, political-historical, intercultural, and interethnic dimensions (Hurd 2015).

Dressler says that "the potential of the notion of the 'post-secular' is limited since it ultimately remains within the logic of religio-secularism" (2014). For example, a tendency to remain within the religio-secular paradigm is seen in the work of anthropologist Talal Asad (1993, 2003). He was one of the first to question religio-secularism more broadly, but he remains focused on religion and secularism, with a strong penchant toward critiquing secularism rather than religion (Bangstad 2009; Mufti 2010; and see Jansen 2011, analogously, about Saba Mahmood's reading of the work of Nasr Abu Zayd). A substantial trend within the criticism of religio-secularism takes a reflexive approach to ask what it means to rely on religio-secularism as a lens for investigating culture, ethnicity, and religion in politics (and religion in political conflict specifically). This criticism will be especially helpful where religio-secularism has been highly influential for theorizing about minorities and minoritization (e.g., in France and Turkey) and about conflicts concerning global politics in which struggles over religion and/or secularism are involved, including the ongoing French head-scarf affairs (Jansen 2013).

## (p. 371) Specifying Religio-Secularism

The critique of religio-secularism focuses on the ways that secularism and religion have been defined in semantic continuity with each other. Dressler has formulated this problem well:

> In the most general way, I 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. The question of the political can be regarded as the vantage point through which this antagonism/binary is constantly reinforced. (2014)

Religio-secularism stems from a tradition (primarily liberal or republican, Euro-Atlantic) of explaining political violence in terms of religious violence. This tradition has its roots in the historiography of the early modern wars during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that labeled them as "wars of religion." This view had been mostly superseded by the more secular historiography of the twentieth century, which concentrated on the worldly, political, ideological, (inter-)cultural, and socioeconomic dimensions of history and conflict. However, during the Cold War, there developed a tendency to discuss historical conflicts once again in terms of spiritual and religious value conflict, such as a strug-

gle between (Christian) capitalism and (atheist) communism. Historian Jonathan Herzog (2011) invented the term “military-spiritual complex” for this spiritualization of worldly conflict (see as well Stevens 2010; Moyn 2015). This tendency’s reinforcement during the late 1970s and 1980s and beyond has not been well-researched, nor has its role in theorizing about political conflict after the end of the Cold War (but see the recent work of Su 2016). After decolonization and the end of the Cold War, novel power constellations arose for which religion increasingly played a defining role for redrawing political boundaries set during the Cold War and/or the process of decolonization. Afghanistan is a representative case (Mamdani 2004), and so is Iran, several African countries, the Philippines and India (Hurd 2015, Mahmood 2015, Su 2016).

In philosophy and political theory, religious worldviews (rather than socioeconomic and cultural developments) became increasingly important as focal points for political analysis in the last decades of the twentieth century. From 1985 onwards, John Rawls grounded his view of justice on the prevalence of a deep value pluralism due to citizens adhering to “comprehensive doctrines” disagreeing about the good life, causing political disagreement and even conflict. This doctrine of deep value pluralism was naturalized and globalized in political theoretical debate, instead of interpreted as part of a Post Cold War and deeply Christian American intellectual landscape. Today, the abundance of debates about “religion in the public sphere” within political theory shows how normal it has become to assume that religious (or metaphysical) worldviews define our political identities to a large extent.

In reaction to these developments, some scholars have tried to understand how calling post–Cold War conflicts “religious” has a performative dimension, which produces them, at least partly, *as* religious. To further explore this point, philosopher Jacques Derrida has coined the term *mondialatinisation* (translated as “globalatinization”; 2000: 23). As Derrida puts it: “the world today speaks Latin (most often via Anglo-American) when it authorizes itself in the name of religion.” (2002 64). Looking at the long-term development of *mondialatinisation*, (p. 372) anthropologist Richard King interprets it as a conceptualization of the (orientalizing) process whereby expressions of cultural difference have tended to be translated as “religious” in the Western imagination: “judgments over what is religious and what is not, particularly when formulated from the perspective of philosophy, or the philosophy of religions, should be looked upon in terms of their disciplinary role as a form of epistemological border control at the margins of ‘western civilization’” (2009: 48; see as well Meighoo 2016)).

We can now apply this methodological and historical introduction to contemporary debates about secularism and religion.

# Secularism

Comparative constitutionalism allows one to distinguish at least eight fundamentally different (and inconsistent) meanings of secularism in constitutional contexts alone (Bader 2010). Hence, as Stuart Hall once said about multiculturalism, secularism, over the years,

has come “to reference a diffuse, indeed maddeningly spongy and imprecise, discursive field: a train of false trails and misleading universals. Its references are a wild variety of political strategies” (Hall 2001: 3) I limit myself here to the three most common meanings, for initially specifying the mutual autonomy of political and religious spheres, without having the pretense to be able to leave the spongy field.

First, in political and constitutional contexts, secularism broadly refers to the *separation* of religion and politics, which has historically been characterized as a separation of church and state. In principle, the state does not interfere with religions, and religions stay at a distance from state power. Some people take this to mean that religious affiliations should not be visible in public spaces or that religious authorities may not make political statements, but such questions are highly contested.

Second, in cultural and scientific contexts, secularism usually refers to the notion that religion (as belief) should be replaced by scientific insights or at least by a skeptical stance toward “final truths” to oppose religion taken as dogmatic belief. This secularism is part of the antireligious inheritance from the Enlightenment age, demanding more than just a separation between church and state (between religion and reason). To paraphrase Sigmund Freud, the goal should be: “where religion was, shall be secularity.” In Charles Taylor’s (2007) words, the goal is the “subtraction,” the departure of religion. Secular stances about the moral life, for example, are found among natural scientists like Richard Dawkins and among cultural scholars and artists who view literature, philosophy, and art as modern sources for morality “after” theology.

Third, in liberal political philosophy, offering elaborations upon basic concepts of liberal democracy, secularism usually refers to the idea that positions about civic matters based on a particular conception of the good life—often seen as typically religious—have a limited applicability within political debates about constitutional values and that we need a ‘secular’ public sphere. Influential philosopher Jürgen Habermas, for example, argues that to play a political role, such ‘particular’ conceptions of the good require *translation* into terms that are accessible for all and terms potentially agreeable to many, at least in principle. Without that translation into what Habermas sees as ‘secular’ terms, those conceptions of the good remain too particular (as dogma, “belief,” or “doctrine”) to ever join an overlapping consensus about (p. 373) constitutional essentials – although religious traditions may carry great semantic resources for giving meaning to life (Habermas 2008; see Lafont, this volume).

These three common meanings of “secularism” and dominant political theories defending secularism today—mostly in the liberal and republican traditions—presuppose religio-secularism (as defined in the previous section). This is related to the liberal historiography of the early modern ‘wars of religion’, when liberal theorists leave unexplored the question of how religious these wars actually were, and whether it was 'secularism' that came out of them or, at least partly, religious homogenisation cum minority formation (Asad 2006; Cavanaugh 2009; Diefendorf 2014). Instead, they may recount how religious conflicts were reduced thanks to the separation of church and state, the privatizing of belief, and

the introduction of religious freedom. In a word, secularization and secularism "tamed" the holy fire of religion. Additionally, political theories defending secularism also tend to define religion as a product of secularity. Under the influence of secularization, the story goes, premodern cultural-religious traditions encompassing all of life including politics were transformed into modern religions concerning only nonpolitical dimensions to life. Religion is hence both the beginning and the end product of secularity, and secularity is likewise religion's product. This viewpoint is possible through the shifting definition of religion as (1) a body of thought and practice about the good life that can be more or less politically irrelevant (*adiaphora*) and also (2) from another perspective, a blanket term covering "competing universalisms" concerning everything about life. Liberalism's historical horizon and manner of distinguishing secularism and religion sustain worries that religion can rapidly reacquire political and highly competitive dimensions, making religion dangerous. These worries remain effective today, in a context where neoliberal thinking takes people to normally be motivated by incentives provided by ongoing competition in the course of daily life. An ambivalence therefore characterizes liberal discourses concerning religion and secularism. Although liberalism depicts itself as a neutral way to separate religion apart from governing, it also regards religion as a power requiring regulation, turning it into an object of policy for containment or marginalization. As a result, secularism is neither the neutral foundation for the state nor the social condition toward which religions are destined. Instead, secularism must continually frame and shape religion in a number of ways (Asad 2003; Dressler and Mandair 2011; Hurd 2015; Mahmood 2015).

We can now turn to typical problems and solutions arrived at by contemporary liberal discourses in cases where the secular–religious distinction is politically dominant. This dominance is neither given nor necessary. One can read Veit Bader (2007; see this volume), who has countered that dominance. Still, it has increasingly prevailed for cases such as the headscarf issue in France and Turkey and now throughout Europe. Let us therefore turn to France, a country where religio-secularism has taken center stage in social conflicts displaying intermingled religious, racial, gender, class, and intercultural aspects. In recent years, the *laïcité* form of secularism has acquired the status of a needed prerequisite for the realization of freedom and equality, core values of liberal democracy.

# Laïcité

Since 1989 the French headscarf affairs have been almost exclusively understood in the context of *laïcité*, the French conception of secularism. *Laïcité* played a large role in the 2004 ban on wearing headscarves in public high schools. Since then, the ban has been expanded in a (p. 374) number of ways. A mother wearing a headscarf may not bring her toddler inside a public school building, and women cannot wear a *burqa* in the streets of France.

These French developments have been extensively evaluated from the stance of liberal theory. Liberal philosophers critical of *laïcité* often distinguish a more liberal and tolerant

(Lockean) type of secularism from a more "scientistic," rationalistic, authoritarian (Hobbesian or Rousseauian) secularism. Many variants fall in between these options; theorists can take what was earlier labeled as a "multiple secularisms" approach. For example, Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure (2011) perceive an antipluralistic and antimodern form of secularity when French citizens proclaim secularism as the only true doctrine. These two thinkers make a plea for a different form of secularism leaving room for individuals' and groups' divergent views and practices (see also Laborde 2008; Baubérot 2010). This stance places much weight on religious freedom, a freedom diminished by any secularism becoming in effect a "theological" doctrine, especially when it acquires state power. Interpreters applying this stance fail to interrogate the concepts of "religion" or "secularity," however. If secularists are authoritarian and proclaim themselves as holders of truth, this stance assigns that kind of secularism over to the side of "religion" (theology) and recommends the type of tactics usually reserved for controlling religion.

Invariably, then, these liberal interpreters subscribe to a quite minimal interpretation of secularism, which often adds little to the key concepts of freedom and equality that form the basis of liberal democracy. It is for that reason that Charles Taylor has lamented that it is now too late to ban the word "secularism" but, at the same time, that this is *the* reason for continuing to use it (2009: xxi), without questioning the political or conceptual necessity of secularism itself within a liberal democracy.

Therefore, even if moderate, narrative, liberal, tolerant secularisms can accommodate religion, including its practices, more successfully than die-hard, truth-claiming *laicism*, they remain wedded to the idea that we should treat "religion" as a separate category in need of a special principle, while at the same time preframing the position of minorities—such as, saliently today, Jews and Muslims in Europe—as "religious." Doing so tends to hide from view all of the majority–minority relations, power inequalities, class and colonial history, everydayness, migration histories, histories of imaginaries, and stereotypes in intercultural memory that are relevant to understand the position of these minorities—as well as the genealogy of the concept of 'minority' itself (Nordmann 2004; Badiou 2006; Bowen 2007; Jansen 2013; Hurd 2015). Therefore, a liberal critique of authoritarian secularism made from the position of religio-secularism will not provide sufficiently sociologically and politically informed evaluations of societal questions – as Karl Marx already knew in the nineteenth century considering the so-called 'Jewish Question' (Marx 1978; Farris 2014). Liberal interpretations tend to be solely concerned with the legitimate place of religion in the public sphere, not with the validity of "religio-secularism" itself.

Remaining within the French context, we should seek out other factors to conflicts surrounding headscarves and other contested religious practices. The principle of *laïcité*, insofar as it is constitutionally defined, does not entail a ban on headscarves, nor a prohibition against religious symbols or religious expression in the public sphere (Bowen 2007). Instead, a complex mixture of political, sociological, psychological, and postcolonial motives has aligned to produce the headscarf law (Nordmann 2004; Balibar 2004; Bowen 2007; Jansen 2013). Moreover, the famous Stasi Commission, advising on the headscarf

law in 2003, did not base its conclusions on any definition of *laïcité* but relied on the additional goal of maintaining public order—an order (p. 375) perceived by many (including sociologist Alain Touraine and political scientist Gilles Kepel) to be threatened by inimical Islamists in France (Jansen 2010, 2013).

In 1989, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu ([1989] 1999) already said that the debate over secularism betrayed underlying motives bearing racial and colonial traces: a resistance to the long-term presence of Arabs in France. For Bourdieu, secularism was the respectable version of an older colonial mentality, largely due to Algeria. Others have pointed to the role of class politics, gender politics, migration history, the role and organisation of the French police, the introduction of security discourses and practices, and the possibility of basing political success on populist themes (see Jansen 2013). The French context hence suggests that the growing literature on the interconnections between race and religion (Anidjar 2008; Darian-Smith 2010; Meer 2014; Topolski and Nathan 2014; Vial 2016)) should be enlarged to deal with the interconnections of race, migration, and religio-secularism. Leaving France, we can examine broader contours to the critique of religio-secularism.

# Europe and the Position of Ethno-religious Minorities

Increasingly, religio-secularism is more or less taken for granted when dealing with various aspects to the lives of ethno-religious minorities at a global scale—including their legal definition and their regulation as “minorities” (Hurd 2015). For historical reasons, within Europe, this situation concerns Jews and Muslims in particular, but other minorities, especially those connected to recent migration histories, are affected by this trend as well.

The status of Jews and Muslims has been increasingly thematized in terms of their religious (bodily) practices, such as religious clothing, ritual slaughter, and circumcision. These practices, treated within religio-secularism, allow secular, liberal, or humanist values to be contrasted against orthodox religious values. However, for Jews and Muslims, their practices and the meanings they convey are situated in cultural and historical contexts too complex to be grasped within religio-secularism. This is no less true if we apply expansive definitions of secularity and religion. Interpreting religious practices in contemporary social contexts requires far more attention to the memory of Christian and modernist ideas about Judaism and Islam (about the ‘Semite’, about race and racism), to the legacies of these cultural memories in the present, and additional social factors. Yirmiyahu Yovel succinctly formulated this point in regard to the position of the Jews in modernizing Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the dynamic relation between minorities and majorities during this transformational period, he wrote:

> Jews … provided Europeans with a mirror, a crooked, passion-laden mirror, in which to see a reflection of their own identity problems. The “Jewish problem” was basically a European problem: that is, not only a problem for Europe but a reflection of Europe’s own problem with itself, of how, in an age of rapid transformation, Europeans were understanding their own identity, future, and meaning of life. (1998: xi)

This mirroring effect upon minorities, a manifestation of both Christian and secular insecurities surrounding the transformations of modernity, is now at work with regard to Muslims (p. 376) (and again relevant once again for Jews). On the one hand, Muslims are described in terms of religious orthodoxy and stubborn piety, but on the other hand, they are regarded as more modern, globalized, and intangible than European majorities. At a time when actual situations are tragically confirming such stereotypes, we have entered an immensely complicated semantic field. We can only thematize these mirrorings by admitting how the categories of “religion” and “secularity” do not cover the reality of these intercultural relations but partly help to produce them in the first place. Discussing debates about religious practices in abstraction from broader cultural matters, focused only through the secular–religious framework, omits crucial perspectives.

Notions of Jewishness and Muslimness, and of Judaism and Islam as well, are varied, unsystematic, and interwoven cultural constructs that cannot be separated from Islamophobia and anti-Semitism—although they are not entirely produced by them, either. We need to take more seriously the triangular dynamic to self- and other-definitions among Jews, Muslims, and other Europeans (whether labeled as secular, Enlightened, Christian, or Judeo-Christian). Debates on ‘religion in the public sphere’ therefore get it wrong when they limit themselves to the question of how religious peoples and populations fit into secular nation-states, and secular European and international institutions. Debates should no longer be about the “Muslim question” as a present-day equivalent of “the Jewish question,” that is, about how Muslims could (or should) integrate into a secular Europe. Rather, these debates should be about the “European question,” about how European cultures can and should deal with minorities on the basis of their specific (and nearly always deeply problematic) histories of actual ‘minority-making’ (Anidjar 2012). And this has to happen while an expansion of *jihadism* (or *takfirism)* within Europe and right-wing extremist reactions against the Muslim presence are both fueled by framing violence in terms of a clash of absolute values—religious and secular values.

# More Historical and Sociological Critiques of Religio-Secularism

Religio-secularism’s framework is not only misleading with regard to the status of specific minorities; its problematic assumptions make our understanding of religion as well as secularity quite rigid. Public discourses applying religio-secularism tend to advance highly idealized images of secularism as a Euro-Atlantic political tradition of a radical separation between church and state, privatized religion, and near total freedom of speech, a

tradition “normal” for contemporary Western societies. Islam may then be viewed as a highly problematic religion that must adapt to this political tradition. Besides misrepresenting Islam, this framework misrepresents Western secularism. It is indeed the case that each modern state does differentiate between religion and politics, just in as many nonmodern societies, but that distinction is everywhere a matter of degrees and one that does not lend itself to any easy, radical separation. The contrary of secularism, then, could not point just to theocracy. The state and religion are always, to varying degrees, interwoven throughout governmental policies and actions, no less than the entanglement among all other forms of human association, even the most “private” relations (Bader 2007). With better insight into the diversity (p. 377) and extent of disciplinary and governmental power (as Foucault’s work shows), any notion of a strict separation of church and state is exposed as chimerical. In France, for example, the official doctrine is *laïcité*, although there are many forms of government involvement with religions. Examples include the extensive subsidization of the Catholic tradition’s cultural preservation, subsidies for special schools, and the formation of an Islam de France by choosing representatives for the French state (Bowen 2007; Jansen 2013).

As for religion, the idealization of religion as just a matter of belief, in that “free” domain of individual conscience, is also far from evident in the real world. Religions, and differences among them, are shaped by environing political processes from local up to international scales. Conflicts between “religious sects” (an oft-heard term) in countries like Syria and Egypt are not largely the result of opposed religious convictions. They arise from complex social processes involving religious interests and goals, inherited colonial issues, postcolonial interferences during and after the Cold War, current political interests of global actors, and so on. Therefore, the near exclusive focus of US foreign policy institutions on freedom of religion and belief could not amount to just an apolitical advocacy of universal human rights. As Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (2015) has argued, such advocacy may contribute to the hardening of boundaries between religious groups, the establishment of power inequalities, and the obscuring of other dimensions to conflict—the impact of authoritarian state power in particular.

Religio-secularism, as we have discussed, owes much of its ambivalence toward religion to the dominant interpretation of the European “wars of religion”: religion incited people to violence because the alleged absoluteness of their religious knowledge consummated a holy fire that legitimized and even encouraged violence. Historical research has placed this interpretation into better perspective. Material, territorial, and other motivations also played crucial roles in those wars. After the Peace of Westphalia (1648) the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (“whose realm, his religion”) was in vogue across Europe as powerful political interests invoked it to determine which religion had the upper hand (Cavanaugh 2009). That does not mean that truth claims of religious belief are not historically relevant but rather that they always stand within contexts where they sometimes lead to violence, and often do not, depending on other circumstances beyond religion itself. Religious and nonreligious motivations are deeply entwined, so a strict methodological di-

vision between religious and secular motives and practices can no longer be reliable for conducting the historiography of the early modern wars (Diefendorf 2014).

Another historical argument questions religio-secularism from the secular side. Neither organized religion nor deep religious belief enjoy any monopoly on political violence, as demonstrated by the various totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, as well as the globalizing capitalism of our own day. Large-scale crimes against humanity, along with the neglect and dispossession of many peoples, has been carried out in the name of racial, national, and economic ideologies. Religion, moreover, has no monopoly on strong conviction nor on ideology—as certainties about the proper functioning of capitalist markets can display. Going further, seemingly secular economic concepts such as “debt,” “obligation,” and “trust” in the economic realm have deep cultural connections with their theological legacies (Graeber 2012).

These interwoven histories between religion and secularity undermine the stance that people of literal religious belief, those who believe in God(s) or heaven, are the ones most capable of fanaticism. Far more political violence is hidden within the pursuit of secularism (p. 378) than anticipated by the presumption that fanaticism and violence are natural by-products of religion. Moreover, historical religions often operate with a concept of transcendence that exceeds all worldly frameworks and expectations and even our utopias; and some say that religions (properly understood) build up foundational reserves to secular ideologies and political violence (Latour 2013). Therefore, it is vital to seek out new concepts that can shed light on what the political problematization of religion is really about so that we can directly debate particularism, violence, securitization, dogmatism, and ideology anywhere on the political spectrum and even fault sheer human blindness, impotence, and aggression. Particularism and dogmatism are especially important for our argument. Religio-secularism tends to make us forget that they are common to both religious and secular doctrines and worldviews, because it automatically associates religion with particularism and dogmatism and tends to present secular arguments as more intrinsically inclined to reasonability; finding that particularism is not exclusive to either side arouses another problem almost invisible to the secular–religious framework.[1]

There is one additional urgent reason for stepping outside of the religio-secularism framework. The implicit definition of religion in terms of particularism misleadingly suggests that religions are by nature closed systems of absolute truth claims. This may provoke religious groups into actions that appear to fulfill those crude expectations. We see this happening all over the world. In America, the religious right-wing political movement permits religious opinions to justify antidemocratic and racist opinions and attitudes, and some conservative religious groups will not hold themselves accountable to science or to freedom and equality.[2] Freedom of conscience plays a complicated role here. On the one hand, it raises a crucial barrier against coercion by the government or political majorities. On the other hand, freedom of conscience can also become a license for refusing to reconsider or compromise any traditional visions, modern ideologies, or complicated neoliberal combinations of traditionalism and capitalist ideology. This license is especially detrimental where it proves profitable to be religious or to lead a religious organization

(Posner 2008; Vatter 2011; Brown 2015). However, religious traditions can testify against an interpretation of religion in terms of particularism and dogmatism. Much religious reasoning is not dogmatic and stays open to discussion. And the very same text-centered traditions said to embody absolute truth claims—"because the Bible says so"—all have extensive hermeneutic and/or heterodox traditions. The meanings of holy scriptures within religions are always reinterpreted in relation to novel contexts in which they emerge (Boyarin 2003; Abu Zayd 2006 — this is not necessarily a culturally secularist or Protestant view, as I argued *pace* Saba Mahmood in Jansen 2009). Religious traditions are intimately familiar with internal sources of critique and renewal, and in addition to that, they are often in discussion with each other, instead of contemplating only their own truth claims.

# Genealogies of Religion, Postsecularism, and the Critique of Religio-Secularism

Among those who have criticized religio-secularism since the 1990s, many begin from examining the concept of "religion" and tracing the modern origins of this concept (Asad 1993; (p. 379) Smith 1998). For this genealogical approach, liberalism and secularism are usually taken to be closely related and studied as legacies of Protestant, Christian, and colonial contributions to the concept of religion. Hence according to its genealogies the concept of religion, as it is employed in liberal and secular frameworks, has Eurocentric presuppositions and pretensions and/or operates from unquestioned Christian assumptions. Here we return to the problem captured by Derrida's play on words, *mondialatinisation*. This approach interprets the conceptual history of 'religion' in terms of a collection of doctrines or beliefs containing certain truth claims about the good life, and emphasizes that this interpretation arose within a specifically Christian context, developed during colonial expansion and incorporated into liberal and secular traditions (Asad 1993; Spinner-Halev 2005; Brown et al. 2009; Brown 2012; Josephson 2012). Bringing the interpretation of religion from such a genealogical, "postsecular" line of reasoning, to a further stepping back from religio-secularism, is an eminently useful line of research to be developed in the future. Let me explain. In *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad (1993) discussed Immanuel Kant's work on religion. Kant forms a crucial intellectual connection between Protestant Christianity and modern philosophy and secularism. Kant distinguishes religion as a universally singular category, one accessible to everyone in principle, from the religiosity of particular "cults." Those cults are religious traditions replete with holy books, religious laws, and religious practices, which Kant regards are merely the exterior vehicles for an inner, moral, and universal religion ([1793] 2003). The more cultic, the less serious the religious core matters; religion concerns "meaning," not "practice." Protestantism is, according to Kant, closer to true religion than Catholicism—and much closer than Judaism and Islam. Kant notoriously claimed that the "yoke of external observances" to which the Jews submitted should be cast off (Kant [1793] 2003 185; see Mack 2003; Jansen 2013). In the wake of this kind of conceptual history, Western modernism inherited ideas about what religion is (universalistic and truth-claiming) and what 'cult' is (particularizing and articulating specific traditions). Asad's tracing of the Kantian-secular

understanding of “religion” is connected to his critique of secularism as a norm for today’s world. For instance, he connects it to a critique of the interpretation of the head-scarf as a religious “symbol” or “sign”—reducing it to a question of “meaning”—which is how the headscarf is invariably perceived in France and elsewhere. The wearing of a head-scarf is, according to Asad, not a contingent sign but rather the participation in a practice that constitutes a “religious way of being” (2006: 501).

Similar critiques, interestingly, have been offered in regard to other religions. They have been put forward with the Indian context, for example, by S. N. Balagangadhara and Jakob De Roover (2007), who go so far as to claim that only monotheisms—which they call “Semitic” (*sic*! see Anidjar 2008; Meer 2014) can be called religions—which implies a very ‘Kantian’ interpretation of ‘religion’. Other traditions, such as Hinduism in their view, operate through the rearticulation of ritual practices and stories but not through the transfer of doctrines and claims on truth. Jürgen Habermas (2008), by contrast, endorses the notion of religion as a “way of being” when he paraphrases contemporary Christian authors like Nicholas Wolterstorff. Ironically, these authors draw from the Protestant tradition itself to argue against the secular-Kantian interpretation of religion as universal and belief-centered.[3]

These debates all help to revise or parochialize the concept of religion as simultaneously both a matter of doctrine and choice, an interpretation that arose out of the interaction between the Protestant tradition, modern liberal thought, and other cultural traditions through colonial interactions (King 2009; Masuzawa 2005; Josephson 2012). (p. 380) And this interpretation is, curiously, what has been seen as the “postsecular” aspect to these debates. But if we do call them debates about “postsecularism,” the notions of religion and secularity have been left more or less intact. This in turn suggests that while “secular” or “Christian-modern-secular” individuals and cultures may feel at home within “secular” societies, there also will be a specific group of religious citizens for whom secularity presents a problem—a situation which then becomes interpreted in terms the ‘return’ of religion in the public sphere. I recommend departing from the religio-secularism framework altogether instead. In contrast to the Protestant-modernist and Kantian conception of religion, Asad presents an interpretation of medieval religious practices, where inner meaning and outer practice are not easy to distinguish from one another, because they occur together and are “performed” in unison (1993). However, this alternative can be interpreted beyond the religious–secular domain: Asad’s interpretation of medieval Catholicism coheres with a post-Kantian, pragmatic philosophical anthropology and a philosophy of language that affirms the interwovenness of meaning and practice, and of concept and affect, and the mutual constitution of rationality and culture. In other words, the Kantian dichotomy between religion and cult is analogous to the dichotomy between subject and object, which has been corrected in twentieth-century philosophy in many different ways. The radical separation between doctrine and practice, and the inner and outer, is simply untenable because individuals are always involved in learning processes, in language use, and in social practices. This is an insight shared by philosophers such as John Dewey,

Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Wendy Brown, Charles Taylor and Bruno Latour, despite their differences.

The suggestion that religion (and secularity) in the Kantian sense applies to modern European traditions, but not to others, is therefore conceptually problematic and falsely suggests deep cultural difference between “secular” (including modern Christian, or, ironically today, Judeo-Christian) and other “religious” cultures and groups. As we depart from religio-secularism, we can see how it is indebted to a modernist philosophical framework needing radical revisions.

# Reviewing Religion in Politics from Outside Religio-Secularism

Leaving religio-secularism behind may be uncomfortable for secularists and liberals, especially if attention must be redirected to affective, doctrinal, and social and political dimensions of both religious and secular beliefs and practices. Due attention here risks destabilizing the distinction between conduct (practice) and belief (doctrine) that has been crucial to liberal judgments about what the freedom of religion does and does not cover (Malik 2013). The constitutional protection of belief remains crucial for the protection of minorities today, perhaps especially in Europe, despite all the difficulties with religio-secularism. One comforting thought is that some flexibility to the concept of religion has been allowed within juridical proceedings for a long time, which have recognised that belief and practice do undeniably overlap; secular doctrine is more inflexible in this regard than secular juridical practice (Bader 2007; but see Danchin 2012 and Moyn 2014 on the status of Muslims with the European Court of Human Rights).

(p. 381) Moreover, even discourses well aware of the historical dimensions and relativity of the concepts of religion and secularism can also carry their own authoritarian weight. Balagangadhara and De Roover (2007; 2012)), as already mentioned, claim that Hindu traditions are not essentially religions in the sense of doctrines about religious truth. Instead, they form a part of a culture of transferring practices and stories. Further, they argue that Hindu fundamentalism is a typical result from the importation of religion, during India’s colonial period. On the basis of that reasoning, Balagangadhara and De Roover depict conversion as a practice typical of religious (truth-claiming and theological) traditions, not cultural traditions such as Hinduism. One’s religion can be freely chosen, but no such choice is inherent to cultural tradition, such as the Hindu culture. This may sound reasonable as a theoretical position. As a practical matter, however, some Indian *dalits* (“untouchables”) try to escape Hindu caste traditions by converting to Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity. Conversion therefore has become a highly politicized issue, and this intellectual debate reproduces the politics of the *hindutva* movement of Indian nationalism. This problem illustrates how a more culturally orientated concept of religion may not elude a political interpretation and would not automatically be less political than an interpretation in terms of doctrinal orientation.

Another conclusion is available, however. If the cultural and political dimensions to religion always intersect and interact with religious belief and practice, then a person's way of being religious is simply one aspect of that person's everyday life. Whether this "religious being" allows room for progressive explanations is not a philosophical question but clearly a historical-political question, and one that can lead to different answers, depending on the local situation. However that interpretation proceeds (in terms of piety or theology and so on), we should not unduly focus on just religiously motivated action. If we postulate that religious practices acquire meaning only in a cultural context, and hence within a political-historical-legal-institutional context, then we cannot separate "the religious" from the worldly dimensions of certain practices and arguments. Hence, we require additional perspectives from beyond the framework of religio-secularism to understand and evaluate cultures and conflicts (Marsden 2005; Bangstad 2009; Jansen 2011; Schielke and Debevec 2012; Darian-Smith 2010; Hurd 2015; Shortal 2016).

# Conclusion

The basic argument against religio-secularism is that it tends to obscure the intricacies of political, socioeconomic, cultural-historical, religious, and ideological dimensions to situations requiring analysis and evaluation, while also failing to sufficiently problematize the concepts of "religion" and "secularity" themselves. Religio-secularism, especially if it becomes the primary or exclusive framework for understanding cultural and political conflict, serves as an ideological barrier rather than an illuminating, or even "Enlightening," paradigm.

Critical reflection on the increasing grip of religio-secularism, in contrast to the captivation with "postsecularism," takes a reflexive attitude toward religio-secularism and its distorted lens through which to view our historical world. Other lenses should be used to survey contemporary conflicts, especially when today's events are framed as conflicts over religion, religion in the public sphere, and secularism.

## Bibliography

Abu Zayd, Nasr. 2006. *Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Alouane, Rim-Sarah, Yolande Jansen, Tariq Modood, and Anya Topolski. 2015. "Symposium on *Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe* by Y. Jansen." *Ethnicities 15* (*6*), 1–17.

Anidjar, Gil. 2008. *Semites. Race, Religion, Literature.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Anidjar, Gil. 2012. "On the European Question." *Forum Bosnae* 55, 13–27.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Asad, Talal. 2006. “Trying to Understand French Secularism.” In *Political Theologies,* edited by H. De Vries and L. Sullivan, 493–526. New York: Fordham University Press.

Bader, Veit. 2007. *Secularism or Democracy? Associational Governance of Religious Diversity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bader, Veit. 2010. “Constitutionalizing Secularism, Alternative Secularisms or Liberal-Democratic Constitutionalism? A Critical Reading of Some Turkish, ECtHR and Indian Supreme Court Cases on ‘Secularism.’” *Utrecht Law Review* 6(3), 8–35.

Badiou, Alain. 2006. *Polemics*. London: Verso.

Balagangadhara S. N., and Jakob De Roover. 2007. “The Secular State and Religious Conflict: Liberal Neutrality and the Indian Case of Pluralism.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15(1), 67–92.

Balagangadhara, S. N. and Jakob De Roover. 2012. “The Dark Hour of Secularism; Hindu Fundamentalism and Colonial Liberalism in India.” In *Making Sense of the Secular: Critical Perspectives from Europe to Asia*, edited by R. Ghosh, 111–130. London and New York: Routledge.

Balibar, Etienne. 2004. “Dissonances within *Laïcité*.” *Constellations* 11(3), 353–367.

Bangstad, Sindre. 2009. “Contesting Secularism/s: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad.” *Anthropological Theory* 9, 188–208.

Batnitzky, Leora. 2011. *How Judaism Became a Religion*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 383) Baubérot, Jean. 2010., “The Evolution of Secularism in France: Between Two Civil Religions.” In *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age,* edited by E. Hurd, 57–68. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. “Un problème peut en cacher un autre.” Archives du Collège de France. **http://ldh-toulon.net/Un-probleme-peut-en-cacher-un.html**. (Orignal work published 1989)

Bowen, John. 2007. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Boyarin, Daniel. 2003. *Sparks of the Logos: Essays in Rabbinic Hermeneutics.* Leiden: Brill.

Brown, Wendy. 2012. “Civilizational Delusions: Secularism, Tolerance, Equality.” *Theory & Event* 15(2). **http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v015/15.2.brown.html**.

Brown, Wendy (2015) “When Firms Become Persons and Persons Become Firms: neoliberal jurisprudence in Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores.” Public lecture at LSE, podcast available at **http://www.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/events/2015/07/20150701t1830vHKT.aspx**.

Brown, Wendy, Asad, Talal, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood. 2009. *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cavanaugh, William. 2009. *The Myth of Religious Violence. Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Danchin, Peter G. 2011. “Islam in the Secular Nomos of the European Court of Human Rights.” *Michigan Journal of International Law* 32(4), 663–747.

Darian-Smith, Eve. 2010. *Religion, Race, Rights; Landmarks in the History of Modern Anglo-American Law.* Portland, Oregon: Hart Publishing.

Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Foi et savoir, suivi de Le siècle et le pardon*. Paris: Seuil.

Derrida, Jacques. 2002. *Acts of Religion.* Edited by Gil Anidjar. London: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques. 2005. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Diefendorf, Barbara. 2014. “Were the Wars of Religion about Religion?” *Political Theology* 15(6), 552–563.

Dressler, Markus. 2014. “Beyond Religio-Secularism: Toward a Political Critique.” Immanent Frame. **http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2014/02/25/beyond-religio-secularism-toward-a-political-critique/**.

Dressler, Markus, and Arvind Mandair (eds.). 2011. *Secularism and Religion-Making*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dubuisson, Daniel. 2003. *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Farris, Sara. 2014. “From the Jewish Question to the Muslim Question. Republican Rigorism, Culturalist Differentialism and Antinomies of Enforced Emancipation.” *Constellations* 21, 296–307.

Gauchet, Marcel. 1985. *Le desenchantement du monde. Une histoire politique de la religion.* Paris: Gallimard.

Graeber, David. 2012. *Debt: The First 5000 Years.* New York: Melville House.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Herzog, Jonathan. 2011. *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman.2015. *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 384) Jansen, Yolande. 2010. "Secularism and Security: France, Islam and Europe." In *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age,* edited by Linell Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 94–115. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jansen, Yolande. 2011. "Postsecularism, Piety and Fanaticism: Reflections on Saba Mahmood's and Jürgen Habermas' Critiques of Secularism." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37(9), 977–998.

Jansen, Yolande. 2013. *Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: French Modernist Legacies.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Josephson, Jason Ananda. 2012. *The Invention of Religion in Japan.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Judd, Robin. 2007. *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843–1933.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1793. *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*. Repr. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2003.

Kaplan, Benjamin. 2009. *Divided by Faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

King, Richard. 2009. "Philosophy of Religion as Border Control: Globalization and the Decolonization of the 'Love of Wisdom' (Philosophia)." In *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion,* edited by P. Bilimoria and A. B. Irvine. Dordrecht: Springer.

Laborde, Cécile. 2008. *Critical Republicanism: The Hijab Controversy and Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laborde, Cécile. 2013. "Political Liberalism and Religion: On Separation and Establishment." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 21(1), 67–86.

Latour, Bruno. 2013. *Rejoicing: Or the Torments of Religious Speech*. Translated by Julie Rose. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Mack, Michael. 2003. *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maclure, Jocelyn, and Charles Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2015. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age. A Minority Report*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Malik, Maleiha. 2013. "Religion and Sexual Orientation: Conflict or Cohesion?" In *Religion in a Liberal State,* edited by Gavin D'Costa, Malcolm Evans, Tariq Modood, and Julian Rivers, 67–92. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2004. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon.

Marsden, Magnus. 2005. *Living Islam: Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan's North-West Frontier.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Marx, Karl. 1844. "On the Jewish Question" translated in *Marx and Engels Collected Works. Volume 3*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978.

Massad, Joseph 2015. *Islam in Liberalism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meighoo, Sean. 2016. *The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales*. New York: Columbia University Press

(p. 385) Meer, Nasar (ed.). 2014. *Racialization and Religion: The Role of Race, Culture and Difference in Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia*. London and New York: Routledge.

Modood, T. 1998. "Multiculturalism, Secularism and the State." *Critical Review of International, Social and Political Philosophy* 1(3), 79–97.

Modood, T. 2014. "Is There a Crisis of 'Postsecularism' in Western Europe?" In *Transformations of Religion and the Public Sphere: Postsecular Politics*, edited by R. Braidotti, B. Blaagaard, T. de Graauw, and E. Midden. 14–34. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moyn, Samuel. 2014. "From Communist to Muslim; European Human Rights, the Cold War and Religious Liberty." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113(1), 63–86.

Moyn, Samuel. 2015. *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mufti, Amir (ed.). 2010. *Special Issue: Antinomies of the Postsecular*. *Boundary 2* 40(1).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2007. *Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Nordmann, Charlotte (ed.). 2004. *Le foulard islamique en questions.* Paris: Éditions Amsterdam.

Posner, Sarah. 2008. *God's Profits: Faith, Fraud, and the Republican Crusade for Values Voters.* Saucalito, Calif.: Polipoint Press.

Qutb, Sayyid. 1964. *Milestones (Ma'alim fi al-Tariq)*. Indianapolis, Ind.: American Trust, 2005. Translation: **http://www.majalla.org/books/2005/qutb-nilestone.pdf**.

Rawls, John. 1993. *Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rawls, John. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Schielke, Samuli, and Liza Debevec (eds.). 2012. *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes. An Anthropology of Everyday Religion.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Shortal, Sarah. 2016. "Lost in Translation: Religion and the Writing of History." *Modern Intellectual History* 13, 273–286.

Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark Taylor, 269–284. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Spinner-Halev, Jeff. 2005. "Hinduism, Christianity, and Liberal Religious Toleration." *Political Theory* 33(1), 28–57.

Stasi, Bernard. 2003. *Laïcité et République: Rapport au Président de la République*. Paris: La Documentation Française.

Stevens, Jason. 2010. *God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sullivan, W. 2007. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2009. "What Is Secularism?" In *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*, edited by G. Brahm Levey and T. Modood, xi–xxii. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Topolski, Anya, and Emmanuel Nathan (eds.). 2015. *Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition? A European Perspective*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Vatter, Miguel (ed.). 2011. *Crediting God: Sovereignty and Religion in the Age of Global Capitalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vial, Theodore. 2016. *Modern Religion, Modern Race.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. (p. 386)

## Notes:

(1.) John Rawls saw this very well, which is why he talked about “comprehensive doctrines” and public reason instead of religion and secularism, but he remained wedded to the idea that systems of dogmatic truth claims that have religious or metaphysical dimensions form a central part of people’s political identities. Cécile Laborde (2013) discusses this view in Rawls, leaving it unclear, however, whether she herself wants to step out of the Rawlsian framework or bring it back to a more classical religion–secularity distinction.

(2.) We see it in Daesh (ISIL) and Al Qaeda and in *jihadism* or *takfirism* more generally.

(3.) Saliently, Sayyid Qutb employs the term of Islam as a “way of life,” at least that is what is given in the English translation from 1964 (Qutb [1964] 2005; Jansen 2011). To my knowledge, how the existentialist terminology of “ways of being” entered the Islamic discourse still needs to be traced.

**Yolande Jansen**

Yolande Jansen is Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Amsterdam Center for Globalization Studies of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is also the Socrates Professor of Humanism in Relation to Religion and Secularity at VU University Amsterdam. Her recent book is titled Secularism, Assimilation and the Crisis of Multiculturalism: French Modernist Legacies.

# A Secular Critique of Religious Ethics and Politics

Paul Cliteur

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.24

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses the difference between a nonsecular or religious critique of religious ethics and politics and a specifically secular critique. It introduces the central notion of a secular critique, autonomy, and its two types, moral and political. Moral autonomy entails the separation of religion from ethics. The ideal of making that separation is called “moral secularism.” The opposite of moral autonomy is “moral heteronomy.” An extreme case of moral heteronomy is discussed: Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his own son when God commanded him to do so. Next, the importance of political autonomy and political secularism is illustrated with reference to the conflict between the king Ahab (the model of a secular ruler) and the prophet Elijah (the model of a religious leader). Some stories in the holy scriptures of the monotheist religions held in common by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are unfavorable toward secularism (both moral and political).

Keywords: secular critique, religious ethics, religious politics, secular ethics, secular politics, autonomy

LET us start with the statement that there are countless ways in which religious ethics and religious politics can be criticized. As John Shook writes: “the complaints are pretty much the same: religious leaders caught as hypocrites, religious people behaving immorally; religious scripture endorsing unethical deeds; religions promoting hatred, conflict and wars; religions promoting injustice and discrimination; and the like” (2010: 3). But what I am concerned with in this chapter is a specific *secular* critique of religious ethics and politics. An example can make this clear. The religious ethics and politics of, for example, the fundamentalist Islamist movement IS or Isil (Said 2014; Sansal 2014) can be criticized from another *religious* perspective: a Christian or Buddhist one, for instance. One may also criticize religious ethics and politics from the view of the same religion, Islam, that IS adheres to. This is, in fact, what the British Prime Minister David Cameron did. Reacting to the spectacular military successes of IS, Cameron said: “What we are witnessing is actually a battle between Islam on the one hand and extremists who want to abuse Islam on the other” (2014). His remarks are relevant to our purpose be-

cause they highlight the difference between a critique of religious ethics and politics in general and a *secular* critique of religious ethics and politics in particular.

Not everyone would be willing to accept Cameron's characterization of the conflict. First of all, IS would not. Who is the British prime minister to lecture them on what is true Islam and "abuse of Islam"? What expertise does Cameron have in this field? From the perspective of a reasonable outsider, Cameron's religious critique of religious ethics and politics of IS was not very convincing either. Was IS, fighting for an Islamic caliphate (Pankhurst 2013), not an Islamic movement? Did their ideas really have nothing to do with the religion of Islam? Was this "abuse of Islam"?

Whatever can be said about Cameron's analysis, his remark is important because it sets us on the track of the specific character of a *secular* critique of religious ethics and politics. Cameron's critique is a critique of the religious ethics and politics of IS, but it is definitely not a secular critique. What Cameron does—and this type of critique is prevalent, much more prevalent than a secular critique, in fact—is tell the extremists that they do not live up to the (p. 390) ideal form of religion by hijacking Islam and not realizing the true nature of Islam, which is basically peaceful and good.

# Critique and Secular Critique

What makes a critique a secular critique? Secular critique is different, and it is the purpose of this chapter to highlight what makes a *secular* critique of religious ethics and religious politics different. Secularists—those who engage in the secular critique of religious ethics and politics—do not primarily object to this or that specific element of religious ethics and politics. Religion is not particularly friendly to women (Benson and Stangroom 2009), homosexuals (Heins 1993; Fone 2000), and atheists (Werleman 2009). Secularists mainly object to the whole concept of religious ethics and politics and deny any necessary connection between religion on the one hand and ethics and politics on the other. Furthermore, secularists advocate the severing and emancipation of ethics and politics from religion.

There are several misunderstandings about this enterprise, and it is useful to get them out of the way first. Antisecularists, that is to say, those who do not sympathize with the idea of secular ethics and politics, are often mistaken about the nature of secularism when they claim that secularists have declared war on religion as such. Secularists are militantly against religion, many people think. Or they are "aggressively" antireligious. But this is something secularists deny (Blackford 2012; Berlinerblau 2012). At least it is not connected to the secularist position as such. There are secularists, like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens,[1] who subscribe to both secularism *and* atheism. But that does not make the connection between secularism and atheism a necessary one.

What all secularists do have in common is that they are against *the use* of religion for bolstering moral and political claims. They believe a moral claim has to be supported ethically (moral secularism) and a political claim has to be supported politically (political secu-

larism). But one cannot advance religious reasons for a moral or political claim. At least one *ought* to try not to do this. What secularists favor in discussing matters of public policy and ethical matters is speaking a kind of "moral Esperanto": a language that is not connected to religion and that, accordingly, we can all understand (Cliteur 2009).[2]

So what secularists object to is *using religion* for moral and political purposes. In other words—and this is an important point to highlight—religion does not have to be rejected as such (this is how atheism differs), but it certainly must be rejected when it presents itself as the basis of ethics and politics. The word "basis" requires further commentary and analysis, since it is a source of much confusion (Nowell-Smith 1999). Of course, it is possible that someone is "inspired" by religious ideas. Christians claim to find inspiration for their politics in their religion. They claim, for instance, that the person of Jesus Christ inspires them to advocate some sort of alleviation of the plight of the hungry and the poor. Many Christians also declare that the idea that God created all men equal ("All men are created equal," it is said in the Declaration of Independence) inspires them to advocate more social justice in the legal and political system. One may, for example, be inspired to advocate the abolition of slavery. This was the case with the English philanthropist and politician William Wilberforce (1759–1833) who had a leading role in the abolition of the slave trade. Religious inspiration (p. 391) for necessary political change is also prevalent in the work of Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968), whose work is was hailed as a "testament to religious faith at its best" (Guiora 2009: 63; Guiora 2014: 8–9). Rallying his audience against the Vietnam War, King spoke eloquently about the "ministry of Jesus Christ" and said: "to me, the relationship of this ministry to the making of peace is so obvious that I sometimes marvel at those who ask me why I am speaking against the war" (1967: 655). Muslims claim that the life of Mohammed is a source of inspiration to them. For Buddhists, the life of Buddha is a point of reference for their moral and political ideas (Revel and Ricard 1997). What this all means is that many religious believers assert that they derive their moral and political ideas from their religion, for example, from Holy Scripture.

It is important to state clearly that none of this puts them at loggerheads with secularism or secularists. Such a conflict only arises if religiously minded people (people "inspired by religion") argue that morality and politics can be legitimate *only on the basis of religion*. In other words, what secularists contest is not that some religious and political ideas are derived from religion (a historical or psychological connection), but they object to the idea that one needs religion to justify these ideas (which is a moral and, more in particular, a meta-ethical claim). Secularists deny that if there is no God, everything is permitted —a worry once expressed by Dostoyevsky (Sartre 1970: 36; Bouteligier 2014: 290). In their view, moral choices in the world are very much the same with or without God. Here, the conflict with IS or any other religious extremist or fundamentalist movements is evident.

There is a second crucial misunderstanding about a secular critique of religious ethics and politics. This is that one presupposes that secularists must be against values like neighborly love or being kind to one another because these ideas are somehow connected

to religion or derived from Holy Scripture. What is wrong with these kind of values, religious people may ask secularists. The answer is: nothing. This is not what the secularist critique is about. The secularist critique only says that these values are not necessarily intertwined with, or dependent on, any religious outlook. You can be good to your neighbor without trying to base those values on your religion. From the perspective of secularism, "religion" as a reason to act in a certain way is comparable to "astrology" as a reason to act in a certain way. People can sometimes perform good deeds on the basis of astrological predictions, but that does not make astrology a "sound basis," "indispensable," or "necessary" for politics or ethics. It is better to separate religion from ethics and politics like it is better to separate astrology from ethics and politics.

So much for being "inspired" by your religion. From a psychological point of view it cannot be denied that moral behavior is inspired by religion, but the significance of this empirical fact to justify moral or political behavior is nil. We can next formulate this secular critique of religious morals and politics by introducing a central philosophical concept, the concept of "autonomy."

# Moral Autonomy and Moral Heteronomy

The central idea of secularism is *autonomy*. Now, as is so often the case with central concepts, this word has many meanings, but in the context of secularism it means "independence." It is the independence of ethics and politics from religion. Therefore, one may consider (p. 392) secularism as an emancipation movement: it entails the emancipation of ethics and politics from religion (consult Schneewind 1998).

As with all types of emancipation, this development does not necessarily mean that you "hate" or are unduly "negative" about what you emancipate from. Let me give an example. Women's emancipation does not mean that women have to "hate" men or are unduly critical about men. It only means that they do not want to be subservient to men. Women have their own place in society as agents independent from men. Another example is this. The emancipation of slaves does not entail that slaves are unduly critical of their masters. Their only claim is: we are human beings with an innate human dignity.

Although these observations may sound like truisms, this is all highly relevant for secularism. From a secular point of view, ethics, politics, and religion are not intrinsically connected; they are separate domains of reality. The German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950), one of the most impressive defenders of an autonomous ethics, states it in the following way: "From the fact that religion and mythology have been bearers of positive morals, it does not follow that morality absolutely needed these supporters. Rather can their ethical content be entirely removed in principle from the mytho-religious drapery" (2002: 111). Hartmann continues, "The religious man attributes to the divinity everything of which he does not know the source; foremost, consequently, he attributes the moral commandments to it. In so doing he fails to appreciate that autonomous character of the moral values" (112). What has to be accomplished is the recognition of the self-sufficing character of moral principles, says Hartmann. He clearly sees this as a process of

emancipation: “Then ethics discards the garments of its infancy and calls to mind its own proper origin” (112). One may confound these domains (and this is what has happened in most historical epochs and in most places of the world), but one ought to separate them. This would be better for all of us: believers, unbelievers, and everyone. Of course, secularism is not a recipe for the good life, but it is an element of it. We may formulate it thus: secularism is a necessary condition for harmony in a pluralist society, not a sufficient condition.

The opposite of moral autonomy is moral heteronomy. Where moral autonomy tries to disconnect morals from religion, moral heteronomy tries to connect the two. In its most extreme form, moral heteronomy teaches that morality is totally dependent on religion. A “moral obligation” is simply a “religious obligation.” And the most extreme form of moral heteronomy, the opposite of moral autonomy, is a situation in which people are prepared to do things that are evidently morally outrageous, but because of that relationship with religious mandates these acts are performed or condoned. The presumed necessary connection between religion and morals makes people think that immoral acts are not immoral because they are mandated by religion.

A good example of this is the killing of one’s child on what is perceived as a command of God. What is one of greatest goods that we have? Life. And what is one of the worst things that can happen to us? Death. So killing an innocent human being[3] counts as the most serious offense one can commit against the common good. Now what is the greatest good next to our own life? The life of those whom we love: our spouse, our parents, our children. Accordingly, the most atrocious act someone can perform, is killing one’s father (patricide), mother (matricide), or one’s child (infanticide). To the dismay and indignation of secularist critics of religious ethics and politics (and in a sense a kind of conundrum for many religious believers as well), this is what happened in the story of Abraham, who was willing to offer his son Isaac when this was commanded by God.

(p. 393) The story is known as “the binding of Isaac” or “the Akedah” (in Hebrew). According to the story, Abraham bound his son before placing him on the altar.[4] The story is told in the Old Testament, or what the Jews call the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 22:1–13), and with minor variations also in the Qur’an (37:99–113), so this story is important for adherents of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Draï 2007). The God of Israel entered into a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:9f), and so he became the patriarch of Israel (John 8:33–39; Romans 4:1), but he is also seen as the spiritual father of Christians and Muslims (Romans 4:11f; Quran 33:78). The three Abrahamic faiths all acknowledge Abraham as their forefather. So it is not strange that Bernard Lewis (2003) writes that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have many points in common. Islam is much closer to the Jewish or Christian tradition than to, for example, Hinduism (a form of polytheism),[5] Buddhism (according to some not even to be considered as a religion), or Taoism.[6]

God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. The story is this. Abraham had to kill his son as a test of his loyalty to God. Genesis says, “God tested Abraham” (Genesis 22:1). God said to Abraham: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the

land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you" (Genesis 22:3). This is a horrible command to a father of course, but surprisingly, Abraham did not protest. "He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood" (Genesis 22:10). But when Abraham took the knife to kill his son, God interfered in the form of an angel. The angel said: "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (Genesis 22:12).

From a secularist perspective there are at least two problems with this story. First that Abraham was prepared to do something grossly immoral, only because he thought this was religiously mandated. That shows to what depths people can sink if they do not separate ethics from religion. But there is a second problem that has to be highlighted: it was God who demanded this. The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven (Genesis 22:15) and said to Abraham:

> By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice. (Genesis 22:19)

In short, God rewarded Abraham for something that was a gross violation of ethics. Abraham should have said: "Lord, you have endowed me with conscience, with moral sense, and I understand you want to put me to the test now, and see whether I will say 'no' to such an immoral command." And the Lord should have said: "Yes, that's precisely what I mean, and with your refusal to sacrifice your son, you have passed this test." But this was not what happened, as we know. And it is also not what the classical tradition of Western theology teaches us. St. Augustine understood quite well what the meaning of this passage was. As Augustine wrote in *City of God*, explaining why Abraham had to be obedient: when the command was given to sacrifice his son "the thunder of a divine command must be obeyed without argument" (1972: 694). And if one regards Holy Scripture as "divine command," that implies that Holy Scripture must then be followed without argument. This attitude was backed up with a whole worldview derived from scripture, for example, the conviction that the devil inspired (p. 394) heretics to oppose Christian teaching "under cover of the Christian name as though their presence in the City of God could go unchallenged like the presence, in the city of confusion, of philosophers with wholly different and even contradictory opinions!" (Augustine 1958: 409). Heretics were considered "enemies within" by Augustine (410).

It is therefore not surprising that in the prevalence of Abraham in the holy tradition atheists see a compelling argument to reject such a god altogether—that, at least, is what Paul Kurtz (1998: 40–43), Richard Dawkins (2006: 274–275), Sam Harris (2005: 18), A. C. Grayling (2013), and Christopher Hitchens (2007) have done. Even if Abraham is less obedient to God's commands in other passages (e.g., Genesis 18:23–33), Genesis 22 is a

problem—not only according to atheists but also according to moral secularists. Abraham's willingness to obey implies the total annihilation of moral autonomy. The prevalence of this mentality as exemplified in this central part of the Bible is therefore an important element in the secular critique of religious ethics and politics.

# Political Autonomy and Political Heteronomy

So far we have been concerned with the secular critique of religious *ethics* (and not politics). Ethics, from a secular perspective, should be independent of religion. And as the paradigm of nonautonomous ethics we dealt with the story of Abraham, willing to sacrifice his child when commanded to do so by God. Abraham is therefore a kind of anti-hero of moral secularism.

There is another dimension to secularism: political autonomy and the concomitant ideal of political secularism. Not only should morality be independent from religion but also politics. And just like with moral secularism, there are countless manifestations of the opposite of this ideal, to wit attempts to base the polity on adherence to one or several religions. The Bible provides examples showing how the tension between political secularism and religious politics is an important element of the sacred tradition. As Bertrand Russell wrote, the very early history of the Israelites cannot be confirmed from any source outside the Old Testament. For that reason, it is "impossible to know at what point it ceases to be purely legendary" (1945: 309). Moving forward in time, it happens that the first person mentioned in the Old Testament confirmed by an external independent record is at the same time highly relevant for our topic: King Ahab, King of Israel who ruled from c. 874 BCE to c. 853 BCE. (He is spoken of in an Assyrian letter dating 853 BCE). Ahab was enmeshed in a protracted conflict with a religious spokesman, the prophet Elijah. Elijah plays the same role for political secularism as Abraham played with regard to moral secularism, as a voice of denial.

Elijah promoted a firm monotheism that had to be defended against rival gods (Wright 2009; Kirsch 2004; Assmann 2006). He claimed that there was no reality except the God of Israel: no God but God (see Aslan 2005). Despite his good reputation in the Old Testament and the Qur'an (6:86), in contemporary terms we would regard Elijah as an extremely "intolerant" religious leader, at least if we take "tolerance" to mean that we put up with religious creeds other than our own (consult Ayer 1988: 96; Zagorin 2003: xiii). In his rejection of the foreign gods, Elijah did not mince words. As Leonard Levy writes in his study (p. 395) *Blasphemy: Verbal Offense against the Sacred from Moses to Salman Rushdie*, "Inoffensive speech was not the hallmark of Elijah, Isaiah, or Jesus himself" (1993: 572).

Ahab was the son of the Israelite king Omri, who was already allied with the Phoenician cities of the coast. He had married Jezebel (died c. 843 BCE), the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon (the modern Lebanon). Jezebel played the role of the seductress. With her Tyrian courtiers and a large contingent of pagan priests and prophets, she propagated a rival religion to the religion of Israel: the religion of Baal in the royal city of Sa-

maria. During the reign of Ahab there was thus not one religion in Israel but two. Baal was the chief god of the Canaanites. He was worshipped as a god of rain who made the soil fertile; sometimes he was also portrayed as a god of war. Throughout Israel temples were established to Baal on high places where, since the days of the Judges, he was worshipped. During the reign of Ahab, Baal worship became the court religion, which led to the confrontation with Elijah (Comay 1995: 43). In a modern pluralist society this would be nothing special, but this was not the way the prophet Elijah saw the matter. Accepting both Baal and Yahweh as objects of veneration made the Israelites guilty of blasphemy, apostasy, and heresy. (These are the kind of charges contemporary Islamist ideologues make against the royal family of Saudi Arabia.[7]) Jezebel's policies, and Ahab's condoning of these policies, also caused a kind of syncretism, a blending of religions together, which is also something that orthodox believers abhor.

The Bible tells us that Elijah devised an experiment that was supposed to demonstrate the existence of the one true God, the God of Israel, and also demonstrate the false claims of the prophets of Baal.

> Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the LORD; the god who answers by fire is indeed God. (1 Kings 20:24)

Needless to say, the god of Israel wins. The god of the prophets of Baal remains silent and the God of Israel ignites the pyre. On the basis of this success, Elijah also claims superiority over Ahab (and his wife) who had given the prophets of Baal some room to exercise their own religion. What Elijah wants is: one God, one religion, and one king who is totally committed to that religion (like Abraham was when he was prepared to offer his son).

The story about the struggle between Ahab and Elijah for political leadership is important for two reasons. The first is that this story manifests the superiority of the one true god, who is the God of Israel and not Baal. This is, supposedly, proven by the experiment on Mount Carmel. From the perspective of a secular critique of religious politics and ethics, the story of Ahab and Elijah is also important for another reason. What is established after the experiment is that Elijah, and not Ahab, is the supreme leader of the people of Israel. The moral of the story seems to be: "Listen to the prophet, to the religious leader, and not to the king, to the secular leader." It is the religious leader who has the direct line to God, not the secular politicians.

This interpretation is of major political significance, as one may expect. It means a "theocracy" is the right model of government and that the authority of a "priest," "pope," "ayatollah," or "imam" supersedes that of the secular leaders in the state. The struggle between Ahab and Elijah was only the beginning of the struggle between the religious powers striving for supremacy and the secular powers. The story of Ahab can also be read against the background of a "ritual humiliation" of the king, which was, according to some scholars, (p. 396) an important element in the royal ideology of Judah, Babylonia,

and Assyria. This ritual humiliation was meant to emphasize the "absolute dependence upon the favor of the deity" (Rosenberg 1965: 381). In its Babylonian form, the chief priest of the temple of Marduk, the patron deity of the city of Babylon, would take the diadem, scepter, and the other royal insignia from the king and lay them before the deity. "While divested of these signs of loyalty, the king had his ears boxed and pulled by the priest, after which he would kneel before the god and offer a prayer of penitence" (381). Then the priest announced to the king that his prayer had been heard. If the king looked after the welfare of Babylon and the temple, his power would be exalted. Subsequently, the royal insignia were restored to him.

As one might expect, this was not only a manifestation of the rightness of theocracy over democracy, but it also meant a boost to the importance of the priests. It de facto meant the religious leader was inaugurated in a position of power over the secular leader. From the "ritual humiliation" of the king in Babylonian lore to the completely opposite republican ritual humiliation of Pope Pius VII during the crowning of Napoleon I in 1804, the struggle between clerical leaders and the secular leaders would be an important element of political history. (Napoleon crowned *himself* and did not confer this important symbolical gesture to the pope.)

To modern ears the story of what happened on Mount Carmel, which, according to the believers, "proved" the supremacy of the God of Israel over Baal, may sound perplexingly naïve. In Spinoza's famous chapter VI on miracles of *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, the philosopher writes:

> As men are accustomed to call Divine the knowledge which transcends human understanding, so also do they style Divine, or the work of God, anything of which the cause is not generally known: for the masses think that the power and providence of God are most clearly displayed by events that are extraordinary and contrary to the conception they have formed of nature, especially if such events bring them any profit or convenience: they think that the clearest possible proof of God's existence is afforded when nature, as they suppose, breaks her accustomed order, and consequently they believe that those who explain or endeavor to understand phenomena or miracles through their natural causes are doing away with God and His providence. ([1670] 1951: 81)

From a post-Spinoza perspective, miracles prove nothing, at least not what people who perform or solicit miracles claim they prove (divine intervention). Besides, is it not possible that the god of Baal is superior in many respects *except* in his ability to perform miracles? But this is not what should concern us here. Within the context of this chapter on the tension between religious ethics and politics on the one hand and secular ethics and politics on the other, this story is about the clash between the rival claims of the *king* and the *prophet* of Israel to have the final say on what the state religion should be. Who is the ultimate source of authority: the king or the prophet? The secular ruler or what is called the spiritual ruler?

In a theocracy, as the religious leader Elijah wants to demonstrate, this is the prophet. The king can be corrected and punished by the religious leader.[8] It is also the religious leader who is authorized to inflict punishments upon the people and a disobedient king. In another episode of this conflict Elijah says to King Ahab: "Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, I will bring disaster on you" (1 Kings 21:20). The king could have said: "Who are you to lecture about the religion of this realm?" The king could also have said, as Frederick the Great (1712–1786) did, that everyone in his kingdom could live according (p. 397) to the religion of his own choice ("Jeder soll nach seiner Fasson selig werden"). Every state-mandated compulsion that Elijah wants to introduce in matters of religion is anathema to the modern human rights perspective and also to political secularism.

A secular critique of religious ethics and religious politics focuses on moral autonomy and political autonomy. The defense of moral autonomy (or moral secularism) and the defense of political autonomy (or political secularism) can be illustrated by many stories from Holy Scripture. Two of these stories stand out: the story about Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son and the story of Elijah aiming to crush the prophets of a rival religion.

# Conclusion

This chapter highlights a specifically secular critique of religious ethics and religious politics. The secular critique takes as its starting point the ideal of *secularism.* Secularism is an ideal (or ideology) that comprises two elements: advocating *moral* autonomy and advocating *political* autonomy. Autonomy has several meanings, but in the context of secularism it means independence of religion. So moral autonomy means morality independent of religion. Political autonomy means politics independent of religion.

The aim of a secular critique of religious ethics and religious politics is to show that having an autonomous ethics is better than departing from a heteronomous ethics. This point is illustrated with the example of Abraham willing to sacrifice his son. It is also better to have an autonomous politics than a heteronomous politics. That point is illustrated with the story of the conflict between King Ahab and the prophet Elijah. Political heteronomy and moral heteronomy are important themes in the stories of the Bible. The editors of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Coogan 2007) spell out the central core of the teaching of the books of Kings. It is "didactic literature," and a repetitive theme is that the "only God there is, the Lord, demands exclusive worship."[9] Worship must not involve idols or images. The world of the books of Kings, the editors continue, is a moral world, in which wrongdoing is punished, whether the sinner be king (1 Kings 11:9–13), prophet (1 Kings 13:7–25), or ordinary Israelite (2 Kings 7:17–20).

This world is totally different, one may add, from the moral lessons the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) teaches with its provisions on freedom of thought (Article 18), freedom of religion (Article 18), and freedom of speech (Article 19). Articles 18 states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in commu-

nity with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

## Bibliography

Aslan, Reza. 2005. *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. New York: Random House.

Assmann, Jan. 2006. *Monotheismus und die Sprache der Gewalt*. Vienna: Picus Verlag.

Augustine. 1958. *City of God*. Edited by V. J. Bourke. Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books.

Augustine. 1972. *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans.* Translated by Henry Bettenson. Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books.

Ayer, A. J. 1988. "The Sources of Intolerance." In *On Toleration*, edited by Susan Mendus and David Edwards, 83–100. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benson, Ophelia, and Jeremy Stangroom. 2009. *Does God Hate Women?* London and New York: Continuum.

Berlinerblau, Jacques.2012. *How to Be Secular: A Call to Arms for Religious Freedom*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

(p. 399) Blackford, Russell. 2012. *Freedom of Religion & the Secular State*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bouteligier, Claudia. 2014. "Recht, woord en dialoog. Enkele aantekeningen naar Dostojevski." In *Fundamentele verhalen: over recht, literatuur en film*, edited by Claudia Bouteligier and Afshin Ellian, 283–311. The Hague: Boom Juridische Uitgevers.

Bury, J. B. 1930. *History of the Papacy in the 19th Century*. London: Macmillan.

Cameron, David. 2014. "Isil Poses a Direct and Deadly Threat to Britain." *The Telegraph* (16 August).

Cliteur, Paul. 2009. *Esperanto Moral: Por una ética autónoma,* Translated by Marta Arguilé Bernal. Barcelona: Los Libros del Lince.

Comay, Joan. 1995. *Who's Who in the Old Testament Together with the Apocrypha*. London: Routledge.

Coogan, Michael (ed.). 2007. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dawkins, Richard. 2006. *The God Delusion*. London: Transworld.

Draï, Raphaël. 2007. *Abraham ou la recréation du monde*. Paris: Fayard.

Falkenhayner, Nicole. 2014. *Making the British Muslim: Representations of the Rushdie Affair and Figures of the War-On-Terror Decade*. Houndmills, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fone, Byrne. 2000. *Homophobia: A History*. New York: Henry Holt.

Fourest, Caroline, and Fiametta Venner. 2003. *Tirs Croisés: la laïcité à l'épreuve des intégrismes juif, chrétien et musulman*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

Grayling, A. C. 2013. *The God Argument: The Case against Religion and for Humanism*. London: Bloomsbury.

Guiora, Amos N. 2009. *Freedom from Religion: Rights and National Security*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guiora, Amos N. 2014. *Tolerating Intolerance: The Price of Protecting Extremism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harris, Sam. 2005. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Hartmann, Nicolai. 2002. *Moral Phenomena*. Translated by Stanton Coit. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Heins, Marjorie. 1993. *Sex, Sin, and Blasphemy: A Guide to America's Censorship Wars*. New York: New Press.

Hitchens, Christopher. 2007. *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve.

Hübsch, Khola, Maryam. 2014. *Unter dem Schleier die Freiheit: Was der Islam zu einem wirklich emanzipierten Frauenbild beitragen kann*. Ostfildern, Germany: Patmos Verlag.

Khalidi, Tarif. 2008. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. London: Penguin.

Kierkegaard, Søren. 1994. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. London: Everyman's Library.

King, Martin Luther Jr. 2006. "Speech on the Vietnam War" (on 4 April 1967). In *American Speeches: Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton*, 651–667. New York: Library of America.

Kirsch, Jonathan. 2004. *God against the Gods: The History of the War between Monotheism and Polytheism*. New York: Viking.

Kretzmann, Norman. 1999. "Abraham, Isaac, and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality." In *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, edited by Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray, 417–429. Oxford: Blackwell.

(p. 400) Kurtz, Paul. 1988. *Forbidden Fruit: The Ethics of Humanism*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Levy, Leonard W. 1993. *Blasphemy: Verbal Offense against the Sacred from Moses to Salman Rushdie*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lewis, Bernard. 2003. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

McCabe, Joseph. 1939. *A History of the Popes*. London: Watts.

Mleynek, Sherryll. 1994. "Abraham, Aristotle, and God: The Poetics of Sacrifice." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62(1), 107–121.

Norman, Richard. 1995. *Ethics, Killing and War*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Nowell-Smith, Patrick. 1999. "Morality: Religious and Secular." In *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, edited by Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray, 403–412. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pankhurst, Reza. 2013. *The Inevitable Caliphate? A History of the Struggle for Global Islamic Union, 1924 to the Present*. London: Hurst.

Pelham, Nick. 2001. "Fatwa warns Saudi royals against 'help for infidels.'" *The Telegraph* (10 October).

Revel, Jean-François, and Matthieu Ricard. 1997. *Le moine et le philosophe: le bouddhisme aujourd'hui*. Paris: Nil éditions.

Rosenberg, Roy A. 1965. "Jesus, Isaac, and the 'Suffering Servant.'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84(4), 381–388.

Russell, Bertrand. 1945. *A History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Said, Behnam T. 2014. *Islamischer Staat: IS-Miliz, al-Qaida und die deutschen Brigaden*. Munich, Germany: C. H. Beck Verlag.

Sandmel, Samuel. 1955. "Abraham's Knowledge of the Existence of God." *Harvard Theological Review* 44(3), 137–139.

Sansal, Boualem. 2014. *Allahs Narren: Wie der Islamismus die Welt erobert*. Translated by Regina Keil-Sagaw. Gifkendorf, Germany: Merlin Verlag, 2014.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1970. *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*. Paris: Nagel.

Schneewind, J. B. 1998. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Shook, John R. 2010. *The God Debates: A 21st Century Guide for Atheists and Believers (and Everyone in Between)*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Singer, Peter. 1990. *Animal Liberation,* 2nd ed. New York: New York Review of Books.

Spinoza, Baruch. 1670. *A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise*. Translated by R. Elwes. New York: Dover, 1951.

Taliaferro, Charles. 2009. *Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oneworld.

Werleman, C. J. 2009. *God Hates You, Hate Him Back: Making Sense of the Bible*. London: Dangerous Little Books.

Wright, Robert. 2009. *The Evolution of God*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Zagorin, Perez. 2003. *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment.* New York: New York University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) On Dawkins, paragraph 3 of chapter 2, “Secularism, the Founding Fathers and the Religion of America,” in *The God Delusion* (2006) is basically a defense of secularism and not of atheism. Chapter 3, “Arguments for God’s Existence,” is a defense of atheism. Regarding Hitchens, his use of the word “secularism” seems broader than that of Dawkins in *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007: 12, 39, 55, 68–69).

(2.) Falkenhayner (2014: 53) refers to the debate between Rawls and Habermas on the way British Muslims would have to make their objections to the publication of Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses.* According to Rawls, religious objections to the novel had to be translated into a language that would be acceptable to all British citizens. But Habermas thinks that many religious citizens would not be able to do this without jeopardizing their existence as pious citizens. Religious citizens should not be forced to “secularize” their speech. But does not Habermas underestimate the capacity of religious citizens, one may ask? Does he not confuse religious citizens with religious fundamentalist citizens?

(3.) See Norman (1995: 159–207). And not only a *human* being; see Singer (1990).

(4.) A classic commentary is Kierkegaard’s “A Panegyric upon Abraham” (1994: 11–18). See also Kretzmann (1999), Mleynek (1994), and Sandmel (1955).

(5.) At least some forms of Hinduism are polytheistic. There are also monotheistic elements in the Bhagavad Gita. See Taliaferro (2009: 8).

(6.) Consult Lewis (2003: 4) and comparisons of different fundamentalist forms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Fourest and Venner (2003).

(7.) See Pelham (2001). From the perspective of Islamist ideologues, such leaders are even sneakier than the openly secularist and atheist leaders of the United States and the former Soviet Union. In their case, at least, we know what we have. In the case of liberal sycophant pseudo-Muslims who present themselves as the representatives of Allah in this world, we are dealing with dangerous figures because not all serious believers see through their façade.

(8.) A medieval case serves as another illustration. According to some historians, Canossa, the now-ruined tenth-century castle southwest of Reggio nell'Emilia in Italy, was famous for serving as the meeting place in 1077 of Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV. The matter was a controversy over who possessed the rightful power of investiture of local church officials. On 28 January, Henry journeyed to Canossa as a simple penitent. The pope made him wait for three days before Henry received absolution. The name "Canossa" became associated with the submission of the secular power to the church. Whether the story is based on solid historical facts is disputed (McCabe 1939: 273). During Prussia's *Kulturkampf* against Roman Catholic influences in Germany, Bismarck promised, "Nach Canossa gehen wir nicht" ("We are not going to Canossa") (see Bury 1930: 163).

(9.) As stated by the editors of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Coogan 2007: 488).

**Paul Cliteur**

Paul Cliteur is a Dutch jurist and philosopher. He presently is Professor of Jurisprudence in the Law School of Leiden University in The Netherlands, where he directed the Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Law for several years. He was previously a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Delft. He is the author of The Secular Outlook: In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism.

# Secular Education and Religion

James Arthur

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.25

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores how increasingly diverse and democratic societies reconcile issues of religion and secular education in public schooling, focusing on the American and European public school systems. It addresses ongoing legal conflicts in education and religion and explores some recent US Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights decisions in this arena. In particular, it discusses the issues involved in the relationship between secular and religious conceptions in public schooling as well as exploring the increasingly controversial themes of religious symbolism, religious curricula content, neutrality, and secularism in public schooling. The chapter concludes with discussion of issues related to the tendency of some domestic courts and national legislators to secularize the meaning of religious symbols and the application of principles of secularism to determine neutrality in the educational field.

Keywords: education, public schooling, religious education, religious expression, church-state separation

THE question of what role, if any, religion ought to play in public schooling is one that is both controversial and emotive. This chapter explores that question, with regards to the American and European public school systems. It considers how these increasingly diverse and democratic societies reconcile issues of religion and secular education in public schooling. It addresses ongoing legal conflicts in education and religion and explores some recent Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights (European Court) decisions in this arena. In particular, it discusses the issues involved in the relationship between secular and religious conceptions in public schooling as well as exploring the increasingly controversial themes of religious symbolism, religious curricula content, neutrality, and secularism in public schooling.

# Introduction

“Secular education” has always suffered from a degree of ambiguity and imprecision in the way it is employed. George Combe (1841) first used the phrase in a positive discussion of American public schools in an article anonymously published in the *Edinburgh Re-*

*view*. He affords it a largely antireligious definition but does not completely exclude religion. However, many proponents of a “secular education” understood the phrase differently, and their usage of the phrase ran together a matrix of definitions. The educational debates at the time were characterized by a discussion of nonsectarian education, which was often conflated with secular education understood differently by those who advocated it. For example, Protestant dissenters in England promoted “secular education” but meant by this an education that included the teaching of Christianity. They simply objected to any provision of education that allowed the Church of England to control schools and teach its own doctrines. They also accidently encouraged or fostered the idea that religion in schooling was “sectarian.” They therefore joined with secular campaigners who in the end wanted a fundamentally different kind of secular education. These early proponents of a purely secular education, mindful of this potential Christian source of political support, were careful to suggest that secular (p. 402) education would be objective and neutral and that it would not alter the personal religious beliefs of the students (Arthur and Holdsworth 2012). Since secular protesters were a tiny minority in Britain and in America, the first and most successful moves to secularize the school curriculum was led by Christians.

In both America and Britain, religion was incorporated into the school curricula from the outset. Each local community’s established Protestant minister often served as the de facto, if not the formal, chief administrator or governor of the school. Protestant dissenters in England and Catholics in America wanted to prevent particular churches from exercising control over young members of their congregations in public schools. A curriculum that was free from teaching religion would be preferable to one that used the tenets of Christianity from another denominations perspective. They therefore arrived at the idea of a “secular education” by default and were supported by a tiny number of vocal secularists who ultimately wanted all religious practices removed entirely from the public school curriculum. In 1871, at Hunter Point’s public school in New York State, a nine-year-old public school student, Catherine Ann Dennen, stood up in class and objected to the reading of the Bible. The school principal immediately expelled her, but this was part of a widespread campaign launched by the Catholic Church to exclude the teaching of religion in public schools. The Catholic Church taught, and still maintains, that it is impossible for schools to be neutral or objective because the assumptions made by teachers, the textbooks used, and the ethos of the school convey open or hidden messages to students. Many believed at the time that the Catholic Church was divisive and even subversive in this campaign, but the Catholic Church won the argument. In June 1872 the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of New York ruled that no prayers, Bible readings, or religious exercises were to be included as part of the curriculum of a public school (Justice 2005). Despite this decision, many public schools tolerated and promoted a generalized Protestantism, which was one reason the Catholic Church established a parallel system of schools both in Britain and the United States. It is clear that the origin of this movement to remove religious practices controlled exclusively by one denomination from the public schools in Britain and in the United States was essentially led by Christians.

In both countries during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the granting of exclusive privileges to one denomination was gradually removed. Establishing equality between Christian denominations by assisting them in the provision of schooling increasingly became the norm. In America, assistance was typically modest. Various state legislatures authorized the payment of transport for students to private schools, which in 95 percent of cases meant the local Catholic school. In Britain this went much further. The government financed Catholic and Protestant schools through direct taxation, a system that continues to this day. Public schools in America continued to have the students recite prayers, while in Britain legislation made it compulsory to have a religious act of worship each day—a requirement that is still in force. A turning point came in America, however, with the Supreme Court decision Emerson v. Board of Education (1947), which ruled for the application of the First Amendment wording "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion" to state law. Prior to this date, this clause of the First Amendment imposed limits only on the federal government, leaving each state within the union to grant certain privileges to Christian denominations within its boundaries. It is often argued that this clause was meant to protect religion, not to ask the government to make judgments between religion and nonreligion. Nevertheless, 1947 opened the door in America (p. 403) for secular campaigners and some religious believers to ask for the removal of all religious practices from public schools by employing the argument that such practices contravene the First Amendment because there must be a separation or wall between religious practices and public schooling. The Supreme Court has consequently decided many cases involving parents and children in regard to applying the anti-establishment clauses of the Constitution's First Amendment.

From the 1950s on, it seemed that in liberal communities, particularly within the academy and in the legal profession, religion was viewed as conflicting with the spirit of open inquiry and scientific culture. It was increasingly felt by some elites that all religious practices were by nature at odds with an inclusive society (Bruce 2003). By the 1960s many of them believed that religion would wither and die as the progress of secularization undermines the confidence of Christians in the truth of what they believed. What was needed in education, they claimed, was neutral teachers and unprejudiced inquiry. It was against this background that the Supreme Court made its 8–1 decision in *School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp* (1963) to strike down mandatory, coercive, and school-sponsored forms of religious worship in public schools. In Britain, religious worship remained compulsory in schools, as indeed it did in many European countries. However, whilst the 1963 case in America indicated that the states should maintain strict neutrality, neither aiding nor opposing religion, the relationship between religion and public schooling has not been entirely resolved by the courts. Legal battles continue in America and increasingly within Europe between those who wish to end all links with religion in publicly provided schools and those who wish to continue or re-establish such links. These debates have helped facilitate a rise in public consciousness about religion in education but at the same time have increased confusion. Semantic debates dominate discussion about the constantly changing meaning and application of "secular education" and "religion." Both are often an articulation of a confusing matrix of values.

It should be recognized at the outset that the provision of religious education in public schools in America is permitted as a curricular subject for study so long as it has a legitimate educational purpose. In reality few public schools offer religious education as a subject whilst in Europe most schools do. The question is, of course, what does "legitimate educational purpose" mean? Normally it would include being balanced, objective, fair, and neutral, which means no religion is taught as "true" nor any religion presented as "more right" than any other. Students can also pray in private on public school premises if they wish and can be released from school to attend religious classes elsewhere. Public schools are not religion free zones, despite court rulings that prohibit even moments of silence at the start of the school day. There is certainly a strong fear, among many secular campaigners, that large numbers of American parents want to make disguised or subtle efforts to force students in public schools to contemplate religion. However, the legal separationist policy between religion per se and public education is something that is still being addressed on a case-by-case basis in US courts, which is leading to unpredictable results. This separationist policy has also influenced decision-making in the European Court, particularly when determining whether and in what circumstances public education is neutral and objective. However, often this is conflated with what is "secular," which raises further issues. This is made even more complicated by the secularization of religious symbols and practices by the courts, which has become in some cases a means of preserving religious references in public education that the majority find agreeable. For example, during the Christmas holidays in (p. 404) the United States a Christmas tree is allowable in a public school setting but not a cross or nativity scene, as these have not yet gained secular status in society. It is also interesting that there is a much closer connection between religious and political educational debates in the United States than there is in Europe.

# The American Approach to Religion in Public Education

Before discussing the European situation in regard to religion in public education, it is worth reviewing two legal cases in America. The first is the *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000) and the second is *Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District, et al.* (2005). The first case decided that a school district policy allowed and encouraged student-initiated prayer at high school football games, over the school's public address system, by a speaker representing the student body. It concluded that this practice violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. A number of students objected to the practice of praying before a match through their parents on the grounds that it endorsed religion, but the other students, the majority, argued that this was not state-sponsored speech or prayers. The court disagreed. Its 6–3 decision accepted that this practice communicates a governmental religious endorsement. It reasoned that the speech or prayer was not private and uses the facilities of the school. The decision concluded that public school teachers supervised the match as well as the election of the student representative by the student body and therefore the school was officially encourag-

ing prayer. The two families that objected to this practice were both religious believers—one Catholic and the other Mormon. Both sets of parents argued that the prayers initiated by students were contrary to the Establishment Clause. It is interesting that individual Catholics are still objecting to Protestant religious practices in public schools with or without the support of their church whilst other Catholics defend the same religious practices in public schools. The case demonstrates that the use of the Establishment Clause as an argument for the separation of religious practices and public schooling is still being employed by Christians as well as by secular campaigners.

The court essentially accepted that the true purpose of the election of a student to solemnize the football game deliberately invited and encouraged prayer. Peculiarly, the court did not feel that the solemnization of an event could have been interpreted in a secular way. The distinction that was made by the court decision was between government speech endorsing religion and private speech endorsing religion; the former is constitutionally illegal whilst the latter is permitted. In other words if the criteria for the election of the student was purely secular—elected because of good public speaking skills and social popularity—and if the elected student decided to deliver a religious message or say a prayer, then this was acceptable. The objection was not to an elected student praying before a football match but to the purpose for which he or she was elected. This raises the question of whether someone can divorce religion from consideration in their public intentions, for example, reasons for voting for a particular candidate. The decision of the court appears to endorse the exclusion of religious-based reasons. From this it follows that students may not employ all their reasons when deliberating on whether they should elect a particular candidate. Members of the (p. 405) student body, it could be argued, are consequently split into public and private selves—only their public secular selves can enter into the justification for electing someone—so their religious reasons must play little or no part. Is this kind of logic possible in reality? Is it right that we ask students to leave part of their identity at home? It is one reason why these legal cases do not by themselves resolve the application and interpretation of the Establishment Clause.

The second case, *Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District, et al.* (2005), was the first direct challenge brought in an American federal court testing a public school district policy that required the teaching of intelligent design (ID). In October 2004 the Dover Area School District in Pennsylvania changed its biology teaching curriculum to require that intelligent design be presented as an alternative to evolution theory. Some of the parents in the area successfully argued that ID is a form of creationism and that the school board policy violated the Establishment Clause. Previous attempts to introduce creationism into the public school curriculum failed because it was taught as scientific fact. Eleven parents of students in Dover sued the Dover Area School District over the school board requirement that a statement presenting ID as “an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view” must be read to all students. A number of science teachers in the district also refused to read the statement on the grounds that it was not science. On 20 December 2005 the court ruled that the *Dover* mandate requiring that statement to be read in class was unconstitutional. The ruling concluded that ID is not science and permanently barred the board from “maintaining the ID Policy in any school

within the Dover Area School District, from requiring teachers to denigrate or disparage the scientific theory of evolution, and from requiring teachers to refer to a religious, alternative theory known as ID."

The school board had claimed that their ID statement did not teach intelligent design and that it simply made students aware of its existence as an alternative to evolution, but no such statements were made about other subjects in the school curriculum. The board denied that ID was "religion in disguise," despite being represented in court by the Thomas More Law Center, a conservative Christian not-for-profit law center. Members of the board were also active Christians. At the November 2005 school board elections, none of the members of the Dover School Board who voted for the ID policy were re-elected, and a new school board, which rejected the policy, took office. This effectively stopped an appeal to a higher court.

The judge in the *Dover* case believed that ID was simply a re-labeling of creationism, which had already been banned by the US Supreme Court in 1987. It was therefore unconstitutional to teach ID as an alternative to evolution in public schools. He found that ID could not be uncoupled from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents. Employing the increasingly controversial *Lemon V. Kurtzman* (1971) test, three questions were asked of the ID teaching: (a) Does the activity have a secular purpose and effect? (b) Does the activity promote or inhabit religion? and (c) Does the activity result in an excessive entanglement of the government and religion? The judge determined that it was not considered science and it did not serve a legitimate educational purpose. He therefore concluded that ID was primarily religious in intention.

The *Santa Fe* and *Dover* cases concerned themselves, respectively, with prayer on public school premises and with introducing what was perceived to be religious content to the public school curriculum. The latter case had stronger reasoning for the final decision than the former case. It is accepted that the government may not prohibit the free exercise of religion or restrict the speech of its citizens (including students). If the *Santa Fe* case decision had been more inclusive in its interpretation of the Establishment Clause, then it (p. 406) would have accepted that the football match was a voluntary activity with only the most basic supervision from teachers to ensure safety. Therefore, the degree of "establishment" or "entanglement" with religion was insignificant when contrasted with the legal practice of many American states awarding vouchers to parents to attend private religious schools. The European Court has been considerably influenced by the American legal duty on government to promote neutrality through strict separation. As a result, the European Court began to favor absolute secularism in the context of public schooling even though each country has a different attitude toward the place of religion in public schools. This tendency by the European Court has been successfully challenged in recent years, and there is new emphasis on the responsibility of states to ensure neutrality and impartiality in the provision of public schooling.

# European Approaches to Religion in Public Schools

In all European countries, the Christian Churches are active in running schools fully or partly funded by the state. There is a complex, but often direct, financial and legal relationship between almost all European states and Christian Churches. These relationships invariably involve a public presence for Christianity in public schooling. The basic model is one of cooperation with religion as opposed to separation. Public schools in Europe are generally provided by the state and open to all citizens. The kind of schooling provided in them often legally seeks to adopt a largely neutral and impartial approach and content to education, especially in relation to subjects or issues that are currently deemed to be contentious. However, the degree of separation between religion and a neutral education can be extremely misleading because there is wide variation among European democracies in the way that public schools and religion are institutionalized. Whilst all European countries profess a mainly secular identity, the different notions of secular education held in each country overlap and intersect in complex and multiple ways. Therefore, as in the United States, the future of the relationship is not a closed question but one that is constantly evolving (see Cranmer and Oliva 2008). There are considerable differences between countries in Europe, but the “Christianity” expressed in western European countries with national churches is usually one which is submerged, diluted, and implicit—often summed up as “belonging without believing” (Sandberg 2008: 349–350).

In eastern Europe religion was forbidden in public education under the communist system, but there has been a resurgence of religion since the collapse of communism in 1991 (Knox 2005). Where the Catholic Church has a significant presence, thousands of new Catholic schools have been established to parallel the public school system. Where the Orthodox Church is strong, the approach has been to influence public education through the state. The Russian Orthodox Church has successfully lobbied government to pass legislation in Russia to make religious education mandatory in all public schools and to make “offending religious feelings” in a public place a criminal offense through a new Blasphemy Law in 2013. The Russian Orthodox Church also campaigns to end the monopoly of Darwinism in public schools, which has echoes of similar Christian campaigns (p. 407) in the United States. The revival of Orthodox belief in parts of eastern Europe has led to many public schools having icons of Christ placed in classrooms. There appear to be no restrictions in legislation on the placement of religious symbols in public places. Russia’s minority Muslim population has also been active in demanding a greater say in the content of public education. However, Russia passed a law in 1997 that severely limits minority religious groups from access to schools and hospitals. The Russian Orthodox Church certainly enjoys state-sanctioned privileges, and its revival gathers support from political and nationalist forces and is intimately connected to a consideration of Russian identity. This could also be said of other eastern European countries such as the Ukraine. The real question is whether the state in these countries is guiding the church(s) or whether the church is influencing the state.

France is unique in that it is the only country in Europe that upholds "neutrality" in its constitution between religion and the state. France has a commitment to a *laicist* understanding of public education that theoretically forces religion out of education and appropriates to itself the power to define public education. The state employs an assertive secularism in public schooling. French citizens clearly have various conceptions of what constitutes the good life, and the public education system defends the right of citizens making a choice but not any particular conception of "the good." The system is not neutral on the basis on which students make these choices. France generally employs exclusive neutrality, which appears to result in the state remaining blind to religious and cultural differences in schools. However, the ironic fact is that in French secular society there is a growing religious discourse, while the Catholic Church in France finds positive value in French secularism (Barbier 1995; Allen 2008). France is pragmatic about accommodations with religion and even supports private Catholic schools. Jacques Audinet (1980: 41) concludes that the idea of *laïcité* cannot deny the fact that at a deeper level there is a profound and enduring influence and formative power of religion in French culture. Consequently, an inclusive neutrality that allows and recognizes religious and cultural differences whilst not unfairly privileging one religion over others would allow space for religious practices in schools. It is interesting that the French socialist government issued, in 2013, a Charter for Secularity in Schools, which is essentially aimed at Muslims; particularly in addressing the call from some Islamic campaigners for modifications to dress codes and to some school subjects, such as physical education for girls and science education. There is nothing new in this document, but it is worthy of note that most French public schools offer fish on Friday (a Catholic practice) but not halal meat (a Muslim requirement; McGoldrick 2006). Much of French legislation on education has been aimed at regulating Islamic claims in schooling on the grounds that Islam somehow threatens the French idea of *laïcité*.

Since the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the European Court has raised anew the question of the relationship between religion and public education. After a period in which "secularism" seemed to gain ground, there has been a resurgence of debate of the salience of religion in social, cultural, and public life (see Arthur 1998, 2008). The *Kjeldsen et al*. (1979–1980) judgment of the European Court establishes the framework for each European state's involvement in education and in particular sets both limitations and imperatives of that venture. The decision forbids schools to have an aim of indoctrination but also says schools must respect parents' religious convictions. The decision of the European Court means that parents cannot object to all religious or philosophical content in the curriculum where the information or knowledge is conveyed in an "objective, (p. 408) critical and pluralistic manner." The European Court has also given explicit support to state neutrality. In the case of Leyla Sahin v. Turkey (2005), it stated that: "The Court has frequently emphasised the State's role as the *neutral and impartial* organiser of the exercise of various religions, faiths and beliefs, and stated that this role is conducive to public order, religious harmony and tolerance in a democratic society."[1] The application of the approach in *Kjeldsen* to educational issues has given rise to the European Court deciding whether and in what circumstances the state is neutral. While opt-out pro-

visions are usually available for religious instruction, they may not be available where the education is perceived as neutral.[2] The immediate question then becomes—what is neutral or neutral to whom? A parent committed to one particular faith may take the view that to teach about different religions in a neutral and objective way is, from their perspective, indoctrination in relativism or ideological secularization (Rivers 2010: 250). Despite the declared neutrality toward religion, many public schools across Europe often engage in practices that promote the Christian religion.

In the case of Folgerø v. Norway (2008), the content of the Norwegian religion and ethics curriculum was challenged. The (narrow) majority of the European Court's Grand Chamber found that the amount of time spent on Christianity was acceptable since 86 percent of Norway's population were members of its established church. However, the European Court criticized Norway for qualitatively favoring Christianity in the public school curriculum over other religions and, since this was neither neutral nor objective, parents, it reasoned, should be provided with an opt-out. The principle was established that the state's duty of neutrality and impartiality is incompatible with any judgement on its part of the legitimacy of religious beliefs or ways of expressing them. In the context of education, neutrality should ensure pluralism (Norway 2008: para. 84).

In recent years, the European Court has had to listen to and heed arguments based on conscience much more closely than in the past. The European Court may resolve challenges to conscientious objections against religion or philosophical beliefs by using a doctrine known as the "margin of appreciation." The margin of appreciation means that the European Court will normally play a subsidiary role in the matter following the principle it set out in Leyla Sahin v. Turkey: that "the national authorities are in principle better placed than an international court to evaluate local needs and conditions" (Leyla Sahin v. Turkey 2003: para. 100). The European Court is aware that in its proceedings it runs the risk of clashing with cultural and religious conceptions and practices. While Article 9 of the European Convention explicitly gives individuals the right and freedom to hold and to manifest whatever beliefs their conscience dictate (subject to the limitations in Article 9[2]), the proceedings of the European Court have increasingly relied upon adherence to the state's domestic principles of secularism in the interpretation of cases before it (Knight 2005, 2007; Taylor 2005). The consequence of this is that some of the European Court's decisions begin to shape meaning in the public domain in an increasingly secular, not neutral, fashion. In the landmark case of Refah Partisi v. Turkey, the European Court supported the Turkish government's decision to dissolve an Islamic party by affirming the view that "the principle of secularism" in the Turkish constitution was a necessary presupposition of democracy (2003: paras. 90–95). In another ruling, Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey, the European Court ruled that the "principles of secularism" in the Turkish constitution were compatible with Article 2 of the First Protocol in relation to education in schools (Hasan and Eylem Zengin v Turkey 2008: paras. 58, 59).

(p. 409) In making a judgment about what is neutral, the European Court could, either intentionally or unintentionally, make a strict secularist or atheistic view the norm; that is, the default position becomes a nonreligious position. But can the state be totally neutral

in all religious or philosophical matters? At best, such an approach could diminish historical and cultural narratives. This can be seen perhaps most clearly in the European Court's treatment of religious symbolism in state schools. States apply varying interpretations on what counts as a specifically religious or cultural symbol, and many religious symbols have lost their religious significance to become secular. A lack of clarity or consistency between international and domestic courts in defining "cultural-religious" symbols in historical contexts has emerged, which is problematic since how we define cultural or religious symbolism in the legal sense determines what is to be accommodated in public schools. These issues have become particularly concentrated in the controversies surrounding the display of crucifixes in public school classrooms.

# The Crucifix Case

Most European countries have no law about religious symbols on school premises (Doe 2011: 197). However, the issue has become contentious for some and legislation differs in each European state. For example, a cross must be displayed in Austrian public and public-status schools in classes where religious education is compulsory, if the majority of the pupils belong to a Christian denomination.[3] Crucifixes in Spanish schools have been classified as both religious and cultural symbols, and their presence in school is a matter for the school authorities.[4] However, in 2008 the display of a crucifix in public schools was held to be against the principles of equality and religious freedom granted by the Spanish Constitution by an administrative judge of Valladolid, Spain, and this decision was later confirmed by the Spanish Administrative Court of Appeal.[5] Crucifixes are lawful in Slovakian classrooms, whereas, in Romania, one court has said they are lawful and another court has decided they are unlawful.[6] In Germany, there are some states that allow the presence of crucifixes on the walls of public schools while there are others that prohibit them.

Crucifixes and crosses are an integral part of Italian culture and scenery. The placing of crucifixes in Italian classrooms has been mandatory since the 1920s but was widespread prior to this date, and indeed the crucifix is still a permanent fixture in many government offices, courts, and hospitals (Mancini 2009; McGoldrick 2011; Ronchi 2011). The first legal decision that challenged the display of the crucifix in Italian public schools came in 2003 when Scots-born Islamic convert Adel Smith, who was also a radical Muslim and leader of the Italian Union of Muslims, brought a case before the court in L'Aquila in central Italy. However, the main challenge to the presence of a crucifix in public schools is known as the "Italian Crucifix Case" of Lautsi v. Italy (2011) that was finally decided by the Grand Chamber of the European Court on 18 March, 2011.

The case was brought by Finish-born Italian citizen Mrs. Soile Lautsi whose husband, during a school governors' meeting in 2002, asked the school authorities in the town of Abano Terne to remove the crucifixes from the classrooms in the primary school that her two sons attended. The school's governing body decided to leave the crucifixes up, and a directive from the Ministry of State Education was subsequently sent to all head teachers

to retain the practice of displaying crucifixes in the classroom. She then brought the case before the (p. 410) Veneto Regional Administrative Court in July 2002, on the grounds that it was contrary to the principle of secularism and infringed the required neutrality on the part of the public authorities. Her case was eventually dismissed, and having exhausted all her domestic avenues of redress, an application was lodged with the European Court in July 2006. On 3 November 2009, a unanimous 7–0 decision by a lower section of the European Court ruled against Italy, declaring that a country must

> refrain from imposing beliefs, even indirectly, in places where people are dependent on it or in places where they are particularly vulnerable. The schooling of children is particularly sensitive because in this case, the binding power of the State is imposed on minds that still lack (depending on the level of maturity of the child) the critical capacity to allow them to distance themselves from the message implied by a preferential choice expressed by the State in religious matters.
>
> (Lautsi v. Italy 2009: para. 48)

The European Court observed that the religious symbolism of the cross was predominant and that it formed an integral part of the school environment. It considered that the presence of the crucifix could easily lead students of all ages to understand that they were being educated "in a school environment characterized by a specific religion" (para. 55). According to the European Court, some students, such as atheists and other religious minorities, may find this disturbing. It declared that the freedom not to believe any religion was not limited to the absence of religious services or religious education but extended to practices and symbols that expressed a belief. It concluded that it did not see how the "display in classrooms of public schools of a symbol that it is reasonable to associate with Catholicism [the majority religion in Italy] could serve the educational pluralism that is essential to the preservation of a 'democratic society' as conceived by the European Convention" (para 56). The Italian state was to refrain from restricting "the right of parents to educate their children according to their beliefs and the rights of schoolchildren to believe or not to believe" and it should be neutral in the exercise of its public functions, particularly in the field of education (para 57).

This decision caused an unprecedented and largely negative public reaction within Italy and widespread opposition within several other European states. When the case was referred by Italy to the European Court's Grand Chamber in January 2010, ten European countries participated in support of Italy. The Italian government mounted a vigorous defense of the legitimacy of displaying the crucifix in classrooms, primarily maintaining that the European Court had failed to accord a margin of appreciation to the domestic authorities, that the duty of neutrality did not equate to secularism, and that the crucifix was not a symbol with an exclusively religious importance. The Grand Chamber was under unprecedented political pressure and faced huge popular resentment.

The Italian government criticized the European Courts' first judgment for interpreting the requirement for the state to ensure neutrality in the school environment as a requirement to exclude any relations between the state and a particular religion, rather than as a re-

quirement on the public authorities to take all religions into account. As quoted in the final decision, the Italian government said, “the judgment was accordingly based on confusion between ‘neutrality’ (an ‘inclusive concept’) and ‘secularism’ (an ‘exclusive concept’)” (Lautsi v Italy 2011: para. 35). In Italy’s view,

> neutrality meant that States should refrain from promoting not only a particular religion but also atheism, “secularism” on the State’s part being no less problematic than proselytizing by (p. 411) the State. The European Court’s original judgment was thus based on a misunderstanding and amounted to favouring an irreligious or antireligious approach of which the applicant, as a member of the Union of Rationalist Atheists and Agnostics, was a militant supporter. (para. 35)

This final decision of the Grand Chamber in 2011 overturned the previous decision by a majority of fifteen to two. The Grand Chamber based its reasoning on the fact that as between the signatories to the Convention, there is no common consensus on the meaning of *laicità* nor on the display of religious symbols in public buildings. It found that while the crucifix was above all a religious symbol, there was no evidence placed before the European Court that the display of such a symbol on classroom walls might have an influence on pupils. From this, it decided, the decision regarding whether or not to display the crucifix in public school classrooms was a matter falling within the Italian state’s margin of appreciation. The judgment stated that, while the display of the crucifix “conferred on the country’s majority religion preponderant visibility in the school environment,” it was not in itself sufficient to constitute indoctrination and establish a breach of the requirements of Article 2 of the First Protocol (Lautsi v Italy 2011: para 71). The European Court was now attempting to place the display of the crucifix in a wider context. It noted that the presence of the crucifix was not associated with compulsory teaching about Christianity and that the school environment was open to expressions of belief from other religions. For example, it was not forbidden for pupils to wear Islamic head-scarves or other religious symbols. By allowing Italy to use its margin of appreciation, the European Court effectively decided that the views of the majority should outweigh the views of the minority.

The Grand Chamber’s judgment is pragmatic; it defers the matter back to the Italian state. However, in relation to understanding and defining what constitutes the “secular” and “secularism,” the judgment remains mystifying. The opposed arguments advanced by the Italian government and Mrs. Lautsi’s family remain unresolved.

# Conclusion

Looking to the future, there are two sets of central issues that arise from the study of the decisions of the European Court and Supreme Court in relation to the place of religious symbols displayed in public schools. The first set revolves around the tendency of some domestic courts and national legislators to secularize the meaning of religious symbols in the face of legal challenges and therefore to interpret them in cultural terms, not as the symbols of any given religion. The second set concerns the application of principles of

secularism to decide upon neutrality in the educational field as seen not just in the European Court decision of Lautsi v. Italy (2011), but also in Leyla Sahin v. Turkey (2005).

In the first set of issues the European Court emphasized that the confessional character embodied in a displayed crucifix did not constitute indoctrination. As such, domestic courts and politicians are free to emphasize the cultural and passive character of the crucifix or icon of Christ as an integral part of their country's national inheritance. The Supreme Court also accepts that the cross is not only a religious symbol but also a memorial to military service. (p. 412) Religion can create powerful symbols of social life and human experiences and can evoke (or even provoke) in individuals an emotional response or an experience of social membership (Berger 1999). It also provides a framework and system for considering moral and social issues and for making sense of these together with a structure for moral and social development. Bruce (2003) argues that religion is intimately implicated in the identity of people, for religion is a profoundly social matter. It is a collective enterprise and acts as a kind of "social cement," leaving a lasting imprint.

In relation to the second set of issues, dangers remain for the European Court, and, in future judgments, the Court must be careful to avoid equating state neutrality with ideological secularism. Again the Supreme Court accepts that religious freedom does not require the total secularization of the public space. A failure to do so would support the views of historian Yehoshua Arieli who has commented that

> The secular character of the normative system embodied in human rights doctrine is essential to its comprehension. All its premises, values, concepts and purposes relate to the anthropocentric world and to ways of thought freed from the transcendentalist premises and from the jurisdiction of religious authority. And so, the development of the doctrine of human rights is inseparably connected to the process of secularisation of Western society.
>
> (Quoted from the original Hebrew in Raday. 2003: 663)

From this perspective, human rights are not value-neutral and take on a strong emphasis of maximizing individual conceptions of the "good" that, in practice, create an inevitable focus on personal freedom over traditional social or community-based conceptions. There is also no consensus on how European states understand the concept of secularism. Secularism is increasingly seen as a worldview (Casanova 2009) that holds that religion has a legitimate place only in the private sphere and must not entangle itself with public schooling—clearly not a neutral position. Public education that is free from any religious influence is not education that is neutral between different worldviews.

Joseph Weiler, a religious Jew, acting as counsel[7] in the Lautsi v. Italy case, argued that the position adopted by the European Court in its first decision

> was not an expression of the pluralism manifest in the Convention system, but an expression of the values of the secular State. To extend it to the whole of Europe

> would represent the “Americanisation” of Europe in that a single and unique rule and a rigid separation of Church and State would be binding on everyone.
>
> (Lautsi v. Italy 2011: para 47).

Europe has rejected this strict separation but, like the United States, applies a principle of neutrality in regard to religion so that public education must be religiously neutral. In the end, the European Court’s Grand Chamber decided that secularism is on a par with religion because it is a particular worldview—it also recognized that atheism is a protected religious belief. Therefore, secularism cannot be accepted as an overarching meta-normative principle in education. Its whole-scale adoption would thus compromise or contradict the aim of neutrality in public schooling.

The relationship between “neutral” and “secular” in educational terms is crucial because it has such a direct effect on what it means to foster critical thinking in children. Many believe that it is somewhat naïve to propose that public schooling should be secular, by assuming that “secular” means neutrality. It could be argued that secular education is intended to (p. 413) socialize children into a set of naturalistic political assumptions, affections, and practices. Such nonneutral secular education could uncritically initiate children into ways of thinking by using categories of explanation that exclude or ignore alternatives (Assad 2003; Casanova 2009). From there, it would be a relatively short step for a teacher to then exclude religious considerations from the classroom altogether, leaving only secular resources as a means to foster critical thinking and thus ignoring religious ways of thinking about the world. Therefore, to systematically and deliberately exclude religion from contributing to public schooling raises more questions than it answers. Budde and Wright (2004: 19, 21, 258) have commented that compulsory mass education in a liberal secular society can “diminish and dilute” the integrity of particularistic Christian communities. It functions to advance nontheistic belief systems, therefore destabilizing religious loyalties. One accusation that can be leveled at modern secularism, therefore, is that it does not affirm the political distinction between church and state, but instead it philosophically attempts to disconnect ordinary life and, in religious terms, education from God. In more extreme forms, it becomes a militant ideology and attempts to take the place of religion itself on the basis that we no longer need God.

Nevertheless, secular education in contemporary discussions is still employed to justify a “neutral” or “nonideological” approach to public schooling. “Secular” is therefore frequently used as a synonym for an “objective” approach to education. However, secular rationalism, the basis of a secular education, is not a neutral, absolute position. It is based on shifting intellectual foundations and is merely one particular tradition of inquiry. In America and Europe, there appears to be greater government entanglement with “secularism” and with secular purpose and effect, broadly defined. The courts have generally failed to reckon with the ideological nature of secularism, as their actions and decisions often imply that the religious views of parents must be subordinated to the overriding liberal values of toleration and diversity. There needs to be a balance between the rights of the state to decide the core values of education and the rights of parents to the religious

upbringing of their children. This also contrasts with the rights of faith communities to have a say in public education and the rights of children to not be forced to accept any religion.

As Zachery Calo (2010: 101) observes, the European Court has embraced a mode of secular legal logic, which treats the influence of religion in public schools as a problem to be managed rather than an essential feature of a healthy democratic society (Taylor 2005). Similarly, this could be said of the US Supreme Court. Secularism, as an ideology, attempts to exclude religious conceptions from public life, and it remains to be seen if the European Court can avoid such a myopic judicial interpretation in the future. Public education is not neutral because it helps shape human beings. In the United States, public schools may not teach religion, but they can teach about religion in a secular context. There is a need for a more finely nuanced understanding of both religion and neutrality in public education. The US approach is more categorical, while the European approach is, for now, more ad hoc and flexible on questions of religion in public schooling (Stavros 1997). Nevertheless, Monsma and Soper (2009: 11, 30) make the case that the Supreme Court is moving away from the strict separationist policy and that its decisions are becoming more narrowly divided. The United States has secular laws in a religious culture. "Secular" should not be seen as "nonreligious," "neutral," or excluding religion. The law should allow both religious and nonreligious convictions and expressions in public schooling.

## Bibliography

Allen, J. 2008. "Pope in France: The Case for 'Healthy Secularism.'" *National Catholic Reporter* (12 September), 1–2.

Arthur, J. 1998. "British Human Rights Legislation and Religiously Affiliated Schools and Colleges." *Education and the Law* 10(4), 225–236.

Arthur, J. 2006. *Faith and Secularisation in Religious Colleges and Universities*. London and New York: Routledge.

Arthur, J. 2008. "Learning Under the Cross: Legal Challenges to 'Cultural-Religious Symbolism' in Public Schools." *Education and the Law* 20(4), 337–349.

Arthur, J., and M. Holdsworth. 2012. "The European Court of Human Rights, Secular Education and Public Schooling." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 60(2), 129–149.

Assad, T. 2003. *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Audinet, J. 1980. "A Culture without Religion? The Case of France." *Concilium: International Journal of Theology* 136, 35–39.

Barbier, M. 1995. *La Laïcité*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Berger, P. 1999. *The Desecularisation of the World: Resurgent Religions and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Bruce, S. 2003. *Politics and Religion*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Bruce, S. (ed.). 1992. *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Budde, M., and J. Wright (eds.). 2004. *Conflicting Allegiances*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press.

Calo, Z. 2010. "Pluralism, Secularism and the European Court of Human Rights." *Journal of Law and Religion* 26, 261–280.

Casanova, J. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Casanova, J. 2009. "The Secular and Secularism." *Social Research* 76(4), 1049–1066.

Combe, G. 1841. "Remarks on Education in America." *Edinburgh Review* 73, 486–502.

(p. 415) Connolly, W. 1999. *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Cranmer, F., and J. Oliva. 2008. "Church–State Relationships: An Overview." *Law and Justice: The Christian Law Review* 162, 4–17.

Doe, N. 2011. *Law and Religion in Europe: A Comparative Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dogru v. France. 2008. 49 EHRR 179.

Emerson v. Board of Education. 1947. 330 U.S. 1.

Folgerø v. Norway. 2008. 46 EHRR 47.

Grant, C. 1968. "A Note on 'Secular' Education in the Nineteenth Century." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 16(3), 308–317.

Greenawalt, K. 2005. *Does God Belong in Public Schools?* Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey. 2008. 46 EHRR 44.

Justice, B. 2005. *The War that Wasn't: Religious Conflict and Compromise in the Common School of New York, 1865–1900*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark. 1979–1980. 1 EHRR 711.

Knights, S. 2005. “Religious Symbols in the School: Freedom of Religion, Minorities and Education.” *European Human Rights Law Review* 5, 499–516.

Knights, S. 2007. *Freedom of Religion, Minorities and the Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Knox, Z. 2005. *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russian after Communism*. London: Routledge Curzon.

Lautsi v. Italy. 2009. European Court of Human Rights, Second Section, ECHR (Application No. 30814/06).

Lautsi v. Italy. 2011. European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, ECHR (Application No. 30814/06).

Lemon v. Kurtzman. 1971. 403 U.S. 602.

Leyla Sahin v. Turkey. 2005. 41 EHRR 8.

Mancini, S. 2009. “Between Crucifixes and Veils: Secularism and Religion as Guarantors of Cultural Convergence.” *Cardozo Law Review* 30(6), 2629–2668.

McGoldrick, D. 2006. *Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe*. Portland, Ore.: Hart.

McGoldrick, D. 2011. “Religion in the European Public Square and the European Public Life—Crucifixes in the Classroom?” *Human Rights Law Review* 11(3), 451–502.

Monsma, S., and J. Soper. 2009. *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Raday, F. 2003 “Culture, Religion, and Gender.” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 1(4), 663–715.

Refah Partisi v. Turkey. 2003. 37 EHRR 1.

Rivers, R. 2010. *The Law of Organised Religion: Between Establishment and Secularism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ronchi, P. 2011. “Crucifixes, Margin of Appreciation and Consensus: The Grand Chamber Ruling in *Lautsi v. Italy.*” *The Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 13(3), 287–297.

Sandberg, R. 2008. “Church–State Relations in Europe: From Legal Models to an Interdisciplinary Approach.” *Journal of Religions in Europe* 1(3), 349–350.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe. 2000. 530 U.S. 290.

School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp. 1963. 374 U.S. 203.

Smith, G. 2007. *A Short History of Secularism*. New York: I. B. Tauris.

(p. 416) Stavros, S. 1997. “Freedom of Religion and Claims for Exemption from Generally Allocable, Neutral Laws: Lessons from across the Pond.” *European Human Rights Law Review* 6, 607–627.

Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District, et al. 2005. 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (Docket no. 4cv2688).

Taylor, P. 2005. *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Valsamis v. Greece. 1997. 24 EHRR 294.

## Notes:

(1.) Leyla Sahin v. Turkey (2005: para. 107, emphasis added). These principles have been reaffirmed in other contexts, such as Dogru v. France (2008), which considered secularism in France as a constitutional principle and as a founding principle of the Republic.

(2.) See, for example, the case of Valsamis v. Greece (1997), where the European Court made an independent judgment about the neutrality of educational provision.

(3.) Austrian Religious Instruction Act (Religionsunterrichtsgesetz) of 1949, RelUG 1949: s(b)(1).

(4.) Decisions by the superior courts of Madrid (15 October 2002) and Castilla-Leon (20 September 2007). Note that the latter court decided (14 December 2009) that a crucifix must be removed upon parental request.

(5.) Administrative Court of Appeal, No. 3250, 14 December 2009.

(6.) HC of Cassation, 11 June 2008: lawful. Bucharest CA: unlawful.

(7.) Weiler represented the governments of Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Russian Federation, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, and the Republic of San Marino.

**James Arthur**

James Arthur is Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Staffing and Professor of Education and Civic Engagement at the University of Birmingham, UK. He is Director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at Birmingham and Honorary Secretary of the Society for Educational Studies. He coedited the Routledge International Handbook of Education, Religion and Values.

# Secularism, Feminism, and the Public Sphere

Niamh Reilly

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.26

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter outlines major developments shaping contemporary debates about religion and secularism in public and political life and the role of women and feminism therein. It considers, from a gender perspective, debates in normative political theory about religion, secularism, and the Habermasian public sphere. These themes are explored as they are dealt with in feminist scholarship on the critical edges of Enlightenment thinking. The phenomena of the separation of church and state, the progressive "secularization" of modern societies and relegation of religious practice to private domains, and the growing acceptance of gender equality, are no longer presumed to be inevitable and interrelated. This chapter considers what is involved in rethinking secularism as a feminist political principle, in a context of globalization and in contemporary multicultural societies.

Keywords: women, feminism, religion, globalization, multiculturalism, public sphere

IN the early twenty-first century, religion resurfaced as a highly visible aspect of political and public life in all parts of the world. This has provoked renewed debate about the role of religion in late modernity. The widely held conception of secularism as a core tenet of a liberal, modernizing paradigm is now in question. That is, the phenomena of the separation of church and state, the progressive "secularization" of modern societies and relegation of religious practice to private domains, and the growing acceptance of gender equality are no longer presumed to be inevitable and interrelated. Most graphically, the events of 9/11 (11 September 2001) and the ensuing "War on Terror" have put religion at the center of global politics, albeit very narrowly as a problem of combating "radical Islam."

In the context of Europe, globalization, immigration, and European Union enlargement have fostered the re-emergence of religious identities and actors—across all faiths—as significant social, cultural, and political forces in public and private life in an increasingly multicultural Europe. These events underline the need to critically examine established ways of thinking about religion, secularism and the public sphere, and in particular, the status of women and the role of feminism in this nexus. Four sets of developments shape

the parameters of this enquiry. These are: the dominance of the "clash of civilizations thesis" in everyday and academic discourses; the continued emergence of politicized, autocratic, and violent movements in the name of religion; the ongoing scrutiny of the empirical and philosophical basis of the "secularization thesis"; and new critiques of the religious–secular binary from progressive perspectives, both nonreligious and religious, as well as from expected traditionalist or conservative standpoints.

The rest of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first outlines the four sets of developments just noted that shape contemporary debates about religion and secularism in public and political life and the role of women and feminism therein. The second section considers, from a gender perspective, debates in normative political theory about religion, secularism, and the Habermasian public sphere. The third section continues to explore these themes as they are dealt with in feminist scholarship on the critical edges of Enlightenment thinking. Finally, the conclusion considers what is involved in rethinking secularism as a feminist political principle in a context of globalization and in contemporary multicultural societies.

## (p. 418) Key Developments Shaping Contemporary Debates

The cataclysmic events of 9/11 in New York City, and subsequent bombings in London and Madrid, have been understood and discussed in the West in ways that reinforce the cultural essentialist notion of a "clash of civilizations," that is, the idea that there are irreconcilable differences between a supposedly rational and free West and an irrational and oppressive Islam. This is marked by the conflation of Islam with the threat of terrorism. Moreover, in Western liberal democracies, the violence of 9/11 has been filtered through a lens of anxiety in relation to the increasingly visible multicultural composition of societies. These developments have pushed to the surface questions about the accommodation (or not) of "other" religions in established practices that regulate existing religions vis-à-vis the state and in public life. Concerns are often presented as being about religion per se in liberal democratic societies and the threats that religious actors pose to the rule of (secular) law. However, much of the accompanying debate revolves around alarmist constructions of "Islam in the West" as the quintessential religious "other." This imagined clash of civilizations has played out in Europe especially around the role of the state in the regulation of different modes of Muslim women's dress in public settings (Skjeie 2007). Significantly, safeguarding gender equality and women's rights, and/or the secular nature of the state or public sphere, have featured prominently in justifications of punitive policies aimed at migrant or minority groups in the West, particularly Muslims.

These developments are a reminder of the centrality of gender power relations at the intersection of religion, culture, and the public sphere. Tensions between calls for women's equality and the rights of sexual minorities on one side, and the claims of religions on the other are well documented across all major religions and in every region of the world. It is also well recognized in feminist scholarship that gender identities and ethno-religious

identities work together in complex ways that can be exploited by dominant groups, often at the expense of minority women. This is evident, for example, in the targeted use of sexual violence in ethno-religious conflicts and, conversely, in justifications to wage war or to prohibit forms of Muslim women's dress in the name of defending "women's rights." It follows that a more nuanced understanding of the changing role and influence of religion in the public sphere, and the implications for how secularism is construed, requires complex, multidisciplinary, and comparative gender analyses. Yet, with some notable exceptions (Phillips 2007; Mahmood 2005; Scott 2007), gender rarely figures as a principal concern or category of ana-lysis in the literature on multicultural politics, religion, and the public sphere (see, e.g., Levey and Modood 2009; Parekh 2005; Kymlicka 1996; Taylor and Gutman 1994).

The emergence of politicized, autocratic religious movements over the past three decades, across all regions and major religions (Bhargava 2011: 92–93), further underlines the need to re-examine current notions of secularism in the nexus of religion, state, and gender and the role of women and feminism therein. Whether in the name of Christianity, Islam, or other religions, these movements seek to impose literalist and ultraconservative versions of religious teaching through state law and policy, most often targeting the sexual and reproductive freedom of women and sexual minorities (Shaheed 2004; Othman 2006; Al-Labadi 2014; Yuval-Davis 2014). The rise of "Islamic State," a transnational, "nonstate" militarized (p. 419) movement that purports to be religiously motivated and uses violence to achieve its ends, is a particularly egregious manifestation of this trend. More generally, religious minorities the world over are at risk in any context where dominant religious communities enjoy privileged or established positions vis-à-vis authoritarian states (Mekonnen and Van Reisen 2014). New approaches are called for that challenge politicized religious authoritarianism and violence in all its guises, without rendering religious individuals and communities susceptible to discrimination, persecution, or cultural violence and without enabling the cooptation of feminist projects for retrogressive purposes.

Debates around the relevance of the "secularization thesis" also shape contemporary discussions about secularism, women, and feminism. The sociological evidence on secularization is contradictory. Some continue to argue that the secularization thesis is relevant in specific contexts, where secularization is understood as a process of steadily declining public influence and/or privatization of religion. For example, focusing on dropping rates of church attendance and/or membership in the most stable and prosperous countries in northwest Europe, Steve Bruce (1996) concludes that there is a decisive overall trend toward secularization as modernization occurs. However, he also finds that participation in traditional religious practices remains high in countries where the formation of national identity and religion were intertwined historically (e.g., Ireland and Poland). Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart draw on World Values Survey data (1981–2001) to argue along similar lines that secularization understood as a "systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs has occurred most clearly among prosperous social sections living in affluent and secure post industrial nations" (2004: 5).

In contrast, others argue that societies in different parts of the world (especially beyond Europe) are actively "de-secularizing" and that this is evidenced by the rise of new religious and spiritual movements and practices (Berger 1999; Davie 2002; Herbert 2003). José Casanova's comparative study of Brazil, Poland, Spain, and the United States (1994) leads him to conclude that outside of Europe the "de-privatization" of religion is underway. He suggests that enforcing a rigid separation of church and state (e.g., in France) is unique to the European Enlightenment critique of religion, which was driven by a rejection of particular, context-specific links between churches and authoritarian regimes in Europe. Subsequently, updating his theory of public religion, Casanova maintains that religion has been de facto continually present in public spheres in a majority of countries, including long-established democracies, despite the rhetoric of the "secular modern state" (Casanova 2008; Stepan 2000). These conclusions are echoed in the findings of the EU VEIL research project (Values, Equality in Liberal Democracies). The study reveals much variation within Europe in state responses to the Muslim headscarf, which maps onto significant differences in the model of church–state relations, traditions regarding antidiscrimination, and prevailing cultural and legal concepts of citizenship in each of the countries studied (e.g., Kiliç et al. 2008).

Overall, therefore, the notion of a single path of secularization is not credible. While participation in formal religious practices (mainly in affluent liberal democracies) appears to be declining, the relevance and diversity of religious and spiritual identities and practices more broadly continues to be significant and actively evolving in most societies. At the same time, fears about the consequences of the fusion of religious authority and state power (especially in some European contexts) have led to a strong, normative attachment to a particular brand of secularism, understood as a strict separation of "church and state," and the effective containment of religion to the private sphere of personal and family life. However, if it is (p. 420) recognized that this vision is more prescriptive than descriptive, and that "secularization" defined in this way is not an inevitable outcome of modernization, there is an onus on proponents of the secular democratic state to acknowledge and defend its status as a normative political-social ideal and to define its parameters and modalities in nonoppressive ways.

Along with doubts about the empirical validity of the secularization thesis, the extension of influential poststructuralist critiques of Enlightenment rationality to questions of religion has also prompted reconsideration of the interrelation of secularism and feminism (Reilly 2011). Feminist studies in religion has always challenged the Enlightenment critique of religion. However, this body of work has been largely unheeded in "secular" scholarship to date. Elizabeth Castelli, for example, problematizes the operation of the secular–religious divide as follows:

> It has been an obstacle to some conversations that many feminists, whether activists or academics, have tended to read "religion" as an abstraction solely in negative terms—reading "religion" only as a constraint ideologically and institutionally, and reading the embrace of religious affiliations or allegiances as a sign

> of false consciousness. This negative rendering of "religion" is in many respects an ironic holdover from Feminism's own Enlightenment inheritance. (2001: 5)

This critique has gained purchase as poststructuralist thinking gathered momentum and unsettled the Enlightenment underpinnings of many disciplines across the humanities and social sciences— including the equation of "objective knowledge" with "the rational" and, more recently, with "the secular." Writings by Joan Scott and Judith Butler exemplify a more recent, explicit poststructuralist feminist engagement with "religion." Specifically, their analyses expose oppressive discursive practices that attend gendered understandings of "secularity as modernity" culminating in, as Butler describes it, "cultural assaults" on religious minorities (2008: 3). Similarly, addressing the French doctrine of *laïcité*, Scott argues that ideas about secularism "structure the way we think about how to deal with religion in general and Islam in particular" (2007: 95). She criticizes normative secularization theory, which conflates "secularism" with forward-looking "modernity" and "democracy," and the Enlightenment critique of religion, which demands the triumph of reason over superstition, sentiment, and belief. From this perspective, the moral panic around Islam in Europe and the related bans on Muslim women's dress come into focus as forms of state violence that are apparently justified when viewed through a rigid reading of the religious–secular binary. Deepening poststructuralist critiques of secularism as coercive normative practice, Saba Mahmood further questions the "liberatory" bias of poststructuralist feminist theory. She criticizes its "overwhelming tendency … to locate agency within those operations that resist the dominating and subjectivating modes of power" and urges instead a separation of "the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics" (2005: 14). In doing so, Mahmood argues, feminist analysis closes off recognition of "dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance" (14), including certain religious practices.

In summary, in a post–9/11 world, the combination of increasingly globalized and multicultural societies, the unsettling of the secularization thesis, and poststructuralist critiques of the religious–secular binary all raise profound questions for how liberal democracies respond to more visible and more active religious actors in public life and in politics. The questions raised are especially salient to women and to sexual and religious minorities who are often adversely targeted in the exercise of politicized, autocratic religious authority. (p. 421) Because questions of gender and religion are typically constructed as "private" within liberal secular logic, reconsidering the interrelation of state and religious authority through a gender lens necessarily entails rethinking dominant understandings of the public sphere. Toward this end, the following section briefly reviews this literature with a focus on gender, secularism, and feminism.

# Religion, Secularism, and the Public Sphere: Engendering the Debate

Habermas's conceptualization of the public sphere ([1962] 1989) has featured prominently in normative democratic theory for several decades. For social democrats, his theorization enabled an important distinction to be made between the machinery of the state (formal politics, law, and public administration) and "public arenas of citizen discourse and association" (Fraser 1990: 56) where domination by state or free-market interests is subject to public contestation. At the same time, as a perennial defender of the radical promise of European Enlightenment ideals, Habermas's work also exemplifies the "Enlightenment critique of religion." Typically, religion was addressed by Habermas as inherently irrational, absolutist, and authoritarian—that is, as the Enlightenment's "other." More recently, however, reflecting the renewed visibility of religion as a significant social and political force and as a scholarly subject of cross-disciplinary inquiry, Habermas's perceived intolerant treatment of religion in public and political life has attracted more critical attention. In response, he has modified somewhat his argument for a carefully delineated and restricted place for "religion" in the public sphere. Recognizing the relevance of Habermas's ideas to contemporary scholarly analyses of the interrelation of religion and political life more generally, this section considers key fault lines in debates about religion in the Habermasian public sphere, the implications for the rethinking established understandings of secularism, and the relation of both to feminism as a political project.

Habermas's point of departure on religion in public life begins with a commitment to "political liberalism," which he understands as: "a nonreligious, post-metaphysical justification of the normative foundations of constitutional democracy" (2008a: 102). Elaborating this "secular" view of the basis of the constitutional democratic state, Habermas insists that "the democratic process counts as a procedure of legitimate lawmaking" and, crucially, that "democracy and human rights are interrelated in a coeval manner in the process of founding a constitution" (2008a: 103). This legitimating function of the democratic process, therefore, demands continual "inclusive and discursive [processes] of opinion- and will formation" (103) whereby those affected by norms, laws, and policies can have a meaningful say in their formulation. For Habermas, the legitimating character of such discursive practices requires a commitment on the part of all participants—as "free and equal members of their political community" (2008b: 121)—to decide outcomes in a disinterested manner on the basis of "good reasons." Building on liberal theorist John Rawls's prescription for "the public use of reason," Habermas characterizes and defends his account of the "secular state" as follows:

> In a secular state only those political decisions are taken to be legitimate as can be impartially justified in the light of generally accessible reasons, in other words equally justified vis-à-vis (p. 422) religious and non-religious citizens, and citizens of different confessions. A rule that cannot be justified in an impartial manner is illegitimate as it reflects the fact that one party forces its will on another. Citizens

> of a democratic society are obliged to provide reasons for one another, as only thus can political power shed its repressive character. (2006: 5)

Hence, for Habermas, the legitimation of norms, policies, and laws implemented by a state requires them to be "rationally acceptable" to all affected, regardless of participants' religious worldviews.

Critics of Habermas's public sphere have highlighted various weaknesses, many of which focus on the gap between his ideal of public deliberation and "actually existing democracy" (Fraser 1990). Most frequently, critics are skeptical about Habermas's central reliance on a supposedly universal communicative reason because, seemingly, it entails an impossible requirement or presumption that all participants are equally "well informed," equally positioned to access and process information and other resources, and equally disposed to use such information for the purposes of posing and counterposing "good reasons" and "best arguments." For example, citing feminist research that reveals gender differences in modes of communication and the sidelining of female voices in mixed-gender exchanges, Fraser cautions that "deliberation can serve as a mask for domination … beyond gender to other kinds of unequal relation, like those based on class or race and ethnicity" (1990: 64). Hence, in contrast to Habermas's monolithic public sphere where participants are imagined to deliberate in search of the "common good," Fraser welcomes the contesting and parallel presence of multiple "subaltern counterpublics." Especially in an unequal society, she argues, such counterpublics allow members of "subordinated social groups [to] invent and circulate counterdiscourses … and to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (67). At the same time, she recognizes that subaltern counterpublics may also be "anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian" but argues that "insofar as [they] emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive space" (67). While Fraser does not explicitly include religious communities as potential subaltern counterpublics, clearly, the concept encompasses their inclusion.

Overall, therefore, Habermas's theorization of the public sphere has been faulted for privileging "Western," "bourgeois," and "masculine" perspectives, which he presumes to be "universal." That is, Habermas's public sphere fails to comprehend and address the scale and depth of the barriers to equal participation in public discourse and the invisibility and "lack of voice" experienced by sizable minorities, if not a majority of people, in most (democratic) societies. This is especially so, as Fraser underlines, for historically discriminated-against and marginalized groups, including women and minorities. More recently, critiques have highlighted the potentially oppressive nature of the "secular" logic exemplified by the Habermasian public sphere. For some, like Judith Butler and Joan Scott, as discussed earlier, this is prompted by concern about the politics of secularism in the post–9/11 era, including battles over the regulation of Muslim women's dress in public spaces. For others, criticism of Habermas's treatment of religion reflects an extension of long-running critiques of the limits of liberal individualism by communitarian political theorists such as Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel. In the liberal–communitarian divide that has structured much debate in political theory since the 1990s the communitarian side

has always been more disposed to addressing religion and morality as constitutive features of public life. Sandel notes, “Liberals often worry about religion in politics because they associate religion with intolerance [and (p. 423) the] resolve to avoid wars of religion has shaped much liberal political thought” (2006: 146). Despite the appropriation of communal values by conservatives in the United States and elsewhere, however, he argues that “there is nothing intrinsically conservative about family or neighborhood or community or religion” (42). Indeed, he cautions a “vision of public reason [that] is too sparse to contain the moral energies of a vital democratic life … opens the way [in public life] for the intolerant and the trivial and other misguided moralisms” (246).

As critiques of the secularization thesis have gained momentum, Habermas has conceded greater space to religious language and arguments within his account of rational, democratic dialogic processes. He argues:

> [T]he liberal state has an interest in the free expression of religious voices in the public arena. … It must not discourage religious persons and communities from also expressing themselves as such in the political arena, for it cannot be sure that secular society would not otherwise cut off itself from key resources for the creation of meaning and identity. … Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of communal life. In corresponding political debates, this potential makes religious speech into a serious vehicle for possible truth contents. … However, the institutional thresholds between the “wild” political public sphere and the formal proceedings within political bodies also function as a filter that allows only secular contributions from … the informal flows of public communication to pass through. (2008b: 131)

Hence, Habermas wishes to confine the role of religion to opinion formation in the “weak” public sphere of civil society as distinct from the strong public of parliamentary policy and lawmaking (Cooke 2007: 227). Moreover, he asserts that while “morally convincing intuitions and reasons” offered by “religious citizens” should be heard, they must be translated into “generally acceptable language” (Habermas 2006: 15) if they are to be incorporated in formal state law and policy. Although Habermas uncritically equates “generally accepted language” with secular language and remains intent on regulating the presence and role of religion, at the same time he attempts to decenter a narrow secularist mindset (exemplified, e.g., by the French doctrine of *laïcité*). In doing so, his recent work signals a distinct move toward a more tolerant and pluralist stance on the presence of religious discourse in the public sphere of democratic states. For poststructuralist scholars, however, Habermas’s accommodation of religion in the public sphere falls far short of what is required (Bender and Klassen 2010; Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008). Specifically, Bender and Klassen argue that the ideology of pluralism is an inadequate “solution” to religious difference because, in its various manifestations, it “articulates and naturalizes the very boundaries of difference that it seeks to diminish, overcome and mediate” (2010: 15) and is “always directed toward and galvanised by multiple fields of knowledge power” (18).

For different reasons, communitarian critics such as Charles Taylor also consider Habermas's compromise with "religious citizens" to be deficient in key respects. While not disputing that contemporary democracies should be neutral vis-à-vis different religious communities, Taylor takes issue with the liberal preoccupation with religion as "strange and perhaps even threatening" (2011: 51). Rebutting Habermasian and Rawlsian understandings of reason as an abstract and universal attribute of all, Taylor considers all reason to be contextual and grounded in culture and experience, including an array of religiously mediated identities and experiences. Rather than conceive of the public sphere as a kind of filtering system based on a required mode of reasoned deliberation, Taylor's vision of secular (p. 424) democracy is one where "mutual recognition and collaboration in common pursuits" are fostered (Calhoun 2011a: 129) in ways that "maximize the basic goals of liberty and equality between basic beliefs" (Taylor 2011: 56), including, but not limited to, religious beliefs.

As with all communitarian visions, this account raises questions about who speaks for communities. It is not sufficiently concerned about the politics of who formulates and articulates a community's "beliefs," and what kinds of tradeoffs are deemed acceptable in balancing "liberty and equality" against "beliefs." The majority of religious organizations continue to be structured along patriarchal and often hierarchical, social class lines; hence it is usually educated, middle-class male leaders who speak for communities and who have the discretion to ignore or actively suppress internal dissent. Feminist critics have long raised concerns about the subordinate status of women in all major religions. While much of this criticism reproduces an unreflective equation of secularism with feminism, some is also derived from poststructuralist critiques of identitarian politics. Jakobsen captures the pitfalls involved when she asks:

> [H]ow do we fully represent religious differences in the public sphere? Who are the appropriate representatives of religious communities? The Institutional leaders of those communities? Charismatic leaders? Someone else? And if those leaders also happen to be all men or of one race, who represents the racial minorities and women of this group? … In other words, crosscutting differences make it difficult if not impossible to use a unit of identity … to find a means of representing everyone. (2010: 33)

Hence, there are problems with the scenario envisaged by Taylor of flexible negotiation among "religious communities" aimed at arriving at a settlement between "liberty and equality" on the one side and "beliefs" on the other. It concedes too much to powerful arbiters of community "beliefs" and risks disregarding the will of some members of the community, dissenters, or others adversely affected by the settlement.

Offering another response to the challenge of "accommodating" different and often conflicting worldviews (including religious positions), Judith Butler eschews equally the totalizing logics of the universal deliberative subject, the communal value-driven "we," and identitarian religious belonging. Rather, she posits a notion of "cohabitation" instead of such aspirations to agreement, integration, or authenticity. Butler elaborates an ontologi-

cal understanding of cohabitation as "our convergent condition—one of proximity, adjacency, againstness, one of being interrupted by the memory of someone else's longing and suffering, in spite of oneself" (2011: 88–89). She continues:

> Since there is no home without adjacency, and no way to reside anywhere without the outside defining the space of inhabitation, the *co* of cohabitation cannot be thought simply as spatial neighbourliness. There is dependency and differentiation, proximity and violence. (2011: 89)

Butler's idea of cohabitation expresses a more radical break with liberal and communitarian versions of the public sphere than does Nancy Fraser's embrace of multiple subaltern counterpublics. Subaltern counterpublics, while expressing deep critiques of the dominant, bourgeois, public sphere are nonetheless construed by Fraser as oriented toward the eventual inclusion of subaltern counterpublics in the public sphere. This is achieved through the hopefully transformative integration of the "needs, perspectives and strategies" of (p. 425) previously excluded groups (Fraser 1990: 66). Fraser suggests that the presence of illiberal counterpublics is an inevitable dimension of discursive richness, which by definition is valued positively within a framework of normative participatory democracy. Ultimately, therefore, Fraser's response remains rooted in emancipatory critical theory. This entails a continuing commitment to the deliberative ideals at the heart of Habermas's public sphere and a qualified ontological assumption that "communication across lines of cultural difference is not in principle impossible" (69) as long as participants are not required to "bracket differences" (presumably including religious differences). In contrast, the beginning of a tenable response from Butler's perspective entails recognition among antagonistic communities (citing the example of Israel and Palestine), that their continued mutual existence relies upon the "reality" that they are constitutionally and simultaneously deeply opposed and deeply interdependent.

The differences between Butler's and Fraser's analyses reveal basic fault lines between poststructuralist and critical theory positions regarding the prospects and limits of dialogic democratic practices in addressing the challenges posed by increased visibility and claims of religion in public and political life. Craig Calhoun (2011b), also approaching these questions from a critical theory perspective, concurs that insisting on the privatization or exclusion of religious perspectives and actors from the public sphere is incompatible with the goal of civic solidarity, which deliberation in the public sphere ostensibly seeks to foster. He further questions the rationale for and practicability of translating religious norms into secular forms, noting that "conflicts between worldviews and religious doctrines that lay claim to explaining man's position in the world cannot be laid to rest at the cognitive level" (2011b: 87). Calhoun cautions against "abandoning norms of fairness or state neutrality among religions" and argues for the normative necessity and practical possibility of building a "uniting bond of a civic solidarity, which cannot be legally enforced" but without which segmentation of communities "along the dividing lines of competing world views" replaces reciprocity and solidarity among citizens (2011b: 88). Read from Calhoun's perspective, therefore, Butler's concept of cohabitation appears to offer

only an “unsteady modus vivendi” and likely political disintegration “into irreconcilable segments” (88).

In contrast to poststructuralist positions, critical theorists locate the solution to accommodating diverse and/or conflicting religious claims in the public sphere in political, dialogic practices and in the retention of a commitment to a neutral and inclusive notion of secularism. Liberal-multicultural theorist Anne Phillips offers a similar response, which she roots emphatically in a commitment to individual rights. Phillips recognizes that

> [g]ender equality does not depend on a strict separation of religion from politics … [and] there may be a range of possible combinations, along an axis from greater to lesser religious engagement in politics, compatible with strong regimes of gender equality” [provided] “the rights of the individual” [remain central]. (2009: 45)

Rajeev Bhargava similarly holds with rehabilitating secularism. He offers an account of nonbinary, “critical social secularism,” which he places within a framework of moral and ethical reasoning (2011: 110). Among other things, this entails a “principled distance” on the part of the state (as distinct from a rigid separation of state from religion) and a commitment to combating four forms of domination: interreligious, intrareligious, domination of religious by secular, and domination of secular by religious (111). The following section continues to (p. 426) explore these themes in the nexus of religion, secularism, and the public sphere as they are dealt with in feminist scholarship on the critical edges of Enlightenment thinking.

# Feminism, Religion, and Democracy on the Critical Edges of Enlightenment Thinking

In feminist scholarship that is critical of the Enlightenment but retains a significant commitment to the radical promise of its ideals, there are two dominant approaches to religion: first, feminist political and social theorizing that typically deals with religion as an absence, and second, a substantial body of feminist political sociology, which primarily focuses on the harmful effects of politicized religion and “religious fundamentalism” (Jeffrey and Basu 1998; Anwar 2009; Shaheed 2009). Religion is generally ignored as an empirical horizon or as a category of analysis in the work of influential Western feminist political theorists. A cursory review of the index pages of a selection of widely used texts in the field (Young 2002; Bryson 2003; McLaughlin 2003; Harding 2004; Hartsock 1998; Okin 1992) indicates that none have included “religion” or a related term. Notably, however, feminist theory texts that focus on the experiences and perspectives of women in the global South tend to include substantially more references to religion, although usually along the negative lines noted earlier and evident in the political sociological literatures (e.g., Mohanty 2003: ch. 9; McCann and Kim 2010; Nussbaum 2000; Tripp et al. 2009).

On one level, the absence of religion even in Western feminist political theory is puzzling. As an area of scholarship concerned with examining the gendered exercise of power across public and private domains, much remains to be interrogated within all major religions wherein: men hold “most or all of the roles of authority and prestige” and “from these positions … control and dictate the norms of the [religion] for all women” (Gross 1996: 106). On another level, the silence on religion confirms the observations (Castelli 2001; Beattie 2005; and others) that most such scholarship retains an unexamined Enlightenment view of religion—as the antithesis of rationality and freedom. The persistence of this view of religion in feminist political theory, however, is at odds with quite basic feminist critiques of the public–private divide, which now underpin the most moderate liberal feminist agendas (evidenced, e.g., by the focus on remedying domestic violence or securing “family-friendly” conditions of work). Hence, even if it is accepted that the influence of religion is or ought to be confined to the “private sphere,” it surely remains relevant to the theorization of the gendered exercise of power along the personal to political spectrum. This point is underlined when one considers that women make up the majority of actively religious people worldwide (Furseth and Repstad 2006: 190–191; Woodhead 2008). It follows that feminism, as a conceptual and practical project concerned with the “emancipation of women,” must acknowledge the role of religion in women’s lives in more complex and nuanced ways than has happened to date.

The presumption that religion is not relevant in influential feminist theory texts also reveals a problematic Western bias. It assumes that injurious gendered religious practices are really only a problem for women in societies that are “not modern” (i.e., in or from (p. 427) the global South) who, within this logic, are generally construed as victims of religion. Religion is rarely seen as a problem in the same way for Western religious women who are more likely to be understood as complex subjects negotiating contradictory identities and demands (e.g., Catholic women who use contraception or conservative women who champion “equal but different” arguments about gender roles within the church). Certainly, much feminist scholarship at the intersection of religion and politics has roots in a liberal Enlightenment tradition epitomized by a commitment to women’s equality and human rights. Yet, despite “freedom of religion” also being a cornerstone of this tradition, because religion is frequently implicated in endorsing subordinate roles for women relative to men and/or harmful cultural practices, equality feminism tends to view religion primarily as a threat. Much criticism has been leveled against this brand of feminist thinking as inevitably Western-centric and neo-imperialist (Razack 2008; Grewal 1999). Susan Okin’s (1999) essay “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”, for example, is often cited (somewhat unfairly) as epitomizing a retrogressive, universalist position wherein the experience and worldview of white, Western, middle-class, and, ostensibly, secular women is falsely universalized as the norm of “modern emancipated womanhood.” This variant of Western feminism as mobilized in the context of the Muslim headscarf debates, against supposedly unemancipated women and the men who oppress them, is rightly criticized by Scott (2007) and Butler (2008).

Undoubtedly, the War on Terror narrative is infused with gendered and racialized perceptions prevalent in the West that equate Islam with fundamentalism and "terrorism." This makes Muslim and other minorities in the West more vulnerable to intolerance, discrimination, and state-sponsored abuses of human rights (Fekete 2004). In addition to affecting women as members of targeted minority communities, as seen in conflicts over the Muslim headscarf, these trends have wider gender-specific implications. For example, minority women often play a daily interfacing role between their communities and the majority population (e.g., around accessing housing, education, health care, and other services) and, in this regard, can bear the brunt of prejudice and discrimination against the community, which they are perceived to represent. Further, in situations of heightened tension between minority and majority communities, minority women who experience abuse within the family or community are extremely unlikely to seek assistance if they fear that they will be stigmatized for betraying the community and/or that their abuser will be subject to maltreatment by the authorities.

Much feminist scholarship on the critical edges of the Enlightenment tradition focuses on problematizing "religious fundamentalism" and, in this regard, can be implicated or co-opted in retrogressive narratives of the War on Terror. However, blanket critiques of this work, which retains a commitment to Enlightenment norms, often miss the counter-hegemonic, postcolonial moment of this body of literature. This includes nuanced analyses by feminist scholars from various global South standpoints about global South contexts from Egypt and Iran to India, Pakistan and Malaysia (Al-Ali 2000; Anwar 2009; Jeffrey and Basu 1998; Badran 2009; Narayan 2000; Othman 2006; Shaheed 2009; Tohidi and Bayes 2001). While the arguments of these scholars are complex and varied, they share a common critical orientation that challenges gender inequalities in context, rejects cultural essentialism, and aspires to the substantive realization of gender inclusive visions of democracy and human rights.

(p. 428) In global South contexts, cultural essentialist arguments are mobilized by autocratic, religious movements that conceal gender-based oppressions in the name of upholding authentic communal religious integrity and rejecting Western secularism. As Farida Shaheed argues, around the world, processes of decolonization, national independence, modernization, and globalization have generated a "bewildering pace of change" and a need to construct new histories and (re)create identities and ways of belonging at the individual, community and national level (1989: 4). It is important to keep in mind that, in the global South, most fundamentalist religious projects have roots in a legacy of Western "colonisation and hegemonic rule and control" (Shaheed 1999, 63).

At the same time, writing about secularism, gender, and the state in Egypt, Nadje Al-Ali is highly critical of the now hegemonic scholarly literature from "the Islamic perspective" that takes as given the unequivocal equation of secularism with the "West" and "Christianity." Al-Ali problematizes this relatively new orthodoxy in Egypt and the Muslim world more generally, characterizing it as "an essentialist presupposition that has to be challenged" (2000: 131). Such arguments promulgate a false dichotomy that permits only two possible standpoints in postcolonial contexts: either to defend "authentic" local culture

against “the West” or to collude in the neo-imperialist imposition of Western values and agendas. Within this logic, which is at the heart of contemporary violent Islamist projects, internal dissent is not simply absent but ineffable as critical voices are only heard as “Westernized” betrayers of Islam and local culture—with feminist voices especially castigated as “Western” (Mukhtar 2003; Shaheed 1989). This logic is deeply disingenuous. It denies the agency and belonging of locally situated, indigenous dissenting subjects who both (a) articulate women’s equality or human rights claims in their own contexts and (b) firmly reject the imposition and false universalization of human rights values from various dominant standpoints, internally or externally.

Feminist critics of religious fundamentalist movements (Saghal 2004; Imam and Yuval-Davis 2004) are also critical of some multicultural positions in the West. Saghal has criticized British multicultural policy in particular, which initially allowed certain social policies to be determined by conservative male community leaders. In response to “secular” Asian feminist pressure to address crimes against women in these contexts (especially forced marriage), British politicians and policymakers, reflecting a dominant progressive understanding of multiculturalism, looked for religious arguments (Hindu, Sikh, Muslim) to justify legal and policy interventions against forced marriage. In doing so, Saghal argues, they “resorted to developing support amongst the very people [they] wanted to criticise, and thereby helped increase their hold over ‘their’ communities” (2004: 58). Similarly, regarding the Muslim headscarf debates, arguments from a multicultural perspective can err by focusing only on impediments to Muslim women to wearing Muslim dress but not on the right of a Muslim woman not to do so if that is her wish. In doing so, they fail to acknowledge and address the conflicts that regularly arise when the self-determination of a woman clashes with the “beliefs of the community.” This underlines that, to the extent there is a problem or not in relation to a woman wearing a Muslim headscarf, it is the problem of maximizing the conditions of her self-determination. If a woman is forced to, or prohibited from, wearing any form of Muslim headscarf, whether by an individual or a state actor, it is equally unacceptable from an emancipatory feminist perspective.

The final section considers what is involved in rethinking secularism as a feminist political principle in a context of globalization and in contemporary multicultural societies.

## (p. 429) Conclusion: Rethinking Secularism as a Feminist Political Principle

The need to re-examine established ways of thinking about secularism and its relationship to feminism has arisen in the context of the confluence of a number of developments in recent years including the increasing dominance of the “clash of civilizations” thesis, the expansion of progressive poststructuralist critiques of Enlightenment rationality to encompass questions of religion, and sustained critiques of the “secularization thesis.”

Without the presumption of an inevitable, singular path of secularization, there is an onus on defenders of secularism to argue its merits and modalities as a normative political principle. This entails moving away from defending ethnocentric accounts of secularism as universally applicable. Rather, it means clearly defining the purpose of secularism and justifying its operation in specific contexts. On the view, the principle of secularism is invoked to specify context-specific conditions of human freedom, including the freedom of women and of sexual and religious minorities, among others, within an emancipatory, inclusive account of the democratic polity. This requires genuine respect for religious pluralism. Such an approach must be attentive to the scope of religious authority enjoyed by different actors in order to safeguard against violations of human freedom through the abuse of religious authority in various contexts and to eschew constructions of religion as only a constraint and the antithesis of freedom.

Any vision of feminism that aligns automatically with antireligious expressions of secularism or blanket condemnations of Muslim women's dress as an offensive symbol of the oppression of women is untenable as a basis for emancipatory feminist practice in a context of globalisation. Elsewhere, I have developed an account of cosmopolitan feminism that outlines the tenets of a nonoppressive, globally oriented feminism (Reilly 2007). Most important, emancipatory cosmopolitan feminism entails recognition of the complex and often contradictory intersectionality of women's identities and experiences cutting across gender, socioeconomic privilege, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, geolocation, and so on (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1991; Yuval-Davis 2006). It also requires recognition that this complexity can only be comprehended through dialogic practice. Embracing such a feminist ontology of intersectionality, then, demands that the content of any practical emancipatory agenda, aimed at transforming gender oppression, will be formulated in mutually respectful dialogue. It cannot be imposed by one group of women or men on another group of women in the name feminism. Moreover, this cosmopolitan feminist perspective embeds feminism in democratic practice oriented toward the substantive realization of human rights and freedoms.

The strategies of the Malaysian nongovernmental organization Sisters in Islam, as articulated by Norani Othman (2006) and Zainah Anwar (2009), offers a practical illustration of emancipatory cosmopolitan feminism in which religion features centrally. Othman argues that feminism in Malaysia must be a two-tiered struggle against gender discrimination and oppression emanating first from "secular patriarchy" and second from more recent manifestations of "Muslim patriarchy." She expressly calls on the women's movement in Malaysia to directly address the impact of authoritarian politicized religion on the integrity of constitutionalism, respect for human rights, and democracy. When authoritarian **(p. 430)** religious forces permeate state power, she warns, breaches of religious or moral ethics, as determined by local religious leaders, are treated as criminal behavior. (This is precisely the scenario that Habermas seeks to prevent by limiting religious speech to the informal public sphere.) Othman, however, goes beyond Habermas's safeguards by insisting on the *necessity* of making links between religious and democratic, constitutional, and human rights values *within* religious communities. Building on the ideas of Abdullahi An-Na'im (1992), Othman urges other devout Muslim women to reflect critically on the role

of “Islamic knowledge” in “reclaiming the space for substantive democracy and justice” and to find a “language of protest and resistance to religious and state authoritarianism” (2006: 347). Finally, she stresses that the extent to which “internal debate among Muslims can help to … re-constitute women’s rights and gender equality in Islam depends on the democratic space … that exists in Muslim societies” (352).

This vision articulated by Othman (2006) in a scenario of the deepening fusion of authoritarian religion and state power expresses an instructive feminist reading of the principle of secularism in emancipatory politics. In this account, secularism underpins a dialogic public civil space that is defined *above all* by tolerance. Similar to Bhargava’s vision (2011), such a secular public space is far from antireligious; it is a site of tolerance for competing interpretations of religious ideas *within* religions and respect vis-à-vis different religious and nonreligious worldviews. In this regard it rejects the “Enlightenment critique of religion,” which views religion as the antithesis of rationality and freedom. However, it equally defends a notion of secularism as one that demands state neutrality vis-à-vis different religious communities and subjectivities.

Othman’s public sphere, therefore, includes religious argument and expressions of religious identity as aspects of human self-understanding, communication, and development, and she admits religion as a legitimate discursive horizon in shaping (if not codifying in law) the ethical, moral, and spiritual life of communities. Significantly, this vision calls for the active participation of religious women in critically reinterpreting religious concepts in emancipatory ways. Moreover, Othman sees such critical public debate as a pivotal mechanism in the substantive realization of women’s rights and gender equality both within Islam (including in the family) and vis-à-vis state. This account of a public sphere, which rejects the opposition of religion and secularism, resembles Scott’s (2007) suggestion of religion and the state operating as “parallel systems of interpretation.” Othman, however, is less equivocal about what is required to ensure that the scope of religious authority exercised in such public spheres does not translate into the legitimization of gendered and other forms of oppression: a secular democratic state, grounded in constitutionalism and human rights and critically (re)interpreted from emancipatory feminist perspectives.

## Bibliography

Al-Ali, N. 2000. *Secularism, Gender & the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Al-Labadi, F. 2014. “Guardianship in Marriage: Gender and Islamic Law in Palestine.” In *Religion, Gender, and the Public Sphere*, edited by N. Reilly and S. Scriver, 168–179. London and New York: Routledge.

(p. 431) An-Na’im, A. A. 1992. “Toward a Cross-Cultural Approach to Defining International Standards of Human Rights: The Meaning of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment

or Punishment." In *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus*, edited by A. A. An-Na'im, 19–43. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Anwar, Z. (ed.). 2009. *Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family*. Selangor, Malaysia: Musawah.

Badran, M. 2009. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences.* Oxford: Oneworld.

Beattie, T. 2005. "Religious Identity and the Ethics of Representation: The Study of Religion and Gender in the Secular Academy." In *Gender, Religion, and Diversity: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by U. King and T. Beattie, 65–78. London: Continuum.

Bender, C., and Klassen, P. E. (eds.). 2010. *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Berger, P. 1999. *The Desecularization of the World: The Resurgence of Religion in World Politics*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Bhargava, R. 2011. "Rehabilitating Secularism." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 92–114. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brah, A., and A. Phoenix. 2004. "'Ain't I a Woman?' Revisiting Intersectionality." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5(3), 75–86.

Bronner, S. 2004. *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bruce, S. 1996. *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryson, V. 2003. *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Butler, J. 2008. "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time." *British Journal of Sociology* 59(1), 1–23.

Butler, J. 2011. "Is Judaism Zionism?" In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, edited by E. Mendieta and J. VanAntwerpen, 71–90. New York: Columbia University Press.

Calhoun, C. 2011a. "Afterword: Religion's Many Powers." In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, edited by E. Mendieta and J. VanAntwerpen, 118–134. New York: Columbia University Press.

Calhoun, C. 2011b. "Secularism, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 75–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Casanova, J. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Casanova, J. 2008. “Public Religions Revisited.” In *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, edited by H. de Vries, 101–119. New York: Fordham University Press.

Castelli, E. A. 2001. “Women, Gender, Religion: Troubling Categories and Transforming Knowledge.” In *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, edited by E. A. Castelli, 3–25. New York: Palgrave/St. Martin’s Press.

Cooke, M. 2007. “A Secular State for a Postsecular Society? Postmetaphysical Political Theory and the Place of Religion.” *Constellations* 14(2), 224–238.

Crenshaw, K. 1991. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43, 1241–1299.

Davie, G. 2002. *Europe—The Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis.

(p. 432) Fekete, L. 2004. “Anti-Muslim Racism and the European Security State.” *Race & Class* 46(1), 3–29.

Fraser, N. 1990. “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy.” *Social Text* 25–26, 56–80.

Furseth, I., and P. Repstad. 2006. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives.* Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Grewal, I. 1999. “‘Women’s Rights as Human Rights’: Feminist Practices, Global Feminism and Human Rights Regimes in Transnationality.” *Citizenship Studies* 3(3), 337–354.

Gross, R. M. 1996. *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Habermas, J. 1962. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by T. Burger. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 1989.

Habermas, J. 2006. “Religion and the Public Sphere.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 1–25.

Habermas, J. 2008a. “Prepolitical Foundations of the Constitutional State?” In *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* translated by C. Cronin, 101–113. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Habermas, J. 2008b. “Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the ‘Public Use of Reason’ by Religion and Secular Citizens.” In *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, translated by C. Cronin, 114–147. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Harding, S. (ed.). 2004. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hartsock, N. C. M. 1998. *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Herbert, D. 2003. *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion* in the *Contemporary World*. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Imam, A., and Yuval-Davis, N. 2004. "Introduction." In *Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms*, edited by A. Imam, J. Morgan, and N. Yuval-Davis, ix–xviii. London: Women Living under Muslim Laws.

Jakobsen, J. R. 2010. "Ethics after Pluralism." In *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*, edited by C. Bender and P. E. Klassen, 31–58. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jakobsen, J. R., and A. Pellegrini. 2008. "Times Like These." In *Secularisms*, edited by J. R. Jakobsen and A. Pellegrini, 1–38. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Jeffery, P., and A. Basu. 1998. *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia.* London and New York: Routledge.

Kiliç, S., S. Saharso, and B. Sauer. 2008. "Introduction: The Veil: Debating Citizenship, Gender and Religious Diversity." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 15(4), 397–410.

Kymlicka, W. 1996. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levey, G. B., and T. Modood (eds.). 2009. *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Mahmood, S. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

McCann, C. R., and S. Kim (eds.). 2010. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

(p. 433) McLaughlin, J. 2003. *Feminist Social and Political Theory: Contemporary Debates and Dialogues*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mekonnen, D. R., and M. Van Reisen. 2014. "Religious Persecution in Eritrea and the Role of the European Union in Tackling the Challenge." In *Religion, Gender, and the Public Sphere*, edited by N. Reilly and S. Scriver, 232–247. London and New York: Routledge.

Mohanty, C. T. 2003. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Mukhtar, A. A. 2003. "Working within Sharia Takes You Only So Far." *Human Rights Dialogue* 2(10), 26.

Narayan, U. 2000. “Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism.” In *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial and Feminist World*, edited by U. Narayan and S. Harding, 80–100. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Norris, P., and R. Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, M. C. 2000. *Sex & Social Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Okin, S. M. 1992. *Women in Western Political Thought*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Okin, S. M. 1999. “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” In *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, edited by S. M. Okin, J. Cohen, M. Howard, and M. C. Nussbaum, 105–114. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Othman, N. 2006. “Muslim Women and the Challenge of Islamic Fundamentalism/Extremism: An Overview of Southeast Asian Muslim Women’s Struggle for Human Rights and Gender Equality.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 29(4), 339–353.

Parekh, B. 2005. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan.

Phillips, A. 2007. *Multiculturalism without Culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Phillips, A. 2009. “Religion: Ally, Threat or Just Religion?” In *A Debate on the Public Role of Religion and its Social and Gender Implications*, edited by J. Casanova and A. Phillips, 35–58. Gender and Development Programme Paper No. 5. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Razak, S. H. 2008. *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Reilly, N. 2007. “Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights.” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 22(4), 180–198.

Reilly, N. 2009. *Women’s Human Rights: Seeking Gender Justice in a Globalizing Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Reilly, N. 2011. “Rethinking the Interplay of Feminism and Secularism in a Neo-Secular Age.” *Feminist Review* 97, 5–31.

Saghal, G. 2004. “Two Cheers for Multiculturalism.” In *Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms*, edited by A. Imam, J. Morgan, and N. Yuval-Davis, 51–60. London: Women Living under Muslim Laws.

Sandel, M. J. 2006. *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Scott, J. W. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 434) Shaheed, F. 1989. *Women, Religion and Social Change in Pakistan: A Proposed Framework for Research—Draft*. International Centre for Ethnic Studies Project (1988–1989), Dossier 5–6. London: Women Living under Muslim Laws.

Shaheed, F. 1999. “Constructing Identities: Culture, Women’s Agency and the Muslim World.” *International Social Science Journal* 51(159), 61–73.

Shaheed, F. 2004. *Constructing Identities: Culture, Women’s Agency and the Muslim World*. Dossier 26. London: Women Living under Muslim Laws.

Shaheed, F. 2009. “Gender, Religion and the Quest for Justice in Pakistan.” Final Research Report prepared for Religion, Politics and Gender Equality Project. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Skjeie, H. 2007. “Headscarves in Schools: European Comparisons.” In *Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Europe: Where to Draw the Line?,* edited by M. L. P. Loenen and J. E. Goldschmidt, 129–145. Antwerp, Belgium: Intersentia.

Stepan, A. C. 2000. “Religion, Democracy, and the ‘Twin Tolerations.’” *Journal of Democracy* 11(4), 37–57.

Taylor, C. 2011. “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism.” In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, edited by E. Mendieta and J. VanAntwerpen, 34–59. New York: Columbia University Press.

Taylor, C., and A. Gutmann (eds.). 1994. *Multiculturalism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Tohidi, N., and J. Bayes (eds.). 2001. *Globalization, Gender, and Religion: The Politics of Women’s Rights in Catholic and Muslim Contexts*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tripp, A. M, J. Kwesiga, I. Casimiro, and A. Mungwa. 2009. *African Women’s Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Woodhead, L. 2008. “Gendering Secularization Theory.” *Social Compass* 55(2), 187–193.

Young, I. M. 2002. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yuval-Davis, N. 2006. “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 13(3), 193–209.

Yuval-Davis, N. 2014. “Religion and Gender in Contemporary Political Projects of Belonging.” In *Religion, Gender, and the Public Sphere*, edited by N. Reilly and S. Scriver, 31–44. London and New York: Routledge.

**Niamh Reilly**

Niamh Reilly is Established Professor in Political Science and Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Galway. For many years she has consulted on deliberations of the United Nations and Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs. She coedited Religion, Gender and the Public Sphere and authored Women’s Human Rights: Seeking Gender Justice in a Globalizing Age.

# Secularism, Race, and Political Affiliation in America

Juhem Navarro-Rivera and Yazmín García Trejo

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.27

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter introduces readers to a relatively unknown aspect of American secularism: its growing racial diversity. It discusses the importance of racial and ethnic minorities in the growth in the number of people with no religious affiliation (nones) in the United States since 1990. Furthermore, it argues and demonstrates that this growing racial diversity is a major source of the exodus of secular Americans away from the Republican Party and, to a lesser extent, toward the Democratic Party. The chapter concludes with the implications of this diversity and political affiliations for the future cohesion of the secular community in the United States and how it will be able to leverage these to gain political power in the future.

Keywords: secularism, race, political parties, African Americans, Latinos, nones

IN this chapter we explore the racial diversification of the secular population in the United States and its effects on American politics. We define these “secular” people as people who have no religious identification, including those who consider themselves to be atheist, agnostic, or have no religion in particular. This group is also known as the “nones” or the “religiously unaffiliated.” The role of race in the growth of secularism in American society has been overlooked in the literature about secularism, which has focused on the role of young, mostly white, Americans defecting from religion. Secularism has also grown significantly among racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans and Latino Americans.

To examine the role of racial and ethnic minorities in the rise of secularism, we compare the number of Americans of color among the secular population in 1990, 2008, and 2014. We use three surveys to track changes in the racial composition and partisan affiliation of the secular population. For 1990 we use the National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI; Kosmin and Lachman 1991), and for 2008 we use the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS; Kosmin and Keysar 2009). The reason for using these surveys is that the NSRI and ARIS employ the same open-ended question for asking religious identification: “What is your religion, if any?” This consistent wording allows for measuring what

the respondent thinks of his or her own religious identity, rather than selecting from a previously defined list provided by the interviewer. The ARIS has not been replicated since 2008. To update our numbers, we use the 2014 American Values Atlas (AVA; Public Religion Research Institute 2014), a nationally representative survey of American religious identification conducted in 2013 by Public Religion Research Institute. The main difference between the ARIS surveys and the AVA is that the religious affiliation question is closed-ended by asking respondents "What is your present religion, if any," and respondents are instructed to choose from a list of affiliations. The affiliations considered as nones or secular are "atheist," "agnostic," and "nothing in particular." The 1990 NSRI was conducted among a sample of (p. 436) more than 100,000 American adults while the 2008 ARIS included a sample of nearly 55,000 Americans ages eighteen and older. Similarly, the 2014 AVA includes a sample of over 50,000 American adults. These surveys include questions about racial identity and political party preference that can help us understand the diversification of secular Americans and their political views.

The growth of secular Americans of color has social and political implications. The social implications are about what we think about the group's identity. The public image of secular Americans is one of young white males abandoning religion, particularly mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. This chapter challenges that narrative. Politically, the implications are the increasing support of secular Americans in favor of the Democratic Party. In recent years secular Americans have voted overwhelmingly for Democratic Party candidates, becoming one of the most important voting blocs within the party. We argue that racial and ethnic minorities have played a major role in the continued drift of secular Americans away from the Republican Party and toward the Democratic Party.

# The Rise of Secular Americans

One of the major sociological developments in the United States is the fast growth of the secular population, or people with no particular religious identification. For decades the secular population in the United States was very stable. According to estimates by John Green (2010a), about 7 percent of Americans identified with no religion in the 1960s, a figure similar to the 8 percent reported by the 1990 NSRI. A generation later, the 2008 ARIS recorded the percentage of Americans nearly doubling to 15 percent. Evidence points to the continued growth of secular Americans up to the present day at an even faster pace. According to the Public Religion Research Institute's AVA, more than one in five (22 percent) Americans have no religious affiliation as of 2014. At 22 percent, the nonreligious is the largest group in American religious affiliation with a size similar to that of Catholics (also 22 percent). While the secular population nearly doubled in a span of eighteen years between 1990 and 2008, their numbers have grown by roughly 50 percent in slightly more than half a decade.

The rise of the secular population goes against the image of the United States as the most religious of all industrialized democracies (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Religion has been an important part of American civic life since before the time Alexis de Tocqueville

([1840] 2004) chronicled life in the United States in the early nineteenth century. The piety of the American population was one of the ways the American government used to differentiate the country from the "godless communists" of the Soviet Union during the Cold War that spanned from the middle of the twentieth century to the 1990s. American presidents include biblical quotes in their speeches, which usually close by asking God to bless the nation. How is it possible for secularism to take root in the United States, and in such a short time frame?

Given the deep religious roots in the American population, scholars have discussed the causes of the contemporary secular explosion. Two of the leading teams of scholars in these regard are Hout and Fischer (2002, 2014) and Putnam and Campbell (2010). The thesis that these scholars, with varying emphasis, present is that American secularism is driven by young people. These young Americans, especially those of the Millennial generation (born from around 1981 to around 2000), have led the exodus from religion due to the politicization of religion. This means that Millennials are leaving religion mostly because of how the (p. 437) religious right has used religion to promote a political agenda of intolerance. For example, a 2014 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute found that in the case of rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations, around a quarter of Millennials who left their childhood religion and now have no religious affiliation did so because of the treatment of LGBT people (Jones et al. 2014). Of the several causes put forth, we focus on two in particular: a generational replacement and a religious right backlash. While these two explanations are not unrelated, as we will see, they concern the two aspects of secularism explored by this chapter: demography and politics.

One of the major blind spots of focusing on Millennials as a source of growth is that it centers on a demographic that is primarily white. Most of the defections away from religion come from former white mainline Protestants and Catholics. This narrative ignores the increasing number of nonreligious Americans of color due to the stereotype of people of color as religious. We argue that explanations focusing on secular individuals tend to ignore the role of racial diversity in the fast growth of the secular population. Moreover, the increase in the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities in the secular population impacts the overall political leanings of the group. While secular Americans have historically more likely to affiliate with the Democratic Party than the Republican Party, voting accordingly so, the rate of affiliation toward the Democratic Party—and disaffiliation with the Republican Party—has increased over time.

# Race and Religion in America

Table 27.1 shows how the white share of the secular population has increased rapidly in the current decade. In the nearly two decades between 1990 and 2008, the number of Americans with no religious identification increased by nearly 20 million. Surprisingly, in just six years between 2008 and 2014, that number has also increased by nearly 20 mil-

lion. In less than a quarter of a century, the secular population has increased by nearly 40 million, and percentage-wise it has increased faster than the general population growth.

Table 26.1 Racial Composition of Secular Americans 1990, 2008, 2014

| | **1990** | **2008** | **2014** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Estimate* | *14.3 Million* | *34.2 Million* | *53.1 Million* |
| White | 80% | 72% | 69% |
| Black | 10% | 8% | 9% |
| Hispanic | 4% | 12% | 12% |
| Other[a] | 6% | 8% | 10% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% |

([a]) Includes Asian Americans, people who identify with more than one race, and people who identify with other racial groups.

*Sources*: National Survey of Religious Identification (1990); American Religious Identification Survey (2008); American Values Atlas (2014).

(p. 438)

Like the American population overall, the secular population is becoming more diverse. In 1990 Americans of color accounted for one in five secular Americans, totaling just under 3 million of the roughly 14 million nones in the country. As the number and percentage of the nonreligious increased and gained attention, many of the explanations for their growth focused on the young people abandoning religion. Members of the Millennial generation are considered major agents of the growth of secularism. According to much research, young Americans account for a disproportionate share of the secular population. Americans under the age of thirty account for 21 percent of the US population but one-third of the secular population. As Kosmin and Navarro-Rivera (2012) show, the increase in secular identification is not just a feature of Millennials. The preceding Generation X (roughly 1961 to 1981) also experienced major gains in the size of its secular population. As Table 26.1 shows, there is more to the growth of secularism than just age cohorts.

In 1990 the ratio of white to nonwhite nonreligious Americans was four to one, which was reduced to two to one by 2014, showing the importance of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and other people of color in the growth of secularism in the United States. These racial and ethnic minority groups, often thought to be among the most religious in the country, have contributed to nearly 40 percent of the growth in secularism in

the United States since 1990. As a result, secular Americans of color now account for nearly one-third of all nones. The racial composition of secular Americans has started to resemble the rest of the country.

As the country continues to change in its racial composition to a future when people of color will collectively comprise the majority of the population, it is important to highlight the major role they have played in the increase of American secularism. Moreover, a narrative that focuses on the young and white diminishes the contribution of important segments of the population, making it harder for secular organizations to reach out to potential new members by making them look important only because they show the diversity of the membership without seriously taking into consideration their experiences. The substantial contributions of secular Americans of color to the community are not just limited to the growing size of secularism and racial diversity. People of color are contributing to subtle but important changes to the political views of the community. This is especially true when it comes to political affiliation and voting in US elections.

# Partisanship in America

The political system in the United States features two major political parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These major parties have a mostly decentralized structure and act more as "umbrella organizations" for various interest groups. These groups form the constituencies of the parties and develop the parties' platforms as well as serve as the base for candidate recruitment.

The importance of religion in America is that it acts as a powerful predictor of partisan affiliation in the United States today and an even stronger predictor of attitudes toward the so-called culture war issues. Debates over the rights of LGBT people, women's rights—including reproductive rights—as well as other issues related to sexuality fall under this banner. The political debates over these culture war issues occur between those who (p. 439) oppose policies such as allowing same-sex couples to legally marry or legalized abortion and those who are in favor of these policies. Secular Americans tend to favor the implementation of these policies (Jones et al. 2014), while Americans on the other side of the religious spectrum—people who attend religious services often and have a strong sense of belief in God—are more likely to oppose these policies. Politically, in recent years, these issues have become partisan. Members and leaders of the Republican Party favor conservative attitudes on culture war issues, such as banning legal abortion and opposing legal marriage between people of the same sex. People who affiliate with the Democratic Party have moved toward the opposite positions by favoring, for the most part, those policies. The best examples of this partisan polarization rooted in religion are the voting records of the two extreme opposites in American religious landscape: White evangelical Protestants and secular Americans. According to an analysis by the Pew Research Center between 2004 and 2012, the Democratic Party presidential candidates received an average of 71 percent of the secular vote. During that same time period Republican Party candidates averaged 77 percent of the white evangelical Protestant vote.

In addition to religion, race is also a major predictor of partisan affiliation. Like religion, the parties' stances on issues affect how people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds perceive them. The main racial differences concern issues of civil rights and liberties, criminal justice issues, and economic justice. In recent elections, people of color (e.g. African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans) have overwhelmingly favored the Democratic Party candidates over the Republican Party candidates (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research 2015). Since 2004 the Democratic Party has received an average of 92 percent of the African American vote and 64 percent of the Latino and Asian American vote. Republican candidates have received an average of 57 percent of the white vote.

The importance of these racial and religious dynamics in politics is the overlap between religion and race. Religious Americans overwhelmingly support the Republican Party. Yet Americans of color (particularly African Americans and Latinos) who are very religious tend to support the Democratic Party. On several issues related to the culture war, such as same-sex marriage, African American Protestants have been on the same side as Republicans opposing the legalization of these marriages (Jones et al. 2014). Moreover, although most African American Protestants are of the evangelical kind and believe in Biblical literalism and the inerrancy of the Bible just as white evangelicals do, "there has been virtually no movement whatsoever among [African American] biblical literalists toward the Republican Party" (McDaniel and Ellison 2008: 189).

The Black Church, as the religious cultural institutions of African Americans are collectively known, is one of the settings for debating issues relevant to that community (Harris-Lacewell 2004). African Americans have some of the highest rates of religious affiliation among racial and ethnic groups in the United States, and they report the highest levels of attendance to religious services. The visible role of the Black Church in American politics suggests that African American churches are hotbeds of political organization. However, Calhoun-Brown states,

> [I]t is a mistake to assume that the majority of African American churches are political environments. It is not correct to assert that, at least politically, a mega institution like "the black church" even exists as far as it impacts an individual's propensity to vote and participate in non-electoral modes of political behavior. The data reveal a large degree of variation in the type of churches that respondents attend and political significance to the variation. (1996: 951)

**(p. 440)** This implies that the politics of African Americans are not determined by their religious leaders and that the role of these leaders in politics is limited. This is especially true of the minority of African Americans who profess no religious affiliation. If most religious African Americans are not affected by the politics of the Black Church, it should have no effect among those who are openly not religious.

The politics of Latino Americans cannot be stereotyped either. This population descends or comes from countries where the Spanish Empire once ruled in the Americas. Along with its political rule, the Spanish brought their official religion with them. Over the course of three centuries, the Catholic Church became the most important social and po-

litical institution in Latin American countries. Most of the region is still Catholic; in fact, according to the Pew Research Center, Latin America is the most Catholic region in the world. The Catholic Church's dominance over Latin America easily extended to Latinos living in the United States. A majority of Latinos are still Catholic; according to the 1990 NSRI, about two-thirds (66 percent) of Latinos identified as Catholic. Recent studies by the Pew Research Center and Public Religion Research Institute estimate the percentage of Latino Catholics at 53 or 54 percent. A significant source of the decline comes from waves of conversions to Protestantism, particularly after the 1960s. Today, the largest source of Catholic decline among Latinos is the increase in the number who do not identify as religious. This group doubled its size from 6 percent to 12 percent between 1990 and 2008 (Navarro-Rivera et al. 2010) and is now reaching 20 percent of the Latino population (American Values Atlas 2015).

After Latinos and African Americans, measuring the size of other ethnic groups becomes complicated due to data limitations. It is known that Asian Americans, the third-largest racial minority in the country, accounts for roughly 3 to 4 percent of the population. Contrary to most Latinos, who share a colonial past with Spain and Catholicism, or African Americans, who share a history of slavery, Asian Americans have ancestries or origins in various countries. These countries mostly share being located in the Asian continent and have a variety of languages and religions, which makes it harder to generalize. Finding statistics of religious change is hard because until recently most surveys did not disaggregate Asian American respondents. However, results from the 2008 ARIS and the 2014 AVA show that many Asian Americans identify as nonreligious. In 2008, 27 percent of Asian American identified as nones, a number nearly twice as high as the population as a whole (Kosmin and Keysar 2009), while the AVA shows that close to three in ten Asian Americans identified as nonreligious in 2014.

# Race, Secularism, and Politics

Secular Americans are known for predominantly supporting Democratic Party candidates. As discussed earlier, some of the reasons for the group's political behavior are related to the Republican Party's strong religious constituency, so supporting this particular party is difficult for many secular Americans. That is why it is important to understand the intersection between religion and politics in the United States. Shared religious values and identities serve as a "source of cohesion and support for democratic politics" (Barbeu et al. 2011: 537). Like religion, race is a source of cohesion for many racial minorities in the country, not necessarily (p. 441) because of shared beliefs but more because of shared experiences. These experiences may include discrimination experienced due to skin color, language, or physical appearance, even when individuals within those groups are internally heterogeneous in terms of social class, educational background, and other social and demographic characteristics.

These diverse experiences also include religion, despite the way race is typically regarded as dictating politics in these communities. Leal (2010: 309) explains how religion is im-

portant among Latinos and how the impact of Latino religious activism and movements has been overlooked. In the case of African Americans, the contrary is often the case. As Wielhouwer (2009: 403) recounts, black churches have influenced the political activism and organization of the communities. At the same time, the number of churches engaged in political activity is limited.

This narrative of Americans of color concerned mostly about race or being religious activists erases the contributions of secular people of color. This view ignores the contributions of people like Frederick Douglass or James Baldwin, outstanding thinkers whose secularism was part of their world outlook. It also ignores the contributions to secular government of people like Benito Juárez, who forged a secular republic in the very religious country of Mexico, or Nemesio Canales, an atheist who skewered Puerto Rican society with satire in the way Mark Twain did in American society. Secular Americans of color, knowingly or not, belong to a long tradition of questioning their social institutions. This questioning includes diverging from traditional habits of racial or ethnic groups in the political arena.

Regarding the nones and American political parties, the two political features highlighted in the literature are the tendency of secular Americans to (a) vote for Democratic Party candidates and identify with the Democratic Party while also tending to identify as political independents and (b) hold liberal views toward topics such as abortion and same-sex marriage (Green 2010a). In 2012, 70 percent of nonreligious Americans voted for Barack Obama, a level of support similar to the 2008 voting percentage. While the levels of support for Obama in 2012 and 2008 were historically high, these were not completely out of the norm for Democratic Party presidential candidates. Since at least 1980, secular Americans have preferred the Democratic Party candidates over their Republican Party counterparts (Bolce and De Maio 2007; Green 2010a, 2010b; Guth et al. 2006; Navarro-Rivera 2012; Smidt et al. 2007). The Democratic Party candidates have won the majority of the vote of secular Americans in most elections since 1980 (Green 2010a), the sole exception being 1980 when a plurality of the nonreligious supported Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter over Republican candidate (and eventual winner) Ronald Reagan, while 16 percent favored independent candidate John Anderson.

In addition to their political preferences, research on their voting behavior finds that secular Americans are less likely to vote in presidential and midterm elections (Smidt et al. 2007) than Americans do in general. These differences may be related to the youth of the group, since younger Americans tend to have lower levels of voter turnout than older Americans (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Atheists are the exception as the only secular subgroup “more likely to vote than the average citizen” (Wielhouwer 2009: 406).This pattern makes sense because voters tend to be better educated and have higher incomes than nonvoters (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), and atheists have the highest levels of education and income of all secular subgroups (Cox 2013).

The data in Table 26.2 shows that secular Americans have a propensity of not declaring a preference for the two major political parties. A majority of Americans, according to these

(p. 442) three years of data, consider themselves “independent” of the two major political parties or refuse to provide an answer as to which is their preferred political party. This propensity has grown over time. By 2014, nearly six in ten secular Americans did not identify with a major political party.

Table 26.2 Political Party Affiliation of Secular Americans 1990, 2008, 2014

| | **1990** | **2008** | **2014** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Estimate* | *14.3 Million* | *34.2 Million* | *53.1 Million* |
| Democrat | 27% | 34% | 32% |
| Independent | 42% | 41% | 49% |
| Republican | 21% | 12% | 10% |
| Other/Don’t Know | 8% | 12% | 9% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% |

*Sources*: National Survey of Religious Identification (1990); American Religious Identification Survey (2008); American Values Atlas (2014).

When examining affiliation with the two major political parties, we also notice major changes. Secular Americans’ affiliation with the major parties has declined, but it has not been uniform across both parties. The percentage of seculars affiliated to the Democratic Party increased 5 percentage points between 1990 and 2008, from 27 percent to 34 percent; in 2014 the percentage declined slightly to 32 percent. By contrast, secular Americans have been disaffiliating from the Republican Party. In 1990, 21 percent of secular Americans identified with the Republican Party, just 6 percentage points less than those who identified with the Democratic Party. In 2008 the percentage decreased to 12 percent, and by 2014 it further decreased to 10 percent.

This means that while in 1990 the ratio of Democrats to Republicans among secular Americans was close to one to one, by 2008 it had increased to nearly two to one. In 2014 the ratio increased again to more than three Democrats for every Republican, but this recent trend is due to declining percentages of Republicans overall.

Figure 26.1 puts these changes in perspective. The chart shows the changes in partisan affiliation by showing the numbers of secular Americans affiliated with each party or identifying as independents. In 1990 there were just under 1 million more secular Americans identifying as Democrats (3.9 million) than as Republican (3 million). In 2008 the number of Democrats tripled to 11.6 million, but the number of secular Americans identi-

fying as Republicans increased by just 1.1 million to 4.1 million, a 25 percent increase. Between 2008 and 2014, the number of Democratic Party–affiliated secular further increased to 17 million (about 33 percent) while the number of Republicans increased just 1.2 million.

These divides are important for understanding the current political potential of secular Americans as a group into the future, and they provide hints about the recent and not-so-recent past among the secular. They are also important for further exploring group identification where race intersects with nonreligious groups, as similar experiences emerge from ways that secular people of color live in American society. A deeper look at (p. 443) the changes in partisan affiliation shows that this tendency has been driven in large part by secular communities of color. Of the 3.9 million secular Americans affiliated with the Democratic Party in 1990, 3 million were white and 900,000 persons were of color (primarily African American and Latino). Of the 3 million Republican secular Americans, 2.6 million were white and 400,000 persons were of color in 1990. By 2014, the number of secular Americans identifying as Democrats increased more than four times, but major racial differences emerged. More than 5 million of those identifying as Democrats between 1990 and 2014 are secular Americans of color while 8 million are white Americans. This means that 39 percent of the growth in secular Democrats comes from communities of color. In the case of Republican secular Americans, just 13 percent come from communities of color. In nearly a quarter century, the number of Republican Party–affiliated secular Americans of color increased by 300,000. Among white secular Americans, the number is 2 million.

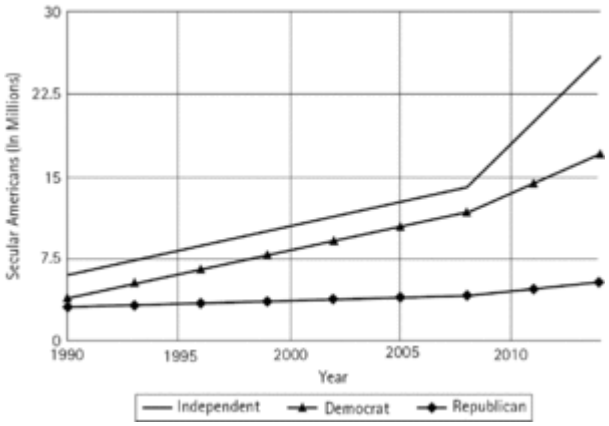


*Figure 26.1* Partisan Affiliation of Secular Americans 1990, 2008, 2014.

These results make sense when looking at how race and partisanship operate in the American political system. African Americans are among the most religious Americans (Calhoun-Brown 1996, 1998; Ellison 1993). For example, ARIS 2008 shows that 87 percent of African Americans identify with a religion. Moreover, they also have high rates of religious participation; McKenzie (2004: 626) finds that about just 24 percent of African Americans report never attending religious services. Due to these high levels of religiosity, the role of the church is very important in African American culture and politics. Many

prominent leaders of the African American community have come from the Black Church, and the Black Church is one of the preeminent institutions that African Americans trust as one of the few spaces for discussing issues relevant to the community (Harris-Lacewell 2004). Among these important issues are matters of social and economic justice. The importance of the church to African American community life may explain the lower rates of secularism among this group. As Ellison argues, unaffiliated blacks seem to "lack the supportive social ties, identity affirmation, and positive reflected appraisals that are afforded by church (p. 444) participation and divine relations, they apparently are able to compensate at least in part for this deficit" (1993: 1042). However, African Americans are strong supporters of the Democratic Party despite holding what are considered "traditional views" associated with conservative Christians who affiliate with the Republican Party (Martin 2005).

One of the main reasons for African Americans' Democratic Party affiliation is a perception that the Republican Party does not offer them a space where they feel welcome within the party. The Republican Party today is evidently conservative on racial issues, such as civil rights. The racial polarization in the constituencies of the Democratic Party, supported by the vast majority of African Americans, and the Republican Party, displaying little racial diversity in its ranks, can be linked to the struggle for civil rights. As liberal Democrats, particularly in the North, supported the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s and 1970s, the more conservative Democratic South began turning Republican. Today the South features few Democratic members in the US House of Representatives, and none of these Democrats from the southern delegation is racially white. Given the affinity of African Americans for the Democratic Party, and the affinity of secular Americans in general for that party as well, it comes to no surprise that secular African Americans are more likely than white secular Americans to report affiliation with the Democratic Party.

A similar pattern occurs with Latinos, who show religious affiliation rates lower than African Americans and whose affiliation has undergone rapid changes. ARIS 2008 found that 12 percent of Latinos had no religious affiliation (Kosmin and Keysar 2009), while more recent estimates from the Pew Research Center (2014) and Public Religion Research Institute (2014) raise this figure to 18 percent. The Latino religious landscape is also more diverse than African Americans' dominant Protestantism. A majority of Latinos are Catholic; Catholics and seculars are most likely to identify with the Democratic Party, while Protestant Latinos have the highest levels of identification with the Republican Party (Navarro-Rivera et al. 2010). As Leal points out, although the majority of Latinos are Catholics, "various Protestants denominations have made inroads among Latinos in recent years—primarily evangelical and Pentecostal churches" (2010: 313). Latinos with no religion are more liberal in their political views than Latino Protestants (Valenzuela 2014: 931). Latinos without a religious identification reported the highest support among Latinos for Obama in 2012 (81 percent) while evangelical Christians supported Republican candidate Mitt Romney (51 percent) (Jones et al. 2013). Secular Latinos, given their political views and the political affiliation patterns of their religious co-ethnics, have higher

levels of Democratic Party affiliation. As their numbers in the secular community increase, they affect the political leanings of the Latino community as a whole.

The increasing numbers of secular Americans coming from communities of color are transforming the political behavior of secular Americans. Republican Party identification has also declined among secular white Americans, suggesting that the strong influence of the religious right has negatively influenced the views of secular Americans regarding the Republican Party, but the intersectionality of race and secular affiliation drives the lower levels of Republican Party affiliation among secular Americans of color. Secular Americans of color, primarily African Americans and Latinos, propelled the exodus away from the Republican Party because they are less likely to support this party, even as they are a substantial reason for the growth of secularism in the United States between 1990 and 2014.

## (p. 445) Predicting Political Trends

By the year 2050, racial and ethnic minorities such as African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans will constitute the majority of the population of the United States. A context of racial diversity influences the study of secularism in America. In this chapter we argue that explanations focusing mostly on young peoples' drifting away from religion and becoming disenchanted with the increasing prominence of conservative religion tends to underplay the role of racial and ethnic minorities in the increase of a secular population, especially in the last generation.

The addition of racial diversity to the study of the secular population brings social and political implications to the status quo of research explaining the rise of the nones in the United States. The social implications originate from the need to challenge explanations that the secular growth is only explained by the increase of young, white males Millennials who do not affiliate with any religion. This perspective overlooks the role that young people of color, especially African Americans and Latinos, have played on the increase of secularism. As we demonstrate in our analysis, people of color account for nearly 40 percent of the growth in secularism in the United States since 1990.

Latinos in particular are contributing to this trend partly because they have a Catholic historical background and Catholicism has been one of the religious institutions depleted by the rise of the secular population. Although the percentage of secular African Americans is smaller, it is necessary to understand the context in which African American secularism develops, in which the Black Church dominates social and cultural communal institutions. However, African American secularism has been with us for many years, and many prominent African Americans have been leaders of secular thought, while better known for accomplishments in other areas. Secular thinkers such as Frederick Douglass or A. Philip Randolph are best known for activism in favor of racial equality and justice.

Rising numbers of secular Americans voting for Democratic Party candidates, even when most identify as independent, suggests that the Republican Party needs to improve their outreach to secular Americans. As more secular Americans continue to come from communities of color, the racial politics of the Republican Party and the influence of the religious right will clash with this subgroup of secular Americans. Gender issues will also become also important as women continue to increase as a share of the secular population. The Republican Party has been steadfastly conservative toward reproductive health issues that matter to women, at a time when the number of secular women is also growing. Another source of secular growth comes from the LGBT community as a significant percentage of LGBT Americans identify as secular and also have low levels of Republican Party affiliation.

The remaining category, and the largest, of the secular population is white males. There is an assumption that many secular white males may be attracted to the Republican Party, especially those with a libertarian bent. A survey released by Public Religion Research Institute and the Brookings Institution shows that while most libertarians are secular white males, and they tend to affiliate more with the Republican rather than the Democratic Party, these are a small fraction of all secular Americans, and they are likely the core base of the secular Republican constituency rather than a potential source of growth (Jones et al. 2013). Members of these communities do not identify with any religion, they do not feel welcome (p. 446) in the Republican Party, and their Democratic Party identification and their “independent” affiliation have both been increasing.

# Conclusion

The political future of secular Americans will largely depend on how well they navigate the intersectionalities among their component groups. Moreover, as this community grows more diverse, it raises the possibility of coalescing with other groups based on race, gender, or other identities. Given that this may also entail coalescing with religious groups, especially when it comes to Democratic Party politics, secular American leaders will have to figure out a way of defining their interests and what can and cannot be negotiated. As part of a future research agenda on the diversity and politics of secular Americans, it is important to understand the negotiation of identities among secular Americans of color. Specifically, to what extent do they feel that their identities shape their political views, and how connected do they feel to each (racial and secular) community?

We also need to understand the relationship between secular Americans of color and religious Americans of color. Do secular Americans of color feel shunned by their racial communities when these are particularly religious? Can they navigate both worlds in order to play roles in creating political alliances with religious people when the communities share common goals? Furthermore, we need to explore gender identities as well. How these identities also affect the political beliefs and behavior of secular people is crucial to understand the future of secular political participation. While more research is necessary, it

is clear that diversity will play a major role in the political cohesion of secular Americans in the future.

## Bibliography

Baker, Joseph, and Buster Smith. 2009a. “None Too Simple: Examining Issues of Religious Nonbelief and Nonbelonging in the United States.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48(4), 719–733.

Baker, Joseph, and Buster G. Smith. 2009b. “The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated.” *Social Forces* 87(3), 1251–1263.

Barbeau, Aimee, Carin Robinson, and Clyde Wilcox. 2011. “A Vine with Many Branches: Religion and Public Opinion Research.” In *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*, edited by George C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, 535–551. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bolce, Louis, and Gerald De Maio. 2007. “Secularists, Antifundamentalists, and the New Religious Divide in the American Electorate.” In *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*, edited by J. Matthew Wilson, 251–276. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Bolks, Sean M., Diana Evans, J. L. Polinard, and Robert D. Wrinkle. 2000. “Core Beliefs and Abortion Attitudes: A Look at Latinos.” *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1), 253–260.

Brown, R. Khari, and Ronald E. Brown. 2015. “Race/Ethnicity, Religion and Partisan Leanings.” *Review of Religious Research* 57(4), 469–505.

(p. 447) Bullivant, Stephen, and Lois Lee. 2012. “Interdisciplinary Studies of Non-Religion and Secularity: The State of the Union.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27(1), 19–27.

Calhoun-Brown, Allison. 1996. “African American Churches and Political Mobilization: The Psychological Impact of Organizational Resources.” *Journal of Politics* 58(4), 935–953.

Calhoun-Brown, Allison. 1998. “While Marching to Zion: Otherworldliness and Racial Empowerment in the Black Community.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37(3), 427–439.

Cox, Daniel. 2013. “Is Atheism Only for the Upper Class? Socioeconomic Differences among the Religiously Unaffiliated.” *Huffington Post* (24 April). **http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-cox/is-atheism-only-for-the-upper-class-socioeconomic-differences-among-the-religiously-unaffiliated_b_3146894.html**.

DeSipio, Louis. 2007. “Secularists, Antifundamentalists, and the New Religious Divide in the American Electorate.” In *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*, edited by J. Matthew Wilson, 161–184. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1840. *Democracy in America*. Repr. New York: Library of America, 2004.

Djupe, Paul A., and Laura R. Olson. 2007. “A Meditation on and Meta-Analysis of the Public Presence of Religious Interests.” In *Religious Interest in Community Conflict: Beyond the Culture War*, 253–280. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press.

Ellison, Christopher G. 1993. “Religious Involvement and Self-Perception among Black Americans.” *Social Forces* 71(4), 1027–1055.

Funk, Cary, and Jessica Hamar Martinez. 2014. “The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States: Nearly One-in-Four Latinos Are Former Catholics.” Pew Research Center. **http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/**.

Funk, Cary, and Greg Smith. 2015. “‘Nones’ on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation.” Pew Research Center. **http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/10/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf**.

Green, John C. 2010a. “Gauging the God Gap: Religion and Voting in US Presidential Elections.” In *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, edited by Jan E. Leighley, 443–452. New York: Oxford University Press.

Green, John C. 2010b. “Religious Diversity and American Democracy: A View from the Polls.” In *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?* edited by Alan Wolfe and Ira Katznelson, 46–88. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Green, John C. 2015. “Religion and the Presidential Vote: A Tale of Two Gaps.” Pew Research Center. **http://www.pewforum.org/2007/08/21/religion-and-the-presidential-vote-a-tale-of-two-gaps/**.

Guth, James L., Lyman A. Kellstedt, John C. Green, and Corwin E. Smidt. 2007. “Getting the Spirit? Religious and Partisan Mobilization in the 2004 Elections.” In *Interest Group Politics*, edited by Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, 157–181. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Guth, James L., Lyman Kellstedt, Corwin E. Smidt, and John C. Green. 2006. “Religious Influences in the 2004 Presidential Election.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36(2), 223–242.

Harris, Fredrick C. 2010. “Entering the Promised Land? The Rise of Prosperity Gospel and Post-Civil Rights Black Politics.” In *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?* edited by Alan Wolfe and Ira Katznelson, 255–278. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. 2004. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 448) Hout, Michael, and Claude S. Fischer. 2002. “Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations.” *American Sociological Review* 67(2), 165–190.

Hout, Michael, and Claude S. Fischer. 2014. “Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Political Backlash and Generational Succession, 1987–2012.” *Sociological Science* 1, 423–447.

Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. 2013. “What Americans (Still) Want from Immigration Reform.” Public Religion Research Institute. **http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2013.Immigration_Phase2.WEB-copy.pdf**.

Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. 2014. *A Shifting Landscape. A Decade of Change in American Attitudes about Same-Sex Marriage and LGBT Issues*. Washington, D.C.: Public Religion Research Institute. **http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014.LGBT_REPORT.pdf**.

Jones-Correa, Michael A., and David L. Leal. 2001. “Political Participation: Does Religion Matter?” *Political Research Quarterly* 54(4), 751–770.

Kelly, Nathan J., and Jana Kelly. 2005. “Religion and Latino Partisanship in the United States.” *Political Research Quarterly* 58(1), 87–95.

Kelly, Nathan J., and Jana Morgan. 2008. “Religious Traditionalism and Latino Politics in the United States.” *American Politics Research* 36(2), 236–263.

Kosmin, Barry, and Ariela Keysar. 2006. *Religion in a Free Market: Religious and Non-Religious Americans : Who, What, Why, Where*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Paramount Market.

Kosmin, Barry, and Ariela Keysar. 2009. *American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2008) Summary Report*. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture. **http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/08/ARIS_Report_2008.pdf**.

Kosmin, Barry, Ariela Keysar, Ryan T. Cragun, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. 2009. “American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population. A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008.” Hartford, Conn.: Trinity College. **http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/facpub/14/**.

Kosmin, Barry, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. 2012. *The Transformation of Generation X: Shifts in Religious and Political Self-Identification, 1990–2008*. **http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/facpub/60/**.

Kosmin, Barry, and Seymour Lachman. 1991. *Research Report: The National Survey of Religious Identification, 1989–90*. **http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2013/11/ARIS-1990-report1.pdf**.

Kosmin, Barry A., and Seymour Lachman. 1994. *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*. New York: Crown.

Leal, David L. 2010. “Religion and the Political and Civic Lives of Latinos.” In *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?* edited by Alan Wolfe and Ira Katznelson, 255–278. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Martin, William. 2005. *With God On Our Side : The Rise of the Religious Right in America*. New York: Broadway Books.

Martini, Nicholas F. 2012. “‘La Iglesia’ in Politics? Religion and Latino Public Opinion.” *Social Science Quarterly* 93(4), 988–1006.

McDaniel, Eric L., and Christopher G. Ellison. 2008. “God’s Party? Race, Religion, and Partisanship over Time.” *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2), 180–191.

McKenzie, Brian D. 2004. “Religious Social Networks, Indirect Mobilization, and African-American Political Participation.” *Political Research Quarterly* 57(4), 621–632.

(p. 449) Navarro-Rivera, Juhem. 2012. “The Evolution of the Religiously Unaffiliated Vote, 1980–2008.” Public Religion Research Institute. **http://publicreligion.org/2012/10/the-evolution-of-the-religiously-unaffiliated-vote-1980-2008/**.

Navarro-Rivera, Juhem, Barry A. Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar. 2010. *U.S. Latino Religious Identification 1990–2008: Growth, Diversity & Transformation*. Hartford, Conn.: Trinity College. **http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/facpub/9/**.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Pew Research Center. 2014. *The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States*. Washington, D.C. **http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/**.

Public Religion Research Institute. 2014. *The American Values Atlas*. **https://ava.publicreligion.org/**.

Public Religion Research Institute. 2015. *The American Values Atlas*. **https://ava.publicreligion.org/**.

Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. 2015. “Presidential Elections.” **http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/polls/us-elections/presidential-elections/**.

Rosenstone, Steven J., and John Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: Macmillan.

Smidt, Corwin E., John C. Green, Lyman Kellstedt, and James Guth. 2007. “What Does the Lord Require? Evangelicals and the 2004 Presidential Vote.” In *Religion and the Bush Presidency*, edited by Mark J. Rozell and Gleaves Whitney, 31–47. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Valenzuela, Ali Adam. 2014. “Tending the Flock: Latino Religious Commitments and Political Preferences.” *Political Research Quarterly* 4(67), 930–942.

Wielhouwer, Peter W. 2009. “Religion and American Political Participation.” In *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, edited by James L. Guth, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and Corwin E. Smidt, 394–426. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Juhem Navarro-Rivera**

Juhem Navarro-Rivera is a Research Associate at the Public Religion Research Institute, and is completing a PhD at the University of Connecticut. He coauthored the 2008 report American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population (Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture).

**Yazmín García Trejo**

Yazmín A. García Trejo is a research scholar at El Instituto: Institute of Latino, Caribbean and Latin American Studies at the University of Connecticut. She holds a doctorate in political science from the University of Connecticut. Her academic interests focus on the differences in the growth of secularism in Latin American countries.

# Black Infidels: Secular Humanism, Atheism, and African American Social Thought

Sikiyu Hutchinson

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.28

## Abstract and Keywords

African Americans are among the most religious groups in the United States. Consequently, secular humanism and atheism are largely anathema to mainstream African Americans. Nonetheless, secular humanist and atheist traditions have coexisted with religious traditions in African American social thought and community as a progressive political and cultural counterweight to black religious orthodoxy. Radical or progressive humanism is specifically concerned with the liberation struggle of disenfranchised peoples. Organized religion is one of many powerful forces solidifying inequity based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism are amplified and reinforced by economic injustice institutionalized under global capitalism. Hence, humanism is especially relevant for people of color living in conditions of structural inequality in which the state serves only the human rights of the wealthy.

Keywords: African Americans, secular humanism, atheism, feminism, civil rights

> It is not too much to say that whoever wishes to become a truly moral human being … must first divorce himself from all the prohibitions, crimes, and hypocrisies of the Christian church. If the concept of God has any validity or any use, it can only be to make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of Him.
>
> James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1993: 47)

SATURDAY afternoon, like clockwork, the street corner preachers on Crenshaw and King Boulevard in South Los Angeles take to the stage. Decked out in flowing robes and dreadlocks, they fulminate into their mikes about the universe, God’s will, and unnatural homosexuals to a motley audience of drivers and passengers waiting for the next express bus. Members of the Black Israelites, they are part of a long tradition of “prophetic witness” and performative religiosity in urban African American communities. This particular corner of black America is a hotbed of social commerce. Kids who have just gotten out of school mingle jubilantly as pedestrians flow past fast-food places, mom and pop retailers,

street vendors, and Jehovah's Witnesses hawking *Watchtower* magazines. The Israelites have become an enduring part of this shifting tableaux. Exclusively male and virulently sexist and homophobic in their rhetoric, they are tolerated in many African American communities, in part because of the visceral appeal of black nationalism. In addition to articulating a vision of religious zealotry, the Israelites are also performing a caricature of black masculinity, one that links the "scourge" of homosexuality and fallen women to the destruction of the black family.

In many respects, organized religion, specifically Christianity, has functioned as a gender-defining mechanism for African Americans. The legacies of slavery, the Enlightenment, and scientific racism have racialized gender, such that Western notions of masculinity and femininity pivot on hierarchies of race. Forged in Enlightenment ideology, "New World" notions of civilized sovereign white manhood and idealized white womanhood were predicated on the antipode of the dark savage Other. Hence, African Americans utilized Christianity to (p. 451) disrupt this regime. Christianity enabled African Americans to stake a claim to being human and to being American. It provided ontological meaning and context to the Holocaust of African slavery. And it also prescribed a rigid hierarchy of masculinity and femininity based on heterosexist norms. These norms aligned African Americans with European ideals of family and domesticity. Despite centuries of racial apartheid, African Americans have struggled to achieve these ideals.

It is precisely because of these regimes of power that nontheism and secular humanism are problematic for mainstream African Americans. According to the Pew Religion Research Forum, 87 percent of African Americans are religious, making African Americans among the most religious communities in the United States (Pew Research Center 2009). Thus, while there is tolerance for the very public bigotry of the Black Israelites, African Americans collectively view atheism and atheists as distasteful. African Americans have some of the most negative views of atheists among all groups (Edgell et al. 206). Performer Steve Harvey's charge that atheists have no morals underscored how much atheism is associated with otherness and deviance. In a racist culture, the otherness and deviance associated with atheism is at odds with the elusive quest for assimilation. Granted there have been few politically prominent African American atheists to provide cultural context and validation for black nonbelief. However, aversion to secular humanism devalues the humanist legacy of African American social thought.

A belief system that encompass atheist, agnostic, freethinking, and skeptical worldviews, secular humanism holds that humankind ultimately rises or falls on its own. Instead of demanding moral obedience to deities and supernatural forces, secular humanism frames morality in terms of principles of justice, fairness, and equality. Reason and the scientific method are the most viable ways of understanding the natural world. The afterlife is a fiction concocted by human beings to assuage fear of death and the unknown. And the dogmas and "moving goal posts" of many organized religions (i.e., a god or gods as responsible for both suffering and freedom from suffering) often inhibit the quest for knowledge and respect for human potential.

Radical or progressive humanism is specifically concerned with the liberation struggle of disenfranchised peoples. Organized religion is one of many powerful forces solidifying inequity based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism are amplified and reinforced by economic injustice institutionalized under global capitalism. Hence, humanism is especially relevant for people of color living in conditions of structural inequality in which the state serves only the human rights of the wealthy.

In his article "Anybody There? Reflections on African American Humanism," Anthony Pinn maintains: "Humanism … is a way of ordering our world and our lives through giving equal attention to human failure and human potential as the launching platform for more sustained engagement with community and dignity" (1997). For Pinn, the cultural context of black humanist influence is critical. Contrary to the belief that black humanists are alien interlopers derailing the black Jesus train, he stresses that

> African Americans who embrace humanism … do not live in isolation. They are able to draw on the wisdom of African American humanists who have come before them … who have embraced this perspective … before it was labeled [as such].
>
> (Pinn 2006: 73)

So, instead of being an abstract trope with no bearing on everyday black experience, humanism is a vital lens for critical consciousness. In contrast to the bigoted dogma of the Black (p. 452) Israelites, the work of Jeffrey "P-funk" Mitchell, public philosopher and YouTube pioneer (he touts having had the first videos on the web addressing atheism), speaks to this legacy. Since 2006, the L.A.-based Mitchell has been documenting his engagement with everyday folk on atheism and faith. Using the handle "Atheist Walking," Mitchell conducts free-ranging philosophical inquiries into Christianity's contradictions with a rolling camera and a satirically raised eyebrow. Often adopting the role of the bemused interlocutor, he delves into "atheist spirituality," biblical literalism, and the paradoxes of faith.

In one of his online videos set at a bus stop, Mitchell comments, "I want people to look at each other with the same reverence that they look at God and realize that 'we' did this, we made this happen." The "we" represents will, agency, and motive force, qualities that many believers attribute to God as omniscient architect and overseer. "God's plan" or divine providence is then rendered inscrutable. Nonbelievers are compelled to ask if individual actions (for good or ill) are determined by God or if human beings simply act on their own volition in a universe overseen by God. Since time immemorial, nonbelievers have questioned God's control over those who commit evil acts or whether or not hell is the only "medium" for justice. By refusing to invest supernatural forces with authorial power over human affairs, humanism emphasizes human responsibility for the outcome of our pursuits. Morality is defined by just deeds, fairness, equality, and respect for difference, not by how fervently one claims to adhere to "Godly" principles.

However, in communities plagued with double-digit unemployment and cultural devaluation, self-sufficiency and ultimate human agency may be perceived as demoralizing if not dangerously radical. As a child preacher steeped in the fiery oratory of the Black Church, writer James Baldwin recounted his growing cynicism about spreading "the gospel." Lamenting the grip of religion on poor blacks, Baldwin said, "When I faced a congregation, it began to take all the strength I had not to … tell them to throw away their Bibles and get off their knees and go home and organize." (Baldwin 1993: 39) In Baldwin's view, worship saps collective agency. For Baldwin, religiosity is not just a liability but existential surrender. In a nation in which "God decreed" that "white people hold the power," the seeds of religious skepticism come from deconstructing institutional racism and white supremacy. In *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin reflects on the economic degradation of his Harlem community. Boys and girls coming of age in an apartheid era of limited opportunity could "choose" one of two soul-killing paths: the "Avenue" or the church. Growing up in an ultra-devout, God-fearing home with an authoritarian father who "became so holy" because "he believed what white people said about him," Baldwin's default escape hatch was religion (1993: 4). White supremacy demanded that African Americans be complicit in their own negation. A Christian morality based on the theft of black liberty was an integral part of this negation. As a teenage preacher, Baldwin recalls the power he enjoyed in the pulpit, seduced by the emotional and spiritual rapture of being "saved." He vividly details his growing recognition of how corrupt this power was. For, "the fact that I was 'young brother Baldwin' increased my value with those same pimps and racketeers who had helped to stampede me into church in the first place" (38). Circling like vultures over dead flesh, "they were waiting for me to come to my senses and realize what a lucrative business I was in" (38). Being "young brother Baldwin," a hot prodigy in the pulpit, gave him a sense of power and authority, partly freeing him from his washed-up father's tyranny. In this universe he flourished, drunk with Bible-thumping performance art, courted, admired, and deferred to, given license to act with impunity because of his "holy" status.

**(p. 453)** Then, he begins to read. Reading is "fatal," for it signaled the "slow crumbling of my faith, the pulverization of my fortress" (Baldwin 1993: 34). Reading gives definition to his unrest, shape to the dialectic of intellectualism and spiritualism raging within. As he studies scripture he begins to understand how his sense of certitude and moral superiority came from the othering of "infidels." Because his Jewish friends were not "saved," they were destined to burn in hell regardless of the kind of lives they had led on humble Planet Earth. Because black Christians and the Black Church demanded the same blind emotional servitude as white Christians, they were no better morally. The Black Church could not offer sanctuary, sustenance, genuine charity, or fellowship because it ran on fear.

Baldwin experiences a near epiphany about faith's futility in an all-night prayer session. Lying in a wretched heap "on the floor":

> The saints sang and rejoiced and prayed. And in the morning, when they raised me, they told me I was "saved." Well indeed I was, in a way, for I was utterly drained and exhausted, and released, for the first time, from all my guilty torment. I was aware then only of my relief … I could not ask myself why human relief had

> to be achieved in a fashion at once so pagan and desperate. And by the time I was able to ask this question, I was able to see that the principles governing the rites and customs of the churches in which I grew up did not differ from the principles governing the rites and customs of other churches, white. The principles were Blindness, Loneliness, and Terror, the first principle necessarily and actively cultivated in order to deny the two others. (1993: 31)

Baldwin's journey underscores the intimate connection between socioeconomics and faith. Had it not been the "Avenue" or the church, then what? He speaks of men going into the service and returning ruined. He laments college graduates scrubbing floors. He swaggeringly declares that girls became "God's decoys" for boys slouching toward the wreck and ruin of the Avenue.[1] Girls, "single-minded" and duty-bound to making good black men and pleasing Jesus, keep home and hearth in clenched fists. As females, they are both earthbound and heaven-gazing. They must tame, civilize, and domesticate to sustain moral order. They must defer to the raging voice of original sin, knowing that it is their special God-decreed lot in life to save boys from their "naturally" morally degraded selves.

Baldwin's imagery smacks not just of determinism but the slow grind of enterprise. Faith is redeemer and parasite, codifier of gender norms and symptom of racial apartheid. So when Baldwin, on the cusp of the bloody 1960s, fantasizes about telling his congregation to throw away their bibles and organize, he presages the era's existential dilemma. If white supremacy is ordained by God, then black liberation cannot be. If all men are *created* equal, then some will by definition be more equal than others, and others will not even be deemed human. Creation signifies an agent, an invisible standard, an implicit hierarchy. The "chosen people" make "God" in their image, not the other way around. The street corner Israelites' "prophetic" visions of black macho nationhood hinge on this. And Baldwin highlights how organized religion is about competing versions of being chosen. Allegiance to this view of "chosen-ness" makes black liberation struggle impossible. So while activism and faith are not incompatible, blind faith is particularly insidious for black people because of the legacy of Jim Crow.

Much of the debate amongst European and European American religious skeptics and nonbelievers is fixated on religious cosmology versus science/evolution. However, African American religious skepticism has a broader mandate. Because African Americans have historically been excluded from the very category of the human, they have had to negotiate (p. 454) their relationship to Western notions of being human. The racist backlash to the election of President Barack Obama is a stark example. Never has the old racist joke about what a black man with a Ph.D. (or in this instance an Ivy League law degree) is called been so relevant a commentary on white Middle America's psyche. Obama's flogging demonstrated how deep the legacy of African American dehumanization extends: the caricature of King's iconic little white and black kids holding hands up in flames. During the 2008 presidential campaign, right-wing groups trotted out images of primitivism, terrorism, and foreignness to cast Obama as a politically dangerous anti-American racial Other. Obama was a bone-in-the-nose savage, a joker in white face going after American

freedoms, a turban-wearing Muslim, and a watermelon-eating darkie—evoking the grotesquerie of D. W. Griffiths' racist 1915 propaganda film *Birth of a Nation*. After his election, these images were a recurring theme in the fear-mongering antigovernment rhetoric of far-right factions like the Tea Party. Far from ushering in a new era of "postracialism," as some political observers claimed, Obama's election was a firm reminder that white terrorism was alive and well. Indeed, the Secret Service reported that assassination plots and other threats to President Obama's life were at a record high. The fact that Obama did not win a majority of the white vote underscored the intractability of racial divisions along party lines. Traditional schisms between the heavily "Red State" Republican white South and Midwest and the "Blue State" Northeast and West were minimally disturbed by Obama's victory. So while his election symbolized a quantum leap in *possibility* for racial equity, the narrative of uncomplicated progress that many would like to ascribe to it was undercut by the reality of racism and racial segregation.

It is within the context of over four hundred years of liberation struggle that African Americans enter into the discourse of humanism. African Americans adopted European American cultural traditions and practices like Christianity as a means of survival and self-definition. Enlightenment ideology established a racial hierarchy in which Africans were subhuman and African culture was the antithesis of European civilization. Racial slavery was justified because of the alleged mental and spiritual inferiority of Africans, an empirical "fact" institutionalized by the emergent field of scientific observation. Similarly, Judeo-Christian ideologies of racial hierarchy, in which Africans were perceived to be the so-called Children of Ham (doomed to enslavement because of Ham's sins against Noah), provided a "moral" context for white supremacist justifications of slavery. This complex relationship to the category of the human informed African Americans' embrace of Christianity. To be moral beings with *human* worth and value, African Americans had to identify with and reshape the corrupt ethical universe of the oppressor.

Insofar as the question of what it means to be human was a cornerstone of black liberation struggle—especially as it pertained to the contradictions inherent in Western epistemological formulations of the human—it has always been steeped in humanistic inquiry. Race, as defined by Western science, has been at the center of Euro-American notions of what it means to be human. According to evolutionary biologist Joseph Graves,

> Eighteenth century Enlightenment scholars never doubted that God and science declared the existence of races and that there should be hierarchical relations between them. According to this thinking, the European stood at the pinnacle of human perfection and all other races were to be measured against him. (2002: 3)

In America, the Africanist presence allowed the new white man to explore possibilities of being and becoming sovereign, free, and, ultimately, human.

(p. 455) In Europe, the Africanist presence was conjured up in nineteenth-century exhibitions of black bodies, most notably that of the so-called Venus Hottentot, or Saartije Baartman. Baartman was a South African Khoi woman who was literally paraded all over Europe and displayed as a human artifact/oddity in salons and museums by the European

scientific establishment. This was a common practice in an era of heightened Enlightenment exploration of race, racial difference, and sexuality. Like many Africans staged for public exhibition in nineteenth-century Europe before her, Baartman became an object of scientific investigation (Holmes 2007). She was poked, prodded, measured, assessed, and ultimately dissected in death by British and French empiricist wizards like the esteemed scientist Georges Cuvier. She was marshaled as resident Other to determine the exact nature of her "difference" from "normal" (i.e., white) men and women. This standard only had weight and relevance in the context of Baartman's grotesqueness. Her deformations provided white femininity with its mooring as the standard of feminine beauty. Her subhumanity gave her white male examiners a biological compass (and canvas) that was then translated into immutable racial difference. The sexual deviance signified by her enormous backside literally functioned as an epistemological frame and cover for her interpreters' own cultural biases and assumptions. In performance, she became the long-sought "missing link." Her anatomy affirmed white racial superiority and captured inexplicable gaps in the ascent from "savage" to "civilized." Through the lens of the European male scientist, looking, seeing, and interpreting were transparent enterprises.

Western history's Exhibit A is the white man as impartial, objective, disengaged observer, hovering with the angels. Small wonder then that white Middle America has awoken to Obama—his imperialist policies aside—as its most visceral nightmare. Colonialist practices in which the bodies of African, Asian, and indigenous peoples were used by the scientific establishment to "measure" racial difference and verify social pathology helped advance Western rationalism and empiricism (Washington 2006: 9–25). European scientists typed and classified virtually every inch of the black body in the quest for some immutable marker of racial difference. In his book *The Race Myth*, Joseph Graves (2005) details how scientists like eugenics pioneer Francis Galton used psychometry, "the measurement of human intelligence," to validate the theory of black inferiority and white European superiority. African American human rights activist Ida B. Wells, along with Frederick Douglass, criticized the exhibition of "primitive" indigenous peoples and African "savages" in the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The fair was designed to highlight the social, scientific, and technological advances of the United States. By exalting the excellence of the United States., these exhibitions illustrated clearly demarcated boundaries between civilized and savage.

Black women's bodies were the proving ground. Caught in the crossfire of science and superstition, black femininity has been critical to defining Western notions of "the human." When the famed abolitionist preacher and activist Sojourner Truth dramatically rolled up her shirt sleeve to show her arm during her historic "Ain't I a Woman" address at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, she was rebuking notions of genteel white womanhood *and* degraded black femininity. Although there is some dispute about her exact words, her declamation, "I have plowed, I have planted and I have gathered into barns. And no man could head me. *And ain't I a woman?*" was a resounding critique of European Christian ideals of cloistered, protected femininity. Truth's challenge was issued to the white male ministers in her audience. Festering with resentment, they violently objected to the blasphemy of women speaking in public. In celebrating her flesh and

challenging the (p. 456) gendered division between body and intellect, men's space and women's space, Truth made a *humanist* intervention into the dualities of Western empiricism and Judeo Christian dogma. Truth's abolitionism was informed by a fiery religious worldview. Yet her critique of gender inequity laid the foundation for black feminist freethinking analysis of Christianity.

Indeed, it is impossible to fully evaluate the African American civil rights legacy without a consideration of its humanist influences and implications. Although theologians and historians have historically emphasized the influence of organized religion on African American civil rights resistance, black humanist scholars point to another tradition. Both Norm Allen Jr. and Anthony Pinn have critiqued the exclusion of humanist influence from appraisals of African American social thought and civil rights resistance. Whilst acknowledging the role of African American Christian ideology in black liberation, these scholars believe the influence of humanist principles of rationalism, social justice, skepticism, and free thought must be foregrounded. Indeed, the absence of evidence for organized religion's truth claims led thinkers like Frederick Douglass, W. E. B DuBois, and A. Philip Randolph to form a secular humanist view of social justice.

Pinn's book *By These Hands: A Documentary History of African American Humanism*, chronicles this intellectual tradition. At an 1870 Anti-Slavery Society convention, Frederick Douglass proclaimed, "I bow to no priests either of faith or of unfaith. I claim as against all sorts of people, simply perfect freedom of thought" (Graves 2005: 3–15). Douglass's comments were in response to black preachers' insistence that he "thank" God for Emancipation. His failure to be appropriately devout elicited a firestorm. After his speech, a group of prominent black preachers passed a resolution censuring him, holding, "That we will not acknowledge any man as a leader of our people who will not thank God for the deliverance and enfranchisement of our race, and will not vote to retain the Bible … in our public schools." This rebuke was perhaps one of the first documented instances of the black "authenticity police" trying to silence an eminent thinker. Generations before the poverty pimps of the prosperity gospel, black Christian carte blanche had already begun to rear its ugly head.

Douglass's standoff with black preachers foreshadowed the combustible politics of questioning the religious establishment. Things invariably got dicey when it came to authentic black leadership. Skeptic leaders like labor activist and Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) founder A. Philip Randolph utilized religion to reach the black masses. Although Randolph was widely believed to be an atheist, he understood the appeal religious themes had for a black constituency born and bred on religiosity.[2] Randolph relied on black churches and religious organizations for political outreach and community support. BSCP meetings and forums were frequently held at or supported by local black churches across the nation. Insofar as the BSCP's platform drew on religious themes, Randolph's acknowledgment of and respect for religion can perhaps be viewed as a form of cultural competence. However, throughout his career as publisher and editor of the influential journal the *Messenger*, Randolph provided a platform for vigorous critique of Christianity's role in black liberation struggle. In 1927, the journal sponsored an essay

writing contest titled “Is Christianity a Menace to the Negro?” (Taylor 2006: 70). As a socialist and vocal critic of “orthodox” Christianity, Randolph was constantly plagued with accusations of being an infidel. Of course, known infidels could not be effective black leaders. According to Cynthia Taylor:

> In the beginning the *Messenger* editors set out to attack all that was “narrow and medieval in religion,” especially the Negro Church’s accommodation to Jim Crow. Randolph himself (p. 457) redirected this counterproductive editorial policy in order to reach out to progressive-minded allies inside and outside the Negro Church. With the demise of radicalism by the 1920s, Randolph and other *Messenger* editors nonetheless kept up the debate on ‘orthodox’ black Christianity by offering religious alternatives to their readers. … In this process, Randolph insisted that religious ideas and institutions were not so sacrosanct as to be excluded from democratic debate. … In the *Messenger’s* last phase … he consciously distanced himself from atheism while still challenging the Negro Church’s position. (2006: 84–85)

Taylor also notes that Randolph’s distancing from atheism was influenced by anticommunist sentiment that would crescendo in the post–World War II era. Randolph was especially sensitive to the charge; he believed that being smeared as a nonbeliever was also motivated by racism. Being a nonbeliever, black, and part of the radical left was a lethal combination. Like many radical organizers aligned with communist and socialist politics during this period, Randolph was the subject of an FBI probe and frequent smears by the mainstream media. As the organizer of the first planned march on Washington in 1941, his later vision of community organizing was both socialist and humanist. Equitable living-wage jobs, decent affordable housing, and full enfranchisement were basic human rights. The absence of these rights in the twentieth-century United States made a mockery of its claim to democracy. In the context of Randolph’s political organizing, Christianity became a lingua franca for black solidarity and not a litmus test.

Frederick Douglass’s skepticism was of a different tenor. As a towering intellectual pioneer of the African American free thought and secular humanist traditions, he challenged the moral hypocrisy of white Christianity in both the United States and Europe. His journey from a committed Christian to a questioning agnostic was compelled by decades of critical observation and lived experience. For Douglass, white slaveholders’ moral piety was especially obscene given the savagery of beatings, rapes, and family separations. Angered by what he viewed as blacks’ passive acceptance of the message of Christian deliverance from earthly suffering he noted, “I dwell here in no hackneyed cant about thanking God for this deliverance.” Instead, he believed that “man is to work out his own salvation.” And it was only through the individual’s will and self-determination that uplift was possible.

Douglass’s experience is a powerful example. Then, as now, the overwhelming association of religiosity with authentic blackness makes it difficult for atheist or agnostic black secular humanists to be vocal. In the introduction to *The Black Humanist Experience,* Norm

Allen notes, “Humanists often feel … that they are a misunderstood and despised minority. Many are afraid to come out of the closet due to fear of being ostracized … by intolerant religionists” (2002: 9).

On websites and in chat rooms, many African American secular humanists who identify as atheists or agnostics express anxiety about “coming out” to friends and family. Sites such as Atheist Nexus and Think Atheist have become virtual meeting spaces for atheist, agnostic, and skeptic African Americans who believe that they would be stigmatized for their views in real time. During the late 1990s, Internet broadcaster Reginald Finley, aka the “Infidel Guy,” began hosting a weekly online show focusing on atheism and free thought. Facebook and other forms of social networking allow black nonbelievers to connect in greater numbers than would otherwise be possible. Over the past year, organizations like Black Atheists of America, my own Black Skeptics Group, and African Americans for Humanism have sprung up or regrouped to address the need for community and visibility. Neurophysiology (p. 458) graduate student Mark Hatcher started a Secular Students’ chapter at Howard University, making it the first of its kind at a historically black college or university.

For my own part, I have had difficulty publishing an article on black humanism in the local black Los Angeles press. The assistant editor of one paper told me that the editor thought I was too “biased” against religion. Again, tacit religious belief is often a prerequisite for black social acceptance. David Burchall, founder of the now-defunct Secular Community in Long Beach, California, struggled to attract African Americans due to this factor. Burchall’s organization provided secularist individuals of all backgrounds and perspectives with a welcoming community meeting place. Burchall stated that he “rarely meets a black person who says he or she is an atheist.”[3] In this regard, invisibility fuels isolation and reinforces social conformity among secular African Americans. Agnostic/atheist Ivori Patterson fears coming out for professional reasons, especially since

> I’m doing a short-term internship and looking for other work of the like in order to boost up my resume before I begin applying to law schools. The problem here is that I’ve been networking with some high profile people that belong to the same parish I used to attend. Do you honestly believe they’ll continue to stick their necks out for an atheist?”[4]

Thamani Delgardo, a health-care professional and agnostic who grew up in the Black Church, said she is reluctant to come out as a nonbeliever because: “I’m afraid that my family members will think less of me and will be very disappointed.”[5]

As the religious right has become more vociferous, black atheists have been challenged by a sociopolitical climate that has grown more showily hyper-religious, evangelical, and superstitious. Given the tenor of religious hysteria, it is not surprising that more atheists know their way around the Good Book than Christian true believers. After years of passing as good Christians, benign “spiritualists,” or even certified holy rollers, many black nonbelievers come equipped with biblical ammo, ready to smack down the most obscure Old Testament absurdity. It pays to be equipped when the Bible is the most popular book

in black America and black literacy levels are obscenely low. According to the Pew Research Center (2005), a majority of African Americans Protestants believe creationism should be taught in public schools rather than evolution. Many also believe that secular liberals have "gone too far" to keep religion out of schools and government. Consequently, black humanists argue that religious dogma has jeopardized African American academic progress, particularly in math and science. It is because of religious dogma, Delgardo says, that young African Americans believe "God will make a way for their survival, so they may drop out of school, have children with no visible means of supporting them, or simply not plan for their financial future because they believe god will handle the hardships and the details that rationalists plan for." The believer's devaluation of the present is a secular humanist point of contention. The belief that human agency is not a sufficient foundation for action, and that assuming ultimate responsibility for one's life and destiny is beyond the purview of "mere" human beings, is especially harmful for black Christians.

Commenting on the stranglehold religiosity has had on African American progress, black humanist James Forman said,

> As a Negro growing up in the United States, I believe that the belief in God has hurt my people. *We have put off doing something about our present condition because we have believed God was going to take care of business in heaven*.
>
> (quoted in Pinn 1998: 172, emphasis in original)

(p. 459) As a former head of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Forman's belief system had a profound influence on black civil rights resistance. Many of the principles of activist struggle, such as the focus on social justice and community organizing, multiracial coalition building, and political action through modeling, mentoring, and leadership building, reflect a progressive humanism. In 1969, Forman protested at Riverside Church in New York, demanding reparations for white churches' collaboration in the slave trade. The protest reflected his belief in the complicity of organized religion in the African slave holocaust—which is still perceived as a radical notion in the era of a resurgent Confederacy.

Forman challenged the role redemptive suffering played in black activism, identity, and community organizing. This challenge was also a powerful theme in the work of Harlem Renaissance writers. The Harlem Renaissance period was one of the most fertile eras for black secular humanist and skeptical thought. From the 1920s to the 1940s, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Richard Wright explored the problematic role of the Black Church in African American culture. Larsen's 1927 novel *Quicksand* questions the cultural, social, and emotional dominance of the Black Church in African American communities from the standpoint of a biracial woman grappling with her apostasy and her place in life. Larsen vividly chronicles the claustrophobia of female domesticity and religiosity in a small rural town. Her mixed-race protagonist Helga Crane emerges as a fiercely independent critical thinker whose ambiguous racial identity informs her frustrated quest for subjectivity. The daughter of a white Danish woman and an African American man, Helga's inability to meaningfully connect with either part of her heritage

propels her on a nomadic emotional journey. For much of her young adult life she travels: teaching in a black Southern college town, working in Harlem, discovering long-lost white relatives in Copenhagen, and finally settling uneasily in a small religious black community in rural Alabama.

Initially lamenting blacks' passive acceptance of the "white man's God," Helga's quest takes her from skepticism to Christian conversion to atheism (Larsen 1986: 133). She despairs when she discovers that she is unable to make her way on her own, deterministically trapped in an era and a cultural context where marriage is the only "proper" path for women. In a harrowing scene with orgiastic overtones,[6] Helga seeks shelter from the rain in a church after rejection by Dr. Anderson, a former colleague she was ambivalently attracted to. Drawn into the congregation's vortex of fire and brimstone, she is literally taken over by its exhortations of salvation. Distraught over her lack of purpose in life, she latches onto the church's minister, marries him, moves to Alabama, and quickly descends into the drone of domestic life. Helga's transition from single urbanity to married drudgery signifies a retreat from selfhood. She submerges her desire for independence, capitulating to a life of childbearing, childrearing, and family caretaking. At first, the simple devoutness of her adopted community seduces and lulls her. Yet, as she gradually grasps the depth of her submission to a life of unrelenting domesticity, it begins to repel her. Here, religiosity and domesticity are linked as emblems of oppression. Her internal conflict over the dominance of religious belief in the lives of African American working-class folk reaches a fever pitch after a long, tortured convalescence from childbirth. For Helga,

> Religion after all, had its uses. It blunted the perceptions. Robbed life of its crudest truths. Especially it had uses for the poor—for the blacks. How the white man's God must laugh at the great joke he played on them. Bound them to slavery, then to poverty and insult, and made them bear it.
>
> (Larsen 1986: 133)

(p. 460) Helga's observations have particular relevance for contemporary black women. She deftly links the imperialism of God belief with the socioeconomic degradation of black communities; communities whose "ghetto pathology" would be labeled "matriarchal" decades later. Conversing with Sary, a mother of six, she wonders how women can bear the burdens of all their family and domestic responsibilities. Sary responds that one must simply trust in the "savior" to be delivered in the afterlife. Sary is one of a stream of domesticated rural black women who cater to Helga's husband, the town preacher. Black women's entanglement in the cult of the male preacher becomes another example of provincial insularity. Helga's dissatisfaction with recurring suffering, sacrifice, and deferment ultimately leads her to conclude that there is no God.

Like James Forman, Helga's rejection of the Christian entreaty to take the possibility of redemption "on faith," despite unrelenting earthly evil, misery, and suffering, becomes the catalyst for her retreat from religious dogma. After the book's publication, Larsen's probing exploration of the ministry was uneasily received by some (Hutchinson 2006:

281). As a woman who “did not believe in religion” herself and was considered unconventional for the period, Larsen defied the bourgeois prescriptions of black middle-class womanhood. Challenging religious faith bucked conventional gender norms epitomized by the sacrificial good woman. A recurring theme in both Larsen’s *Quicksand* and her 1928 novel *Passing* is the gulf between society’s narrow expectations and her female protagonists’ sense of self and subjectivity. In this regard, *Quicksand* is a stunningly contemporary indictment of black parochialism and moral repression. And in the final scene of the novel, Larsen lowers the emotional boom on the reader with a devastating evocation of the price Helga must pay for her “complicity.”

Larsen’s cautionary tale resonates in an era in which black women are increasingly imperiled by domestic and sexual violence, persistent health challenges, and the often crushing burden of single parenthood. That this landscape has deepened in the context of heightened black religiosity is a testament to Christianity’s contribution to black female dehumanization. Indeed, Larsen’s depiction of the reverence some black women bestow on community preachers provides vivid insight into the cultish nature of female idolatry. The women of the town in *Quicksand* practically revel in Helga’s descent into domestication. By becoming one of them, her status as a potential threat to the town’s social order diminishes. Distorted female self-image compels women to fixate on the preacher/pastor figure as a God surrogate whose human foibles are excused as part of the “stresses” of leadership (Cooper 2012: 3–190; Cole and Sheftall 2003: 114–119).[7]

While Larsen’s skepticism played out through her fiction, Zora Neale Hurston chronicled the evolution of her doubt in a 1942 essay “Religion.” Hurston notes that “as early as I can remember, I was questing and seeking” (1991: 146). For Hurston, the “group think” of organized religion conflicts with her fundamental sense of intellectual independence. The daughter of a preacher, Hurston admits that “When I was asked if I loved God, I always said yes because I knew that that was the thing I was supposed to say” (148). Though her family was invested in the church, doubt nagged at her in all the inexplicable details of life that were just chalked up to “God’s will.” When she began to study world religions, she saw that they shared the common theme of divine deliverance from earthly suffering. She then concluded that faith merely allowed the masses to deal with their “fear of life and its consequences.” (153) The craving for some omnipotent source of all life’s mysteries gave meaning to the unknowable, even though an all-powerful God was ultimately a human creation. Like (p. 461) popular entertainment, blind acceptance of religious contradictions dulled one’s critical faculties, uniting believers in a bond of ritual and bigotry against nonbelievers.

Despite her blasphemous thoughts as a youth, Hurston fondly recalled church revivals, where “hell was described with dramatic fury … and everybody was warned to take steps that they would not be a brand in that eternal burning.” (1991: 148) No reflection about being raised in the Black Church is complete without evocations of fire and brimstone. For African Americans in Baptist, Pentecostal, and African Methodist congregations, the performative aspect of churchgoing is especially rewarding. Acts of testimony, witnessing, and getting saved allow churchgoers to participate in rituals that require maximum

audience participation. These rituals function as a public articulation and advertisement of their devotion to God and hope for salvation.

In his 1940 piece “Salvation,” Langston Hughes took square aim at the performative nature of churchgoing and the act of getting saved. Hughes details an encounter during a special children’s church service he attended at age thirteen, in which he was practically browbeat into accepting the “light of Jesus.” While his friend Westley submits to the pastor’s entreaties to come to Jesus, Hughes remains unmoved. Conflicted by his inability to actually feel the spirit or see Jesus, he agonizes over the congregation’s overzealous encouragement:

> I began to be ashamed of myself, holding everything up so long. I began to wonder what God thought about Westley, who certainly hadn’t seen Jesus either … God had not struck Westley dead for … lying in the temple. So I decided that maybe to save further trouble, I’d better lie too. (1991:120–121)

Hughes’ decision to go with the flow to please others was the beginning of a lifelong struggle with the compulsory nature of black religiosity. Expressing his feelings of betrayal, he concludes, “I didn’t believe there was a Jesus anymore. (1991: 122)”

Fear of being different, and being deemed less holy, forces Hughes to betray his own sense of what is true. The heavy emphasis on public conformity to Christianity as a badge of belonging and moral worth is one of the most problematic issues for black skeptics. Nonconformist African Americans are quickly marginalized as not racially “representative.” For example, in *Quicksand*, Helga Crane’s harshly candid assessments of organized religion are largely confined to her personal thoughts in the book. By remaining silent about her beliefs, she, like other African American nonbelievers, plays the game of presumed faith, thereby reinforcing religiosity as the default position in black communities. Hence, black children do not have any publicly visible alternative models to organized religion. Commenting on the early indoctrination of children into religious belief, the nineteenth-century atheist, suffragist, and abolitionist, Ernestine L. Rose said:

> It is an interesting and demonstrable fact that all children are atheists and were religion not inculcated into their minds they would remain so. Even as it is, they are great skeptics, until made sensible of the potent weapon by which religion has ever been propagated, namely, fear.
>
> (quoted in Gaylor 1997: 82)

Jermaine Inoue, Los Angeles–based media director for Black Atheists of America, recounted how his aunt quizzed him on the Bible with “a switch in her hand.”[8] “Tom,” a black atheist from Dallas, likened religion in the black community to a “play toy for babies (i.e., the uneducated).”[9] Christian moral authority allows the powerful to do “whatever they want to without resistance.”[10] In black Christian communities, the skepticism of children is squashed by (p. 462) biblical literalism and intolerance. Nonbelief means the flames of hell are already licking up your legs. Membership in religious fraternity has its privileges.

So at an early age children learn not to question or publicly ponder the “truths” of organized religion. Although they may see nonobservant religious relatives, particularly males, not going to church, unquestioned belief remains an expectation.

For young girls, conformity to the moral code of Christianity is particularly onerous. Those who do not comply with the moral double standard of chaste behavior and submission to males are targeted. While “promiscuous” or sexually provocative behavior in boys is encouraged, girls with these tendencies are quickly put in their place by peers, labeled “hos,” “bitches,” or (in the case of gender-nonconforming girls) “dykes.” Policing the sexuality of young women of color begins at the schoolyard level, in the media, the community, and the family. While some would argue that this is as much a matter of secular as it is religious censure, its Judeo Christian roots are undeniable. The distorted self-worth and self-image of many African American young women speaks to the continued dominance of Judeo Christian European–based gender hierarchies of desirability and attractiveness. Because of the slave legacy of racial and sexual dehumanization, black women in particular are judged through the harsh prism of European ideals of feminine beauty. The historical association of white femininity with moral worth and virtue still shapes contemporary stereotypes of young black women as promiscuous and sexually rapacious. While feminist historical scholarship and cultural criticism have disrupted these stereotypes, there has been virtually no secular humanist critique of the racialized construction of femininity (Hutchinson 2013).

For some black feminists, atheism is an important part of their belief in and commitment to gender justice. Here, atheism’s appeal lies in its potential to deconstruct the bankrupt mores, values, and ideologies that undergird patriarchy, sexism, and heterosexism. Commenting on the growing number of black women atheist leaders, Mandisa Thomas, founder of Black Non-Believers notes, “[We’re motivated by] our dominance in the community and our natural leadership roles. We’re mothers and career oriented; a lot of us are very dominant and … passionate about helping non-believers. We’re coming out of these sexist/misogynist roles and asserting ourselves a lot more.”[11] Atheism becomes a vehicle for pushing back against traditional gender roles and limitations—especially those tied to sexuality, respectability, motherhood and marriage. Bucking these traditions, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender black atheists and humanists also identify as secular because of homophobic religious bigotry and discrimination.

In the public sphere, the obscurity of black public figures or mentors who hold atheist/skeptic/agnostic views contributes to the tacit acceptance of organized religion in general and Christianity in particular. While most of the aforementioned thinkers are giants of twentieth-century African American intellectual thought and literature, they have very few counterparts in contemporary letters. When it comes to explorations of religious skepticism, African American intellectual and literary inquiry has not produced a body of literature that rivals that of the early to mid-twentieth century. The socially conservative tenor of African American communities has marginalized skeptical, agnostic, or atheist analyses of black politics and culture. This highlights the historical and cultural amnesia

of the times. Bible-thumping blacks who invoke religion at every opportunity would be surprised that some of the most influential figures in “black history” were dirty infidels.

As one of the foremost scholars of black liberation struggle, W. E. B. DuBois often drew on religious themes and imagery in his work, most notably in his landmark *The Souls of* *(p. 463)* *Black Folk*. However, according to Anthony Pinn, DuBois’ intellectual allegiance was to rationalism and skepticism. Following a trip to the Soviet Union, DuBois wrote an essay on his appreciation for Russian civil society. Proclaiming himself a freethinker, he expressed approval of the prohibition on teaching religion in Russia’s public schools. The “fairy tales” of organized religion were destructive because they conditioned children to strive for a fictitious afterlife, rather than make the best of the world at hand. For DuBois, this was a “moral disaster.” He had experienced religious intolerance after having been criticized as a teacher at a Black Methodist school for not leading his class in prayer. Like Hurston and Douglass, DuBois’ skepticism deepened with his intellectual maturation. Consequently, he said, “From my 30th year on I have increasingly regarded the church as an institution which defended … slavery, color caste, exploitation of labor and war.” (1968: 285)

This critique has special resonance for Kwadwo Obeng, author of *We Are All Africans: Exposing the Negative Influence of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic Religions on Africans*. A native of Ghana, Obeng is a former Jehovah’s Witness who broke from the sect after rigorous independent study of the Bible. In his book, he acknowledges the constructive role Christianity played in African American communities during the slave era, when it provided a cultural and philosophical context for black human rights resistance. Yet he cautions that contemporary Christianity is a mere diversion for black folk. Poor blacks have few avenues for systemic redress of racism by either self-serving black preachers or “Christian-identified” black politicians. As “the church has become part of our DNA, Black politicians feel they need to wrap Jesus all around them to be successful” (Obeng 2008: 8). A recurring theme with black atheists and humanists is that the business of organized religion has been particularly detrimental to poor blacks, who tithe millions to churches while their communities collapse. They point to the rise of “prosperity gospel” as an example of the Black Church’s betrayal of the social justice legacy of Martin Luther King.

As a result, many black atheists and humanists oppose the political deference shown to faith-based initiatives. Faith-based initiatives provide churches and other spiritual organizations the license to discriminate against those that do not adhere to their principles. Gabriel Lockett, vice-president of the Secular Students’ Alliance at the University of Maryland, decried the “lax accounting practices within churches” and wondered “why [there isn’t] the same scrutiny of faith-based organizations as there is of other 501c3s?”[12] As part of a younger generation of black secular humanists, Lockett identifies as an atheist and believes that black visibility in the secular movement must increase. Like many black atheists, he was raised in a Christian household. He was initially hesitant about coming out due to fear of “emotional backlash” from his family. Now active in secular causes, he believes that African Americans would benefit immensely from a more enlightened view of social morality. For Lockett, “if we eliminate the ‘God Debate’ from the con-

versation we can focus on the common bonds of humanity … oftentimes I hear 'not my problem' or 'I'm doing me,' a mentality that is fostered in the church."[13]

Mark Hatcher of Howard University's Secular Students organization has seen a shift in public discourse due to the popularity of political satirists like Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. He is

> happy that Stewart and Colbert are out there because they're making it cool to talk about these things. It's making it easy to talk about these things because of their extremism. It's not as much of an issue because a lot more people are talking about the outrageousness of religious fundamentalism."[14]

(p. 464) The "us versus them" policing of morality in the Black Church is especially problematic for black atheists and humanists. Obeng believes that the moral authority of organized religion is most suspect when a solidarity of bigotry is forged, for "why else would the Mormon Church, the Catholic Church, Southern Baptists, Islam, [Rick Warren's] Saddleback Church … band together to deny those with a different sexual orientation the civil right of marriage?" (2008: 1). Similarly, black secular humanists say, the patriarchal tenets and biases of religions like Islam, Judaism, and Christianity prevent women from becoming self-actualized beyond roles as caregivers. As the recipient of the American Humanist Association's 1997 Humanist of the Year award, author Alice Walker spoke of how women's self-actualization was a casualty in her strict religious Southern upbringing. Recounting how her mother was the backbone of her community's church—but had been taught to believe in Jesus and, by extension, God, was a blond white man—Walker assailed the Earth-denying aspects of Christianity. She notes,

> The truth was we already lived in paradise … This is what my mother, and perhaps other women knew, and this was one reason they were not permitted to speak. They might have demanded that the men of the church notice Earth. Which always leads to revolution. (1997)

Affirming her belief in the sanctity of the natural world and the here and now, Walker affirms her "faith" in "womanist" self-actualization, free from the sanction of gods or masters. Chicago-based instructor Kamau Rashid believes that

> Freethought is an extension and expression of the struggle that African Americans have waged for self-determination. In fact it represents a heightened phase of such a struggle wherein one of the final stages of "conceptual incarceration," the belief in a God or gods, is discarded for a belief in the human potential, for a belief in ourselves.[15]

In a religion-besotted culture that has enshrined pastors and preachers as the unquestioned arbiters of moral worth, Rashid's identification of freethought and humanism with black self-determination is a paradigm shift. Faced with complex socioeconomic challenges in an era of limited opportunity, African American communities have, in some instances, turned to religious dogma as a general anesthetic. The legacy of Douglass and

others demonstrates that secular humanist tradition has been vital to black liberation struggle. Yet, when it comes to building alternative models of humanist community, non-theist African Americans face deep political challenges.

## Bibliography

Allen, N. Jr. (ed.). 2002. *The Black Humanist Experience: An Alternative to Religion*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Baldwin, J. 1993. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: First Vintage International.

Cole, J., and B. Sheftall. 2003. *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities*. New York: Random House.

Cooper, D. 2012. *The Black Church: Where Women Pray and Men Prey*. Chicago: Amagination Publishing.

DuBois, W. E. B. 1968. *The Autobiography of W. E. B. DuBois*. New York: International Publishers.

Edgell, P., J. Gerteis, and D. Hartmann. 2006. "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71(2), 211–234.

Gaylor, A. (ed.). 1997. *Women Without Superstition: No Gods—No Masters: The Collected Writings of Women Freethinkers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Madison, Wis.: Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Graves, J. 2002. *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Graves, J. 2005. *The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America*. New York: Penguin.

Holmes, R. 2007. *The Hottentot Venus: Life and Death of Saartjie Bartman, Born 1789—Buried 2002*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hughes, L. 1991. "Salvation." In *African American Humanism: An Anthology*, edited by N. Allen Jr., 119–121. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Hurston, Z. 1991. "Religion." In *African American Humanism: An Anthology*, edited by N. Allen Jr., 146–154. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Hutchinson, G. 2006. *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hutchinson, S. 2013. *Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels*. Los Angeles: Infidel Books.

Hutchinson, S. 2015. *White Nights, Black Paradise*. Los Angeles: Infidel Books.

Lackey, M. 2008. *African American Atheists and Political Liberation: A Study of the Socio-cultural Dynamics of Faith*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

(p. 466) Larsen, N. 1986. *Quicksand* and *Passing.* Edited by Deborah McDowell. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Obeng, K. 2008. *We Are All Africans: Exposing the Negative Influence of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic Religions on All Africans*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Two Harbors Press.

Pew Research Center. 2005. "Public Divided on Origins of Life." **http://www.pewforum.org/2005/08/30/public-divided-on-origins-of-life/**.

Pew Research Center. 2009. "A Religious Portrait of African Americans." **http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans**.

Pinn, A. 1997. "Anybody There? Reflections on African American Humanism." *Religious Humanities* 31(3–4), 61–78. **http://huumanists.org/publications/journal/anybody-there-reflections-african-american-humanism**.

Pinn, A. 1998. *Varieties of African-American Religious Experience*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press.

Pinn, A. 2006. *The African American Religious Experience in America*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Taylor, C. 2002. *Black Religious Intellectuals: The Fight for Equality from Jim Crow to the 21st Century*. London and New York: Routledge.

Taylor, C. 2006. *A. Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African American Labor Leader*. New York: New York University Press.

Walker, A. 1997. "The Only Reason You Want to Go to Heaven Is that You Have Been Driven Out of Your Mind." *On the Issues: The Progressive Woman's Magazine* **http://americanhumanist.org/HNN/issue/details/2012-10-from-the-aha-archives-alice-walkers-1997-humanist-of**.

Washington, H. 2006. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Anchor Books.

## Notes:

(1.) Girls saw the profligacy represented by the "Avenue" and "understood that they must act as God's decoys, saving the souls of the boys for Jesus and binding the bodies of the boys in marriage. For this was the beginning of our burning time … and 'It is better,' said St. Paul … 'to marry than to burn'" (Baldwin 1993: 17).

(2.) Clarence Taylor (2002: 13–15) argues that Randolph framed black labor and civil rights resistance in terms of religious triumph/redemption rather than in terms of class

struggle. Cynthia Taylor (2006: 80–82) argues that Randolph publicly denied he was an atheist perhaps out of political expedience; the “charge” atheist and communist were often yoked together to discredit progressive leaders.

(3.) Author interview with David Burchall, January 2010.

(4.) Author interview with Ivori Patterson, January 2011.

(5.) Author interview with Thamani Delgardo, January 2012.

(6.) Michael Lackey (2008: 73–95) has characterized this scene as a rape scene.

(7.) I also address this phenomenon in my book about the 1978 Jonestown massacre and the Peoples Temple movement, *White Nights, Black Paradise* (Hutchinson 2015).

(8.) Jermaine Inoue, interview questionnaire, November 2010.

(9.) Anonymous subject, interview questionnaire, November 2010.

(10.) Ibid.

(11.) Mandisa Thomas, telephone interview, 20 July 2012.

(12.) Gabriel Lockett, interview questionnaire, December 2009.

(13.) Ibid.

(14.) Author interview with Mark Hatcher, December 2010.

(15.) Kamau Rashid, interview questionnaire, May 2010.

**Sikiyu Hutchinson**

Sikivu Hutchinson is Senior Intergroup Specialist for the Human Relations Commission of Los Angeles County, California. She is a founder of the Women’s Leadership Project and the Black Skeptics Los Angeles organization. She is the author of Moral Combat: Black Atheists, Gender Politics, and the Values Wars and Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels.

# Secularism and US Religion Jurisprudence

Caroline Corbin

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.29



## Abstract and Keywords

Religious surveys are finding greater percentages of Americans who self-identify as secular. At the same time, religious exemptions under the Free Exercise Clause have become more difficult to obtain. However, religion jurisprudence in the United States has not become more secular for two reasons. First, this greater unwillingness to grant constitutional exemptions reflects a shift in constitutional jurisprudence from "separationism" to "neutrality." Rather than building a wall between church and state, the Establishment Clause is now interpreted to impose fewer restraints on state-sponsored religion. Second, statutes like the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act and its state counterparts have not only reestablished separationist era levels of protection for religious liberty but increased them. The result is a religion jurisprudence where religion is accommodated more than ever, while the state has more leeway to advance religion. This combination has unfortunate consequences for both secular people and core secular values, such as antidiscrimination.


Keywords: Establishment Clause, Free Exercise Clause, church and state separation, religious exemptions, LGBT

# Introduction

AT first glance, it seems as though the United States is becoming more secular than ever. Each religious survey points to a greater percentage of Americans who do not identify with a religious tradition, some of whom even declare themselves to be atheists. At the same time, the Supreme Court has been much more reluctant to interpret the Free Exercise Clause of the US Constitution to require religious exemptions for religious observers.

A second glance, at least with regard to the Supreme Court's religion jurisprudence, reveals otherwise. First, the greater unwillingness to grant constitutional exemptions reflects a shift from "separationism" to "neutrality" in constitutional jurisprudence. While this shift means fewer exemptions under Free Exercise Clause, it also means fewer restraints on the state under the Establishment Clause. Second, although constitutional exemptions have become more difficult to obtain, statutory ones have taken their place and

even surpassed them. As a result, compared to before the paradigm shift, it is now easier for religious observers to obtain accommodations and for the government to promote religion.

After introducing American religion clause jurisprudence, this chapter first examines the shift from separationism, which insisted on a high wall between church and state, to neutrality, which tends to treat religion and its secular counterparts alike. In particular, it describes the Supreme Court's increasing tolerance for state sponsorship of religion under a reconfigured Establishment Clause. Next, statutory law rather than constitutional law receives an examination. While constitutional religious exemptions have waned, statutory ones have become increasingly more available. Not only that, but they have proven to be more expansive than Free Exercise Clause exemptions ever were. Finally, this chapter takes a closer look at the consequences of this new regime for secular people such as nonbelievers and core secular values such as anti-discrimination.

# (p. 468) US Religion Clause Jurisprudence

The First Amendment of the US Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This sentence is understood as containing two clauses, the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause, that guide and limit the government's relationship with religion. The Free Exercise Clause protects religious observers from state interference; a Free Exercise Clause claim exists when the government impedes the practice of religion.

The Establishment Clause is the clause known for maintaining separation between church and state. Motivating Establishment Clause limits is the idea that a union of church and state harms both. "[The Establishment Clause's] first and most immediate purpose rested on the belief that a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and to degrade religion." (*Engel v. Vitale* 1962: 431) Establishment of religion leads to civil unrest and imperils religion: favored religions risk corruption, and disfavored religions become vulnerable to persecution. "Another purpose of the Establishment Clause rested upon an awareness of the historical fact that governmentally established religions and religious persecutions go hand in hand" (*Engel v. Vitale* 1962: 432). An Establishment Clause claim involves a complaint that the government is favoring one or some religions over other religions or is favoring religion over any secular counterparts.

## The Religion Clauses Paradigm Shift

Over the past few decades, a fundamental shift has taken place in religion clause jurisprudence. Although my brief description cannot capture all the complicated nuances of religion clause jurisprudence, there is no denying the change. At one time, separationism dominated. This approach viewed religion as special and distinct and considered that the interests of all were best served by a high and strong wall between church and state. Separation was necessary because religion was thought to be constitutionally distinct in at least three interrelated ways. First, individuals' deep religious commitments were seen

as different in kind from other commitments. Second, the state was considered incompetent to deal with religion and religious doctrine in the way it could with other subjects. Third, under a more negative view of religion's distinctiveness, religion's interaction with the state was thought to create special problems for both church and state.

Under this separationist approach, the Supreme Court was more apt to vigorously enforce Establishment Clause limits. The state was not to directly fund churches, synagogues, mosques, or other houses of worship, or even pervasively sectarian organizations like parochial schools. If a religious group wanted government funding, it had to create a separate, more secular organization, like Catholic Charities or Jewish Family Services. The state was also barred from certain religious displays, such as a Ten Commandments plaque in public school classrooms (*Stone v. Graham* 1980) or a crèche in a county courthouse. (*County of Allegheny v. ACLU, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter* 1989). As Justice O'Connor explained, state endorsement of religion violated the Establishment Clause by "send[ing] a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an (p. 469) accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community."[1]

At the same time, the Supreme Court was more willing to grant exemptions for religious observers under the Free Exercise Clause. During the separationist era, religious observers were entitled to an exemption from a law that imposed a substantial burden on their religious conscience unless the law passed strict scrutiny. In order to survive strict scrutiny, the government has to show that its law accomplishes a compelling state interest and that there is no other way to accomplish that compelling interest. In reality, the Court tended to balance the competing interests at stake rather than demand narrow tailoring, and more plaintiffs lost than won their Free Exercise Clause challenges.[2] Nevertheless, the Court did grant exemptions. For example, despite a law mandating school attendance until the age of sixteen, members of the Old Order Amish were allowed to withdraw their children after eighth grade because they believed that high school would expose their sons and daughters "to a worldly influence in conflict with their beliefs" (*Wisconsin v. Yoder* 1972: 211).

The Supreme Court's approach to religion has since changed. Over the past few decades, the wall of separation has steadily crumbled. Rather than treat religion as distinct and worthy of special solicitude and special wariness, the Supreme Court is more likely to treat religious and secular counterparts in the same way. The shift is not complete, and never will be. Religion is necessarily unique in some ways. But the trend toward a more equal treatment is evident in recent decisions.

## The Weakened Establishment Clause

The shift from separationism toward neutrality has led to an Establishment Clause with much less bite. The Establishment Clause no longer bars direct subsidies to religious organizations. So long as government money is used for secular purposes, the state may award social service grants to religious groups just as it does to their secular counter-

parts. And in a turnaround from the separationism era case law, government may now financially aid religious private schools.[3] This reversal culminated in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002), a case where the Supreme Court approved a school voucher program even though nearly all the government funds went to parochial schools.

Moreover, a weakened Establishment Clause has meant that, in a clash between the Free Speech Clause and the Establishment Clause, free speech trumps. As a result, in some situations it is not only constitutionally permissible for the government to support religion, but it is actually required to do so under free speech jurisprudence. If a public university funds secular student publications, it must fund religious student publications; if a public school allows outside groups to use its facilities after school, it must allow churches to use them to hold services.[4]

Furthermore, the Court has relaxed its vigilance with regard to state-sponsored religious exercises and symbols. Although still wary of prayers in public schools,[5] in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* (2014), for example, the Supreme Court declared constitutional a prayer practice at town meetings despite the fact that almost all prayers given were Christian. While the Supreme Court had upheld legislative prayers before, those prayers had not been explicitly Christian (*Marsh v. Chambers* 1983). In *Greece*, the Supreme Court was unfazed by the pervasive Christianity at the seat of government, arguing that "Although most of the prayer (p. 470) givers were Christian, this fact reflected only the predominately Christian identity of the town's congregations, rather than an official policy or practice of discriminating against minority faiths." (*Town of Greece v. Galloway* 2014:1817).

## The Weakened Free Exercise Clause

The shift toward neutrality has also taken place in Free Exercise Clause jurisprudence. As a result, exemptions are now much harder to come by. During the separationism era, a religious observer was, at least in theory, entitled to a free exercise exemption when the challenged law was found to impose significant religious burdens and failed strict scrutiny. In its decision *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990), the Supreme Court discarded that approach and held that so long as a law was neutral and generally applicable—that is, as long as a law did not target religion and applied broadly—everyone, including religious observers, must follow it, regardless of the religious burden it imposed. Accordingly, although federal law made it illegal for the *Smith* plaintiffs to fulfill a religious sacrament requiring the ceremonial ingestion of peyote, they were not entitled to a religious exemption.

Yet, the impact of the paradigm shift on religious liberty has ultimately been limited.[6] One reason is that the government is not barred from granting religious exemptions. While the Supreme Court has held that the Free Exercise Clause did not require exemptions for the religious, it also has held that the Establishment Clause did not necessarily forbid them. In other words, religious exemptions are constitutionally permitted even when not constitutionally required. Thus, the government may do more to protect religious obser-

vance than the US Constitution requires. As it turns out, legislatures have proven quite eager to grant exemptions to religious observers. In response to *Smith*, Congress enacted a law specifically granting a religious exemption for the ceremonial use of peyote.[7] Congress also passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which, as discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, attempted to restore the pre-*Smith* approach for all religious liberty claims.

In theory, the religion clause shift to greater neutrality should curtail both religious exemptions and religious establishment. In fact, Establishment Clause protections have been cut back while religious liberty protections are as strong as ever in large part because of specific statutory exemptions like the one for sacramental peyote use and the more general statutory protection provided by the RFRA.

# The Religious Freedom Restoration Act

RFRA was Congress's attempt to undo Employment Division v. Smith. It sought to restore as a matter of statutory law the pre-*Smith* state of constitutional law: Unless a federal law passes strict scrutiny, "[g]overnment shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability" (Religious Freedom Restoration Act 1993). Although the Supreme Court struck down RFRA as applied to state laws,[8] RFRA is valid as applied to federal laws. Meanwhile, many states have passed their own version of RFRA that apply to their laws.[9] Thus, as a result of RFRA and its state equivalents, (p. 471) religious exemptions from many laws are as available as they were before *Smith*. These are, of course, statutory exemptions rather than constitutional ones, but they still excuse religious observers from complying with otherwise applicable laws.

Not only has RFRA restored pre-*Smith* entitlements, the Supreme Court's interpretation of it may have actually expanded them. In *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc*. (2014), where a company challenged the requirement that its health insurance include certain forms of birth control, the Supreme Court construed RFRA as providing more protection than the Free Exercise Clause had. First, the Court held that for-profit corporations may seek religious exemptions under RFRA. This was a novel development in religion jurisprudence. The circuit courts had been split as to whether a for-profit business could even be said to have a religious conscience or practice religion. Prior Supreme Court cases had addressed the religious liberty of actual people and nonprofit religious organizations like churches. Never before had a billion-dollar company like Hobby Lobby been considered a religious rights-holder entitled to religious exemptions. Nonetheless, the Supreme Court declared that RFRA covers closely held for-profit corporations.

Second, the Supreme Court took an expansive view of what kind of burdens on religion warrant an exemption. In particular, the Court deferred to plaintiffs' subjective views regarding whether the challenged law created a "substantial religious burden." Thus, the Court accepted the claim that Hobby Lobby's religious opposition to abortion was substantially burdened by the contraception mandate because providing medicine that facili-

tated other people's sinful abortions was itself a sin. Previous Supreme Court decisions had conducted some objective analysis, so that every sincere claim did not necessarily meet the substantial burden requirement.[10] Had it done so in *Hobby Lobby*, the Court could have found that as a matter of objective scientific fact the challenged drugs were not actually abortifacients but worked by preventing ovulation,[11] and therefore there was no clash between the law and plaintiffs' religious beliefs. Instead, the *Hobby Lobby* Court found that "[I]t is not for us to say that their religious beliefs are mistaken or insubstantial. Instead, our narrow function … in this context is to determine whether the line drawn reflects an honest conviction" (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* 2014: 2779). In other words, the Court suggests that, as long as plaintiffs are sincere, if plaintiffs say that as a matter of religion a requirement imposes a substantial burden, then as a matter of law it imposes a substantial burden.[12]

Third, the scrutiny applied to Hobby Lobby's RFRA challenge was more rigorous than was applied in free exercise cases. Recall that although the pre-*Smith* test (after which RFRA was modeled) theoretically called for strict scrutiny of laws that imposed substantial religious burdens, the Supreme Court generally did not insist that the challenged law select the least restrictive means possible (Winkler 2006: 857–858). In contrast, the *Hobby Lobby* Court held that the contraception mandate violated RFRA unless it advanced a truly compelling interest and there was absolutely no other way to advance that interest. Although Free Exercise Clause jurisprudence had never been this demanding, the Supreme Court claimed, rather unpersuasively, that RFRA had meant to break with previous free exercise doctrine rather than reinstate it.[13]

The bottom line is that establishment limits have declined with the constitutional paradigm shift while religious exemptions have not. To the contrary, rather than simply re-establishing the separationist era level of protection for religion, the Supreme Court's interpretation of RFRA may have ratcheted it up.

# (p. 472) Consequences for Secularity

A jurisprudence that contemplates more government-sponsored religion and more religious exemptions has repercussions for secular society. A weakened Establishment Clause can harm religious minorities, including the most secular of religious minorities, nonbelievers. Meanwhile, a strengthened right to religious exemptions risks undermining civil rights protections, particularly antidiscrimination laws.

## Secular People

The Supreme Court has dismissed concerns about the diminishing power of the Establishment Clause, arguing that although the resulting state support for religion might be offensive to some it is not actually harmful. For example, in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* the Court characterized predominantly Christian prayers at town government meetings as merely "disagreeable" and concluded that "an Establishment Clause violation is not made out any time a person experiences a sense of affront from the expression of contrary reli-

gious views ” (2014: 1826). In fact, however, practices now deemed constitutional, such as government-sponsored Christian prayers, risk compromising both the equality and the liberty of religious minorities, including people whose religious beliefs do not encompass belief in a god.

Atheists, the most secular members of society, are a particularly vulnerable group. Studies show that Americans view atheists more unfavorably than any other unpopular group. One study found that “Atheists are at the top of the list of groups that Americans find problematic in both public and private life”; the gap between atheists and other groups in terms of public acceptance “is large and persistent”; and “It is striking that the rejection of atheists is so much more common than rejection of other stigmatized groups” (Edgell et al. 2006: 230). Although atheists are not officially barred from public office, half of Americans polled freely admitted they would not vote for an atheist, even if otherwise qualified and even if nominated by their own party.[14] Americans are equally reluctant to have their children marry atheists.[15] In particular, many Americans think atheists are immoral—up to one half of people surveyed have told pollsters that atheists cannot be moral people,[16] and a large minority find them unpatriotic.[17] In short, hostility to and stereotyping of atheists is common.

Government religious speech risks reinforcing the negative stereotypes about nonbelievers that drive the discrimination against them in the first place. Consider the stereotype of atheists as unpatriotic and un-American. Two of the most widespread expressions of American patriotism, its national motto and national pledge, invoke God. Both were adopted during the Cold War, when the United States was trying to distinguish its God-fearing citizens from the godless communists of the Soviet Union.[18] But adding God to expressions of patriotism bolstered the association of godly with patriotic citizen as well as the association between godless with enemy of the United States, or at the very least, not a loyal American. Similarly, reciting Christian prayers at the beginning of town meetings forges a link not just between faith and citizenship but also between Christianity and citizenship. In these (p. 473) ways, the government perpetuates a harmful stereotype that leads to discrimination against nonbelievers.

These ceremonial practices can also compromise nonbelievers’ religious liberty. Imagine that you live in Greece, New York, where the town meetings start with the Pledge of Allegiance and a Christian prayer. Imagine too that you are either a member of the town council or a citizen who needs to petition the government. In Greece, town meetings provide the forum through which citizens may “petition the board for actions that may affect their economic interests, such as granting of permits, business licenses, and zoning variances” (*Town of Greece v. Galloway* 2014: 1825). If you are a nonbeliever, you have a choice. You can join the prayer and act contrary to your belief system. Or you can refuse to join, reveal yourself to be a nonbeliever, and suffer the consequences. And the consequences can be severe. If you are a town council member, you might not be re-elected. One Colorado town recalled a town trustee after he was outed as a nonbeliever.[19] If you are a citizen, your petition may be treated differently and your social, economic, and political well-being put at risk. After complaining about the prayers, the *Town of Greece*

plaintiffs received hate mail along the lines of: “If you feel unwanted at the Town of Greece meetings, it’s probably because you are.”[20] Despite this reality, the Supreme Court downplayed the pressures on people to betray their beliefs and conform, arguing that “mature adults” are “not readily susceptible to religious indoctrination or peer pressure” (*Town of Greece v. Galloway* 2014: 1827). The Court noted that the prayers would be unconstitutionally coercive if town officials had actually retaliated against nonparticipants. But the fact that the predominantly Christian prayers creates a fear of retaliation and therefore puts pressure on religious outsiders to conform is either denied or deemed constitutionally irrelevant.

Thus, the argument that it is not a problem to interpret the Establishment Clause to allow government religious practices because these practices are essentially harmless or at worst just offensive to nonbelievers overlooks the real harms to the equality and liberty of nonbelievers.

## Secular Values

At the same time, nonbelievers receive less protection under the Establishment Clause, believers receive more protection, albeit under statutory law instead of the US Constitution. Nonetheless, the bottom line is the same: religious observers often need not obey the law when the law conflicts with their religious beliefs. Not all religious exemptions are the same. Some have little impact on others. Allowing sacramental use of otherwise illegal drugs such as peyote or hoasca[21] is essentially harmless, as is granting a kippah- or turban-wearer an exemption from a regulation barring headgear. But religious accommodations can impose upon third parties, and too often the third parties are historically subordinated groups. In those cases, religious accommodations undermine core secular values, including, and especially, antidiscrimination norms. In other words, religious observers regularly contend that they should be permitted to discriminate in the name of religion.

Today, nowhere is this more evident than in claims for exemptions based upon disapproval of homosexuality. Increasingly, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation has become illegal. States and municipalities have banned it in employment, housing, and public (p. 474) accommodations. At the federal level, the Supreme Court has declared that same-sex marriage is a constitutional right (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 2015). While Congress has failed to act, presidents have by executive order forbidden discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in federal employment and by federal contractors.

This growth in protection has been accompanied by a growth of claims seeking religious exemptions. For example, as same-sex marriage has become more widespread, more individuals and companies involved in the wedding industry have claimed that it violates their religious beliefs to participate in any way in those marriages. To do so, they argue, would facilitate sin. Wedding photographers do not want to take pictures of same-sex unions, wedding bakers do not want to bake cakes for same-sex ceremonies, and wedding-gown retailers do not want to sell dresses to same-sex brides.[22] Others oppose extending

health-care benefits to same-sex spouses on the grounds that it would be tantamount to recognizing the union as valid (Desmond 2014). In a similar vein, some nonprofit religious organizations that contract with the government claim that forcing them to hire people who are gay or lesbian violates their religious liberty. They believe that they should be exempt from Executive Order No. 13672, which requires that groups who accept government money must agree not to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.[23]

Few if any of these religious objectors would be entitled to a religious exemption under current Free Exercise Clause doctrine. Antidiscrimination laws tend to be both neutral and generally applicable. Their aim is to prevent discrimination against a historically subordinated group, not target religion, and they usually apply across the board, not just to religious entities. For example, public accommodation laws require all stores to serve whomever walks through the door, regardless of their race, religion, sex, or, in many states, sexual orientation.

Nevertheless, religious objectors have successfully obtained exemptions through statutory rather than constitutional means. (Again, this assumes a law that forbids discrimination in the first instance. Universal protection against sexual orientation discrimination has not yet arrived. Likewise, most states do not require pharmacists to fill all legal prescriptions or require hospitals to provide emergency contraception to rape victims.) Because the Court has held that the Establishment Clause does not necessarily forbid religious exemptions (even when the Free Exercise Clause does not require them), exemptions may be built into antidiscrimination law. The same state statutes that legalized same-sex marriage often granted religious organizations the right to refuse to provide goods and services related to the solemnization or celebration of a marriage if doing so would violate their religious beliefs.[24] Others go even further. In New Hampshire, religious organizations may decline to provide housing if they believe it “promotes” same-sex marriage. Under Minnesota’s Act Relating to Marriage, nonprofit religious organizations and schools may “in matters of sexual orientation, take any action with respect to education, employment, housing, and facilities.”[25] Though the courts have not yet interpreted this language, Minnesota seems to have codified a right to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

A similar story can be told about those who argue that they should be able to discriminate against women in the name of religion. Take, for example, reproductive health. It is well-established that without the ability to control their reproductive lives, women cannot participate as equals in the social, economic, and political life of the nation.[26] A woman’s right to decide whether or not to bear a child is so fundamental that it is constitutionally protected. Yet many who are religiously opposed to abortion and contraception have refused to take (p. 475) any actions that they view as facilitating religiously proscribed conduct. To do so, they argue, would make them complicit in sin. Pharmacists have refused to fill women’s birth-control prescriptions.[27] Religiously affiliated hospitals have declined to make morning-after pills available in their emergency rooms to rape victims on the grounds that they might induce abortions.[28] More recently, large employers, nonprofit

and for-profit, have argued that their religious beliefs prohibit them from complying with Affordable Care Act's contraception mandate.

Sometimes legislatures have enacted specific statutory exemptions for these religious objectors. For example, several states have passed laws guaranteeing pharmacists the right to refuse to fill birth control prescriptions.[29] Other times, the general protection afforded by RFRA (or its state counterparts) may exempt religious objectors from complying with a law. That, after all, is what happened with the contraception mandate. In *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, the Supreme Court held that thanks to RFRA, the national craft-store chain did not have to offer its 13,000 full-time employees a health insurance plan that covered all FDA-approved contraception.

Under a more rigorous Establishment Clause, some of these accommodations would be unconstitutional. In the past, religious exemptions have been held to go too far and cross over from constitutionally accommodating to unconstitutionally favoring religion when (1) the same benefit was not made available to secular counterparts; (2) religious entities were excused from a requirement that did not impose a substantial religious burden; or (3) the exemption shifted a burden onto third parties. By this framework, a Texas statute that that granted religious publications but not secular ones a tax break was found unconstitutional under the Establishment Clause not only because it treated religious publications more favorably than secular publications but also because the tax did not impose a substantial burden on religious exercise to begin with (*Texas Monthly, Inc. v. Bullock* 1989). A Connecticut statute that gave Sabbath observers an absolute and unqualified right not to work on their Sabbath was held to violate the Establishment Clause in part because it burdened third parties, such as coworkers who now would have to cover the Sabbath observers' weekend shift (*Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc.* 1985).

Arguably, many religious exemptions available in our current jurisprudence share these same problematic characteristics. First, some religious exemptions are not made available to their secular counterparts. For example, most states have enacted conscience laws that protect religious doctors at secular hospitals, allowing them to refuse to provide medical care when it would clash with their religious conscience. Yet, the laws do not cover secular doctors at religious hospitals, where religious restrictions may conflict with their secular but nonetheless deeply held moral beliefs about providing necessary medical care.

Second, many of these exemptions relieve burdens that cannot objectively be described as substantial burdens on religious conscience. Earlier exemptions recognized that forcing religious observers themselves to perform an act prohibited by their religion was a substantial burden. The draft, for example, might force a pacifist to kill someone. Now, exemptions are sought (and granted) when religious objectors complain that they are forced to facilitate others' performance of a prohibited act. Furthermore, the connection is often extremely attenuated: The complaint is not that religious objectors must enter into a same-sex marriage but that they must bake a cake for someone else's same-sex marriage. But where is the line drawn? Does selling a bed to a same-sex couple also impose a

substantial burden because it (p. 476) facilitates the sin of homosexuality? These links are too attenuated to amount to a substantial burden on religious conscience.

Third, granting exemptions in these cases impose serious harms on third parties. These are, after all, exemptions from antidiscrimination laws designed to ensure the equality of all citizens. Indeed, equal citizenship lies at the heart of our liberal democracy. The harms of deviating from this fundamental secular value are many. Moreover, these harms will be magnified and multiplied now that for-profit businesses as well as individuals and churches may obtain religious exemptions. To start, there is the obvious denial of a good, service, or facility when a business will not provide what it holds itself out as providing, whether it is a bakery that refuses to bake a wedding cake or a pharmacy that refuses to fill a prescription. Locating a substitute is not always simple. Outside of urban areas, finding another bakery or another pharmacy open late at night when time is of the essence may be easier said than done. In addition, there is the dignitary harm of state-sanctioned discrimination. These current religious refusals to serve are reminiscent of the segregation-era refusal to serve on account of race. Few would deny the insult to dignity of a "whites only" policy. A "heterosexuals only" policy similarly demeans and humiliates. The denials strike such a devastating blow because in both cases the offending trait—race or sexual orientation—is not incidental to someone's sense of self but rather constituent of identity. While being a contraception user may not be as central to identity as being gay, it is closely linked to sex, sexuality, and parenthood, which are. Ultimately, religious exemptions permit and legitimize second-class treatment of people based on core identity markers.

Making matters worse, as with segregation, this second-class treatment is visited upon people—gay men and women and women in general—who have already endured a long history of subordination and discrimination in this country. Segregationist refusals, after all, "not only humiliate[d]" blacks but "serv[ed] as a constant reminder of [their] inferior social position" (Fiss 1965: 569). No two groups share exactly the same history, and intersections between groups further complicate any recounting, but all share the experience of being treated as less equal, less worthy, less than. Being denied service reflects and reinforces this subordinated position. That the state not only tolerates but makes these stigmatizing refusals possible merely adds insult to the dignitary injury.

# Conclusion

Doctrinal developments in US religion clause jurisprudence have made it easier than ever to privilege religion. The move to greater equality between religious and secular counterparts under the Constitution has eliminated previous Establishment Clause restrictions on government subsidies to and government sponsorship of religion. At the same time, statutory exemptions have more than compensated for the diminished availability of constitutional exemptions under the Free Exercise Clause. This combination of fewer establishment limits and more religious exemptions has some decidedly problematic consequences. Particularly hard-hit are various minority groups, whether they be atheists,

members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, women, or a combination thereof. This result is at odds with core secular values such as ending discrimination and promoting equal respect and equal dignity for all.

(p. 477) # Acknowledgments

Thank you to Michael Cheah, Zanita Fenton, Jessie Hill, Chip Lupu, Leigh Osofsky, and Liz Sepper for extremely helpful comments, and thank you to Magena Rodriguez for excellent research assistance.

## Bibliography

Agostini v. Felton. 1997. 521 U.S. 203.

Aguilar v. Felton. 1985. 473 U.S. 402.

Associated Press. 2014. “Refusal to Sell Wedding Gowns to Lesbian Couple Stirs Debate in Bloomsburg.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (8 August).

Boorstein, M. 2014. “Faith Leaders: Exempt Religious Groups from Order Barring LGBT Bias in Hiring.” *The Washington Post* (2 July).

Bowen v. Kendrick. 1988. 487 U.S. 589.

Bowen v. Roy. 1986. 476 U.S. 693.

Brady, K. 2015. *The Distinctiveness of Religion in American Law: Rethinking Religion Clause Jurisprudence*. Cambridge, U.K.:Cambridge University Press.

Brief for Physicians for Reproductive Health et al. as Amici Curiae in Support of Petitioners. 2013. WL 1792349, Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. v. Sebelius, 723 F.3d 1114 (3d Cir. 2013) (No. 13-354).

Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. 2014. 573 U.S. __ (Docket nos. 13-354, 13-356).

Corbin, C. 2012. “Nonbelievers and Government Religious Speech.” *Iowa Law Review* 97, 347–415.

Corbin, C. 2013. “The Contraception Mandate.” *Northwest University Law Review* 107, 1469–1483.

City of Boerne v. Flores. 1997. 521 U.S. 507.

County of Allegheny v. American Civil Liberties Union Greater Pittsburgh Chapter. 1989. 492 U.S. 573.

Craig v. Masterpiece Cakeshop, Inc. 2014. Colorado Civil Rights Commission, Final Agency Order, CR 2013-0008.

Davis, D. (ed.). 2010. *The Oxford Handbook of Church and State in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Desmond, J. 2014. “Same-Sex Benefits at Catholic Universities and Hospitals.” *National Catholic Register* (30 October). **http://www.ncregister.com/site/article/same-sex-benefits-controversy-at-catholic-universities-and-hospitals/**.

Dorf, M. 2011. “Same-Sex Marriage, Second-Class Citizenship, and Law’s Social Meaning.” *Virginia Law Review* 97, 1267–1346.

Dorsen, N. 1986. “The Religion Clauses and Nonbelievers.” *William & Mary Law Review* 27, 863–873.

Edgell, P., J. Gerteis, and D. Hartmann. 2006. “Atheists as ‘Other’: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society.” *American Sociological Review* 71, 211–234.

(p. 480) Eisgruber, C., and L. Sager. 1994. “The Vulnerability of Conscience: The Constitutional Basis for Protecting Religious Conduct.” *University of Chicago Law Review* 61, 1245–1315.

Elane Photography, LLC v. Willock. 2013. 309 P.3d 53.

Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow. 2004. 542 U.S. 1.

Employment Division Employment Division v. Smith. 1990. 494 U.S. 872.

Engel v. Vitale. 1962. 370 U.S. 421.

Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc. 1985. 472 U.S. 703.

Feldman, Noah. 2005. *Divided by God: America’s Church–State Problem, and What We Should Do About It*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Fiss, O. 1965. “Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools: The Constitutional Concepts.” *Harvard Law Review* 78, 564–617.

Gedicks, F. 1998. “An Unfirm Foundation: The Regrettable Indefensibility of Religious Exemptions.” *University of Arkansas Little Rock Law Journal* 20, 555–574.

Gedicks, F., and R. Van Tassell. 2014. “RFRA Exemptions from the Contraception Mandate: An Unconstitutional Accommodation of Religion.” *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 49, 343–384.

Gonzalez v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal. 2006. 546 U.S. 418.

Good News Club v. Milford Central School. 2001. 533 U.S. 98.

Habecker v. Town of Estes Park. 2008. 518 F.3d 1217 (10th Circuit).

Hamilton, M. 2005. *God vs. The Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Harrison, T. 2005. “Availability of Emergency Contraception: A Survey of Hospital Emergency Department Staff.” *Annals of Emergency Medicine* 46(2), 105–110.

Hellman, D. 2000. “The Expressive Dimension of Equal Protection.” *Minnesota Law Review* 85, 1–69.

Holmes, David L. 2006. *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC. 2012. 132 S. Ct. 694.

Jimmy Swaggart Ministries v. Board of Equalization. 1990. 493 U.S. 378.

Kosmin, B., and A. Keysar. 2009. *American Religious Identification Survey Summary Report*. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Lee v. Wiesman. 1992. 505 U.S. 577.

Lim, M., and L. Melling, 2014. “Inconvenience or Indignity? Religious Exemptions to Public Accommodations Laws.” *Journal of Law and Policy* 22(2),705–725.

Locke v. Davey. 2004. 540 U.S. 712.

Lupu, I., and R. Tuttle. 2002. “The Distinctive Place of Religious Entities in Our Constitutional Order.” *Villanova Law Review* 47, 37–92.

Lupu, I., and R. Tuttle. 2004. “Sexual Misconduct and Ecclesiastical Immunity.” *Bringham Young University Law Review* 2004(5), 1789–1896.

Marsh v. Chambers. 1983. 463 U.S. 783.

Marshall, W. 2000. “What Is the Matter with Equality? An Assessment of the Equal Treatment of Religion and Nonreligion in First Amendment Jurisprudence.” *Indiana Law Journal* 75, 193-217.

McCreary County, Kentucky v. American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky. 2005. 545 U.S. 844.

Meek v. Pittenger. 1975. 421 U.S. 349.

Mitchell v. Helms. 2000. 530 U.S. 793.

Muñoz, V. 2015. *Religious Liberty and the American Supreme Court: The Essential Cases and Documents*, updated ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

(p. 481) Nejaime, D. 2012. “Marriage Inequality: Same-Sex Relationships, Religious Exemptions, and the Production of Sexual Orientation Discrimination.” *California Law Review* 100, 1169–1238.

Obergefell v. Hodges. 2015. 576 U.S. __ (Docket no. 14-556).

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. 2008. “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey 2008.” **http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/05/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf**.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. 2012. “Nones on the Rise.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/**.

Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania, et al. v. Casey. 1992. 505 U.S. 833.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act. 1993. 42 U.S. Code §2000bb et seq.

Rosenberger v. Rector and Visitors of University of Virginia. 1995. 515 U.S. 819.

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe. 2000. 530 U.S. 290.

School District of Grand Rapids v. Ball. 1985. 473 U.S. 373.

Sepper, E. 2012. “Taking Conscience Seriously.” *Virginia Law Review* 98, 1501–1575.

Siegel, R. 2007. “Sex Equality Arguments for Reproductive Rights: Their Critical Basis and Evolving Constitutional Expression.” *Emory Law Review* 56, 815–842.

Stone v. Graham. 1980. 449 U.S. 39.

Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky. 2009. 586 F.3d 1109 (9th Circuit).

Sullivan, Winnifred, Robert Yelle, and Mateo Taussig-Rubbo (eds.). 2011. *After Secular Law*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Tebbe, N. 2011. “Nonbelievers.” *Virginia Law Review* 97, 1111–1180.

Texas Monthly, Inc. v. Bullock. 1989. 489 U.S. 1.

Town of Greece, New York v. Galloway, et al. 2014. 572 U.S. __ (Docket no. 12-696).

Underkuffler, L. 2011. “Odious Discrimination and the Religious Exemption Question.” *Cardozo Law Review* 32, 2069–2091.

U.S. v. Windsor. 2013. 133 S. Ct. 2675.

Walton, J. 2014. “Christian Ministries Protest over Executive Order Banning Religious Exemptions from Hiring LBGT: Extreme and Unprecedented.” *Breaking Christian News* (22 July). **http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=14237**.

Winkler, A. 2006. “Fatal in Theory and Strict in Fact: An Empirical Analysis of Strict Scrutiny in the Federal Courts.” *Vanderbilt Law Review* 59, 793-871.

Wisconsin v. Yoder. 1972. 406 U.S. 205.

Wolman v. Walter. 1977. 433 U.S. 229.

Zelman v. Simmons-Harris. 2002. 536 U.S. 639.

## Notes:

(1.) *McCreary County, Kentucky v. American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky* (2005: 860).

(2.) Winkler (2006: 857–858) writes, "The religious liberty category had the highest survival rate of any area of law in which strict scrutiny applies." He also notes that in the decade before *Employment Division v. Smith*, federal courts rejected 87 percent of Free Exercise Clause challenges (859).

(3.) *Mitchell v. Helms* (2000), overruling *Meek v. Pittenger* (1975) and *Wolman v. Walter* (1977). See also *Agostini v. Felton* (1997), overruling *Aguilar v. Felton* (1985) and *School District of Grand Rapids v. Ball* (1985).

(4.) *Rosenberger v. Rector & Visitors of University of Virginia* 1995; *Good News Club v. Milford Central School* 2001.

(5.) *Lee v. Wiesman* (1992); *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe* (2000).

(6.) For example, after *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC* (2012), which upheld the constitutionality of the "ministerial exemption," the *Smith* test does not apply to cases involving ministers' lawsuits against their religious employers and perhaps to any case that implicates "church autonomy."

(7.) American Indian Religious Freedom Amendments of 1994, "Protection and Preservation of Traditional Religions of Native Americans," 42 U.S. Code §1996.

(8.) *City of Boerne v. Flores* (1997) held that Congress exceeded its authority under the Constitution when it attempted to rewrite constitutional standards.

(9.) States with religious freedom restoration acts include Arizona (1999), Arkansas (2015), Connecticut (1993), Florida (1998), Idaho (2000), Illinois (1998), Indiana (2015), Kansas (2013), Kentucky (2013), Louisiana (2010), Mississippi (2014), Missouri (2003), New Mexico (2000), Oklahoma (2000), Pennsylvania (2002), Rhode Island (1993), South Carolina (1999), Tennessee (2009), Texas (1999), and Virginia (2007). Alabama amended its constitution: Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment of 1998, Alabama Constitution Article I, §3.01.

(10.) See, for example, *Locke v. Davey* (2004); *Jimmy Swaggart Ministries v. Board of Equalization* (1990); *Bowen v. Roy* (1986).

(11.) While the government did not contest this point, amicus briefs did. See, for example, *Brief for Physicians for Reproductive Health* (2013).

(12.) Justice Ginsburg, dissenting, wrote: "Today's decision elides entirely the distinction between the sincerity of a challenger's religious belief and the substantiality of the burden placed on the challenger" (*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* 2014: 2799).

(13.) *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* (2015: 2762) describes changes to RFRA as "an obvious effort to effect a complete separation from First Amendment case law." See also Justice Ginsburg in dissent (2791–2792) describing as "not plausible" the majority's characterization of RFRA as "a bold initiative departing from, rather than restoring, pre-*Smith* jurisprudence."

(14.) A Princeton Survey Research and *Newsweek* poll (July 2008) found that 51 percent would not vote for an atheist presidential candidate who was nominated by their party and qualified for the job. A Gallup and *USA Today* poll (June 2011) found that 49 percent would not vote for party-nominated, generally well-qualified presidential candidate who happens to be an atheist; compare with a Gallup and *USA Today* poll (March 2007) finding 48 percent and a Gallup and *USA Today* poll (February 2007) finding 53 percent.

(15.) Edgell et al. (2006: 217–218) report these findings: asked if they would disapprove of their child marrying an atheist, 47.6 percent of those interviewed said "yes"; asked the same question about Muslims, the "yes" responses fell to 33.5 percent. The "yes" responses for African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, and Jews were 27.2 percent, 18.5 percent, 18.5 percent, and 11.8 percent, respectively. See also a Pew Research Center report in January 2014 that 49 percent said they would be unhappy if their child married someone who did not believe in God (http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/16/so-you-married-an-atheist/).

(16.) Pew Global Attitudes Project and Princeton Survey Research Associates International polling from April 2007 found that 57 percent believed it is "necessary to believe in God to be moral/have good values." A Public Religion Research Institute Economic Values Survey poll in May 2013 found that 27 percent "completely agree" and 25 percent "mostly agree" with statement that "It is necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values."

(17.) Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, True Patriot Survey (August 2008) found that when asked whether atheism was patriotic, unpatriotic, or neither, 39 percent of Americans in 2008 told pollsters that not believing in God was "very unpatriotic," and another 4 percent stated it was "somewhat unpatriotic."

(18.) *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow* (2004: 25) states: "The amendment's sponsor, Representative Rabaut, said its purpose was to contrast this country's belief in God with the Soviet Union's embrace of atheism. 100 Cong. Rec. 1700 (1954)."

(19.) *Habecker v. Town of Estes Park* (2008: 1220–1221).

(20.) The email continued: “If you are an atheist, you should not participate in anything having to do with religion & just mind your own faithless lifestyle … Stay away from town meetings & do everyone a favor.” Quoted in Amicus Curiae Brief of the ACLU et al. (22) to *Town of Greece v. Galloway* (2014), citing Andy Dillon’s description of an anonymous letter, which was signed as “666,” in an article “Exclusivity in Diversity’s Clothing,” Indymedia (18 August 2013), http://rochester.indymedia.org/node/99429.

(21.) See *Employment Division Employment Division v. Smith* (1990); *Gonzalez v. O Centro Espirita Beneficente Uniao do Vegetal* (2006).

(22.) *Elane Photography, LLC v. Willock* (2013); *Craig v. Masterpiece Cakeshop, Inc.* (2014); Associated Press (2014).

(23.) Executive Order 13672 amended Executive Order 11478 prohibiting discrimination in federal civilian workforce and amended Executive Order 11246 prohibiting discrimination by federal contractors, given on 21 July 2014. See Boorstein (2014) and Walton (2014).

(24.) These states include Connecticut, Minnesota, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington as well as Washington, D.C.

(25.) Minnesota Statute §363A.26 (2) (2013).

(26.) See, e.g., *Planned Parenthood of Southeast Pennsylvania v. Casey* (1992: 833): “The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives.” It is also well-established that women’s out-of-pocket health care expenses are significantly larger than men’s in large part because of the high cost of contraception. See *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* (2014: 2788), Justice Ginsburg in dissent.

(27.) See, e.g., *Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky* (2009).

(28.) Harrison (2005) reported that 55 percent of all Catholic hospitals refused to dispense emergency contraception under any circumstance.

(29.) Mississippi’s law is typical. “A health care provider has the right not to participate, and no health care provider shall be required to participate in a health care service that violates his or her conscience.” Mississippi Code Ann. Chapter 107. Health Care Right of Conscience. §41-107-1.

**Caroline Corbin**

Caroline Mala Corbin is Professor of Law in the School of Law at the University of Miami, Florida. She litigated cases with the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project. Her scholarship in numerous law reviews focuses on the First Amendment’s speech

and establishment clauses and religious liberty. Her article “Nonbelievers and Government Religious Speech” was published in the Iowa Law Review.

# Separating Church and State in America

David Niose

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.30

## Abstract and Keywords

The culture wars continue to rage in America. In many ways modern American culture is decidedly secular, with little indication that theological concerns play a significant role in the everyday lives of most ordinary citizens. But certain pockets of American society, defined by both geography and politics, continue to exalt traditional religion despite a general overall demographic trend toward secularity. These tensions play out in many ways in public life but nowhere more visibly than in the judiciary, where the two sides struggle to move the legal consensus in their direction. Terms that have been part of the American vernacular for centuries—"church–state separation" and "religious freedom"—still remain open to interpretation, with each side claiming that tradition and precedent favors them. Recent cases, addressing issues such as legislative prayer, LGBT rights, the Affordable Care Act, and the Pledge of Allegiance, do little to resolve these tensions.

Keywords: secularism, separation of church and state, religious freedom, religious right, culture wars

IF one had a flare for drama, it would not be difficult to portray the current state of affairs in the United States as a dialectical clash of epic proportions. On one side is an America charging forth into modernity, with stunning technological advancements that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. In our pockets are computers more powerful than those that put men on the moon, and from a scientific standpoint our understanding of the universe, though far from complete, has never been more in focus. The genome is mapped, as is much of the celestial world, and the place of each within the larger order is soberly digested by those willing to accept the facts delivered by that emotionless courier known as empiricism.

Reflecting this modernist view, American society stridently (and with a hint of smug pride) declares that it will not stand for the prejudices that once defined it, and thus the social landscape has shed some of its ugliest historical attributes. As each year passes, fewer are old enough to remember institutionalized segregation—the separate and unequal schools, the "colored" water fountains and bathrooms—and many point to the two-term African-American president as irrefutable evidence of the country's relatively new-

found enlightenment. Whereas only 4 percent of Americans approved of interracial marriage in 1958, a near-unanimous 87 percent approve today (Newport 2013). Yes, the intelligent modern American understands that we are all of African descent, that racial differences are largely illusory and in no way a basis for prejudice.

# America and Modernity

But there's another side—a significant segment of America that is not so eager to embrace modernity. Social change to some is not evidence of progress but decline, proof that America's greatest years are behind her, that today's generation falls far short of the standards set by predecessors. To this segment of the population, a single woman on birth control is not evidence of liberation but moral abandonment; "family values" have been overshadowed by "the gay agenda"; and the increased prevalence of nonwhites and women in American (p. 483) society is symbolic of something lost, not something gained. Clinging to their Bibles, their old-time religion is as much a cultural defense mechanism as it is a means of salvation.

As these worldviews clash it is not always easy to determine which side is winning. In many ways, mainstream American society exudes secularity and indifference to religion. Mainstream music, television, and film, for example, while far from intellectually compelling, typically show little interest in religion. Indeed, the most telling indicator or what really matters to ordinary people—their conduct in daily life—would often seem to reflect little concern for theological issues. To find serious religiosity, one usually must go looking for it.

But despite this secularity, there are pockets of American culture where resistance to modernity is intense, even some areas where deep respect for religiosity is very much expected. Individuals and entire communities in certain geographic regions (especially in the Deep South but not exclusively so) hold on to conservative religious views with determination. In these instances, despite long-established legal precedents dictating otherwise, one still often finds visible religious favoritism in schools and other public institutions, along with a general defiance toward efforts to promote pluralism and public secularism. School football coaches may lead their teams in prayer, for example, or Christian displays may appear, to the exclusion of others, in front of government buildings. Public officials in such areas may insist that this is permissible because, in their words, "America is a Christian nation" and "there's no separation of church and state in the Constitution."

Even beyond such general geographic and demographic considerations, there are particular aspects of American culture that are more prone to conservative religious tendencies. Specifically, in the areas of politics and government there seems to be an unquestioned acceptance that traditional religion is central to the American way. A typical American may not go to church, may pray rarely if ever, and may enjoy a job and daily life that are far removed from anything spiritual, but will nevertheless nod reflexively when told that America is "a very religious country." Expecting no religiosity in their art, culture, or other facets of life, they will assume without question that any candidate for public office

must profess some kind of religious belief. *Of course* our government exudes religiosity, these typical Americans will say—has it not always been that way?

Actually, it hasn't. But the problem in America is that few are old enough to remember a time when religion did not permeate virtually every aspect of political culture. The massive injection of religion into American public life occurred primarily in the 1950s, during the Cold War years and the McCarthy era, when the Soviet Union was feared and American politicians found it easy to use religion as a trait that distinguished the United States from its communist adversary. During this decade, legislation was passed mandating an annual National Day of Prayer (1952), the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag (in 1954, after lobbying led by the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic fraternal organization), and "In God We Trust" not only became the official national motto (1956) but was inscribed on all currency so that its significance would not go unnoticed by the general population. (The de facto national motto in America since the founding era had been *E Pluribus Unum*, Latin for "out of many, one," a reference to many states combining to form one federal government. *E Pluribus Unum* appeared on the Great Seal of the United States, which was adopted in 1782.) Note that all of this passed while the so-called Baby Boomer generation—an enormous demographic category that would come to define American culture in the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond—was still in its childhood. As the older generation faded and Boomers came to dominate, memories of pre-1950s America (p. 484) faded as well, and the notion of American government being highly religious—and always so—became cemented in the national psyche.

# Culture Wars in the Courts

America's cultural clash is apparent in contemporary jurisprudence, as we consistently see a sharply divided Supreme Court struggling with divisive social and religious issues. As these issues are argued and decided, the only certainty is that large sections of the nation will be dissatisfied with any outcome. In every issue—whether it be gay rights, contraception coverage, or religious freedom—we see the modernists on one side and the traditionalists on the other. Two 2014 Supreme Court decisions illustrate this division well.

The first decision is that of *Town of Greece v. Galloway* (2014), a case arising from a dispute in a small upstate New York community over prayers at the commencement of municipal board meetings. In a 5–4 decision, a common split in modern times in cases involving religion in government, the Supreme Court, in a decision authored by Justice Kennedy (so often the swing vote on the court) upheld a policy and practice of sectarian prayers at the opening of board meetings. This dislodged a general understanding that had been in place going back three decades, when in *Marsh v. Chambers* (1983) the Supreme Court had upheld nonsect-arian prayers. The *Marsh* case, a 6–3 decision, upheld legislative prayer by carving out an exception to the usual "*Lemon* test" for determining Establishment Clause constitutionality. Under that test, a law would be scrutinized to determine

whether it had a secular purpose, had an effect that neither advanced nor inhibited religion, and did not excessively entangle government with religious affairs. If any of these prongs were not met, the law would be considered in violation of the Establishment Clause (per *Lemon v. Kurtzman* 1971).

The 1983 *Marsh* court, however, in upholding legislative prayer, set aside the *Lemon* test altogether because a clear historical record going back to the founding era demonstrated that the framers understood legislative prayer as being constitutional. “From colonial times through the founding of the Republic and ever since, the practice of legislative prayer has coexisted with the principles of disestablishment and religious freedom,” wrote Chief Justice Burger for the majority (*Marsh v. Chambers* 1983: 785). This “unique history” justified ignoring the *Lemon* test, under which the practice of legislative prayer would arguably fail all three prongs. In dissenting, Justice Brennan pointed this out: “[I]f the Court were to judge legislative prayer through the unsentimental eye of our settled doctrine,” he wrote, “it would have to strike it down as a clear violation of the Establishment Clause” (796). This, however, was only the start of Brennan’s criticism of the majority, for after considering the formal analysis that should have been applied, and thus finding grounds for his dissent, he unleashed against the majority for its failure to consider the broader purposes behind the Establishment Clause:

> Legislative prayer clearly violates the principles of neutrality and separation that are embedded within the Establishment Clause. … It intrudes on the right to conscience by forcing some legislators either to participate in a “prayer opportunity,” with which they are in basic disagreement, or to make their disagreement a matter of public comment by declining to participate. It forces all residents of the State to support a religious exercise that may be contrary to their own beliefs. It requires the State to commit itself on fundamental theological issues. It has the potential for degrading religion by allowing a religious call to worship to be intermeshed with (p. 485) a secular call to order. And it injects religion into the political sphere by creating the potential that each and every selection of a chaplain, or consideration of a particular prayer, or even reconsideration of the practice itself, will provoke a political battle along religious lines and ultimately alienate some religiously identified group of citizens. (808)

Brennan agreed that government should not be forbidden from recognizing that religious beliefs and practices have been an aspect of American culture but insisted that doing so does not require the sanctioning of officially sponsored acts of public worship. The fact that the Court’s only basis for approving the practice was historical, he argued, was not persuasive, since even the earliest American legislatures were populated by politicians, not intellectuals or philosophers. “To treat any practice authorized by the First Congress as presumptively consistent with the Bill of Rights is therefore somewhat akin to treating any action of a party to a contract as presumptively consistent with the terms of the contract,” he wrote (816). Indeed, early American congresses passed laws such as the Alien

and Sedition Acts, which made dissent illegal and resulted in the imprisonment of newspaper editors—hardly exemplary libertarian standards in the early years of the Republic.

The prayers that were under scrutiny in *Marsh* were described as nonsectarian, and in fact the chaplain in question, a Protestant minister, had testified that he removed all references to Christ from his legislative prayers after a complaint from a Jewish legislator. Because of this, the general understanding in America for three decades post-*Marsh* was that the Supreme Court had upheld only nonsectarian prayer. This thinking was turned on its head by the *Town of Greece* decision in 2014, when the Supreme Court ruled that such an interpretation of *Marsh* would be erroneous. The prayers in *Marsh* happened to be nonsectarian, Justice Kennedy wrote for the majority, but that should not be understood as meaning that only nonsectarian prayers pass constitutional muster:

> An insistence on nonsectarian or ecumenical prayer as a single, fixed standard is not consistent with the tradition of legislative prayer outlined in the Court's cases. The Court found the prayers in Marsh consistent with the First Amendment not because they espoused only a generic theism but because our history and tradition have shown that prayer in this limited context could "coexis[t] with the principles of disestablishment and religious freedom." 463 U. S., at 786. … Marsh nowhere suggested that the constitutionality of legislative prayer turns on the neutrality of its content.
>
> (*Town of Greece v. Galloway* 2014: 12)

Like Chief Justice Burger in *Marsh,* Justice Kennedy pointed to the historical record in upholding the practice of sectarian prayer, citing evidence that references to "our Lord Jesus Christ" were made in early congressional prayers. "The Congress that drafted the First Amendment would have been accustomed to invocations containing explicitly religious themes of the sort respondents find objectionable," Kennedy wrote (10). In further justifying sectarian prayers, Kennedy pointed out that insistence on nonsectarian prayer puts government in the awkward position of censoring the content of prayers offered by clergy. Such overview of prayers would be "a rule that would involve government in religious matters to a far greater degree than is the case under the town's current practice of neither editing or approving prayers in advance nor criticizing their content after the fact" (13).

In the midst of America's culture wars, the *Town of Greece* decision was seen as a clear victory for the conservative/traditionalist side, an affirmation that America's Christian heritage was being validated by the high court. The *Christian Post* ran a headline: "Religious Groups Hail Supreme Court Decision Allowing Christian Prayers at Town Meetings" (Gryboski 2014). (p. 486) The Rev. Rob Schenck, president of Faith and Action in the Nation's Capital, said he was "delightfully surprised" by the court's ruling, a sentiment that was echoed by Russell D. Moore, president of the Ethics and Liberty Commission, who released a statement saying he was "very thankful" for the decision because Americans must acknowledge that "[t]here is some higher allegiance than simply political process" (quoted in Gryboski 2014). This assertion by Moore gets to the heart of the is-

sue, for many Americans refuse to accept the “higher allegiance” to which he refers, at least to the extent that it alludes to a divinity. Ron Lindsay, president and CEO of the Center for Inquiry, a secular organization, criticized the ruling and the underlying municipal prayer policy for excluding “not only the nonreligious, but those of differing faiths,” while pointing out that the Court’s majority was comprised of five of the six Christians on the court (quoted in Gryboski 2014). (In fact, those six Christians on that court are all Roman Catholics. The other three—Breyer, Ginsburg, and Kagan—are Jewish.)

Adding a surprising twist to the *Town of Greece* fallout, however, was a program launched by the American Humanist Association (AHA), a Washington-based nonprofit that advocates for secularism and humanism. (Full disclosure: the AHA is the author’s employer.) Noting that the Greece decision requires local governments to respect the religious diversity of their populations in designing and implementing legislative prayer policies, the AHA program provides resources for atheists and humanists who seek to deliver secular invocations. Secular groups, including the AHA, had ardently opposed the sectarian prayer policy that had been under scrutiny in *Town of Greece*, but now that the policy had been upheld, the AHA decided to pursue a different course. As the AHA’s press release explained,

> The Supreme Court’s ruling … makes clear that local governments must make “reasonable efforts to identify all of the congregations located within its borders” and welcome an invocation by anyone who wishes to give one, regardless of their faith. The majority decision also states that the policy must be one of nondiscrimination.
>
> (American Humanist Association 2014)

Thus, in a good example of how the back-and-forth of the culture wars is seemingly perpetual, the AHA immediately utilized the *Town of Greece* ruling to give atheism and humanism more visibility. Within just weeks of the *Town of Greece* decision, atheists had given dozens of invocations in communities around the country, including a marvelously ironic atheist invocation before the town board of Greece, New York, where the dispute over sectarian legislative prayer had begun six years earlier (McDermott 2014).

# Equality for Seculars?

The same week that the US Supreme Court ruled in *Town of Greece*, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court issued another ruling that delighted religious conservatives. The decision in *Doe v. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District* (2014) (the author represented the plaintiffs in this case) declared that daily classroom recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools does not discriminate against atheist-humanist schoolchildren, even though the pledge expressly declares that the nation is “under God.” This case presented a new legal strategy for the secular movement, which had come to see Estab-

lishment Clause jurisprudence as being too often inadequate in its protection of secularism.

(p. 487) Starting with the ascent of Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court in 1986, followed by other conservatives Clarence Thomas (1991), John Roberts (2005), and Samuel Alito (2006)—and also Anthony Kennedy (1988), who often gives the conservatives the majority they need—federal jurisprudence had chipped away at the metaphorical wall of separation between church and state in such a way that many seculars had begun to see the courts as providing little protection for the rights of nonbelievers. The Supreme Court's decision in *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* (2007), for example, had declared that taxpayer standing—long considered vital to enforcement of the Establishment Clause—was unavailable when the church–state violation in question was one of executive (rather than legislative) action. In the case, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) had challenged what many believed to be a flagrant Establishment Clause violation—the funneling of millions of tax dollars to churches and religious organizations though the Bush administration's White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Though the Seventh Circuit had ruled in favor of FFRF, the Supreme Court's 5–4 decision reversed and ordered the case dismissed for lack of standing.

The high court's restrictive view of standing on Establishment Clause challenges trickled down to the appellate circuits as well, as was seen in another FFRF case from 2011, *Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Obama* (2011). This case challenged the statute, 32 U.S.Code § 119, which had been passed during the Reagan administration codifying the first Thursday in May each year as the National Day of Prayer. (Before then, the president was required by law to declare a National Day of Prayer each year, but no specific date was set for the event.) The new statute read: "The President shall issue each year a proclamation designating the first Thursday in May as a National Day of Prayer on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals." This being congressional action—a statute and not just executive action—one might think that standing would not be an issue, but alas the Seventh Circuit saw otherwise. That court pointed out that the statute requires no American to do anything, except that it requires the president to make a declaration. The fact that the declaration causes nonbelievers to feel excluded and unwelcome, the court ruled, does not give rise to a legally recognized injury. The president's call to prayer is not a command but a request, and thus if plaintiffs disagree they should ignore it or speak out in opposition to it. "[H]urt feelings differ from legal injury," the court ruled.

In knocking out the challenge to the National Day of Prayer on standing grounds, the Seventh Circuit referred back to the high-profile Supreme Court case of *Elk Grove v. Newdow* (2004) wherein the high court overturned, on standing grounds, a successful challenge to the Pledge of Allegiance in the Ninth Circuit. The Ninth Circuit decision had stunned the country by declaring in *Michael Newdow v. U.S. Congress* (2002) that the federal statute setting forth the wording of the Pledge of Allegiance, 4 U.S.C §4, violated the Establishment Clause due to the inclusion of the assertion that the nation is "under God." As a result, pandemonium broke out in Washington, as members of Congress reacted with

outrage, even marching to the Capitol steps to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in full view of television cameras. The Ninth Circuit stayed its ruling pending review by the Supreme Court, and the 2004 Supreme Court decision overturned the decision, declaring that Newdow, as a noncustodial parent, lacked standing to complain about recitation of the pledge in his daughter's school. This, to the Seventh Circuit considering Establishment Clause standing in 2011, was significant: "If a perceived slight, or a feeling of exclusion, were enough," wrote the Court, "then (p. 488) Michael Newdow would have had standing to challenge the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance, yet the Supreme Court held that he lacks standing" (*Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Obama* 2011).

The hostile environment in federal courts toward Establishment Clause challenges caused the secular community to rethink litigation strategies, and one place it looked was toward the gay rights movement, where major judicial victories were occurring. The revolution became apparent with the 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision in *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* (2003) legalizing same-sex marriage in that state, the first such recognition anywhere in the United States. Few, if any, liberal victories in the culture wars have been more significant than this groundbreaking case, which forced all of America to consider the radical notion of equality for gays and lesbians. Only a generation earlier few gays and lesbians dared to come out publicly to their families and social circles, being gay was almost universally considered a disqualification for elected office, and the thought of same-sex marriage was unimaginable to most Americans. Indeed, one of the key issues that mobilized the religious right in its early days, when Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority was its key activist group in the early 1980s, was the so-called "homosexual agenda." Back then, and even into the 1990s and early 2000s, a primary issue for gays and lesbians was not marriage equality—that was not considered within reach—but civil unions, which would have conveyed most of the same rights of marriage to same-sex couples but without calling it marriage. Before *Goodridge*, social conservatives vehemently opposed attempts to allow civil unions for gays and lesbians, as doing so would only further the "homosexual agenda." Shell-shocked after *Goodridge*, however, the conservative position increasingly became "Aren't civil unions enough?"

Interestingly, the *Goodridge* case, despite its historic significance, was a state case only, with no federal component. The plaintiffs in *Goodridge* filed their case in Massachusetts state court and challenged that state's marriage laws, and the court's decision was based entirely on application of the state constitution's guarantees of equal protection and due process. Thus atheists and humanists in the United States, in considering legal strategies that might offer more hope than the federal courts and their increasingly restrictive view of the Establishment Clause, not surprisingly considered a similar approach. In fact, with the *Doe v. Acton-Boxborough* case, seculars even turned to the same jurisdiction—Massachusetts. The state's Supreme Judicial Court had shown its willingness to break new ground in equality jurisprudence with *Goodridge*, a decision with language that emphasized that the state constitution's protections are often higher than those conveyed by the US Constitution:

> The Massachusetts Constitution protects matters of personal liberty against government incursion as zealously, and often more so, than does the Federal Constitution, even where both Constitutions employ essentially the same language … That the Massachusetts Constitution is in some instances more protective of individual liberty interests than is the Federal Constitution is not surprising. Fundamental to the vigor of our Federal system of government is that "state courts are absolutely free to interpret state constitutional provisions to accord greater protection to individual rights than do similar provisions of the United States Constitution."
>
> (*Doe v. Acton-Boxborough* 2014)

To the secular activist looking for recourse in light of dwindling Establishment Clause protections in federal court, *Goodridge* and its progeny in the gay rights area seemed to call out for attention. For too long America's atheists and agnostics had pointed to the wall of separation between church and state as their legal protection, ignoring the concept of equal protection. (p. 489) In fact, even setting aside the gay and lesbian demographic, virtually every minority asserting its rights in America—racial minorities, ethnic minorities, women—had been utilizing equal protection and nondiscrimination law as their primary tool. The standard had been set, of course, in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education* and the desegregation of public schools and since then the concept of judicial action to guarantee equality had become an important aspect of American jurisprudence. By the early twenty-first century, it had expanded to include gays and lesbians, a demographic category that had been almost entirely isolated and scorned just a generation earlier. Meanwhile, as America's seculars—atheists, agnostics, humanists, and the generally nonreligious—watched this emergence of the gay and lesbian community, their own legal efforts were faltering, as we saw with *Elk Grove, Hein*, and others, as was their social standing. Perhaps, it was thought, a secular replication of *Goodridge* was in order: an equal rights approach in a liberal jurisdiction with high standards of equality.

The *Doe* case was precisely that, with language in the complaint expressly telling the court to ignore the Establishment Clause and federal jurisprudence altogether, to consider the rights of the atheist-humanist plaintiffs solely from the standpoint of equal protection and nondiscrimination. The Massachusetts constitution, unlike the federal, includes an Equal Rights Amendment that expressly enumerates various protected classes, and discrimination based on "creed" is one of them, thus meaning that any discrimination based on such criteria must be reviewed by the court with "strict scrutiny." In other words, any governmental action discriminating based on religion would be presumptively invalid, defensible only if the government can show (1) a compelling reason for the law and (2) that there is no less discriminatory means of achieving the end sought by the law. The general rule of thumb, known by lawyers and jurists alike, is that laws reviewed under the "strict scrutiny" standard are very rarely upheld. As such, if we break the *Doe* issue down to the basics, the analysis is straightforward: As a school-sponsored daily patriotic exercise has students standing tall, with hand over heart, facing the flag, and declaring that America is "one nation under God," it is conditioning children to understand patriotism in a certain way—a way that casts nonbelievers as second-class citizens at

best, unpatriotic at worst. Public schools are sponsoring a daily ceremony, for the purpose of defining and instilling patriotism in children, and doing so with a recitation that portrays one religious class—those who believe in God—as truer patriots than those who do not. Under a strict scrutiny standard, in a jurisdiction that takes equality seriously, certainly this could not be upheld.

Or so we thought. In a decision that sent a clear message to America's secular movement that it had not arrived, the Massachusetts high court—the same court that had delivered the *Goodridge* decision to the nation a decade earlier, unanimously ruled that such a practice in public schools was not a violation of equal protection. The main reason cited by the court was that actual participation in the daily classroom pledge exercise is voluntary, pursuant to the US Supreme Court's ruling in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943). This was rather puzzling logic, and one must wonder whether "voluntariness" would excuse a daily patriotic exercise that portrays racial minorities, women, or even other religious minorities as lesser citizens. If the Pledge, for example, affirmed that America was "one nation under Jesus," would the court reject discrimination challenges from Jews and Muslims based on the practice being voluntary? Nevertheless, this was the Massachusetts high court's logic:

> Here there is no discriminatory classification for purposes of art. 106—no differing treatment of any class or classes of students based on their sex, race, color, creed, or national origin. (p. 490) All students are treated alike. They are free, if they choose, to recite the pledge or any part of it that they see fit. They are entirely free as well to choose to abstain. No one is required to say all or even any part of it. And significantly, no student who abstains from reciting the pledge, or any part of it, is required to articulate a reason for his or her choice to do so.
>
> (*Doe v. Acton-Boxborough* 2014)

In effect, the court tells the atheist child that he or she is being treated equally. There is an eerie similarity in this logic with the arguments that were put forth in the landmark Supreme Court case of *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), where the court declared laws prohibiting interracial marriage unconstitutional. The state of Virginia, in defending its antimiscegenation statute, argued that it did not discriminate at all, since blacks were prohibited from marrying whites, just as whites are prohibited from marrying blacks. Discrimination? What discrimination? This is what the *Doe* court essentially tells the atheist child faced with a daily patriotic exercise that portrays believers as the true patriots. You, little girl (or boy), need not participate, nor does the devout Christian child. The *Doe* court also pointed to the lack of any evidence of bullying as significant, but again this would seem to be a standard applied uniquely to atheists. Massachusetts jurisprudence appears to be void of any decision on racial discrimination, sex discrimination, or any other "suspect class" allegations where the minority is required to show evidence of bullying before deserving equal protection.

What the *Doe* court did not say, but is obvious from its decision, is that courts have an extremely difficult time respecting the notion of atheist equality. We are told that justice is blind, but it is clear that political momentum of some type is necessary in order for American courts to begin to recognize valid complaints about unequal treatment. The defenders of the Pledge of Allegiance in the *Doe* case repeatedly claimed that the "under God" wording has nothing to do with promoting a religious view, that instead the language should be understood as referring to heritage or political philosophy. One could reasonably wonder how any child could possibly be expected to know this not-so-obvious secular meaning of what appear to be unambiguous religious words, but the claim is made even more laughable when we see the hodgepodge of religious activist groups that rushed to join the case as either interveners or amicus parties: the Knights of Columbus, Becket Fund, Massachusetts Family Institute, Alliance Defending Freedom, American Center for Law and Justice. If the wording is so secular, one must wonder why it is of such interest to these religious organizations.

# Religious Freedom or Religious Privilege?

As seculars scratch their heads, baffled by the unresponsiveness of the judiciary to their claims of mistreatment, wondering how things went so awry, one legislative error from the past stands out. A statute known, some would say euphemistically, as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), passed in 1993 with enthusiastic backing from liberals (in fact, the House vote was unanimous, and one of only three "nay" votes in the Senate came from the notorious conservative Jesse Helms), has proven to be a potent weapon for religious conservatives seeking special treatment in the face of government actions that are (p. 491) not to their liking. Some would claim that the RFRA should be more accurately called the Religious Privileging Act, for under its cover all sorts of behavior that would otherwise be considered unlawful are sanctioned as a matter of "religious freedom." Indeed, cries of religious freedom have become increasingly common in America since the passage of RFRA and another similar statute in 2000 called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. As a result, we see pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions for birth control, religious daycare centers failing to meet the safety standards that apply to secular centers, landlords claiming exemption from civil rights laws, and churches ignoring local zoning laws. Thanks in large part to RFRA, the claim of "religious freedom" has become a sort of trump card in the law.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the case of *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014), a 5–4 decision by the Supreme Court that allowed for-profit corporate employers an exemption from the requirement of providing health insurance for their employees that includes certain methods of contraception found to be religiously objectionable by the corporation's owners. Thus, the Court decided that the religious objections of shareholders allow them the right to refuse to provide health-care coverage that is otherwise considered necessary by medical professionals and public policymakers.

The first step that is necessary in order to reach the Court's finding is the determination that a corporation—which of course is a "person" only in the strict legal sense for the sake of conducting enterprise—is entitled to "religious freedom." This is a leap in itself, since anyone can see the folly of supposing that a corporation could have spiritual beliefs or practice a religion. No corporation has ever knelt at a pew, prayed, fasted, pondered theological notions, or converted from one religion to another. Corporations, as persons, are designed and exist for one purpose—to make money for shareholders—and the notion that they can have religious faith is as fictional as their personhood.

Nevertheless, the Court's majority had little trouble brushing that fact aside, while going out of its way to emphasize that it was drawing a very limited exception for the devout Christians who own and operate the corporations in question. The opinion, written by Justice Alito, stressed that the exemption was given only because means were available to ensure that women working for the subject corporations could still have access to free contraceptive coverage via alternative mechanisms put into place by regulators and insurance companies: "We do not hold, as the principal dissent alleges, that for-profit corporations and other commercial enterprises can 'opt out of any law (saving only tax laws) they judge incompatible with their sincerely held religious beliefs.'" These assurances did not appease critics of the decision, who pointed out that claims of "religious freedom" by employers might lead to Christian Scientist employers refusing to provide virtually any kind of health coverage, to Scientologist employers from providing psychiatric coverage, or to religious objections to providing coverage of vaccinations or blood transfusions. And Alito's assurances certainly did not appease the "principal dissent," delivered by Justice Ginsburg. (It is noteworthy that all three female justices sided with the dissent, whereas all five in the majority were Catholic men.)

Disagreeing with Alito that the majority decision was very narrow, Ginsburg called it one of "startling breadth" and argued that it gave a virtual carte blanche for religious privileging, which could only lead to "havoc." Rather than approach the issue from the standpoint of a corporation's fictional personhood and even more fictional religious freedom, Ginsburg instead considered the case from the standpoint of the real humans whose health coverage (p. 492) was being affected: women. "The ability of women to participate equally in the economic and social life of the Nation has been facilitated by their ability to control their reproductive lives," she wrote, quoting prior Supreme Court precedent.[2] Thus, the contrast of the majority and dissent reflected not so much a difference of legal interpretation but one of priorities. The majority put religious freedom—even when claimed through a corporate entity incapable of religious thought—first and foremost, whereas the dissent considered the human interests as primary. Ginsburg's dissent went on: "The exemption sought by Hobby Lobby … would override significant interests of the corporations' employees and covered dependents. It would deny legions of women who do not hold their employers' beliefs access to contraceptive coverage that the ACA would otherwise secure." Big deal, the majority would say, for "religious freedom" is at stake!

Stepping back from the precise factual and legal issues presented in the *Hobby Lobby* case, it is rather sobering to consider that the case involved an issue—birth control—that many assumed had become a non-issue decades ago. Since surveys indicate that 99 percent of sexually active women have used birth control, such virtual unanimity would presumably put the issue to rest (Guttmacher Institute 2015). But not in modern America, where religious objections to birth control are allowed to not only enter the discussion but shape public policy. (There is some irony in the fact that the parties were incorrect in their claims that the contraception methods in question—intrauterine devices and so-called "Plan B"—are abortifacients. The government argued, correctly, that scientific experts reject the idea that these methods of birth control induce abortion. The Court, however, dismissed such arguments, saying that it is not the Court's task to consider the truth or falsehood of religious beliefs.)

As the world population soars past 7 billion, as Western lifestyles drain resources and strain the global environment, Americans still have not reached a consensus on birth control from a public policy standpoint. Indeed, as the culture wars rage, serious presidential contenders, such as former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum, publicly argue that birth control is an evil. A generation or two ago, a naïve prognosticator might have predicted that, by the early twenty-first century, the American public would be so enlightened that public policy would necessarily reflect enlightened pragmatism in the form of free and accessible birth control for all who want it. Surely, the prognosticator would have thought, by the early twenty-first century American society would have reached a point where such sensible policies would be in place; surely the ghosts of America's puritanical past would be exorcised by then.

In fact, many such prognosticators from a generation or two ago are still alive today, comprising a significant portion of today's older generation, and they are aghast at what they see. Instead of progress there has often been regression. It would have been unimaginable in America a generation or two ago, for example, for a presidential candidate to launch a campaign by conducting a huge Christian prayer rally, with biblical readings and call-outs to Jesus. But that's exactly how Texas governor Rick Perry launched his campaign for the 2012 Republican Party presidential nomination. Such behavior would have been considered outlandish even in the Republican Party a generation ago. The late Barry Goldwater, the Arizona senator and 1964 Republican Party nominee, considered the archetype of American conservatism in his day, called the religious conservatives who began overtaking his party in the 1980s a "bunch of kooks." Today Goldwater's tolerant social views would make him (p. 493) an outcast in the party that he once defined. Yesterday's hopeful prognosticators are alive today to see women such as Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann—biblical literalists whose embrace of religion leads them to an adversarial posture toward science—enjoy high-profile positions within the conservative movement and Republican Party. Something has gone very awry.

# No End in Sight

One could argue that the culture wars have always been raging in American society, that there has always been some manifestation of the tension between oncoming modernity and resistant conservative inclinations, but there is no denying that the nature and extent of the cultural clash has intensified since the rise of what we now call the religious right around 1980. When Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority helped elect Ronald Reagan that year, few realized that politically engaged conservative Christians would become a long-term phenomenon that would redefine politics and affect public policy for decades thereafter.

But they have, and today America lives with the results. Since 1980, with the notable exception of gay rights, public policy has lurched to the right in America in almost all areas: economic policy has become less egalitarian; labor has been crushed; anti-science has crept into environmental policy, education policy, and elsewhere; church–state separation has been disintegrating; abortion rights have been slowly disappearing; militarism has become a more defining characteristic of American society; large corporate interests increasingly control the system as more and more industries consolidate; and ordinary citizens are powerless politically as democracy has become plutocracy.

The real question for America is whether real people stand a chance of reversing these trends. Is the surge of conservatism of the past several decades a death blow for participatory democracy and rational public policy, or can it be best understood as a desperate, dying gasp of various conservative forces that are being ushered out as modernity moves forward? Of course there has been a fundamentalist surge in recent years, this theory would argue, for this is how history moves forward, as long-established institutions stage a futile resistance to oncoming forces that will eventually displace them. We would have been naïve to assume that conservative Christianity would go quietly into the trash heap of history.

The danger of this argument—which essentially tries to neatly explain the culture wars as a historical battle between progress and its reactionary foes, with progress of course emerging victorious in the end—is that it is itself naïve. What history has shown is that "progress" is far from inevitable and that various reactionary forces—social, political, economic, and otherwise—often gain surprising momentum, making a mockery of neat plans for progress. Indeed, the descent of early-twentieth-century Germany from cultural prominence and sophistication to fascist nightmare evidences that point. To think that America is somehow above all that, to get so immersed in the rhetoric of America being a beacon of liberty for the world that such negative outcomes are beyond the realm of possibility, would be credulous.

(p. 494) Whether it is Alito and Ginsburg clashing on *Hobby Lobby*, atheist families and their school systems clashing over the Pledge of Allegiance, pharmacists refusing to fill birth-control orders for their customers, Christian employers refusing to hire gay and lesbian employees, or some other manifestation, the culture wars continue to rage in Ameri-

ca and are likely to continue for many years. Secularism, meanwhile, is a specter that looms in the background in two ways. As an individual life stance, personal secularity has become an increasingly popular way of facing the world and engaging with it. This is why secular identity—whether as atheist, agnostic, humanist, freethinker, or just generally nonreligious or something else—is seen more and more in America, especially among young people. Indeed, personal secularity, once an unimportant characteristic even to those who held to it, has become an increasingly important personal quality that many people now choose to display publicly rather than keep closeted. As such, America has seen rapid growth of secular and humanist groups, to the point where they can now be found in almost all metropolitan areas and even many rural areas. This has been made easier in recent years by the growth of the Internet and social media, which have allowed seculars to find one another, connect, and organize. Second, however, aside from personal secularity looms the notion of secular government. That is, even most religious Americans, outside the circle of the religious right, see the idea of secular government as desirable. This is nothing more than the basic Jeffersonian notion of separation of church and state, an appreciation of a government that is neutral toward religion.

The good news for those on the progressive side in the culture wars is that the first notion of secularism mentioned—the concept of personal secularity, of people living their lives without religion or theism—seems to be on the rise in America. While this is happening, however, it is not the most conservative, fundamentalist churches that are emptying but the more mainline and moderate churches. This therefore presents a situation where sharply divided worldviews—godless and conservative Christian—are in actual confrontation with one another in American culture, the outcome of which can only be speculated. The less encouraging news comes when we consider the second notion of secularism—secular government—for there is little reason for optimism as we hope for American government that moves toward a stance of neutrality on religion. Elected officials find religious pandering to be an almost reflexive posture, and, as we have seen, even the judiciary is sympathetic of religious favoritism.

The long-term hope might be that the former notion—personal secularity—will grow in numbers and influence, so that it eventually begins to influence legislatures and courts, so that the notion of secular government can be seen as plausible and desirable. Such lofty goals are not unrealistic, but neither are they near-term.

## Bibliography

American Humanist Association. 2014. “Humanist Group Launches Secular Invocations Program in Response to Supreme Court Ruling.” Press Release (5 May). **http://americanhumanist.org/news/details/2014-05-humanist-group-launches-secular-invocations-program**.

Arizona v. Evans. 1995. 514 U.S. 1.

Boston, Rob. 2003. *Why the Religious Right Is Wrong About Separation of Church & State*, 2nd ed. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books.

Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc. 2014. 573 U.S. __ (docket nos. 13-354, 13-356).

Corning Glass Works v. Ann & Hope, Inc. of Danvers. 1973. 363 Mass. 409.

Doe, et al. v. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, et al. 2014. Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts, Middlesex. SJC Docket 11317.

Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow. 2004. 542 U.S. 1.

Faircloth, S. 2012. *Attack of the Theocrats: How the Religious Right Harms Us All, and What We Can Do About It*. Charlottesville, Va.: Pitchstone.

Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc. v. Barack Obama, et. al. 2011. 641 F.3d 803 (7th Circuit).

Gaddy, C. Welton, and Barry Lynn. 2008. *First Freedom First: A Citizens' Guide to Protecting Religious Liberty and the Separation of Church and State*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Gryboski, Michael. 2014. "Religious Groups Hail Supreme Court Decision Allowing Christian Prayers at Town Meetings." *The Christian Post* (6 May). **http://www.christianpost.com/news/religious-groups-hail-supreme-court-decision-allowing-christian-prayers-at-town-meetings-119192/**.

Guttmacher Institute. 2015. "Contraceptive Use in the United States." **http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_contr_use.html**.

Hansen, Susan. 2011. *Religion and Reaction: The Secular Political Challenge to the Religious Right*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Hillary Goodridge, et al. v. Department of Public Health, et al. 2003. 440 Mass. 309.

Jay Hein, et al. v. Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., et al. 2007. 551 U.S. 557.

Kurtz, P. 2010. *Multi-Secularism: A New Agenda*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Lemon v. Kurtzman. 1971. 403 U.S. 603.

Lynn, B. 2006. *Piety & Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom*. New York: Harmony Books.

Marsh v. Chambers. 1983. 463 U.S. 783.

McDermott, Meaghan. 2014. "Atheist invocation makes history in Greece." Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (15 July). **http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2014/07/15/atheist-gives-historic-invocation-greece/12714037/**.

Michael Newdow v. U.S. Congress, et. al. 2002. 292 F.3d 597 (9th Circuit).

Munoz, Vincent (ed.). 2015. *Religious Liberty and the American Supreme Court: The Essential Cases and Documents*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Newport, Frank. 2013. “In U.S., 87% Approve of Black-White Marriage, vs. 4% in 1958.” Gallup (25 July). **http://www.gallup.com/poll/163697/approve-marriage-blacks-whites.aspx**.

Niose, D. 2012. *Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Niose, D. 2014. *Fighting Back the Right: Reclaiming America from the Attack on Reason*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Planned Parenthood League of Mass., Inc. v. Attorney General. 1997. 424 Mass. 586.

(p. 496) Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania, et al. v. Casey. 1992. 505 U.S. 833.

Richard Perry Loving, et al. v. Virginia. 1967. 388 U.S. 1.

Silverman, H. 2012. *Candidate without a Prayer*. Charlottesville, Va.: Pitchstone.

Speckhardt, R. 2015. *Creating Change through Humanism*. Washington, D.C.: Humanist Press.

Stewart, K. 2012. *The Good News Club: The Christian Right’s Stealth Assault on America’s Children*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Town of Greece, New York v. Galloway, et al. 2014. 572 U.S. __ (docket no. 12-696).

West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, et al. 1943. 319 U.S. 624.

## Notes:

(1.) Hillary Goodridge, et al. v. *Department of Public Health* (2003: 328), citing *Planned Parenthood League of Mass., Inc. v. Attorney General* (1997: 590), *Corning Glass Works v. Ann & Hope, Inc.* (1973: 416), and *Arizona v. Evans* (1995: 8).

(2.) *Ginsburg was quoting Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey* (1992: 856).

**David Niose**

David Niose is an attorney who has litigated numerous constitutional cases. He is past President of the American Humanist Association and the Secular Coalition for America. His bestselling books are titledFighting Back the Right: Reclaiming Ameri-

ca from the Attack on Reason and Nonbeliever Nation: The Rise of Secular Americans.

# Varieties of Secular Experience

David Eller

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.31

## Abstract and Keywords

Investigators should discover how particular groups, institutions, and societies talk about and practice secularism—if in fact they do at all—rather than impose a speciously unified concept, derived from one society's experience, on all places and times. A critical perspective on "the secular" is presented in this chapter, illustrating how to acknowledge and analyze its extraordinary diversity. Insights into African, Japanese, Jewish, Muslim, and American secular experiences illustrate that diversity. This exploration deconstructs the category "secular," as scholars have already done with the category "religion." Both terms—"the religious" and "the secular"—may or may not survive the exercise.

Keywords: secular experience, secular diversity, cultural diversity, modernism, science, technology

MOST people would describe traditional African religions as ancestor worship. However, in a prescient 1936 article, J. H. Driberg urged that what we quickly call ancestor worship "is in fact a purely secular attitude": "No African," he insisted, "'prays' to his dead grandfather any more than he 'prays' to his living father" (1936: 6). Further, the so-called ancestor shrines are simply miniature houses for the dead person, and alleged sacrifices "are identical with and part of the tribute received and transmitted by the living elders" (11). In short, all elders are due respect and gifts, and the ancestors are just the eldest elders, so what we judge as a "religious" attitude "is not sacred but a social recognition of the fact that the dead man has acquired a new status and that … he is still one with" the society of the living (7). Twenty-five years later, Igor Kopytoff concurred, adding that the Suku of southwestern Congo do not even refer to their dead as ancestors—and certainly not as ancestor-spirits—but merely as "old ones" or "big ones." Seniority, not spirituality, is the issue for people, and by smuggling in terms like "worship," "sacrifice," "cult," or even "religion," we spuriously introduce our own notions of religion "which we then feel compelled to explain" (1971: 138)—and to contrast to "the secular."

Meanwhile, in November 2013 Marvel Comics announced the creation of a new superhero, Ms. Marvel, the alter ego of Kamala Khan, a Pakistani-American girl from a conservative Muslim family. We might be tempted to dismiss this character as an example of

American secularism and disregard for religion, but Teshkeel Comics, based in Kuwait, released the first issue of *The 99* in 2006, featuring ninety-nine (the number of names of Allah) young Muslims who develop superpowers. Naif al-Mutawa, the producer of the comic, contended that Muslim children need new heroes too, like the Christian superheroes featured in titles from Christian Knight Comics including Mr. Christian, Desertwind, and The Christian Knight. And we should not overlook Christian dating websites like ChristianMingle, Christian video games like "Guitar Praise," Christian cartoons like *Veggie Tales* and the old *Davey and Goliath*, Christian clowning like Cross the Sky Ministries, Christian camping like the Sonrise National Park Vacation Bible School, and all manner of Christian country, rock, and rap music.

These examples and many more illustrate that it is not so simple to separate, let alone oppose, "religion" from "the secular." In everyday American parlance, "secular" tends (p. 500) to mean absence of religion if not active hostility to religion, but this is hardly the only form that the secular can take. Talk of secularism also implies a number of dichotomies—between religion and civil society, between religion and science, and between spirit and matter, to name a few. From a comparative cross-cultural perspective, none of these meanings or assumptions stands up. In this chapter, we will consider the diverse discourses and formations of secularism across cultures. The title of the chapter, most readers will recognize, is a play on William James's epochal 1902 [1958] study *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, but it is serious play. In that book, James confessed that "religion" is not a sharply defined phenomenon; rather, ideas or actions or objects "are more or less divine, states of mind are more or less religious, … but the boundaries are always misty, and it is everywhere a question of amount and degree" (47). Worse, for conventional understandings of religion and of secularism, he admitted that there is "no one specific and essential kind of religious object, and no one specific and essential kind of religious act," just as there is "no one elementary religious emotion, but only a common storehouse of emotions upon which religious objects may draw" (40). Ultimately, religious experiences "are each and all of them special cases of kinds of human experience. … Religious happiness is happiness. Religious trance is trance" (37). And religious comics are comics, religious music is music, and religious elders are elders.

If this is so—and it is—then the conventional religious-versus-secular dichotomy must yield to or be subsumed into a variety of local secularisms, shaped by specific cultures and histories and by specific conceptions of religion. As Antje Jackelén plainly asserts, "The lines of demarcation do not run neatly between the secular and the religious. They take messy turns" (2005: 872). According to the eminent scholar of secularism, Barry Kosmin (2007), even in the United States, where simple binaries are common, secularism takes many forms, and French *laïcité*, Turkish *laiklik*, Japanese putative nonreligiousness, and Indian secularism are different yet again. In the end, we must accept that secularism is much more various than we typically imagine, as is its relationship to religion. Indeed, "some secularism is anti-religious whereas other secularisms are not" (Lee 2012: 136). Some are actually distinctly proreligious.

# Formations of the Secular

In my field of anthropology, all discussions of the secular begin with Talal Asad's (2003) seminal *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. In that book, he contends rightly that "the secular" is a cultural category that, like all cultural categories, "is neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity"; that is, "the religious" and "the secular" are alike "not essentially fixed categories" (25). Clearly, if "the secular" is constructed in contrast to "the religious," then the lack of specific boundaries for religion makes "the secular" equally nonspecific.

It is commonplace today to note that the term "secular" is of Western origin—and not originally antagonistic to religion ("secular priests" were hardly averse to religion). Frankly, "secular" is not inherently related to religion at all: denoting "of the current age" or "of the present generation," it could apply to any subject. In the case of religion, though, Asad (2003) (p. 501) reasons that secular*ism* is a political project and an ideology but still one that is not necessarily hostile to religion. Modern politics, particularly in the form of the modern state or government, seeks to delimit, quantify, and institutionalize all sorts of things—its borders, its population, its economy, its industry, and of course its religion. This leads to the identification—or creation—of disparate institutional realms like "the economy," "the household," and "the religion." More important, political leaders claim the authority to define and defend the lines between these realms, as well as to regulate each institution within its realm. In other words, the modern state decides what each institution is and how it may behave, in this case what and where is "religion" and more crucially what or where is *normal* religion. From the perspective of the state,

> religion has the option either of confining itself to private belief and worship or of engaging in public talk that makes no demands on life. In either case such religion is seen by secularism to take the form it should properly have.
>
> (Asad 2003: 199)

Most of the time, the state is not opposed to religion, *only to religion outside its allowed territory or its acceptable forms.* Thus, by so constructing and caging religion, the state simultaneously creates that-which-is-not-religion (i.e., the secular) along with that-which-is-not-normal-religion (i.e., religious fundamentalism).

If Asad (2003) is correct that societies or their states possess or construct their own conceptions and boundaries of religion (and I believe he is), then it is self-evident that they may possess or construct them differently. Some societies, as anthropology has discovered, do not even have a term or concept for "religion" and therefore obviously do not have a concept akin to our "secular." For the purposes of the present chapter, they do not have "secular experience" at all, since "the secular"—like religion—is nowhere and everywhere. Other societies or states may adopt an indefinite array of concepts and practices of religion and of the secular, like those of Japan or France or Turkey or India (some of which will be described later and some of which are discussed by other authors in this volume). At one extreme is the antireligion secularism, the official atheism, of the former

Soviet Union; the secularism of the United States, on the other hand, is hardly antireligion and has actually been credited with being beneficial for religion. In the United States, the dominant theme of secularism (although it is ordinarily not addressed as secularism) is church–state separation, a problem that plagues France too but plays out quite differently.

In India, Ashgar Ali Engineer explains, secularism is different again: “neither Hinduism nor Islam has any church-like structure; so there was never any struggle between secular and religious power structures. The main struggle has always been between secularism and communalism” (2007: 152). Since the Indian social context is so different, the Indian state characterizes itself as secular, yet “the word secularism has never been used in the way in which it is often used in Western countries (i.e. a purely this-worldly approach, rejecting other-worldly beliefs)” (148). Instead, the problem in India, dating back to British colonial days, was to prevent animosity between ethnic and religious groups through scrupulous equanimity between religions.

Secularism in colonial and post-independence India, as in China and many settings, was not so much antireligious as anticlerical. (Even in France, *laïcité* was first a movement against the authority and abuses of Catholic priests.) And in India, religion cannot be understood (p. 502) apart from caste. The Brahmans were and are the priestly Hindu caste, and Indian society has a long tradition of disparaging Brahmans as uneducated, corrupt, and exploitative. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian secularism was thus often a socio-political movement “against the hegemony of Brahmans in Indian society,” writes Peter van der Veer; at the same time, “anti-religious secularism is rare” (2013: 162).

Consequently, in India most people are more or less satisfied with a secular state—and even identify themselves as secular—while happily performing their religion. Engineer posits that “an overwhelming majority of people are religious, but tolerate and respect other religions and are thus ‘secular’ in the Indian context” (2007: 153). This accounts for David Gellner’s curious report of the Indian man who dubbed himself a “secular Hindu,” to which he amended the observation that it is “hard to imagine a British person describing themselves as a ‘secular Christian,’ yet this is, of course, what most of them are” (2001: 338). Engineer concludes that because secularism “in the Indian context does not mean being ‘this-worldly,’ it is difficult to divide Indians into believers and unbelievers” and that even highly devout and mystical sects like Islamic Sufis and Hindu bhakti saints can be “considered quite secular” in the Indian sense (2007: 152).

In an attempt to deal with these subtleties, Barry Kosmin (2007) proposes a spectrum of secularism, from “soft” to “hard.” Hard secularism roughly equates to atheism specifically (in societies dominated by theistic religions) or antireligion generally. A bit softer is agnosticism, which, as I have written elsewhere, is erroneously understood as a noncommittal belief-position rather than a process of intellectual hygiene in which propositions are not advanced without evidence. Softer yet is deism, which is a religious belief, and at the softest end of the continuum is liberal religion, which is most certainly religion. So, half of Kosmin’s scale of secularism is conspicuously religious! Off the scale of secularism is

Iran's theocracy, offered as a system without secularism. Yet, even a theocracy inhabits the physical world, and Iran's ayatollahs still want mail delivery, trash collection, and nuclear energy research.

Kosmin's typology of secularism illustrates two key points. First, there is more than one position or attitude that deserves to be called "secular," that is, plural ways to experience and practice secularism. Second and more problematically for the conventional American discourse of secularism, "the secular" and "the religious" are not in principle or in practice mutually exclusive or incompatible. The Indian case establishes the same fact. Contrary to Stephen Jay Gould's (1999) misguided notion of "non-overlapping magisteria," neither religion nor nonreligion resides in its own demarcated world. Both live in *the* world, and as anthropology has repeatedly shown, religion is not only more practiced than "believed" but is also and necessarily embodied and materialized. One could argue that a church or a cross or a Christmas pageant is secular, in that it is here and now, at least a this-worldly manifestation of something purportedly other-worldly. So Fenella Cannell is right when she asserts that there is no such thing "as an absolutely secular society nor that there can be such a thing as a perfectly secular state of mind" (2010: 86). *But neither is there such a thing as an absolutely religious society or perfectly religious state of mind*. "The secular" is not an essence—certainly not the essence that is left after "the religious" is boiled away—because "the religious" is not an essence either. Not even a continuum á la Kosmin, secular is a diverse constellation of practices and discourses variously positioning it in relation to religion.

## (p. 503) The Japanese Secular Experience

Other chapters explore the secular experiences of France and Turkey and add more information on India, so I do not discuss them here. Let it suffice to say, as Nathalie Caron does, that the "American notion of 'being secular' has no easy translation in the French language and context" of *laïcité* (2007: 113) and that Turkey's *laiklik* policy has been far more aggressive than standard American secularism, seeing religion as a real obstacle to modernization. Instead, let us turn to one of the most exceptional versions of secularism, that of Japan.

According to the 2005 World Values Survey, 62 percent of Japanese people identified as nonreligious and 13.7 percent as atheists, one of the highest totals in the world. Yet Emily Aoife Somers finds "thousands of shrines, temples, and natural features that have supernatural connections, festival importance or other manifestations of legend" (2013: 219), and Japan has produced so many new religions over the past century that H. Neill McFarland (1967) could write a book whimsically titled *The Rush Hour of the Gods*. How can we reconcile such a high level of secularism with such a high level of religious activity?

The answer lies largely in the inapplicability of the term "religion" in the Japanese context, which makes the term "secular" similarly suspect. According to Ian Reader, the Japanese word for religion, *shūkyō*, is a recent introduction, derived from the encounter with Christian missionaries and conveying "a concept and view of religion commonplace

in the realms of nineteenth-century Christian theology but at that time not found in Japan, of religion as a specific belief-framed entity" (1991: 13). Predictably, the foreign notion of "religion" as "organized religion" or even worse "dogma" or "creed" is neither indigenous nor relevant to Japan, and consequently the practice of dividing the "religious" from the "secular" is not indigenous or relevant either.

This is why, John Nelson opines, a Japanese person can say, *Mu-shūkyō* ("I have no religion") while engaging in behavior that, to the American eye, appears conspicuously religious (2013: 135). Many Japanese associate "religion" (*shūkyō*) with superstition and fanaticism, as in the case of Aum Shinrikyo, and disassociate "religion" from their own beliefs and rituals. To return to Reader, "the Japanese religious world is not separate from the general flow of life, but an intrinsic part thereof, strengthening, and giving sustenance to it" (1991: 54). Japanese religion—if the word even fits—is very this-worldly: "Traditionally, anything that inspired a sense of awe (that is, which expressed through its nature some special quality or sense of vitality) could be seen as a *kami* [god/spirit] or as the abode of a *kami*, including rocks and trees" (25). What Westerners and Christians would call the "spirit world" is present in nature and society, not separated from them. In addition, many Japanese people experience so-called "religious activity" as more a matter of fulfilling social obligations than of possessing deep faith. Visiting a shrine, attending a festival, participating in a ritual are matters of social belonging—belonging to the family, the village, and ultimately the nation. The goals of "religion" are also distinctly pragmatic, including creating and maintaining social relationships with humans, ancestors, and spirits and ensuring health, prosperity, and tranquility in life.

Recently, Reader found, Japanese society had become increasingly "secular" by modern Western standards. For instance, civic festivals had become frequent, like the Kobe Festival "sponsored by the civil authorities" which was "intended to create a sense of civic pride and (p. 504) community feeling in the city and consists of pageantry, parades, and spectacular street events which have little or no religious content" (1991: 73). This is not antireligion, however, and parallel to this familiar kind of secularism, businesses had absorbed and co-opted religion by embracing religious institutions or forms, sponsoring festivals, supporting shrines and temples, and organizing visits to sacred places—all in the service of reinforcing the loyalty of workers and the image of the company.

Japanese Buddhism paints a still more fascinating picture. Of course, there is a lively and valid argument about whether Buddhism is a "religion" at all or a philosophy or way of life or whatever (similarly, Chinese Confucian scholars have maintained that Confucianism is not a religion but rather a "teaching" [*jiao*]; religion has been equated to shamanism [*wu*]—including Christianity [van der Veer 2009]). Buddhism is obviously a recent arrival to Japan, and as it adapted to its new cultural circumstances it Japanized and proliferated into many schools and sects. Buddhism absorbed the Japanese *kami* and diffused into Japanese culture and society. Some Japanese Buddhist monks even got involved in that most worldly of activities, war. As Nelson (2013) reminds us, in the modernizing period of the late nineteenth century, Buddhism was officially declared a "foreign" religion and suppressed by the state, which was not antireligion but instead promoted its own

Japanese/statist religion, Shinto. And, like in India and China, Buddhist priests were denounced as parasites and hypocrites, profiting off of the suffering and gullibility of their followers.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Buddhism went into decline again, under many of the same pressures that Western scholarship links to secularism, such as urbanization, migration and mobility, and a growing indifference to the service that priests and monks offer. But secularism has not meant the disappearance of Buddhism from Japanese society; it has meant its surprising reappearance in society, in new forms and sites that Nelson (2013) calls "experimental Buddhism." Some perhaps understandable expressions of experimental Buddhism—or what we might rightly call *secular Buddhism*—are social welfare programs to provide childcare or eldercare or assist victims of natural disasters like the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Some priests or temples have become active in the anti-nuclear movement. More unexpected initiatives include a temple "town club" presenting "lectures, concerts, theater performances" (Nelson 2013: 118), and other such events; a temple in a shopping center in the city of Nara, named Everyone's Temple; and even bars and cabarets, like the one where women in "sequined but skimpy costumes with feather head ornaments and high heels … performed a line dance routine titled 'Light of the Buddha'" (168). Finally, priests have begun to provide funerals and burials for pets and to sell modern-style household altars, advertised with snazzy television commercials depicting ancestral ghosts who express their admiration for the altars (154).

# The Jewish Secular Experience

People who are dismayed by the idea of "secular Hindu" have probably never heard of the Society for Humanistic Judaism (www.shj.org) or the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism (iishj.org). Yet, as David Biale chronicles in *Not in the Heavens*, there is a long tradition of Jewish secular thought, predating the modern era. Jewish secularism, he demonstrates, "is a tradition that has its own unique characteristics grounded in part in its (p. 505) premodern sources," not least the fact that scriptural and classical Judaism "never made such a sharp distinction" between the secular and the religious, or between the profane and the sacred, or between the worldly and the spiritual (2011: 4). "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" (4).

Ironically, Biale (2011) finds that one powerful source of Jewish secularism is Jewish religion itself, specifically the scriptural nature of God. The discourse of a God who is utterly transcendent has the potential to evacuate God from the world and from experience. Biale notes the Book of Esther, which "famously does not mention God at all" (16) and the medieval scholars like Maimonides who described a divine being that was "so removed from the world as to have nothing in common with it" (19). All that one could say about

God was negative—that he had no body or no emotions—but even when one was talking about God in the negative, one was still talking about God.

Biale (2011) also finds Spinoza's pantheism to be profoundly secular, in the sense that there is nothing but the world and that God is equivalent to it. Invoking the Aristotelian notion of "substance," Spinoza argued that there is only one substance in the universe, so therefore the universe was God and vice versa. But if this does not lead to an absent deity, it leads to an inert one: "Because nothing can exist outside of the one substance, it is impossible to speak of God as acting out of his free will upon the world. Instead, the very laws of the universe are the actions of God, and as laws, these actions are necessary and determined" (Biale 2011: 26). It is not hard to see how this religious conception could be entirely compatible with Western science (although it does not add anything important to science).

Finally for the premodern era, Biale (2011) offers the Kabbalists as another version of Jewish secularism. In the teachings of Isaac Luria, the universe began when God reduced or contracted himself, "leaving an empty space"; literally—and perfectly opposite to Spinoza—the world was where God was *not*, generating in believers "the very physical sense of separation from the divine" and paving the way "for a radical secular identification of God with nothingness or even death" (47).

We often forget that Judaism went through its own Enlightenment or went through the Enlightenment along with Christianity. Some Jews submitted the Torah to rational scientific scrutiny, while others criticized the rabbis in the same way that the Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, and French criticized their clergy. By 1840 Heinriche Heine was taking a decidedly secular approach to scripture, which for him "was a document of social revolution, not religion" (Biale 2011: 75). And Heine was not the last to treat the Torah as "a malleable document" (76), a piece of human writing with flexible meanings and uses. Sigmund Freud, Biale claims, treated it like a neurotic patient, as in his *Moses and Monotheism*—a book not only to analyze but to psychoanalyze.

Another crucial modern Jewish secularism is Zionism, related to the romantic nationalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Biale, in the early 1900s Vladimir Jabotinsky "found in the Bible a model for a Jewish nationalism" (2011: 90). But a modern nation is not the same as an ancient covenanted or chosen people. The modern concept of nation implicates ideas and practices of politics and statehood together with those of biology and race. On the political side, the "secular theory of Jewish politics might find its legitimacy outside of divine sanction, either in popular consent or some form of contract" (94) and almost certainly in institutions other than the priesthood and the synagogue. On (p. 506) the biological side, it became possible to conceive of the Jews as a people on genetic or racial terms, independent of religion. In the 1800s, for instance, Moses Hess asserted that the foundation of Jewishness was not belief but *ethnicity* (105)—descent or "blood" or race—which induced Emma Lazarus to explicitly call for "the *secularization* and spiritualizing of the Jewish nationality" (113). Notice that secular and spiritual here are not in conflict, since secularization referred to "the physical condition of

the nation: strengthening the Jewish body and developing productive occupations," whereas spiritualization meant "primarily ethical ideals rather than theology" (113).

Of course, some of the consequences of this racialist thinking were disastrous for the Jews. But secular Jewish Zionism produced the state of Israel, with all of the normal problems of a modern state, including configuring the proper relationship between religion and civil society. Something else that we often forget is that not all Jews are in favor of the Israeli state. Purist movements such as Neturei Karta and Toldot Aharon reject Israel exactly because it is secular; likewise, the extremist rabbi Meir Kahane denounced Israel as sinful and secular, since it was not constructed on scriptural and spiritual principles.

It is important to acknowledge the amount and range of contemporary secular Jewish thought and literature. Some of the founders of the social sciences, like Freud, Durkheim, and Boas, were secular Jews, and Biale (2011) discusses many more in the fields of philosophy, fiction, and politics including Joseph Hayim Brenner, Chaim Zhitlowsky, Ahad Ha'am, Simon Dubnow, and David Ben-Gurion. And, as mentioned at the outset of this section, secular Judaism thrives today in organizations like the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, which holds that Judaism

> has been created, lived, and recreated in response to the needs and beliefs of each generation. In our days, we believe in the power of people to understand their world and to influence it for the better. We celebrate human freedom and responsibility for our choices and actions. And we know that if justice is to exist in our world, we must create it together. Secular Humanistic Judaism is a cultural Jewish identity lived through this human-focused non-theistic philosophy of life. (quoted in IISH website: http://iishj.org/about-us/secular-humanistic-judaism/)

Most American "secularists" would probably applaud this statement—and then scratch their heads at the fact that the organization runs programs to train rabbis.

# The Muslim Secular Experience

If there is one thing that the Western public and media—and an alarming proportion of Western scholars—agree on, it is that Islam has been and remains virtually immune to secularization and to all that goes with it in the Western mind, including democracy, women's rights, church–state separation, and science. More than a few Muslims agree: Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas, for example, wrote in his *Islam and Secularism* that "Islam totally rejects any application to itself of the concepts secular, or secularization, or secularism as they do not belong and are alien to it in every respect; and they belong and are natural only to the intellectual history of Western Christian religious experience and consciousness" (1984: 31). Yet, al-Attas operated with an idiosyncratic definition of both secularism and religion: in his estimation, religion meant "revealed religion"—unchanging divine truth—*which* (p. 507) *disqualified Christianity as a religion for him*, while his sense of secular was closer to the original meaning of the term, that is, historically and

culturally contingent rather than eternal and immutable. Consequently, Christianity was secularism but Islam was religion.

The fact that there have been secular regimes in Islamic states (in Arab, Turkish, Persian, central Asian, and Indonesian cultural settings), as Abdullah Saeed discusses in this volume, puts the obvious lie to the presumption that Islam is inimical to secularism. Charles Hirschkind actually characterizes the 2011 "Arab spring" uprising in Egypt as "beyond secular and religious," opining that the protests in Tahrir Square "defied characterization in terms of the religious–secular binary" and that "the entire mobilization unfolded without the question 'secular or religious?' ever imposing itself on the expressions of popular sovereignty" (2012: 49).

Like Judaism, Islam has its own local internal sources and traditions of secularism. As I have discussed much more extensively elsewhere (Eller 2010), the debate about Islamic secularism starts with the very origins of the religion, some parties insisting that religion was never separated from society or the world and others insisting that it always was. Whether or not Muhammad was a secular leader as well as a prophet is a question with a lively history. Probably it makes less sense to force Islam through a Western/Christian prism than to consider how Muslims themselves grappled with the problem. For instance, Islamic scriptures have always been a fount for jurisprudence and case law on issues that are secular in any sense of the term, such as marriage or inheritance. Multiple schools of *fiqh*, or jurisprudence, developed, ending what illusory unity and immutability Islamic law may have had. Islam also allows for *ikhtilaf*, or difference of opinion, and *ijtihad*, or reasoning (i.e., applying precedent to present circumstances), resulting in contrasting and often conflicting rulings.

Even those who believe that Islam was a complete marriage of religion and the world, of *din wa dunya*, may grant that the secular detached from—and threatened—religion upon the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty in 661 CE, just three decades after Muhammad's death. Since then, Muslims have deliberated on the relation between religion and the state/society/world. Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century proclaimed that religious and political authority existed in parallel, not in unison, and in 1925 one of the great Islamic modernizers, Ali Abd al-Raziq, claimed that the Prophet had never created or governed a state and that

> Islam did not determine a specific regime…; rather it has allowed freedom to organize the state in accordance with the intellectual, social, and economic conditions in which we are found, taking into consideration our social development and the requirements of our times. (quoted in Binder 188: 131)

That is the very definition of secularism.

Further, like Judaism (and Christianity), Islam produced its own crop of premodern secularists or rationalists or freethinkers, who were not always or necessarily antireligious. The Mu'tazilite sect applied Greek philosophy and reason (*'aql*) to Islam, concluding that Allah himself was constrained by reason. Few went as far as Ahmed bin Habit or Ibn Abi-

l-Awja, the latter of whom saw the universe as self-sufficient and eternal and thus in no need of a supernatural creator. Abu ‘L-ala Ahmad bin Abdullah al-Ma’arri in the eleventh century allegedly called religion a “fable invented by the ancients” and “noxious weeds” (Warraq 1995: 283).

(p. 508) In the modern era Islam encountered another source of secularism and another challenge, namely Western colonization. After Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent colonial scramble for Muslim lands, local regimes underwent various kinds of voluntary and involuntary secularization. Egyptian ruler Muhammad Ali in the 1800s welcomed Western-style schools, which produced the next generations of administrators and civil servants. In the Ottoman Empire, Mahmed II initiated a series of reforms in 1826 to modernize not only education and government but medicine and even clothing.

These early efforts were followed by well-recognized reformers like Rifa’a Badawi Rafi’ al-Tahtawi, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and Muhammad ‘Abduh; the question of whether they were secularists returns us to the questionable applicability of the term. Al-Tahtawi, educated in Europe, promoted certain Western values and practices but with an Islamic slant; for instance, he held that Western science was Islamic first and therefore hardly incompatible with religion. Like Jewish nationalists, he also conceived of Egyptians as a *watan* or nation—with a noble history that predated Islam—which linked but also distinguished religion from *wataniyyah* (nationhood). Al-Afghani’s career also illustrates the complex relationship between modernism/secularism and Islam. He was no materialist or atheist (indeed, he wrote *The Refutation of the Materialists*), but he championed the compatibility of science and Islam. Without rejecting religion, he challenged the old religious understandings and sought a new *ijtihad* for Muslims of his time, a modern Islam. The answers to the problems of Muslims were still to be found in Islam, if correctly known and practiced, but he saw Islam less as a religion than as a civilization of culture; for him, “The aim of man’s acts is not the service of God alone; it is the creation of human civilization flourishing in all its parts” (Hourani 1962: 114)—a secular attitude after a fashion. ‘Abduh brought reforming tendencies to the intellectual heart of Islam, the great university of Al Azhar, where he struggled to update the curriculum to add modern natural and social sciences and even to integrate prophecy and the theory of evolution.

Recent years have seen a continuation, if a quiet one, of modernist/secularist Islamic thought. Taha Hussain in the 1900s questioned the authenticity of sections of the Qur’an and suggested that Egypt was part of the West and not of Islamic civilization. Some leaders like Nasser in Egypt, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, and Saddam Hussein in Iraq established secular, even socialist, states, and some Muslims flirted with communism, the most atheistic of modern philosophies. Other prominent secularists have included Fu’ad Zakariya, Khalid Muhammad Khalid, and Faraj Fawda—the last of whom was assassinated in 1992. And Islamic secularism is not entirely unorganized: there are important if not prominent institutions such as *Jam’iyyat al-Nida’ al-Jadid* (New Appeal Society), *Jam’iyyat al-Tanwir* (Enlightenment Society), *Hizb ‘Almani* (Secular Party, with its slogan “Religion

belongs to God, the homeland belongs to us all"), and *Tayyar al-'Almani* (Movement for Secularism).

Three last ethnographic examples enhance and complicate the picture of Islamic secularism. In India, where tensions between Muslims and Hindus run high and have boiled over, Raphael Susewind describes four kinds of Muslim peace activists. There are the faith-based actors, who employ Islam for peaceful purposes instead of violence, and there are the Muslim women who connect peace to women's issues—even an *Islamic feminism*—and to the suffering of wives and mothers; some of the women, Susewind finds, end up in "the denouncement of religion altogether" (2013: 87). Curiously, what he calls the secular technocrats are not always antireligion; instead, they work in terms (p. 509) of modern secular values like "human rights" and "justice"—which he characterizes as "*secularized* secularism," "a secularism devoid of quasi-religious zeal, a secularism which has been secularized in the everyday and lost the characteristics of an ideological creed" (73). Last, the so-called doubting professionals appreciate the beauty but also the ambiguity of religion.

Second, Samuli Schielke reports on the *mulid* festivals in contemporary Egypt. With roots in Islamic, specifically Sufi, practice, a *mulid* is a celebration for a Muslim (and, remarkably, sometimes for a Christian) saint, fashioned after celebrations of Muhammad's birth. One feature of the Egyptian *mulid* is *dhikr*, or "collective rituals of ecstatic meditation" (2012: 29); however, in other ways they are popular street festivals, occasions for "dancing, magic shows, puppet theater, shopping, sitting in cafés, and generally 'partying'" (36). Naturally, some conservatives disapprove of the secular aspects of the events and have tried to purge the *mulids* or restrict them to the marginal parts of town.

Obviously, not all Muslims take their Islam equally seriously (any more than Catholics do during Mardi Gras or Carneval). In the central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan, local Muslims "display a profound discomfort with 'religion' and with people who have begun to embrace, and publicly display, a 'religious' identity" (Louw 2012: 151). Maria Louw calls these Kyrgyz people "ironic Muslims" because they themselves take an ironic attitude toward their religion, avowing that they "had never been *real* Muslims" (144). She regards such behavior as

> an everyday form of secularism, a way of relating to "religion" in a context where the meaning of religion has become the object of scrutiny and great controversy and where the perceived increasing "religiousness" in society is associated with all sorts of post-Soviet—and indeed global—excesses. (2012: 144)

# Secularism versus Religion or Vernacular Religion?

The United States, where “separation of church and state” dominates the discourse of secularism, should surely evince a familiar and firm division between “the religious” and “the secular,” and on one measure it appears to do so. Survey data analyzed by Bruce Phillips (2007) reveal that most Americans who can be categorized as secular claim that they have no religion; in fact, they typically do not identify as “secular” but as “without religion” or even as agnostic or atheist. Yet, a closer look at the data suggests that “the American public does not subscribe to a binary system—religion or secularity”: for instance, many self-identifying Christians practice a generally “secular outlook” or even disavow belief in God, while some “nones” who shun a religious identity still attend religious services or entertain other “spiritual” beliefs and practices (Keysar and Kosmin 2007: 17). In other words, contrary to expectations, “Disbelief does not correlate with a secular identification as much as might be expected” (20). Secularism, it seems, “like religion, takes many forms in American society” (Kosmin 2007: 7).

Although it has undoubtedly always been so, John Lardas Modern thoroughly documents the complex interplay of the religion and secularism in late-nineteenth-century America, (p. 510) where “the secular” not only coexisted with “the religious” but actually shaped and supported religion. He rightly perceives secularism as a force or mood

> which conditioned not only particular understandings of the religious but also the environment in which these understandings became matters of common sense. Rather than signal a decreasing influence of the religious, secularism names a conceptual environment … that has made ‘religion’ a recognizable and vital thing in the world. (2011: 7)

One aspect of American secular religion, present in Protestantism but emphasized in the United States, is the individual self; mixing with American individualism, religion was secularized (or Americanized) to encourage “self-culture,” self-examination, self-formation, and self-cultivation. It was also influenced by, as it influenced, industrialization and the fact and metaphor of the machine; the emerging social sciences, with their notion of the integrated system; and nationalism and nation-building processes, including practices like mass printing and opinion surveys. Meanwhile, it absorbed new non-Christian religious ideas such as spiritualism, mind-cure, and Eastern philosophies. In all these ways, “secularism moved across a number of sites—evangelicalism, liberal Protestantism, burgeoning fields of mental science, spiritualism, ethnographic inquiry, moral reform, etc.” (Modern 2011: 12).

For instance, evangelicals then (as today) used every secular means at their disposal to spread religion, obviously including mass-produced books, tracts, readers, newspapers, and handbooks. (Similarly, from 1946 to 1972 George Pflaum published a comic book series called *Treasure Chest of Fun & Fact* for Catholic schools, featuring Bible tales, stories of ordinary children and sports heroes, tidbits of history and science, and games and

puzzles.) Making and distributing these materials necessarily implicated them in the market, literally and figuratively: they had to spend money, purchase machinery, and hire salesmen and deliverers, and their currency was faith as well as cash. (The same could and should be said about today's "prosperity gospel.")

They further adopted the trappings of modern knowledge and scientific truth to establish theirs as "true religion," which had to demonstrate the same level of "systematicity" as any scientific discipline: true religion "not only corresponded to divine script but was also the means of revealing essential principles of the human—reason, coherency, and legibility—to the human in the name of human progress" (Modern 2011: 70). The agenda, Modern writes, "of reproducing religious life by calling attention to its 'secular' credentials and aspirations … was not contradictory" (70). Indeed, secularism became the standard for differentiating between true religion and false: true religion "was wholly secular; false religion a perversion of the epistemological and political order of things. Unlike true religion, false religion deviated from an understanding of the real as a reasonable, coherent, and legible enterprise" (87). "The more one tries to hold on to the categories of the religious and the secular" as isolated and antagonistic phenomena, Modern concludes, "the less meaning they possess" (284).

If the original modernization and industrialization did not inevitably oppose religion and secularism as Max Weber predicted, then certainly twenty-first-century technology and science should do the job. Alas, theology professor Antje Jackelén finds that technology need not be corrosive of religion; instead, technology itself "may be an alternative spirituality rather than an ally of secularism," (mis)construed as nonreligion or antireligion (2005: 863). Of course it is only too apparent that religion need not fear technology: religionists from (p. 511) American televangelists to Islamic jihadists use cameras, cell phones, and the Internet. Religious organizations and individuals maintain websites and blogs, practicing what Jackelén calls cyber-spirituality.

Stef Aupers specifically describes the "technopagans" who work in the computer industry of Silicon Valley. Rather than disenchanting the world, computer technology brings its own enchantments, with computers, programs, and digital information providing the "mystery and spirituality" normally attributed to religion (2009: 160). Part of the spiritual appeal of computer technology is the micro-scale and invisible quality of its operation; at the same time, "technological systems are also becoming larger and thereby literally transcend individual human beings" (161). Most important and remarkably, the machines and programs seem to have a life and will of their own, to surpass the knowledge and intentions of human programmers and users; for this reason, technopagans "raise an animistic perspective on digital technology" (163). Programming is magic, and like premodern magic it is not entirely under human control; its effects are wonderful, frightening, and unpredictable, and this "unpredictability, in turn, raises feelings of 'awe'—a mixture of fascination, delight and excitement on the one hand and fearfulness on the other hand" (165). And for scholars like Rudolf Otto, that is the most basic religious sentiment.

While the ostensibly secular are having surprisingly religious experiences, the ostensibly religious are having surprisingly secular experiences. One of the most noteworthy developments in contemporary American Christianity is the "emerging church" movement, which Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger of the Fuller Theological Seminary define as "communities that practice the way of Jesus within postmodern cultures," seeking to inhabit and transform the secular realm (2005: 44). James Bielo's ethnographic work in the movement portrays Christians with an unexpected sense of irony or paradox, who borrow and blend, innovate and simulate, combining "public reading of monastic and Catholic prayers, burning incense, replacing fluorescent lighting with candles, setting early Protestant hymns to contemporary music, chanting Eastern Orthodox prayers, using icons, creating prayer labyrinths," and other very embodied and sensuous forms of worship (2011: 71), all while claiming to get back to the "fundamentals" of their religion. More amazingly, the Children of God or The Family International—infamous for their former profane practice of "flirty fishing" (enticing male recruits with attractive young women)—are characterized by Gordon and Gary Shepherd as simultaneously hypertheistic and hyperdemocratic, hyperbureaucratic, and hypermodern. Not only does the group manage an international organization, run out of what they themselves call COG/FI Central, but they maintain a publishing company, a set of councils and boards, and even a committee process for sharing and evaluating prophecy. Finally, the by now familiar megachurch movement has been so successful because it has been so overtly secular, meeting members where they live in terms of class, lifestyle, and literally geography. The original megachurch, Willow Creek Church outside Chicago, was intentionally designed with its "target demographic" (the suburban middle-class office worker) in mind, based on surveys of potential members; consequently, megachurches typically remove disturbingly Christian elements from their services while tailoring programs to specific subgroups and offering mundane facilities like Starbucks. In his study of Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, Justin Wilford reports how the church adapts to the suburban experience to "recapitulate the fragmented, decentralized, and diverse nature of postsuburbia" (2013: 112) through special-interest groups and home worship circles.

(p. 512) We could easily multiply examples, from the Turkish Gülen education movement (with schools in the United States), to the Indonesian or Malaysian Islamic corporations that mix religion and business, to the Pentecostal soap operas of the Congo (Pype 2012) and the "strategic secularism" of the Bible Society in England (Engleke 2010). What does all of this mean? It means first and foremost that "secularism can no longer be understood as a replacement for religion" (Çinar et al. 2012: 3) in a single or straightforward way. Secularism or "the secular" is a wide category that, to be sure, includes nonreligion and antireligion but is not equivalent or limited to those positions. To continue to insist otherwise is to mistake part for whole, or extreme for range.

More accurately, "the secular" as actually experienced is about two things. First, as Çinar and colleagues contend, it is about the "control exerted by the secular state in its attempts to 'continually redefine' the space that religion may occupy" and how the state or civil society "produces, redefines, and controls religion in order to establish itself as the norm" (2012: 4). This is what Asad (2003) warned in his pivotal work. But second and

closer to the ground, it is about the failure of the state—and of scholars and religious authorities—to keep religion "in its place." Rather, there is no exclusive bounded place (in space or time) where "the religious" and "the secular" have their independent existences. In real experience, *religion slips into the world as the world slips into religion*, eroding any simple dichotomy of religion and nonreligion. What anthropologists and sociologists like Nancy Ammerman stress is what people actually do with or as religion, what has been called "popular religion" or "everyday religion" or *vernacular religion*. Vernacular religion is religion as ordinary people and nonexperts understand it and practice it, which "may happen in unpredictable places. It may combine elements from multiple religious sources" (Ammerman 2007: 9)—or nonreligious and "secular" sources. In the end, it is not necessary or desirable or even possible to determine in advance what is "secular" or "religious."

What investigators can and should do is discover how particular groups, institutions, and societies talk about and practice secularism—if in fact they do at all—rather than to impose a speciously unified concept, derived from one society's experience, on all places and times. A critical perspective on "the secular" will acknowledge and analyze its extraordinary diversity and therefore deconstruct the category, as scholars have done with the category "religion." Both terms—"the religious" and "the secular"—may or may not survive the exercise.

## Bibliography

Al-Attas, S. 1984. *Islam and Secularism.* Delhi: New Crescent.

Ammerman, N. 2007. "Introduction: Observing Religious Modern Lives." In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives,* edited by N. T. Ammerman, 3–20. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Aupers, S. 2009. "'The Force is Great': Enchantment and Magic in Silicon Valley." *Masaryk University Journal of Law and Technology* 3(1), 153–173.

Barker, D. 2015. *Life Driven Purpose: How an Atheist Finds Meaning.* Durham, N.C.: Pitchstone.

Biale, D. 2011. *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

(p. 513) Bielo, J. 2011. *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity.* New York: New York University Press.

Binder, L. 1988. *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Campbell, C. 1971. *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion*. London: Macmillan.

Cannell, F. 2010. “The Anthropology of Secularism.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, 85–100.

Caron, N. 2007. “*Laïcité* and Secular Attitudes in France.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 113–124. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Çinar, A., S. Roy, and M. Yahya. 2012. “Introduction: Religious Nationalism as a Consequence of Secularism.” In *Visualizing Secularism and Religion: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India,* edited by A. Çinar, S. Roy, and M. Yahya, 1–22. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Driberg, J. 1936. “The Secular Aspect of Ancestor-Worship in Africa.” *Journal of the Royal African Society* 35(138), 1–21.

Eller, J. 2010. “Secularism in the Arab World.” In *Atheism and Secularism,* Vol. 2: *Global Expressions,* edited by P. Zuckerman, 113–137. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Engelke, M. 2010. “Strategic Secularism: Bible Advocacy in England.” In *Contemporary Religiosities: Emergent Socialities and the Post-Nation-State,* edited by B. Kapferer, K. Telle, and A. Eriksen, 39–54. New York: Berghahn.

Engineer, A. 2007. “Secularism in India.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 148–155. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Gellner, D. 2001. “Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism: Anthropological Perspectives.” *Social Anthropology* 9(3), 337–340.

Gibbs, E., and R. Bolger. 2005. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic.

Gould, S. 1999. *Rock of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*. New York: Ballantine.

Hirschkind, C. 2012. “Beyond Secular and Religious: An Intellectual Genealogy of Tahrir Square.” *American Ethnologist* 39(1), 49–53.

Hourani, Albert. 1962. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1798–1939.

Jackelén, A. 2005. “What Is ‘Secular’? Techno-Secularism and Spirituality.” *Zygon* 40(4), 863–873.

James, W. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Repr. New York: New American Library, 1958.

Keysar, A., and B. Kosmin. 2007. “The Freethinkers in a Free Market of Religion.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 17–26. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Kopytoff, I. 1971. “Ancestors as Elders in Africa.” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 41(2), 129–142.

Kosmin, B. 2007. “Introduction: Contemporary Secularity and Secularism.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 1–13. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Lee, L. 2012. “Research Note: Talking about a Revolution: Terminology for the New Field of Non-Religion Studies.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27(1), 129–139.

(p. 514) Louw, M. 2012. “Being Muslim the Ironic Way: Secularism, Religion, and Irony in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.” In *Varieties of Secularism in Asia: Anthropological Explorations of Religion, Politics, and the Spiritual,* edited by N. Bubandt and M. van Beek, 143–161. London and New York: Routledge.

McFarland, H. 1967. *The Rush Hour of the Gods: A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan*. New York: Macmillan.

Modern, J. 2011. *Secularism in Antebellum America, with Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and their Metaphors*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nelson, J. 2013. *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Phillips, B. 2007. “Putting Secularity in Context.” In *Secularism and Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives,* edited by B. Kosmin and A. Keysar, 27–31. Hartford, Conn.: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture.

Pype, K. 2012. *The Making of the Pentecostal Melodrama: Religion, Media, and Gender in Kinshasa*. New York: Berghahn.

Reader, I. 1991. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Schielke, S. 2012. *The Perils of Joy: Contesting* Mulid *Festivals in Contemporary Egypt*. Syracuse, N.Y.: University of Syracuse Press.

Shepherd, Gary, and Gordon Shepherd. 2010. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Somers, E. 2013. “Transnational Necromancy: W. B. Yeats, Izumi Kyôka and *neo-nô* as Occultic Stagecraft.” In *Occultism in a Global Perspective,* edited by H. Bogdan and G. Djurdjevic, 203–230. Durham, U.K.: Acumen.

Susewind, R. 2013. *Being Muslim and Working for Peace: Ambivalence and Ambiguity in Gujarat*. Delhi and Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.

van der Veer, P. 2009. “The Comparative Sociology of India and China.” *Social Anthropology* 17(1), 90–108.

van der Veer, P. 2013. *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Warraq, I. 1995. *Why I Am Not a Muslim*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Wilford, J. 2012. *Sacred Subdivisions: The Postsuburban Transformation of American Evangelicalism*. New York: New York University Press.

**David Eller**

Jack David Eller teaches Anthropology at the Community College of Denver in Colorado. He has published Introducing Anthropology of Religion; Social Science and Historical Perspectives: Society, Science, and Ways of Knowing; and Cruel Creeds, Virtuous Violence: Religious Violence across Culture and History.

# Secular Living: Many Paths, Many Meanings

Jesse M. Smith

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.32

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses the definitions, experiences, and sociocultural construction of secularity. How do people make meaning out of, and in relation to, the secular? The chapter focuses on those individuals and groups who either reject or are uninterested in religion and who hold no theistic beliefs. This is different task from an academic conversation about historical secularism, the functions of secular states or governments, or the historical processes and expressions of secularization. Ideas of the secular, secularism, and secularity are not easy and straightforward concepts. Their meaning(s) and implications are more varied, flexible, and contested than is often assumed: the secular itself involves many paths and meanings and is expressed and experienced in different ways. It is important to go beyond a simplistic "religious life" versus "secular life" distinction and recognize the variability and versatility of secularity, as that variety is becoming increasingly clear in the contemporary landscape.

Keywords: secular, secularity, secular life, secular meaning, social secularity, psychology, sociology

WHAT does it mean to live a "secular life?" Is it simply to live without religion? What does it have to do (or not do) with belief in the preternatural, in God or gods, in an afterlife, in the sacred or divine? Must one identify as secular in order to be living a secular life? How do people come to be secular, and what paths do they take in doing so? What suggests that a person, group, organization, or society, is secular? Questions in this vein could go on. But let us borrow a few more from the opening paragraph of Graeme Smith's *A Short History of Secularism* (2008). These more "loaded" questions provide a sense of the presuppositions that often lie at the center of the concept of the secular and the kinds of value-laden, historically rooted, and Western-centered ideas with which it is usually intertwined:

> What does it mean to describe the West as Secular? Does it mean that we are in the last days of Christianity? Is the Church facing inevitable and terminal decline? Has science and reason triumphed over superstition and myth in the culture of

> civilized peoples? Has the West progressed so far in its intellectual journey that it no longer needs the props and comforts of religion? (1)

Answers to Smith's questions are outside the purview of this chapter. But they do reveal an undercurrent present in much of the writing on "the secular." The questions I pose have a more modest aim and are empirically and analytically closer to the ground. I open and contrast them with Smith's to clarify my purpose. I am concerned with discussing the definitions, experiences, and the sociocultural construction of secularity. The focus is on how people make meaning out of—and in relation to—the secular, which in this chapter refers to those individuals and groups who either reject or are uninterested in religion and who hold no theistic beliefs or belief in the supernatural.This is a different task from one that deals with the academic conversation about historical secularism, the functions of secular states or governments, or the historical processes and expressions of secularization.

On one level, questions about the meaning of living a secular life prefigure their answers. For instance, there is already an implied "yes" to the question about "living without religion," if one is suggesting the common, secular versus religious life distinction. Thus the person who maintains a religious identity, accepts the basic claims of one religion or another, and believes in a divine realm and whose everyday thoughts and behaviors are (p. 516) guided by religious principles could not meaningfully be said to be living a secular life. This is a central meaning of secularity, and one I employ in this chapter. But the importance of going beyond this distinction and recognizing the variability and versatility of secularity[1] is becoming increasingly clear in the contemporary secular–religious landscape.

# Defining Secularity

It is important to examine different definitions of the secular, and address its conceptual parameters, before discussing secular living. Identifying commonalities that underlie its varied meanings will reduce ambiguity regarding related terms and situate it within the broader context of this volume. It will also help clarify both my use of the term and the dual, reciprocally related subject of this chapter: (1) how people come to secularism and what it means to live a secular life and (2) how secular lives themselves both produce and are produced by a variety of contexts, meanings, expressions, and experiences. Definitions range from the rudimentary and straightforward to the complex and multifaceted. Consulting Standard English dictionaries will yield the simplest and most generic definition, which is that *secular* refers to "the worldly, rather than spiritual." At the other end of the spectrum are much more technical and inclusive definitions. These are based on theoretical understandings that underscore the sociohistorical production and political dimensions of the secular. Usually it is distinguished from and shown to have a relationship to religion and other social institutions.

Charles Taylor's (2007) voluminous *A Secular Age* exemplifies this broader and more detailed treatment of the secular. It goes beyond the simple worldly–spiritual dichotomy, attempting to account for the set of complex and interrelated social and historical conditions that both gave rise to and currently characterize the "secular situation" of different societies. Taylor resists offering a sentence-length definition of the secular and instead identifies at least three distinct but related constellations of meanings. The first two are connected to traditional scholarly understanding centered on assumptions about modernization, secularization, and the evolving role of religion in modernity in both the public and private spheres. The shrinking authority of traditional religious institutions in Western society and the concomitant decline of public religious practice are illustrative of this conceptualization. But much of Taylor's work is actually a critique of this view. Namely, it relies too heavily on "subtraction stories," where a kind of zero-sum situation rules in which the decline of religion *means* the rise of the (unambiguously) secular or vice versa. For Taylor, this ignores the more complicated relationship that exists in the real world in which modern social, historical, and political conditions remold and recast religion and belief—but they also give rise to and shape the nature of their conceptual counterparts, secularism and nonbelief. Taylor offers a third sense of the secular, which is also the one most germane to the present discussion:

> [The secular] is a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace…[it] is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious [and nonreligious] experience and search takes place. (2007: 3)

(p. 517) This definition suggests that secularity is "not just a net reduction in religious belief or practice, but a change in the very conditions of belief" (Warner et al. 2010: 9). I would add to this, "conditions of nonbelief." It is from this vantage that a "many paths, many meanings" interpretation of secular living is best understood. Contemplating the social conditions of both belief and nonbelief heeds the dialectic relationship of religion/belief to secular/nonbelief and opens a space for a more varied and plastic understanding of how people actually come to and experience the secular.

This observation is crucial because secularists, along with religionists, construct meaningful lives that involve moral, emotional, and intellectual concerns that are always situated in real social, historical, and political conditions. This process unfolds in more complicated ways than a simple worldly versus spiritual either/or dichotomy suggests. Moreover, a less simplistic view of the secular is less likely to occlude conversation of things often presumed to be the exclusive domain of religion, such as the experiences of awe and wonder,[2] of the cosmos and our place within it, or even the transcendent or "spiritual." Framing the secular this way gives greater currency to an analysis focused on the actual experience of secularity in its own right. It prevents the analytical mistake of examining only religious experience and then assuming secular experience is simply its absence.

It also renders the secular life more empirically available to study as it examines the actual lived experience of secular people.

Another way of pointing to the complexity, variability, or even confusion of the secular is to notice its entanglement with other concepts, theories, and assumptions about conditions in society. For instance, the literatures that employ macro-level analyses regarding the nature of liberal secular nation-states, official state-sponsored atheist nations, and, indeed, much of the writing on secularization itself can obscure understanding of the actual secular experience of individuals at the micro and interactional level of everyday life. Do authoritarian regimes with secularism and atheism as official policy signify a state of secular life for its populace? Or is true secular living possible only in open and democratic societies with both freedom of, and from, religion? This chapter is not intended to answer this question directly, but it does point to something of deeper sociological relevance of which this chapter is concerned: that which regards the relationship between the conditions of society, the place of the individual in it, and the possibilities of secular life. In open, liberal, and democratic societies, "secular" can also refer not to the weakened role of religion but to the sociohistorical, cultural, and legal conditions—such as official declarations and institutional practices regarding the separation of church and state—that lend themselves to religious pluralism and encourage a vibrant religious marketplace. The United States, as one of the most religiously diverse nations on earth, and with a constitutional separation of church and state, is thus highly secular in this sense. Moreover, research attempting to estimate the numbers of secular people globally can employ very flexible definitions. One such definition is that secularity refers to "The disregarding of religious concerns whatever one's belief about the supernatural" (Altemeyer 2010: 1). This conception implies that secular individuals can and sometimes do hold personal belief in the supernatural or even a deity.

To make things more complicated, there are the inevitable "posts" that become appended to established terms, putatively in an effort to capture complexity and social change. So, for instance, the contested and ambiguous "postsecular" suggests some kind of meaningful transition or change in the set of those conditions Taylor (2007) is concerned with and that shape the beliefs and worldviews of individuals, groups, and societies. In trying to account for the "varieties of postsecularity," James Beckford (2012) shows how the term has been used (p. 518) in a number of ways, from being a replacement for the outmoded idea of secularization, to building upon traditional notions of secularism, to a new way of discussing the resurgence of religion itself. Clearly, despite some conceptual overlap and general connections, secularity at the macro level suggests a state of things but implies a sequential, coherent, and historical chronology: presecular > secular > postsecular. For the purpose of this chapter, I am "bracketing" secularity from such assumptions or from any theoretical commitments to the "big" question about historical secularization.

# The Conceptual Relationship of the Secular with Religion

For better or worse, “the secular” is conceptually coupled with the notion of “the religious.” There is a dichotomous and dialectic relationship between the two concepts. Often this has meant that the term “secular” is employed simply as a shorthand negation of religion—a way of referring to what is considered religious and in effect saying, “not that.” It is in this sense that the person (often after being asked about his or her religious preference) using *secular* as a descriptor is in part invoking a counter-identity (Roof 2003), offering up a concept in the negative in suggesting they are *not* religious. It is not just the nonreligious who do this. The increasingly popular phrase, “I’m spiritual, not religious” likewise highlights what one is simultaneously dissociating from, as they describe who they are.

It is tempting to treat both religion and the secular reductively. Indeed, the traditional religious–secular dichotomy encourages the filing of a vast array of human behavior into one of these two either/or categories. Durkheim’s classic analysis of the sacred and profane depict this basic dichotomy (and dialectic) as a central organizing feature of human social and moral life. Amidst the necessity of our ordinary terrestrial affairs (i.e., profane), we also identify and set apart that which transcends these affairs (i.e., sacred) and our ordinary experience. The sacred–profane distinction has served as a powerful conceptual tool for understanding human experience and the motivating forces that undergird a wide range of social action. But this dualism can also be employed as superficial shorthand for complex issues and behaviors that have implications for those who study religion and the secular. For instance, in survey and even interview research, one may feel compelled to choose between religious or secular identities that may not reflect actual beliefs or behaviors.

How do we know when a belief or behavior is secular? Well, it is said not to embody or express anything in particular that could be called religious (or sacred). And what constitutes religion or the sacred? For most this requires some kind of reference to belief in and practice around the supernatural, a supreme being, the transcendent, or even a sense of “the other.” But on closer inspection, the problem of definition and inclusiveness regarding what constitutes religion is apparent. Conceptualizations of religion might be so broadly inclusive they could conceivably cover nearly all forms of human practice. This is not terribly useful for those trying to understand the lives of secular people. And yet, too narrow a definition curtails examination of potential dimensions of secular experience. The secularist nontheist who speaks of transcendent or even spiritual experience is an example.

**(p. 519)** The notion of invisible or implicit religion suggests at the broadest level that it is the intrinsic search for meaning and moral order in human affairs that impart a “religious quality.” Implicit religion is found in the moral and practical everyday commitments of individuals and groups. It is “An investment of a religious dimension in concerns which may

not usually be called religious" (Hinnells 1995: xxxiv). Thus, a religious quality is said to be found in a wide-ranging set of social phenomena and secular settings, from consumerism and the Super Bowl to the beliefs and practices surrounding individualism and communism.

Implicit religion suggests that viewing religion narrowly, conventionally, and only in terms of traditionally identified institutional practices (most often through a Western cultural lens) is a mistake. Instead, religion has more to do with dispositions, intuitions, motives, social process, and moral communities, rather than specific content(s) such as theology or claims about reality. Religion is about rendering experience meaningful and morally relevant, and it is a product of the relational: namely the relationship between self and society. As Luckmann wrote, discussing the "anthropological condition of religion":

> The [human] organism—in isolation nothing but a separate pole of "meaningless" subjective processes—becomes a Self by embarking with others upon the construction of an "objective" and moral universe of meaning. Thereby the organism transcends its biological nature. It is in keeping with an elementary sense of the concept of religion to call the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism a religious phenomenon…this phenomenon rests upon the functional relation of Self and society. We may, therefore, regard the social processes that lead to the formation of the Self as fundamentally religious. (1967:48–49)

This construction extends the parameters of religious phenomena and lends itself to the study of religion beyond its traditional and institutionally moored conceptions. Seeing "religion at play" in less obvious contexts is said to lend focus on process, form, and function rather than traditionally defined religious content. A major implication of giving the concept of religion greater latitude when looking for its empirical manifestations is that it widens the lens on understanding why and how people search for meaning in and through religion and belief. The essential idea is that people learn and come to religious meaning and belief through multiple paths, from different directions, and with varying degrees of concern and commitment.

The idea of "many paths, one mountain" developed out of acknowledgement of this reality. It suggests that as people quest for meaning and for a higher power or purpose, they do so from different paths. However, this also implies everyone is searching for the same truth or that every search will ultimately arrive at the same destination. In academia, much social science research and discourse is dominated by Western, and especially monotheistic, conceptions of religion and God. A more inclusive framework for understanding the search for "ultimate meaning" would be less likely to overlook or ignore the vast array of the beliefs and practices of non-Western traditions. Thus the "many paths, many mountains" trope is offered as a more inclusive or corrective means of understanding the search for meaning and purpose as it suggests a plurality of religious meanings and worldviews and acknowledges the reality that not all are seeking the same answers, or even asking the same questions about human existence and destiny.

What does all this have to do with secularity? The point is not to suggest the same thing in reverse: that there is an "invisible secularism" intrinsic to human nature and to religion.[3] Rather, as with religion and religiosity, the secular and secularity involves variable paths as (p. 520) people search for identity, meaning, and purpose in their lives. Secular individuals can and do live without religion, but for a variety of reasons. Secularists can live out their lives with total indifference to religion, just as they can live (and work) determinedly against religion. Secularists have different motives regarding their "secular choices," no less than they come from different backgrounds and take different pathways as they come to identify with and lead secular lives. They may have different understanding of their own secularity and thus frame their experience of the social and physical worlds differently. As Chalfant (2014: 1) noted in his review of the book *Fifty Voices of Disbelief* (2009), "The plurality of personal narratives and experiences serves as a reminder to academic researchers that atheists [and secularists] constitute a varied demographic with complicated stories and multifaceted self-understandings."

Like religious life, secular life should be treated with more nuance and with greater recognition of the complex, manifold ways in which individuals and groups come to, and experience, the secular. Thus, the "many paths, many meanings" framework highlights the relevance of the social background of secularists, underscores a diversity of secular identity trajectories (LeDrew 2013), and expands the conceptual boundaries for more inclusive models regarding secular processes. There is no complete consensus on whether secularity has historically "looked the same" or remained a constant in all societies. Some research does examine secularity beyond the Western world (see Zuckerman 2010; Bullivant and Ruse 2013), but it still generally applies the Western conception of the secular, which does not easily map on to the reality or experiences of individuals and societies in non-Western cultures (Roemer 2010). Moreover, historical scholarship on secularism in such cultures tends to have a macro-level focus on the behavior of nation-states and the role of sociopolitical power in society, rather than on the secular experience(s) of ordinary people. It is within these considerable limitations that I will incorporate at least some of the implications of secularity in countries outside the West.

In short, the secular, secularism, and secularity (and other possible derivatives and iterations) are not such easy and straightforward concepts. Their meaning(s) and implications are more varied, flexible, and contested than is often assumed. This fact parallels another: that the secular itself involves many paths and many meanings and is expressed and experienced in different ways.

# Social Paths to Secular Meaning and Living

Recognizing the complexity and variability of the secular is not to suggest the concept is ambiguous or lacks a central meaning. Secularity does have coherency or even something essential about it. Indeed, having offered the previous pertinent qualifications, secularity here refers to those individuals and groups who are voluntarily nonreligious, who reject or remain uninterested in religion, and who hold no theistic beliefs or belief in the super-

natural. For clarity I have excluded conceptualizations of the secular that are implicitly inclusive of those who may "believe without belonging" or who would give cognitive assent to the supernatural, to deities, a supreme authority, or any idea of God. Still, the breadth and variety of individuals, groups, and identities that may be subsumed under the term is considerable and includes atheists, agnostics, nontheists, apatheists, (p. 521) antitheists, ignostics, naturalists, secularists, humanists, secular humanists, skeptics, and freethinkers, among others.

Is secularity due to an inherent disposition or a social outcome? The assumption that there is some singular psychological state or deeply rooted intellectual disposition that drives secularity in individuals is apparent in popular media and online discourse. The Internet and the ubiquity of social media have made multiple publics' views in many societies more conspicuous. The myriad websites, blogs, and other online forums that exist in the twenty-first century have provided a new platform for discourse that is more inclusive of a range of voices, identities, and viewpoints. In fact, social media and the democratization and availability of information can itself be an important part of the path to, and expression of, secularity. Examining the social dimensions of secularity does not discount the role of psychology, personality, or intellectual disposition as relevant factors. But even intellectual proclivities do not originate solely within individuals; they are always framed within social contexts and processes.

As news media sources and the general public become more aware of the growing presence of secularists, atheists, and other nonreligious, there has been a concomitant tendency in popular discourse to search for or speak of a single common denominator or "cause" of secularity. Even some social research hints at an underlying cognitive state among secularists. For instance, Hunsberger and Altemeyer's (2006:42) study of atheists suggests that, above and beyond the relevant socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions surrounding nonbelief, secularists in the final analysis may simply be those, "who cannot make themselves believe." This implies a deeply rooted or even intrinsic skepticism among nonbelievers that believers do not possess.

Media lines such as, "Nonbelievers offer 'Reasons Greetings' in Marketing Blitz" (Ali 2008) and "Secular Groups Vow to Keep Fighting for Atheist Monument" (Watkins 2014) give the sense that secularity is primarily about activist secular individuals and organizations publicly competing with or undermining religion. This idea has been reinforced by public campaigns and events, including the secular/atheist billboard campaign (beginning around 2008), the 2012 Reason Rally, dubbed "Woodstock for Atheists," and the first US "atheist monument" in the state of Florida in 2013. A product primarily of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, the billboard campaign offered proclamations to the general public including, "Don't Believe in God? Join the Club!" and, "You Know It's a Myth: This Season Celebrate Reason!" One consequence of all this is that it has underscored the objectives of a segment of activists and makes it likely the public will view such activities as representing the sentiment of secular people generally. This kind of public discourse generates the assumption of a homogeneous group of secularists with essentially identical values, goals, and views (especially concerning religion). This in turn

promotes the popular notion of a single psychological drive or collective motive among secularists or a single path to embracing secularity (e.g., that secularists share an antireligion sentiment or are strict materialists who devalue or are incapable of transcendent experience).

This view is misguided, since there are multiple paths to and types of secularity. The former is made clear in an exchange between LeDrew (2013) and myself (Smith 2013a) in the journal *Sociology of Religion*, which focused on the identity development of atheists and secularists. We outlined some of the problems of thinking and conducting research on secularity in terms of a single pathway model. This discussion was based on our respective previous studies of atheists in particular, both of which employed a process model framework that focused on (p. 522) different social psychological dimensions of identity formation. I argued that my subjects underwent a process of questioning and rejecting theism, whether they were previously religious or not, before declaring an atheist/secular identity (Smith 2011). LeDrew (2013) argued that individuals first discover secular ideas, find them compelling, and only then integrate them into their self-identities. Regardless of the details of identity development, we agreed that both our findings must represent only a few of many possible pathways to secularity.

We should also inquire into the relationship between secularity and one's socialization and social position. How do people come to embrace a life without religion or belief in God? Different disciplines respond to this question in different ways given their variable foci and assumptions about human motives and behavior. From a sociological perspective, social process, cultural and religious setting, and agents of socialization such as the family and education are major determinates of the differential pathways to secular identification.[4] Whether one experiences a religious or nonreligious upbringing plays an important role. Religious parents are likely to socialize their children toward a religious viewpoint, and it can reasonably be assumed that secular-identified parents are more likely to raise children who themselves come to embrace secularity. But perhaps the more sociologically interesting path to secularity, as several studies have now shown, involves the counterexample of those who are raised with religion but who abandon it in favor of a secular identity and life (Smith 2011; Zukerman 2012).

Though studies of secularism at the societal level, including state-sponsored secularism and atheism (Duncan 1988), studies of deconversion and disaffiliation from religion (Ebaugh 1988; Brinkerhoff and Mackie 1993), and even the programmatic study of irreligion (Campbell 1972) date back decades, the processes and pathways to secularity in open societies has historically been ignored. Only since the mid-2000s has the question of how individuals come to embrace a positive secular identity become a serious focus for social scientists. Given a perusal of the developing literature, what these studies show is that secular identities and worldviews are diverse, socially constructed and culturally contingent, variably expressed, and arrived at through differential processes (see NSRN.org for a comprehensive bibliography). Secularity is fluid and can mean different things to different people. The lifelong socialization individuals experience in the contexts of family, schooling, work, and even online (Cimino and Smith 2014) condition and pro-

mote both push and pull factors toward secularity and help carve out the secular pathways they undertake.

Another social (rather than individual/psychological) explanation for differential secular pathways and patterns of identification involves the relationship between secularity, social attitudes, and political orientations. These are also partial products of socialization; whether it involves reproducing the social learning of the person or a rejection of the normative messages one encounters through the socialization process. Survey research clearly suggests that those embracing secularity are more likely to identify with politically progressive attitudes and hold liberal values on a range of social issues (Williamson and Yancey 2013; Zuckerman 2010). In the United States, where traditional religion is often coupled with political conservatism, it is not surprising that those embracing secularism would have a particular tendency toward promoting progressive views and countering those of conservatives. There is no inherent logical or intrinsic connection between secularity and political progressivism. One can certainly be both decidedly secular and staunchly conservative. A secularist can adopt and maintain political positions, attitudes, and activist strategies that coincide with those of a traditional conservative religionist (Cimino and Smith 2007). But secularists of (p. 523) this ilk are a minority. In Williamson and Yancey's (2013) survey assessing the political orientation of nearly 3,600 atheists, only two respondents indicated they were politically conservative. These respondents readily recognized they were a minority among their secular peers. As one middle-aged female stated in an open-ended question of the survey, "I'm an odd duck … an atheist conservative!" (Williamson and Yancey 2010: 66).

Social and political attitudes are strongly influenced by one's social location, which in turn shapes one's secular path. The intersecting variables of race, class, gender, educational attainment, and geographic location (among others) coalesce and come to bear in both the how and the why of secularity. Survey research over the past decade has consistently found that some social groups are simply more likely than others to openly embrace a secular identity and lifestyle. In the United States and other advanced democratic nations, middle- and upper-class white males with high levels of education, and who live in urban areas, are statistically more likely to embrace secularity than any other sociodemographic group (Cragun et al. 2013; Baker and Smith 2009; Zuckerman 2010).

Relative social power and privilege are intertwined with the variables of race, class, and gender. So, depending on historical and cultural context, claiming secularity openly can in part be the *product* of social status and privilege. The essay "From Hitchens to Dawkins: Where Are the Women of the New Atheism?" (Englehart 2013) provides a recent illustration of the relevance of gender and secularity, and—in this case—atheists' self-conscious recognition that the public atheist/secularist leadership tends to be dominated by men. In other words, secular and atheist women tend to be, "conspicuous by their absence" (Brewster 2013: 511). Studies find that men, rather than women, are more likely to claim nonbelief. This can be read as the complement of what the literature on religion has long suggested, that on average, women tend to be more religious than men. There are a variety of reasons for this, some of which have likely gone unnoticed or un-

derstudied, but gender socialization and the norms of masculinity/femininity are partially responsible. For example, in patriarchal societies, if men experience more "social rewards" than women for exercising logic, rationality, intellectual autonomy, competitiveness, and so on, it seems reasonable that men would have more motivation (and an easier time) embracing secularity. This is not the same as suggesting there are numerically fewer secular women on a global scale. There are also many other factors involved that help explain gendered differences regarding religion and secularity, such as the practical issues of family obligations, the workforce, and other economic factors. Cultural constructions of gender do not wholly account for observed differences, and this explanation is not without its problems. For example, some research finds that men who reject traditional gender roles are actually more likely to identify as secular/atheist (see Brewster 2013). It has even been suggested that, in the United States, the "majority group" characteristics, power/privilege, and social status of secular men "feed[s] into the confidence [they] have about their ability to makes determinations about social and theological reality" (Williamson and Yancey 2013: 40). In other words, social position itself can buttress a sense of the validity of a particular viewpoint. The popular image of the highly educated, culturally elite, white male atheist, propped up by the prestige and status of his station, borrows most clearly from this idea.

Of course, this image is not representative of the broader, and especially global, secular community. This relatively small cross-section of secularists has simply tended to be the most publicly visible. Many other sociodemographic groups, including minority groups, exist within the secular community. In the United States, the Black Skeptics, African (p. 524) Americans for Humanism, and the work of African American secular activists such as Sikivu Hutchinson and Alix Jules are examples. Cultural and historical context help determine the significance and interplay of race, class, and gender and their relationship with secularity. For example, in the comparatively more secular societies of western Europe, the social and demographic position of the individual may play a less significant role regarding both the "probability" of secularity and identification with it. In non-Western societies it is more difficult to assess this relationship, as religion and secularism may be conceptualized differently. In Japan, for instance, there is a relatively high degree of secularity at the macro-societal level but not necessarily at the individual level (Roemer 2010). Many culturally embedded ritual practices that the United States would recognize as religious, in Japan, are not so conceptualized by its practitioners.

The issue of varied conceptualizations of secularity is also at play in democratic nations such as India. There, "secularism is interpreted as 'equal respect to all religions,' an interpretation that puts limitations on the development of a truly secular spirit" (Narisetti 2010: 139). Though humanist, and even antireligious, movements have been observed in India for decades, given that secularity may not be about nonreligion per se, further inquiry is needed to better understand the meaning of secularity for everyday people in India and other global contexts in order to assess its relationship with broader social structures and socialization patterns. In still other societies, almost nothing is known about the sociodemographics of secularists. In the theocratic state of Iran, for instance, contemporary open secularists such as the Iranian Atheist Association likely arrive at—and face

very different challenges with—their nonbelief. Nevertheless, given what is known in other cultural settings, the background status characteristics, social experience, and cultural and material resources individuals and groups bring in adopting and promoting secularity are clearly important factors.

Another social dimension of secularity involves the relationship formations of secular individuals. In the United States, the same demographic group most likely to embrace secularity is said to have less practical and emotional reliance on supportive social groups. Some evidence suggests atheists in particular have fewer "social obligations" in terms of their interpersonal relationships (Bainbridge 2005). Having generally greater economic independence, social and cultural capital, higher educational attainment, and fewer children leaves such individuals "more free to espouse atheism" (Bainbridge 2005: 1).[5] Regardless of the exact mechanism behind this, the broader point is that secularity is not simply (or only) a cognitive state, caused by some underlying psycho-neurological drive or inborn intellectual disposition. Rather it is conditioned by social parameters and cultural processes and rendered more or less meaningful, more or less "plausible," by and through a variety of sociocultural contingencies. In short, social position, socialization, and cultural setting shape the development, likelihood, and experience of secularity.

# Secular Selves, Communities, and Worldviews

Whatever one's social situation and path to secularity, the diversity of its expression and understanding is evinced at both the individual and organizational levels. There is an (p. 525) underlying commonality and shared content regarding secularity as a life stance across people and settings, but the particular meanings of secular worldviews can vary considerably. A comprehensive accounting for the global expressions of secularity is far beyond our purview here, but several examples across the micro–macro, sociocultural spectrum are instructive.

There is an increasingly global context to the range and degree of possible secularities. This reality is suggested in the concepts of "polysecularity" (Shook 2014, 2017) and "multiple secularities." The implications for secularity in a global age are complex and varied. For example, the identity options and "nonbelief choices" available to people, and that situate their own experience of secularity, are continually expanding in pluralistic societies (Smith 2013a). Attempts to codify and distill transnational proclamations of the global secular community exist (see the Copenhagen Declaration on Religion in Public Life 2010), but it is not the case that secular individuals and organizations the world over are in total agreement about what it means to be secular with respect to the values and goals of the global secular community into the future.

In the United States alone, secularity has an element of contestation, with "rival secularisms" (Shook 2014, 2017) unfolding. Individuals and organizations pursue different secular goals, take different tracks in their relationship with the religious sphere and general public, and offer conflicting ideas about what the experience and future of secularity can or should be. For instance, secularists are often divided on whether a combat-

ive/defensive or accommodationist approach is best for advancing the cause of secularism. Both camps would like to see a cultural shift toward a greater degree of secularity in society, but those embracing the former are more likely to take a harder line position and support things such as the public criticism of religion, lawsuits on church–state separation issues, and the display of secular/atheist monuments in public spaces. In contrast, accommodationists prefer influencing the public through goodwill and the demonstration of goodness without God. Examples include public campaigns for humanism, conspicuous charitable activity (e.g., Foundation Beyond Belief, Atheists for Humanity), and other leading-by-example strategies. Arguments for secularity of this variety can even integrate elements and espouse goals of what is usually considered religious. Popular works written for a lay audience, such as Alain de Botton's *Religion for Atheists* (2013) and Michael Shermer's *The Moral Arc* (2015) are examples.

Accounting for the diversity and tensions in the secular community would be a difficult task, especially given the proliferation of activist organizations since the mid-2000s. Thus, coherent descriptions of and arguments about secularity in the future should employ conceptualizations that incorporate a more pragmatic and cultural framework, rather than relying solely on traditional notions of the secular. A cultural framework concerns the perpetually negotiated cultural meanings both imputed to and extracted from "the secular" in social interaction across the individual–organizational spectrum in an increasingly global context. It would work toward a more complete integration of the conceptual and empirical relationship between the religious and the nonreligious as it is instantiated in everyday life through social exchange. Being more attuned to the practical and cultural dimensions of secularity as actually experienced by people will reveal that viewing secularity—even organized secularity—exclusively through the lens and language of the study of religion per se would be misguided (Smith 2015). For instance, seeing the secular life as simply the negation or alternative to the religious life suggests religiosity is the natural or default position (see Eller 2010). In contrast to this static view of the secular, a practical/cultural framework pays (p. 526) closer attention to the production and evolution of secular meanings through individual and interorganizational activity. This will offer more productive accounting for, and analysis of, secularity generally, which will be crucial for future research (see Wohlrab-Sahra and Burchardt 2012).

Acknowledgement of the varieties to secular meaning and secular being, manifested in the many different ways people can be secular, is not only meant to counterbalance the commonplace observation of the multiplicity of religious worldviews, expressions, and ideologies. Secularity should also be studied in its own terms, rather than under the exclusive rubric of religion. (See the research published at NSRN.org for an emerging literature premised on this position.) This is clear from both scholarly and popular commentary on the meaning of secular life in contemporary society. Notably, Phil Zuckerman's books (2010, 2015) and blog (see "The Secular Life" in *Psychology Today*) focuses specifically on issues of secular life, from education to gender to morality. The underlying argument is that secularity affords and produces as much meaning and direction in the lives of individuals as religion. Recent qualitative research has also yielded greater appreciation of the stories and experiences of secular people as expressed in their own words (see Smith

2010,2013b; Williamson and Yancey 2013; Zuckerman 2010, 2012, 2014). This expanding understanding suggests the commonalities and diversity among secular people around the globe will offer rich empirical and theoretical terrain for researchers in the years to come. The next section briefly highlights what are likely to be some of the most important themes within this terrain.

Regarding morality, science, and purpose, secular people encounter existential questions, negotiate cultural values, and contend with moral concerns no less than the religious. The steady stream of recent studies on secularism and atheism evince this point (Blessing 2013; Beit-Hallahmi 2010). The variety of issues at play in this research can be distilled into the general themes of finding purpose in life, constructing moral selves, and experiencing the world within a naturalistic and scientific framework of understanding. Morality, science, and purpose tend to be constituent factors of secularity in terms of identity, community, and worldview. Much about morality has been made on both the religious and secular sides. Wielenberg (2013 89) concisely summarizes the central concern of the religious when it comes to considering the secular: “The worry is that the absence of belief in the existence of God makes one more disposed to act immorally than one would be if one had theistic beliefs, and consequently, that wide spread atheism [and secularism] would produce societal dysfunction.” Since this is in part a psychological and sociological claim, it should be investigated empirically (Wielenberg 2013). One of the major consequences of this common belief is that it has often put many secularists on the defensive, as they have in a sense been called by society to account for how they can live moral lives without an objective moral truth moored in an independent and supreme moral authority.

The research that examines the actual relationship between religion, secularity, and moral behavior is mixed and complex. Some studies suggest religion is a protective factor regarding criminality and that it produces positive physical and emotional health outcomes (Powell et al. 2003), while other work stresses that the least religious societies on Earth tend toward the healthiest and “best” societies according to a number of sociopolitical indices (Zuckerman 2009). Part of the issue is the focus researchers take regarding the question, the evidence they employ, the many mediating variables involved (e.g., group solidarities and expectations, community dynamics, environmental and economic factors, and psychological well-being), and the operational criteria at play in attempting to measure the complex (p. 527) construct of morality. Future research on the relationship between religion–secularity and morality will continue to reveal contradistinctive findings. What is less ambiguous is that in societies such as the United States, there exists a general skepticism toward, and “othering” of, nonbelievers (Edgell 2006). This can lead to the experience of social stigma for secularists (Hammer et al. 2012), and undoubtedly the question of morality is at the heart of this. But, despite public sentiment, it is also evidentially clear from research and simple observation that leading a secular life does not preclude living a moral one (Zuckerman 2009).

Studies have observed the salient role of science in the worldviews of secular people (Hunsberger and Altemeyer 2006), even though secularity does not necessarily imply a scientific perspective. Nor is the science–secularity relationship unique to the West. Secu-

larist groups in India for instance, are as often involved in “religious debunking” through scientific arguments as they are promoting secularism per se. But the affinity between the scientific and the secular is not difficult to apprehend. Modern science after all owes a debt to naturalistic thought, an approach and understanding of the world, “that makes no reference to a God” (Ruse 2013) and that relies on an empirical-rational framework for comprehending the world and the cosmos. There is reason to suggest this is a central organizing principle and characteristic feature of the basic worldview of many secular people today. Survey data bear this out, as do the narratives from secularists themselves in interview-based research (see the Bibliography).

Historically, much of humanity has found meaning and direction from a religious source. Competing religious traditions have readily supplied answers to the existential problems human beings face, offering impelling metaphysical or supernaturally anchored teleologies of the greater cosmos and our place within it (which is most often at the center). Secularists, not subscribing to such a view, have faced the question:“Then what’s the point?” But this ostensibly reasonable question is misplaced. Blessing (2013: 104) puts it bluntly, “One common myth is that the nonreligious lead empty, meaningless, selfish, self-centered lives.” The myth has been perpetuated by many religious leaders and far too often uncritically accepted by religious followers. The evidence for the meaning-filled, purposeful lives secular people can and do lead is rooted in the expression of their values, actions, and worldviews. At a basic observational level, there is no essential difference between what secularists value when compared to the broader, often religious, public. Family, community, meaningful work, and a sense of security all top the list. See Blessing (2013) and Zuckerman (2009, 2010) for a list of works on secularism/atheism and their relationship with meaningfulness and well-being. Yet, descriptions of the worldviews of secular people reveal a pattern of a distinctly naturalistic, scientific-materialist, and theist-free view of the cosmos (Wielenberg 2013). Additionally, many secularists, especially in highly religious contexts, put a great deal of thought into the questions of theodicy, eschatology, and other theological concerns and in some cases have broader knowledge concerning religion than the religious themselves (Pew 2010). Moreover, seriously investigating religion and arriving at a “secular conclusion” itself is a source of meaningful activity (Smith 2011).

This is not to suggest that all secular people are preoccupied with religion or that there is a single worldview to which they subscribe. The way in which secularity is experienced and made personally meaningful varies. Sociological analyses have tried to account for the relationships between the social, political, and historical context of societies and to what degree they encourage pluralist religious (and secular) marketplaces. These variables have significant influence on one’s experience of secularity. Great Britain, for instance, has frequently (p. 528) been cited as an example of relative religious indifference (Bagg and Voas 2010) where, because of their history and the role of the state, the demand for religion is low compared to places like the United States, where religious competition is vibrant.

A recent example of the variation among secularists regarding specific beliefs and worldview is the Sunday Assembly, a godless congregational community that emerged in 2013 and now has an international presence with dozens of congregations. Preliminary observations suggest that many of those involved in the Sunday Assembly are secularists interested in the communal and emotional aspects of congregations that religion has traditionally provided. The search for moral and communal solidarity, for awe and wonder (to use the Assembly's own terminology), or even transcendent or spiritual experience among congregants is at play. As Sunday Assembler Steve (not his real name), who I interviewed recently, remarked:

> I've sometimes struggled with terms like spiritual and transcendent over the years because I don't believe in anything immaterial; but I've also had personal, very visceral experiences of my own, so [I think] we should be open to terms like spiritual and transcendent and what they mean for personal experience. I hope there is some room in the atheist community for using that language. I think there just has to be some flexibility because there are useful ways of using "spiritual" and "transcendent"… I mean they are just shorthand for certain kinds of experience.

Steve went on to suggest he hopes secular individuals can come to appreciate the emotional and symbolic role that language plays in expressing human values and experience and that he even envisions a time when the secular community at large moves beyond "secularism as rebuttal to religion" to encompass broader humanist concerns, some of which have been monopolized by religion. No doubt as research examines the relatively new Sunday Assembly, other variations and a diversity of members' attitudes and perspectives will be revealed.

Though some secularists dismiss terms like "spiritual" because of their connection with religion and the supernatural, it is clear that even in the vocal new atheist tradition, there is some advocacy for greater openness to a more encompassing range of conscious human experience, some of which might "need" terms such as "spiritual." Sam Harris (2014), who is often cited as one of the most prominent new atheists, makes just this argument in his latest book, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*. The point is that for many secularists, a scientific-rational and materialist worldview does not shut out personally meaningful conceptions of the (non-supernatural) transcendent, a sense of profundity, or affinity for the aesthetic. Many secular people discuss the power of science itself to inspire the imagination, help frame moral questions, and guide human beings to more prosperous, meaning-rich lives (Smith 2011).

It is in this context of a contemporary, many paths, many meanings conceptualization of secularity that the first definition of secularity, offered at the beginning of this chapter, as meaning "worldly only" or "not concerning the spiritual" loses is purchase. For it implies that the experience of awe, the transcendent, and the unknown against the backdrop of the wonder of the cosmos are simply not on the radar of the nonreligious. A broader understanding of secularity would not conceptually foreclose on what have undeniably been important aspects of conscious human experience. It would also accommodate the fact

that secular individuals and groups express a variety of perspectives and values that might all constitute secular positions.

(p. 529) There is a spectrum of secularity, both within and across cultural contexts, ranging from those indifferent to religion and theism, to those whose secular identities are in some way premised upon rejecting or embracing elements that have traditionally been associated with (Smith 2011). Thus, one basic distinction that can be made on this spectrum is passive versus active secularity. That is, a conceptual continuum that captures not just the oversimplified secular-religious either/or distinction but also the range of possible positions one might occupy regarding one's relationship with secularity. This is appropriate given the recent research that has revealed the importance of identity politics, civic and political action, and secular activism from secular people (Cimino and Smith 2014; Shook 2017).

In fact, there is a growing secular marketplace that is beginning to accommodate, and is itself representative of, the diversity of secular people, their values and goals, and that meet different "secular needs." There are hundreds of local secular groups and regional, national, and international secular organizations around the globe, to say nothing of the growing presence of secular discourse and activism in the online secular community. Some operate as ex-religious support networking, such as those on the Secular Web site (e.g., at infidels.org/library/modern/testimonials/berry.html), while others offer spaces of secular community and solidarity, and still others seek to advance science and secular values through direct civic and political engagement (Freedom From Religion, Atheist Alliance International, etc.) or to reduce the stigma of nonbelief or combat discrimination (e.g., Anti-Discrimination Support Network). Many groups are interconnected and working together, but others stand apart and offer different "secular products." Thus, secular living is premised on the *meaning* of the secular and how secularity itself in turn produces meaning through more or less passive or active engagement with it, as well as how it is incorporated, valued, appropriated, and contested by individuals and organizations. The umbrella of identities and social processes outlined here that constitute the "possibilities of secularity" correspond to the views, beliefs, attitudes, and values that structure the pathways to secularity, and point out the meaningfulness and experience of secularity in the contemporary world.

## Bibliography

Ali, Ambreen. 2008. "Nonbelievers Offer 'Reasons Greetings' in Marketing Blitz." **http://www.newser.com/story/42982/atheists-offer-reasons-greetings-in-marketing-blitz.html**.

Altemeyer, Bob. 2010. "Atheism and Secularity in North America." In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman, vol. 2, 1–21. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Bagg, Samuel, and David Voas. 2010. "The Triumph of Indifference: Irreligion in British Society." In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman, vol. 2, 91–111. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Bainbridge, William S. 2005. “Atheism.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1(1), 1–24.

Baker, Joseph O’Brian, and Buster Smith. 2009. “The Nones: Social Characteristics of the Religiously Unaffiliated.” *Social Forces* 87(3), 1252–1263.

Beckford, James. 2012. “Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51(1), 1–19.

Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin. 2010. “Morality and Immorality among the Irreligious.” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman 113–148. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Blessing, Kimberly A. 2013. “Atheism and the Meaningfulness of Life.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 104–118. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brinkerhoff, Merlin B., and Marlene M. Mackie. 1993. “Casting Off the Bonds of Organized Religion: A Religious-Careers Approach to the Study of Apostasy.” *Review of Religious Research* 34(3), 238–261.

Brewster, Melanie E. 2013. “Atheism, Gender, and Sexuality.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 511–524. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bullivant, Stephen, and Michael Ruse (eds.). 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, Colin. 1972. *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Chalfant, Eric. 2014. “Review: 50 Voices of Disbelief.” **http://blog.nsrn.net/2014/08/18/review-50-voices-of-disbelief**.

Cimino, Richard, and Christopher Smith. 2007. “Secular Humanism and Atheism beyond Progressive Secularism.” *Sociology of Religion* 68(4), 407–424.

Cimino, Richard, and Christopher Smith. 2014. *Atheist Awakening: Secular Activism and Community in America.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cragun, Ryan T., Joseph H. Hammer, and Jesse M. Smith. 2013. “North America.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 601–621. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duncan, Peter. 1988. “Review of *A History of Marxist-Leninist Atheism and Soviet Antireligious Policies* by Dimitry Pospielovsky.”*International Affairs* 64(2), 303–304.

Ebaugh, Helen R. F. 1988. *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edgell, Penny, Joseph Gerteis, and Douglas Hartmann. 2006. “Atheists as ‘Other’: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society.” *American Sociological Review* 71(2), 211–234.

Eller, David. 2010. “What Is Atheism?” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman, vol. 1, 1–18. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

(p. 531) Englehart, Katie. 2013. “From Hitchens to Dawkins: Where Are the Women of New Atheism?” **http://www.salon.com/2013/07/21/**.

Hammer, Joseph H., Ryan T. Cragun, Jesse M. Smith, and Karen Hwang. 2012. “Forms, Frequency, and Correlates of Perceived Anti-Atheist Discrimination.” *Secularism and Nonreligion* 1, 43–58.

Harris, Sam. 2014. *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hinnells, John R. 1995. *A New Dictionary of Religions*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hunsberger, Bruce E., and Bob Altemeyer. 2006 *Atheists: A Groundbreaking Study of America’s Nonbelievers*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

LeDrew, Stephen. 2013. “Discovering Atheism: Heterogeneity in Trajectories to Atheist Identity and Activism.” *Sociology of Religion* 74(4), 431–453.

Luckmann, Thomas. 1970. *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society.* London: Macmillan.

Narisetti, Innaiah. 2010. “Atheism and Secularity in India.” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman, 139–154. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Pew Research Center. 2010. “U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey: Who Knows What About Religion.” **http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1745/religious-knowledge-in-america-survey-atheists-agnostics-score-highest**.

Powell, Lynda H., Leila Shahabi, and Carl E. Thoresen. 2003. “Religion and Spirituality: Linkages to Physical Health.” *American Psychologist* 58(1), 36–52.

Roemer, Michael K. 2010. “Atheism and Secularity in Modern Japan.” In *Atheism and Secularity*, edited by Phil Zuckerman, 23–44. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

Roof, Wade Clark. 2003. “Religion and Spirituality: Toward an Integrated Analysis.” In *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michele Dillon, 137–148. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Ruse, Michael. 2013. “Naturalism and the Scientific Method.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 383–397. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shermer, Michael. 2015. *The Moral Arc: How Science and Reason Lead Humanity toward Truth, Justice, and Freedom*. New York: Henry Holt.

Shook, John R. 2014. “Polysecularity and Rival Secularisms.” Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Indianapolis, Ind. (October).

Shook, John R. 2017. “Categorizing Secular Views: Authentic Secularity, Polysecularity, and Forms of Polysecularism.” In *Organized Secularism in the United States*, edited by Ryan Cragun, Lori Fazzino, and Christel Manning. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Smith, Graeme. 2008. *A Short History of Secularism*. New York: I.B. Tauris.

Smith, Jesse M. 2011. “Becoming an Atheist in America: Constructing Identity and Meaning from the Rejection of Theism.”*Sociology of Religion* 72(2), 215–237.

Smith, Jesse M. 2013a. “Conceptualizing Atheist Identity: Expanding Questions, Constructing Models, and Moving Forward.” *Sociology of Religion* 74(4), 454–463.

Smith, Jesse M. 2013b. “Creating a Godless Community: The Collective Identity Work of Contemporary American Atheists.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 52(1), 80–99.

Smith, Jesse M. 2015. “Atheism.” In *World Religions and their Missions,* edited by Aaron J. Ghiloni, 17–45. New York. Peter Lang.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Warner, Michael, VanAntwerpen, Jonathan, and Craig Calhoun (eds.). 2010. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Watkins, Morgan. 2014. “Groups Vow to Keep Fighting for Atheist Monument.” **http://www.ocala.com/news/20140218/group-vows-to-keep-fighting-for-atheist-monument**.

(p. 532) Wielenberg, Erik J. 2013. “Atheism and Morality.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, edited by Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, 89–103. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wohlrab-Sahra, Monika, and Marian Burchardt. 2012. “Multiple Secularities: Toward a Cultural Sociology of Secular Modernities.” *Comparative Sociology* 11(6), 875–909.

Williamson, David A., and George Yancey. 2013. *There Is No God: Atheists in America*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment.* New York: New York University Press.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2009. “Atheism, Secularity, and Well-Being: How the Findings of Social Science Counter Negative Stereotypes and Assumptions.” *Sociology Compass* 3(6), 949–971.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2012. *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Zuckerman, Phil. 2014. *Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions*. New York: Penguin.

Zuckerman, Phil (ed.). 2010. *Atheism and Secularity: Issues, Concepts, and Definitions.* Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.

## Notes:

(1.) In the same way we recognize this in religion. William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, written well over a century ago, tried to account for spiritual and religious experience from a pragmatic and scientific framework. The legitimacy of examining variety and diversity in the religious, but not the secular life, has historically remained a tacit assumption in much research and writing.

(2.) The recent development of the Sunday Assembly, an international godless congregational community that began in 2013, explicitly avail themselves of this language.

(3.) At the same time, there are secular functions and secularizing forces to be found in religious institutions and practices.

(4.) There is a developing but not yet substantial literature examining this question directly, but much can be inferred from the vast literature on other kinds of identity pathways, including religious identity.

(5.) Though a relationship may exist, other mediating factors are likely at play, and the direction of the relationship between atheism and social obligations is not clear. It could be that secular individuals feel less opportunity to start or maintain certain kinds of relationships, especially in contexts where atheism is stigmatized.

**Jesse M. Smith**

Jesse M. Smith is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. His interests include nonreligion, deviance, and the self.

# Secular Prosociality and Well-Being

Luke Galen

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.33

## Abstract and Keywords

Many phenomena frequently attributed to the effects of religiosity (or to its absence) are, in reality, attributable to secular mechanisms. This can be observed in the domains of personal well-being and prosociality. Despite the commonly held theory that religious beliefs produce benefits such as greater morality and mental health, these associations are actually driven by nonreligious underlying mechanisms. This chapter examines claims made about religion's benefits. Are there really "effects" of religion in these social domains that are quite distinct from secular effects? There are many reasons to doubt whether religiosity and spiritual belief are special and irreplaceable factors responsible for the benefits of living social lives. There are better reasons to conclude that only secular factors and natural causes explain prosociality and personal well-being.

Keywords: secularity, prosociality, well-being, morality, mental health, religion, spirituality

THE distinction between secular and religious phenomena is a gray area in both popular and scientific discourse. From the "nonoverlapping magisteria" perspective, science differs from spirituality because spiritual matters are said to be subjective and immune from empirical falsification. However, the contention is also heard that there are tangible effects from spiritual beliefs. Notably, aspects of positive interpersonal behaviors—prosociality and morality—and personal well-being are thought to be fruits of faith. Although religious rhetoric touts beneficial effects of religion (and corresponding liabilities to secularism), some social scientists and philosophers have suggested that religiosity produces particular benefits that cannot be attained through secular alternatives (Pargament 2002). A few have gone farther, simultaneously pointing to putative tangible advantages of religion while also suggesting that spiritual matters are not approachable via traditional empirical scientific methods (Clark 2014; Slife and Whoolery 2006).

This chapter examines these kinds of claims and evidence offered in their support. Are there really "effects" of religion in these social domains that are quite distinct from secular effects? There are many reasons to doubt whether religiosity or spiritual belief are special and irreplaceable factors responsible for the benefits of living social lives. There

are better reasons to conclude that only secular factors and natural causes explain prosociality and personal well-being.

# Alleged Effects of Religiosity and Spirituality

Specific areas of association with religiosity have often been presented in terms of a presumed causal effect. The link between religious attendance and prosocial behaviors in the form of charitable giving and community volunteering is thought to indicate that faith makes for "better neighbors" (Myers 2008; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Religious effects are argued to be "demonstrably superior to unbelief" in supporting cooperative and (p. 534) altruistic forms of morality (Clark 2014: 161). Spiritual methods of psychological treatment such as Alcoholics Anonymous or specifically religious methods of coping are also suggested to be superior to secular alternatives (Clark 2014; Pargament 2002). Likewise, some researchers argue that religion provides unique assistance in moral development via the instillation of self-control, ethical standards, and behavioral monitoring. It is thought that, without the framework of religion, "people are often hard put to come up with compelling motivations for good behavior" (Zell and Baumeister 2013: 509). Occasionally, the converse formulation is used such that the absence of religiosity decreases prosociality and well-being. Findings have been couched in the form of "Pascal's Wager," in which, other arguments for God's existence aside, "one of the best things one can do is become involved in a religion" (McBrayer 2014: 135).

To be fair, this assumption of causality has also been used to attribute antisocial attitudes and behaviors, such as prejudice and aggression, to religiosity. For example, the Pew Research Center (2009) found that those who frequently attend religious services were more supportive of torture inflicted on terrorists than nonattenders. Their summary stated "religion itself is known to be a strong factor shaping individuals' partisanship and political ideology" and that such questionable moral judgments "may be formed in part by religious convictions." However, as we will see, although beliefs (whether religious or nonreligious) are often presumed to cause co-occurring attitudes and behaviors (whether positive or negative) in many cases, secular factors are the predominant influences.

One objection often raised to the study of religion is that unique subjective experiences are ignored or dismissed in the process of scientific scrutiny. This view holds that secular accounts transform religion into something "other than what it is" and that "without including God, psychologists are not really studying religion as many religious people experience it" (Reber 2006: 200). Such a position is predicated on the assertion that individuals' reports of their subjective spiritual mental state should be taken at face value as indicative of uniqueness. However, one cannot simultaneously argue that religious phenomena receive inadequate scientific attention while also objecting to explanations that involve reduction to secular mechanisms (e.g., "explaining it away"). Despite its pejorative contextualization, "scientific reductionism" is integral for causal understanding and in identifying the primary influences on a given phenomenon.

One basic premise of scientific scrutiny is that mere correlation between two things does not necessarily indicate causality, even when this refers to subjective perceptions. Merely because an individual's mental content invokes spiritual concepts, this does not mean that these beliefs are objectively causing any subsequent behavior. This can be seen in the case of the placebo effect, in which identifying the actual impact of medication requires a separation of patients' expectations from any pharmacological effect. This is crucial for critically evaluating alternative medicines, for example. In a different example, parents often presume that their own childrearing techniques are the primary influence on their children's behavior because this tends to be something that is salient to them and under their control. However, research in developmental psychology has indicated that factors such as shared genetics, social class, neighborhood, school, and peers are more influential than specific parental attitudes and behaviors, despite the latter's perceived importance (Harris 1998).

Such biases can also be seen in individuals' perceptions of the origins of their religious beliefs. Both believers and nonbelievers attribute their beliefs to internal, rational (p. 535) reasons ("I've thought a lot about religion"), whereas they think that other people, even those with shared beliefs, arrived at their views for emotional or external reasons ("They were raised to doubt" or "It gives them comfort"; see Kenworthy 2003; Shermer 1999). Anyone reared in an overwhelmingly religious milieu who declares that his or her belief originated from systematic accumulation of theological reasoning or a "born-again" experience, while discounting obvious contextual influences, is exhibiting this sort of misattribution.

In regard to behaviors, results from social psychology have generally found that situational factors and contextual norms are more influential than dispositional qualities, and religious influences are no exception in this regard (Ariely 2012). For example, when asked why they behave in a helpful or honest manner, individuals tend to refer to mental deliberation (e.g., "My religion teaches kindness"). But more basic secular explanations ("conforming to peer norms" or "not feeling time pressure," for example) must be ruled out before it can be concluded that religious beliefs, or the lack thereof, are the primary motivating factors for behavior. Failing to do so constitutes a "congruence fallacy"—a mistaken causal assumption of consistency between beliefs and behaviors (Chaves 2010). The present question therefore is this: If metaphysical beliefs are not the primary contributors to the association between prosociality and well-being, what are the alternative secular influences?

# Social Engagement

One of the most robust predictors of prosociality and personal well-being is the quality of individuals' social relationships, such as having close confidants, feeling supported, and being embedded in a social network (Diener et al. 1999; Putnam and Campbell 2010). It is not terribly surprising, then, that anything promoting meaningful social or group contact is itself also associated with well-being. Religious engagement is one venue for this type

of contact. Frequent church attenders tend to have denser social networks than nonattenders (Ellison and George 1994). However, terms often used to link prosociality with spiritual beliefs such as “religiously engaged” or “actively religious” can be misleading because they conflate metaphysical beliefs together with social embeddedness. Rather, it is primarily the social component of religious attendance that accounts for its relationship with prosociality and well-being (Salsman et al. 2005; Yeary et al. 2012). The strength of individuals’ religious convictions is less strongly related to mental and physical health than is group attendance (Berthold and Ruch 2014; Patrick and Kinney 2003; Powell et al. 2003). In fact, when the degree of social contact is statistically controlled, the relationship between belief in God and well-being often disappears or is substantially diminished (Greenfield and Marks 2007).

This distinction is sometimes acknowledged by the researchers themselves. (Although others are not deterred from making causal claims regarding the “effect” of religious belief.) In research on charitable giving, “the role of religion in giving appears to turn on the practice itself” (Brooks 2004: 7). In *American Grace*, Putnam and Campbell (2010) found that “religious beliefs … turn out to be utterly irrelevant to explaining the religious edge in good neighborliness” (465). Rather, they found that the religiously based social network predicted **(p. 536)** prosociality, such that “even an atheist who happened to become involved in the social life of a congregation … is much more likely to volunteer in a soup kitchen than the most fervent believer who prays alone” (472–473). It remains is unclear why the component of belief adds anything to the display of those virtues.

What specific secular factors within groups promote prosociality? Regularly attending a social group involves requests for donations of one’s money or time and to engage in structured social activities such as volunteering (Becker and Dhingra 2001; Campbell and Yonish 2003; Merino 2013). These prosocial outcomes can be observed when even nonbelieving individuals engage with a religious congregation (Lim and MacGregor 2012). It turns out that the outcomes attributed to the effects of religious content such as transcendent moral principles are more related to the secular effects of positive social norms and networking (Monsma 2007; Smith and Stark 2009).

The importance of social engagement relative to religious belief explains why both religious and nonreligious individuals who are equally socially engaged exhibit equivalent benefits (Shor and Roelfs 2013). For church members and secular group members alike, the frequency of group attendance is generally the primary predictive factor for prosocial outcomes such as community volunteering. That is not to say that secular and religious forms of social engagement do not differ at all in their prosocial emphasis. One area of distinction has to do with their relative degree of parochialism (versus universalism). Members of religious groups tend to direct their prosociality more toward people who are similar to themselves, whereas members of secular groups tend to be more “indiscriminately prosocial” (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Galen et al. 2015). Although religiosity is positively associated with both religious and nonreligious civic engagement, religious affiliation is negatively associated with volunteering in groups in which religious individuals constitute the religious or ethnic minority (Storm 2015). By contrast, belonging to nonre-

ligious organizations is positively associated with nonreligious volunteering. Whereas religious volunteering tends to be concentrated in churches, the nonreligious spend more time volunteering outside of churches (Cragun 2013). In other words, religiosity (versus secularism) does not determine *whether or not* individuals are prosocial; it merely affects the target or ultimate beneficiary of that prosociality.

How might one's worldview influence these factors? Consider a question raised by theories suggesting that greater religious belief drives greater well-being. What should the comparison or opposite of strong religious belief be—weak or unsure religious belief, or strong and confident atheism? This is an important point because most studies have used the former method (comparing strongly religious with indifferent religious individuals) but described results in terms of the latter, as indicative of the degree of religious belief itself. However, studies comparing strong religious believers with atheists have found no differences on measures of mental or physical health (Moore and Leach 2016). Additionally, there is some evidence that those with uncertain religious views, such as "questers" or "the spiritual but not religious," exhibit lower well-being relative to those with more certain worldviews such as atheists and the religiously devout (Krause 2006; King et al. 2013). Therefore, rather than being an "effect" of either religiosity or nonreligiosity, well-being is more related to the degree of confidence or commitment in people's beliefs or worldviews (Galen and Kloet 2011a). The secular influences of having clear and confidently held worldviews and being involved in a socially supportive group are beneficial for religious and nonreligious individuals alike.

## (p. 537) Personality, Demographic, and Social Factors

Just as secular effects such as social support or degree of conviction can be mistaken for the effect of religious content, other characteristics acting as "third variables" have proven to be more relevant to prosociality and well-being than religiosity. One obfuscating problem stems from treating broad and complex constructs such as atheism, secularity, or religious beliefs as unitary entities. In reality, there are multiple types of believers and dimensions of belief shaped by factors unrelated to the content of the beliefs themselves. Within the broader category of "religion," forms such as fundamentalism or conservative affiliation can have completely different associations with the phenomena discussed in this chapter compared to liberal, nonliteral forms of religiosity (Malka et al. 2011). Likewise, there are different types of nonbelief or forms of secularism that reflect different patterns of demographics, personality, and well-being (Galen 2009). It is often these underlying factors, separate from metaphysical beliefs themselves, that are of greater importance in shaping behavior.

One example of this is the personality trait of authoritarianism. As mentioned previously, prejudice toward racial, religious, and sexual outgroups is related to greater religiosity. Authoritarianism—valuing obedience and preferring one's ingroup—is not itself necessarily religious in terms of belief content. However, it is moderately correlated with religiosi-

ty: conservatively religious people tend to have higher levels of authoritarianism relative to nonreligious people (Altemeyer 2006). Studies that statistically separate the two traits indicate that it is authoritarianism, rather than religiosity per se, that is mostly responsible for greater prejudice (Johnson et al. 2011). In other words, authoritarian personality traits co-occur with some types of religious beliefs, accounting for the incidental relationship with non-prosocial behavior such as prejudice and vengeance (Saroglou et al. 2009). However, it is the trait of authoritarianism that drives the relationship, while certain religious beliefs are only a manifestation of that actual underlying influence.

There are many other such secular factors pertaining to prosociality and well-being that account for effects frequently misattributed to religious belief. Women are more likely than men to be socially engaged, including participation in charity and volunteering activities. Women are also, on average, more religious than men. Likewise, people who are older, more established, and wealthier (markers of "social capital") donate more money to charity and also have higher levels of religious attendance (Wilcox et al. 2012). Not surprisingly, then, statistically controlling for the proportion of married women, income, and education eliminates much evidence for religiosity's closer relationship with prosociality and well-being (Galen and Kloet 2011b; Galen et al. 2015; Manning 2010). In another example, demographic characteristics have a greater effect on the likelihood of being married or divorced than religious belief itself (Call and Heaton 1997). Atheists and agnostics have a lower rate of divorce than conservative Protestants largely because of differences in the age at first marriage, income, and education (Pew Research Center 2015). Thus, what is often described as a benefit of religious belief is largely or completely attributable to secular factors (i.e., demographic influences).

Another secular influence that has been shown to be more relevant to well-being and prosociality than religiosity is the degree of "fit" between individuals' beliefs and the norms (p. 538) of the surrounding area or cultural milieu. The experience of being, on the one hand, an atheist or, on the other, a Christian fundamentalist, will obviously differ depending upon whether one resides in the United States versus Sweden (or Mississippi versus Vermont). It is important to keep in mind that the social science literature has been based disproportionately on samples from North America, where being religious is viewed as normative and socially desirable. Although it is perfectly valid to generalize these results to others in similar cultures, in reality, results are often inappropriately generalized as the effect of "religion" itself and as applicable to other cultures, even those where religiosity is not the norm (such as northern Europe). That mistaken generalization implies some universal property of religion and initiates a misguided search for how religion provides such benefits, without fully addressing whether or not it is itself the causal mechanism.

There is indeed an association between greater religiosity and positive traits such as well-being and more communally oriented personalities in many countries. However, a more accurate description is that religiously involved individuals have, on average, greater well-being than secular people in regions where religiosity is the norm, whereas in areas where secularity is the norm, the opposite is true (Diener et al. 2011; Gebauer et al. 2012;

Stavrova et al. 2013). For example, in (quite secular) Norway, older nonreligious individuals report a greater level of social support relative to religious individuals (Kvande et al. 2015). Similarly, the positive relationship between physical health and religiosity is limited to those living in religious countries (Stavrova 2015). Therefore, such patterns do not represent an "effect of religion" (or irreligion) but rather the secular effect of a normative culture-fit. As with social embeddedness and strength of conviction described previously, worldviews, whether religious or secular, tend to be associated with mental health if they are confidently held, normative, and consensually validated by others.

Another culturally related domain in which secular factors are intertwined with putative religious factors is the historical development of human social groups. Anthropologists have sought to explain how small-scale bands of closely related peoples "scaled-up" into larger, more pluralistic societies by identifying what factors promoted the required cooperation and cohesion. One recent theory posits that the spread of "Big God" concepts—belief in moralizing deities who monitor human actions and punish rule-violators—allowed small-scale societies to establish within-group cooperation sufficient to outcompete other groups and grow in size (Norenzayan 2013).

There is indeed an association between the size and complexity of social groups and that society's view of God or gods. But, as always, the problem is determining the causal direction of relationships. Societal views of God are also confounded with social and economic characteristics. One study consisting of fifteen different societies found that, although involvement in world religions increased some aspects of prosociality, this effect was also influenced by "market integration" norms (the percentage of purchased calories; Henrich et al. 2010). Obviously, trying to separate the influence of cultural factors occurring in preliterate contexts into secular and religious components is not an easy task due to "chicken-and-egg" issues of mutual causality. Many researchers agree that religion is not necessary for the promotion of societal morality and that the historical shift in religious concepts co-occurred with other secular developments reflective of norms and institutions (Henrich et al. 2010; Norenzayan 2015). Other work suggests that it was growing economic affluence and political complexity, rather than particular Big God concepts, that accounted for the transition away from short-term resource acquisition and coercive group conflicts toward (p. 539) the longer-term strategies of self-control and cooperation (Baumard et al. 2015; Watts et al. 2015).

There is a distinction between theorizing that universalist forms of religion have co-occurred in complex societies that combine with other secular factors to facilitate larger-scale interactions versus theorizing that the adoption itself of such religious beliefs was a causal agent in societal transformation. The latter view is often extrapolated to imply that religious beliefs still retain unique prosocial effects. By contrast, the view that secular cultural and economic forces have been the fundamental motivating forces in societal upscaling has the advantage of parsimony by positing fewer and more basic underlying mechanisms.

# Social versus Supernatural Monitoring

Some of the most persuasive evidence regarding the influence of religion on prosociality is thought to be controlled experimental studies of social or economic interactions. These often involve exposure to religious content in the form of subtle reminders or "primes," which results in increased prosocial behavior toward a partner such as generosity, cooperation, and trust. Situational exposure to religious concepts does temporarily activate prosocial and moral behavior. For example, a priming study found that exposure to words such as "spirit" and "divine" resulted in greater sharing relative to neutral words (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007). Many researchers attribute these effects to activation of the feeling of being monitored by supernatural entities, a feature unique to religious concepts. For example, Baumeister et al. (2010) suggested that prosocial priming effects are driven by the moralistic audience of a watchful God, serving as a reminder to be aware of one's actions, which would support self-control "beyond the simple fact of fostering public self-consciousness" (76). This language implies that secular mechanisms are not sufficient to explain the effects of conceptual priming on prosociality and that religion is unique in its ability to promote morality.

However, one notable problem in this *sui generis* type of theory is that studies have found that religious priming of prosociality occurs regardless of participants' own personal level of religiosity, indicating that the effect is driven by the activation of a common social stereotype of religion's association with morality available to the religious and nonreligious alike. More relevant to the present context, in order to test for any unique effect of religion it is necessary to include equivalent control stimuli consisting of prosocial secular influences. Such designs constitute a minority of experimental studies, but prosocial effects have been found to result from priming with secular versions of monitoring or merely positively valenced stimuli. For example, prosociality and generosity have been increased via priming with reward or benevolence-related words, whether religious or secular (Harrell 2012; Johnson et al. 2015). Likewise, activating concepts pertaining to superheroes has increased volunteering behavior (Nelson and Norton 2005). These studies demonstrate that priming with a range of positive stereotypes, not merely religious ones, can activate prosociality.

Rather than involving a special supernatural form of monitoring, prosocial behavior can also be primed using concepts related to increased self-awareness or purely secular social monitoring. Primes related to the former (terms such as "judge," "police," "court") have been (p. 540) found to increase honesty and generosity (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007). In one experiment, for high religious believers, thoughts of being evaluated by both others as well by God increased public self-awareness, indicating that supernatural surveillance triggers the same social cognitive processes activated by social surveillance (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012). Other, more abstract cues can enhance prosociality by merely reminding individuals that they are visible to others or by activating a sense of self-awareness. Performing tasks in front of a mirror has the effect of increasing fairness toward others and of decreasing prejudicial stereotyping (Wiekens and Stapel 2008). The presence of eye-spots increases honesty, generosity, and the willingness to donate to

charity (Nettle et al. 2012; Powell et al. 2012). Being in an environment with bright light increases ethical behavior, and, conversely, conditions of darkness leads to increases in dishonest behavior, indicating that the connotations of being visible to others affects prosociality (Chiou and Cheng 2013).

There are also secular concepts having nothing to do with either social or supernatural monitoring that increase prosocial behavior. Interventions that promote perspective-taking or thinking about how others feel have been found to induce morality via empathy (Batson et al. 2003). Reminders of general moral norms—convictions that certain behaviors are moral and should be acted upon—can strengthen intentions to volunteer (Smith and Masser 2012). Priming with individuals' preferred social affiliations, whether religious or secular, produces endorsement of morality via identification with relevant groups (Thomson 2015). Even exposure to scientific concepts—valued by many secular individuals—leads to increased adherence to morally normative behaviors (Ma-Kellams and Blascovich 2013), likely due to the activation of secular authority concepts (Yilmaz and Bahçekapili 2015). Therefore, although experimental priming with religion is often described as having some unique quality, the central influences activating prosociality are fundamentally secular in character and are not dependent upon supernatural monitoring mechanisms. Rather, supernatural monitoring is itself derivative of broader and more basic preexisting social monitoring mechanisms.

# Secular Morality

As indicated earlier, the degree of religiosity or secularism is less relevant to individuals' level of prosociality than it is to whom prosociality is directed and which issues are considered morally relevant. There is essentially zero difference between the moral behavior of secular and religious individuals in major socially relevant "lie, cheat, hurt and steal" situations (Hood et al. 2009; Zuckerman 2014: ch. 1). However, secular and religious individuals do place different emphasis on moral attitudes pertaining to perceived illicit sexuality or purity violations (Weeden and Kurzban 2012). The extension of prosociality to others by secular individuals tends to be less based on notions of shared group identity but rather is more narrowly focused on issues that directly harm others. By contrast, religious morality is more restricted to members of the perceived ingroup and tends to also include issues perceived as hurtful to the deity rather than other humans (Rozin et al. 1999).

This means that, among the religious, concerns such as empathy toward victims competes with a range of other perceived moral obligations such as that of maintaining sanctity, ingroup allegiance, or obedience to authority, whereas among secular individuals, morality (p. 541) is more focused on concerns of empathy and fairness (Graham and Haidt 2010). For example, the prosociality of less religious individuals is driven to a greater extent by compassion for victims than is the prosociality of the religious (Saslow et al. 2012). As mentioned, on the level of historical societal development, certain religious concepts such as Big Gods have been associated with greater cooperation; but this comity

has tended to be reserved for co-religionists, indicating that the fundamental purpose of religion has not been to promote generalized morality but rather ingroup cohesiveness. In fact, secular institutions are more effective promoters of generalized prosociality, and they tend to "crowd out" religion's role in cooperation (Henrich et al. 2010; Norenzayan 2015: 336).

The empirical evidence thus makes it even more puzzling that purely disinterested prosociality in the form of altruism is sometimes suggested to be only understandable in light of religious belief. Slife and Whoolery (2006) state: "true altruism, which assumes that the ultimate motive for helping behavior can be the benefit of the other, is impossible from a naturalistic perspective" (220). Likewise, Clark (2014) argues that science (as opposed to religion) cannot account for altruism that is universal in its extension to others and is "genuine only when it arises primarily out of concern for others and not out of a desire to attain one's own benefits" (157). It is ironic, then, that, as demonstrated by numerous studies, prosociality on the part of those with conventional religious beliefs is motivated more by a desire to appear empathic (to one's self as well as others) rather than by a genuine empathic concern for those in need of assistance.

# Secularity, Spirituality, and Well-Being

Much of the literature on spirituality has been interpreted as suggesting that any general belief in supernatural concepts has a positive effect. However, the conceptualization and measurement of spirituality, using a blend of transcendent, nontranscendent, and mental health-related content, has been so imprecise as to render these conclusions dubious. One frequently used spirituality measure includes not only a subscale pertaining to prayer but also those concerning universality ("I believe there is a larger meaning to life") and connectedness ("It is important for me to give something back to my community"; Piedmont 1999). Another definition of spirituality refers to experiences of connection with oneself, with others or nature, and with the transcendent (de Jager Meezenbroek et al. 2012). Only the third dimension is necessarily supernatural in focus.

As a result of this conceptual overinclusiveness, many measures of spirituality used to predict well-being themselves include a significant proportion of content referring to well-being (Garssen et al. 2016; Koenig 2008), which artificially inflates the relationship. Well-adjusted individuals, regardless of their endorsement of naturalism, equally endorse such items, lending the impression that more "spiritual" individuals have greater well-being. The converse problem also occurs in that those who reject transcendent experiences are inaccurately categorized as mentally unhealthy. For example, the armed services have used a mental health screening instrument as part of the "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness" program that includes a "spiritual" dimension (Pargament and Sweeney 2011). Otherwise well-adjusted nonreligious test-takers who fail to endorse items pertaining to spirituality receive feedback provided by the interpretive program that includes statements such as "you may lack a sense of (p. 542) meaning and purpose in your life" and "improving your spiritual fitness should be an important goal" (Hagerty 2011).

Another issue related to the overlap or blurring of transcendent with nontranscendent content in definitions of “spirituality” is the resulting confusion in determining which aspects are actually causally related to well-being. The imprecise conceptualizations of spirituality can include a “nontheistic spirituality” in which transcendent beliefs may or may not refer to God (Garssen et al. 2016). When asked about “spiritual” content without the inclusion of supernatural language, most atheists report feeling connected to something greater than themselves and deriving nonspiritual transcendence from nature, science, music, art, and human cooperation (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2010; Smith 2011, and this volume). In fact, studies that statistically untangle transcendent or faith-based content from secular aspects such as connectedness or universality find that the former add little to the prediction of well-being relative to the latter (Piedmont 2004; Schuurmans-Stekhoven 2011, 2013), indicating that much of what is discussed as “spiritual” benefits are, in reality, attributable to underlying secular well-being. Likewise, studies that utilize “dismantling” designs in which religious and spiritual psychotherapies are compared with secular treatments of identical type and duration do not find differences in actual symptom-reduction-related outcomes (Worthington et al. 2011).

We have seen that many aspects related to well-being and attributed to religious or spiritual belief are in reality attributable to mechanisms that are essentially secular and present among engaged nonbelievers, such as social support and degree of conviction. Another domain that is often viewed as quintessentially religious or spiritual in character refers to behaviors, techniques, and rituals performed to promote morality or to enhance mental health. On a pragmatic level, it may be problematic for secular individuals to engage in spiritually based treatments because they may be put-off from fully committing to their rationale. For example, nonbelievers are less likely to follow through with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings, although, interestingly, those who remain in AA achieve similar benefits as believers (Tonigan et al. 2002; Winzelberg and Humphreys 1999). This raises questions regarding the necessity of spiritual (in the transcendent sense) beliefs for this form of treatment. Such questions pertain to the identification of the actual mechanisms accounting for the treatment effects; here we see two (related) issues: (1) techniques labeled as exclusively religious and spiritual, when unpacked, are revealed to operate via essentially secular mechanisms, and (2) secular and nonreligious techniques exist that function with equivalent effectiveness to religious and spiritual techniques.

# Underlying Secular Mechanisms

The literature on religion and spirituality has often focused on techniques or rituals such as coping methods, prayer, meditation, or confession, suggesting that they function to promote well-being in ways that secular versions cannot. However, as we have seen reflected throughout this chapter, even effects described at a distal level as being religious or spiritual are, upon closer examination, reducible to essentially secular mechanisms or have direct secular counterparts. It is worth repeating here that just as an individual’s mental content present while performing an action is not necessarily the cause of any subsequent effects, likewise merely (p. 543) because an individual subjectively labels his

or her state of mind as “spiritual” prior to experiencing an outcome does not necessarily mean that spirituality is driving the effect. The well-known placebo effect illustrates how an individual can experience a salubrious result subsequent to a given technique (e.g., crystal healing, therapeutic touch) and can inaccurately draw a causal connection between the two. An analogy from clinical psychology is that some therapy techniques suggested as being efficacious (e.g., Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing for anxiety), when dismantled into more basic components (e.g., exposure therapy) are found to be inert or superfluous (Powers et al. 2010).

Perhaps the most common example of this is the categorization of meditation as a spiritual technique despite the fact that its efficacious mechanisms include promoting relaxation, habituation following exposure to traumatic thoughts, and enabling clients to decenter from their thoughts. Purely secular forms of the practice exist, such as mindfulness/acceptance-based therapy, which have been found to be effective in buffering stressors and improving well-being (Vollestad et al. 2012). The activity of prayer is also often described as having salubrious effects because practitioners are thinking of spiritual concepts, but it is the specific secular process of self-disclosure—engaging in introspection and communicating difficult thoughts—that accounts for its relationship with better mental health (Black et al. 2015). Likewise, the use of self-talk before a stressful situation has equivalent coping effectiveness to engaging in prayer (Belding et al. 2010). These same processes are also present in nonspiritual contexts such as psychotherapy or in meaningful conversation. The placebo effect is particularly likely to play a role in treatment if the rationale is in accord with the patients’ beliefs and expectations. One study on the use of prayer in pain reduction found that the effect for believers and nonbelievers alike was attributable to the expectational nature of their beliefs rather than some intrinsic properties of the prayers (Jegindø et al. 2013)

As we saw earlier with both prosocial behavior and well-being, perhaps the single most influential factor is meaningful engagement with a social group. This is also the case with techniques related to coping and subsequent mental health outcome. One study found that social behaviors such as either attending church (for the religious) or volunteering (for seculars) are more efficacious than individual religious or nonreligious approaches (e.g., praying or active coping) in reducing mortality risk (McDougle et al. 2016). Likewise, the connection between religiousness and lower levels of distress occurs via secular factors of having social support and hopefulness (Ai et al. 2007). In the example of AA, often suggested as demonstrating the power of spiritually based treatment methods, there is mixed evidence regarding the actual efficacious mechanisms. Although some studies find that spirituality itself leads to increased sobriety for some types of drinkers (Kelly 2011), other research indicates the primary role is played by the social engagement effects of twelve-step programs (Kelly 2012; Tonigan et al. 2002).

Even more extreme rituals typically couched in spiritual terms operate via secular influences. In one study,experiencing (both personally and vicariously) intense pain-inducing religious rituals (firewalking and self-mutilation) had the effect of increasing charitable donations; the effect was not due to individual differences in religiosity but rather by a re-

inforced sense of shared social identity (Xygalatas et al. 2013). Similarly, even in secular situations with no religious or spiritual contextualization wherein strangers have to undergo painful experiences together, a shared social component functions to promote trust and bonding, amplifying the intensity of the experience (Boothby et al. 2014). In sum, even (p. 544) rituals with spiritual connotations operate largely through well-understood secular mechanisms rather than mysterious transcendent forces.

Some researchers have pointed to spiritual content such as in religious coping or the religious mental state of practitioners as partial evidence of unique predictive power or efficacy (Pargament 2002; Wachholtz and Pargament 2008). It first must be noted that the most common methods of coping are used by the religious and nonreligious alike (e.g., self-distraction, venting, positive reframing) indicating more similarities than differences in actual practice (Horning et al. 2011) even if these methods may use different terminology. For example, a common religious coping method is reframing a negative event into a character-building challenge ("God would not give me something that I cannot handle"), which also has essentially identical secular equivalents ("That which does not kill me makes me stronger"). In another example, although having an attitude of "reverence" is often categorized as spiritual, it can also, due to the conceptual blurring mentioned already, be understood in a secular sense (i.e., a feeling or attitude of deep respect, love, and awe), and in that capacity it has been found to exert a protective impact on physical well-being such as shorter hospitalization length (Ai et al. 2011).

But the major problem with most studies comparing spiritual to secular treatments is the lack of equivalence in assessing how techniques interact with the practitioner's own beliefs. Almost all studies claiming to evaluate the question "Are religious and spiritual practices unique or superior to secular versions?" have actually assessed "Are spiritual practices unique or superior to secular versions *for practitioners who are themselves religious or spiritual believers?*" Because most studies draw from general populations, the resulting samples are almost always composed of less than 10 percent secular or nonreligious participants, rendering any cross-referencing of religious versus secular techniques with religious and secular practitioners unfeasible. In a rare study, prayer reduced pain intensity for religious participants but not for nonreligious participants, illustrating how the problem in any head-to-head comparison of religious and secular techniques concerns whether they are substantively equivalent to those who use them. For example, this study on prayer effectiveness compared the use of a religious version of prayer (i.e., directed to God) with a "secular prayer" made to "Mr. Hansen" (Jegindø et al. 2013). Such attempts constitute a false equivalence. Another study used meditation mantras of "God is love" for those in the spiritual condition and "Grass is green" for an "external secular" condition (Wachholtz and Pargament 2008). When studies have used more equivalent versions of techniques such as secular versus spiritual meditation, they have found no differences in their effectiveness (Feuille and Pargament 2015).

Rather, a more accurate summation of most comparisons would be something like: "Spiritual believers are more comfortable utilizing techniques with spiritual content, and these lead to better outcomes for believers compared to when they use secular techniques." Al-

though such a nuanced conclusion is perhaps less than earth-shaking, it does capture the absurdity of attempting to demonstrate a general unique quality or functional superiority of spiritual techniques when used by overwhelmingly spiritually believing participants. What such studies do not demonstrate is that spirituality lends some unique power for believers in a way that nonbelievers could not obtain from secular equivalents. The type of comparison that would address this question would involve a determination of whether both religious and nonreligious individuals derive equivalent benefit from (p. 545) utilizing their own preferred techniques or methods of coping consistent with their own worldviews.

# Functions of Secular Worldviews

It is often suggested that religious worldviews are unique in their ability to provide for epistemic and existential needs such as establishing a sense of certainty, control, meaning, purpose, and assurance regarding our ultimate fate (Clark 2014). Secular worldviews, by contrast, are said to be “incomplete” and unable to provide order, meaning, and purpose (Barrett 2012; Reber 2006). Certainly, religious and spiritual worldviews perform these tasks for believers; however, secular worldviews are equally able to do so for nonbelievers by providing sources of meaning and order other than transcendent or supernatural ones, such as science, art, humanist philosophy, and a belief in progress. A sense of control can be derived from a range of external sources, including deities (for the religious) as well as stable sociopolitical institutions (for the secular; Kay et al. 2010). Likewise, just as existential meaning can be derived from stressing the role of God in controlling our species’ existence (e.g., the “Intelligent Design” of evolution) nontheists may derive equivalent meaning by viewing evolution as a predictable and orderly process (Rutjens et al. 2010).

Experimental research indicates that our worldviews operate in a compensatory or “hydraulic” manner, with individuals bolstering their endorsement of beliefs in a defensive response when their needs for things such as certainty, control, and immortality are threatened or challenged. For example, when individuals are reminded of their mortality, they exhibit a heightened belief in those particular scientific theories that provide a sense of order and predictability (Farias et al. 2013). Such studies have indicated that external sources of order and control are not limited to supernatural entities; rather, scientific theories and naturalistic worldviews can function to provide existential meaning for nonbelievers (Rutjens et al. 2013; Tracy et al. 2011).

This is not to suggest that there are no substantive differences between secular and religious worldviews in terms of content or their outward expression. Existential meaning may be experienced by atheists in a way that is more limited and self-generated, rather than externally derived, although the absence of general external meaning is not necessarily perceived as representing a crisis (Horning et al. 2011; Schnell and Keenan 2011). As mentioned, any lower mental health among atheists, including an absence of per-

ceived meaningfulness, may be more attributable to lower levels of commitment to social groups rather than to any lack of religious belief (Schnell and Keenan 2011).

One of the more notable contrasts between seculars and the religious regards their existential approach to end-of-life concerns. Although both groups strive to find meaning in their deaths and to seek connection with loved ones and the natural world (Smith-Stoner 2007), there are other more apparent differences. In religiously predominant milieus, secular individuals are often concerned that their end-of-life care will be infused with religious elements. The nonreligious are also less likely to desire aggressive measures to prolong life in the face of useless suffering and are more open to the use of physician-assisted death when further treatment is futile (Phelps et al. 2009; Shinall and Guillamondegui 2015). It is likely, (p. 546) given that one of the stated functions of religion and spirituality is to provide a sense of personally transcending death, that this is one area in which there is no secular equivalent.

# Conclusion

Many religious and spiritual beliefs are unfalsifiable because they make no predictions amenable to either confirmation or disconfirmation. However, others make specific references to the tangible effects of supernatural agency that are hypothesized to transcend secular effects, such as in the case of religious or spiritual involvement in prosociality or well-being. Consequently, this tangibility renders them subject to scientific scrutiny, including a determination regarding whether these outcomes can be better-explained as resulting from secular influences. If indeed there are benefits that are empirically confirmable as the products of secular factors (such as social support), any specifically religious component is superfluous or incidental. In effect, the scientific process of identifying causal influences on well-being and prosociality places advocates of religious uniqueness in a position of defending “God-of-the-gap”–type arguments, and those explanatory gaps are increasingly filled in by secular factors.

Some scientists and philosophers still make the inconsistent claim that empirical evidence cannot address the metaphysical issue of God’s existence while also maintaining that scientific findings of tangible benefits support religious arguments. For example, Clark (2014) argues that religious beliefs are not hypotheses because “God … lies outside the naturalistic methodologies and measurements of science” (6), which would call into question psychological and sociological claims because “scientific theories say nothing about the immaterial world” (43). However, this sort of “nonoverlapping magisteria” approach is used alongside arguments that God could have “used natural processes” to accomplish his purposes (131), including in matters pertaining to morality and altruism. That is, despite their supposedly ineffable nature, supernatural effects are said to be detectible via empirical methods, such as in the case of prosocial behavior. Likewise, according to “theistic psychology,” morality is thought to be observable via “God prompting a person to altruistic action” (Slife and Reber 2009, 134). In a similar vein, Clark states: “one might reasonably expect the lives of religious believers to be increasingly loving and

good" and that as a result of immersion in divine writings and rituals "we might expect transformed behavior" (163). Such a demonstration of the moral advantages of theism might "tip the scales in favor of belief in God" (164), an argument often made in the form of Pascal's wager (McBrayer 2014).

However, empirical evidence contradicts notions of religious and spiritual advantages, even using the criteria suggested by proponents. For example, Clark (2014) defines moral duties as properly referring to, not merely ingroup members, but rather "being kind to all human beings" (148). Likewise, true altruism is defined as desiring "the good of the person or persons that one is helping and not one's own good" (141) and doing it "out of genuine sympathy for the other" (156–157). Given these definitions, not only do secular mechanisms explain such moral functioning, but religiously based morals are more limited relative to secularly based morals in their selective extension to ingroup members. We also have established that it is the group engagement component rather than metaphysical belief that is most relevant to prosociality and well-being. Further, there is no evidence (p. 547) that the type of perceived surveillance that increases morality need be supernatural in origin. One might say of *sui generis* religious effects what Laplace was rumored to have said to Napoleon regarding the role of God in astronomical models: "I have no need of that hypothesis."

## Bibliography

Ai, A. L., C. L. Park, B. Huang, W. Rodgers, and T. N. Tice. 2007. "Psychosocial Mediation of Religious Coping Styles." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 33(6), 867–882.

Ai, A. L., P. Wink, and M. Shearer. 2011. "Secular Reverence Predicts Shorter Hospital Length of Stay among Middle-Aged and Older Patients Following Open-Heart Surgery." *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 34(6), 532–541.

Altemeyer, B. 2006. *The Authoritarians*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Ariely, D. 2012. *The Honest Truth about Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves*. New York: HarperCollins.

Barrett, J. L. 2012. *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*. New York: Free Press.

Batson, C. D., D. A. Lishner, A. Carpenter, L. Dulin, S. Harjusola-Webb, E. L. Stocks, et al. 2003. "…As you would have them do unto you": Does Imagining Yourself in the Other's Place Stimulate Moral Action?" *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29(9), 1190-1201.

Baumard, N., A. Hyafil, I. Morris, and P. Boyer. 2015. "Increased Affluence Explains the Emergence of Ascetic Wisdoms and Moralizing Religions." *Current Biology* 25(1), 10–15.

Baumeister, R. F., I. M. Bauer, and S. A. Lloyd. 2010. "Choice, Free Will, and Religion." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 2(1), 67–82.

Becker, P. E., and P. H. Dhingra. 2001. “Religious Involvement and Volunteering: Implications for Civil Society.” *Sociology of Religion* 62(3), 315–335.

Belding, J. N., M. G. Howard, A. M. McGuire, A. C. Schwartz, and J. H. Wilson. 2010. “Social Buffering by God: Prayer and Measures of Stress.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 49, 179–187.

Berthold, A., and W. Ruch. 2014. “Satisfaction with Life and Character Strengths of Non-Religious and Religious People: It’s Practicing One’s Religion that Makes the Difference.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, 876. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00876.

Black, S. W., P. Possel, B. D. Jeppsen, A. C. Bjerg, and D. T. Wooldridge. 2015. “Disclosure during Private Prayer as a Mediator between Prayer Type and Mental Health in an Adult Christian Sample.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 54(2), 540–553.

Boothby, E. J., M. S. Clark, and J. A. Bargh. 2014. “Shared Experiences Are Amplified.” *Psychological Science* 25(12), 2209–2216.

Brooks, A. 2004. “Faith, Secularism, and Charity.” *Faith and Economics* 43(1), 1–8.

Caldwell-Harris, C. L., A. L. Wilson, E. LoTempio, and B. Beit-Hallahmi. 2010. “Exploring the Atheist Personality: Well-Being, Awe, and Magical Thinking in Atheists, Buddhists, and Christians.” *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture* 14(7), 659–672.

Call, V. R., and T. B. Heaton. 1997. “Religious Influence on Marital Stability.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36(3), 382–392.

Campbell, D. E., and S. J. Yonish. 2003. “Religion and Volunteering in America.” In *Religion as Social Capital: Producing the Common Good*, edited by C. Smidt, 87–106. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press.

Chaves, M. 2010. “Rain Dances in the Dry Season: Overcoming the Religious Congruence Fallacy.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49(1), 1–14.

(p. 548) Chiou, W. B., and Y. Y. Cheng. 2013. “In Broad Daylight, We Trust in God! Brightness, the Salience of Morality, and Ethical Behavior.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 36(1), 37–42.

Clark, K. J. 2014. *Religion and the Sciences of Origins: Historical and Contemporary Discussions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cragun, R. 2013. *What You Don’t Know about Religion (But Should)*. Charlottesville, Va.: Pitchstone.

de Jager Meezenbroek, E., B. Garssen, M. van den Berg, D. van Dierendonck, A. Visser, and W. B. Schaufeli. 2012. “Measuring Spirituality as a Universal Human Experience: A Review of Spirituality Questionnaires.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 51(2), 336–354.

Diener, E., L. Tay, and D. G. Myers. 2011. “The Religion Paradox: If Religion Makes People Happy, Why Are So Many Dropping Out?” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(6), 1278–1290.

Diener, E., E. Suh, R. Lucas, and H. Smith. 1999. “Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress.” *Psychological Bulletin* 125(2), 276–305.

Ellison, C. G., and L. K. George. 1994. “Religious Involvement, Social Ties, and Social Support in a Southeastern Community.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33(1), 46–61.

Farias, M., A.-K. Newheiser, G. Kahane, and Z. de Toledo. 2013. “Scientific Faith: Belief in Science Increases in the Face of Stress and Existential Anxiety.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 49(6), 1210–1213.

Feuille, M., and K. Pargament. 2015. “Pain, Mindfulness, and Spirituality.” *Journal of Health Psychology* 20(8), 1090–1106.

Galen, L. W. 2009. “Profiles of the Godless.” *Free Inquiry* 29(1), 41–45.

Galen, L. W., and J. Kloet. 2011a. “Mental Well-Being in the Religious and the Non-Religious: Evidence for a Curvilinear Relationship.” *Mental Health Religion and Culture* 14(7), 673–689.

Galen, L. W., and J. Kloet. 2011b. “Personality and Social Integration Factors Distinguishing Non-Religious from Religious Groups: The Importance of Controlling for Attendance and Demographics.” *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 33(2), 205–228.

Galen, L. W., M. Sharp, and A. McNulty. 2015. “The Role of Nonreligious Group Factors versus Religious Belief in the Prediction of Prosociality.” *Social Indicators Research* 122(2), 411–432.

Garssen, B., A. Visser, and E. de Jager Meezenbroek. 2016. “Examining Whether Spirituality Predicts Subjective Well-Being: How to Avoid Tautology.” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8(2), 141–148.

Gebauer, J. E., C. Sedikides, and W. Neberich. 2012. “Religiosity, Social Self-Esteem, and Psychological Adjustment: On the Cross-Cultural Specificity of the Psychological Benefits of Religiosity.” *Psychological Science* 23(2), 158–160.

Gervais, W. M., and A. Norenzayan. 2012. “Like a Camera in the Sky? Thinking about God Increases Public Self-Awareness and Socially Desirable Responding.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(1), 298–302.

Graham, J., and J. Haidt. 2010. “Beyond Beliefs: Religions Bind Individuals into Moral Communities.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(1), 140–150.

Greenfield, E. A., and N. F. Marks. 2007. “Religious Social Identity as an Explanatory Factor for Associations between More Frequent Formal Religious Participation and Psychological Well-Being.” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 17(3), 245–259.

Hagerty, B. B. 2011. “Army’s ‘Spiritual Fitness’ Test Angers Some Soldiers.” National Public Radio. **http://www.npr.org/2011/01/13/132904866/armys-spiritual-fitness-test-angers-some-soldiers**.

Harrell, A. 2012. “Do Religious Cognitions Promote Prosociality?” *Rationality and Society* 24(4), 463–482.

(p. 549) Harris, J. R. 1998. *The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do*. London: Bloomsbury.

Henrich, J., J. Ensminger, R. McElreath, A. Barr, C. Barrett, A. Bolyanatz, et al. 2010. “Markets, Religion, Community Size, and the Evolution of Fairness and Punishment.” *Science* 327(5972), 1480–1484.

Hood, R. W., R. C. Hill, and R. Spilka. 2009. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 4th ed. New York: Guilford.

Horning, S. M., H. P. Davis, M. Stirrat, and R. E. Cornwell. 2011. “Atheistic, Agnostic, and Religious Older Adults on Well-Being and Coping Behaviors.” *Journal of Aging Studies* 25(2), 177–188.

Jegindø, E. M., L. Vase, J. C. Skewes, A. J. Terkelsen, J. Hansen, A. W. Geertz, A. Roepstorff, and T. S. Jensen. 2013. “Expectations Contribute to Reduced Pain Levels during Prayer in Highly Religious Participants.” *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 36(4), 413–426.

Johnson, K. A., R. Memon, A. Alladin, A. B. Cohen, and M. A. Okun. 2015. “Who Helps the Samaritan? The Influence of Religious vs. Secular Primes on Spontaneous Helping of Members of Religious Outgroups.” *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 15(1–2), 217–231.

Johnson, M. K., W. C. Rowatt, L. M. Barnard-Brak, J. A. Patock-Peckham, J. P. LaBouff, and R. D. Carlisle. 2011. “A Mediational Analysis of the Role of Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Religious Fundamentalism in the Religiosity-Prejudice Link.” *Personality and Individual Differences* 50(6), 851–856.

Kay, A. C., S. Shepherd, C. W. Blatz, S. N. Chua, and A. D. Galinsky. 2010. “For God (or) Country: The Hydraulic Relation between Government Instability and Belief in Religious Sources of Control.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99(5), 725–739.

Kelly, J. F., B. Hoeppner, R. L. Stout, and M. Pagano. 2012. “Determining the Relative Importance of the Mechanisms of Behavior Change within Alcoholics Anonymous: A Multiple Mediator Analysis.” *Addiction* 107(2), 289–299.

Kelly, J. F., R. L. Stout, M. Magill, J. S. Tonigan, and M. E. Pagano. 2011. “Spirituality in Recovery: A Lagged Mediational Analysis of Alcoholics Anonymous’ Principal Theoretical Mechanism of Behavior Change.” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 35(3), 454–463.

Kenworthy, J. B. 2003. “Explaining the Belief of God for Self, In-Group, and Out-Group Targets.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42(1), 137–146.

King, M., L. Marston, S. McManus, T. Brugha, H. Meltzer, and P. Bebbington. 2013. “Religion, Spirituality and Mental Health: Results from a National Study of English Households.” *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 202(1), 68–73.

Koenig, H. G. 2008. “Concerns About Measuring ‘Spirituality’ in Research.” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 196(5), 349–355.

Krause, N. 2006. “Religious Doubt and Psychological Well-Being: A Longitudinal Investigation.” *Review of Religious Research* 47(3), 287–302.

Kvande, M., R. Reidunsdatter, A. Lohre, M. Nielsen, and G. Espnes. 2015. “Religiousness and Social Support: A Study in Secular Norway.” *Review of Religious Research* 57(1), 87–109.

Lim, C., and C. A. MacGregor. 2012. “Religion and Volunteering in Context: Disentangling the Contextual Effects of Religion on Voluntary Behavior.” *American Sociological Review* 77(5), 747–779.

Ma-Kellams, C., and J. Blascovich. 2013. “Does ‘Science’ Make You Moral? The Effects of Science on Moral Judgments and Behavior.” *PLoS ONE* 8(3), 1–4.

Malka, A., C. J. Soto, A. B. Cohen, and D. T. Miller. 2011. “Religiosity and Social Welfare: Competing Influences of Cultural Conservatism and Prosocial Value Orientation.” *Journal of Personality* 79(4), 763–792.

(p. 550) Manning, L. K. 2010. “Gender and Religious Differences Associated with Volunteering in Later Life.” *Journal of Women and Aging* 22(2), 125–135.

McBrayer, J. 2014. “The Wager Renewed: Believing in God Is Good for You.” *Science Religion and Culture* 1(3), 130–140.

McDougle, L., S. Konrath, M. Walk, and F. Handy. 2016. “Religious and Secular Coping Strategies and Mortality Risk among Older Adults.” *Social Indicators Research* 125(2), 677–694.

Merino, S. 2013. “Religious Social Networks and Volunteering: Examining Recruitment Via Close Ties.” *Review of Religious Research* 55(3), 509–527.

Monsma, S. V. 2007. “Religion and Philanthropic Giving and Volunteering: Building Blocks for Civic Responsibility.” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 3, 1–27.

Moore, J. T., and M. M. Leach. 2016. “Dogmatism and Mental Health: A Comparison of the Religious and Secular.” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8(1), 54–64.

Myers, D. G. 2008. *A Friendly Letter to Skeptics and Atheists: Musings on Why God is Good and Faith Isn’t Evil*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.

Nelson, L. D., and M. I. Norton. 2005. “From Student to Superhero: Situational Primes Shape Future Helping.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41(4), 423–430.

Nettle, D., Z. Harper, A. Kidson, R. Stone, I. S. Penton-Voak, and M. Bateson. 2013. “The Watching Eyes Effect in the Dictator Game.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 34(1), 35–40.

Norenzayan, A. 2013. *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Norenzayan, A. 2015. “Big Questions about Big Gods: Response and Discussion.” *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 5(4), 327–342.

Pargament, K. I. 2002. “Is Religion Nothing But … ? Explaining Religion Versus Explaining Religion Away.” *Psychological Inquiry* 13(3), 239–244.

Pargament, K. I., and P. J. Sweeney. 2011. “Building Spiritual Fitness in the Army: An Innovative Approach to a Vital Aspect of Human Development.” *American Psychologist* 66(1), 58–64.

Patrick, J., and J. Kinney. 2003. “Why Believe? The Effects of Religious Beliefs on Emotional Well Being.” *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 14(2–3), 153–170.

Pew Research Center. 2009. “The Religious Dimensions of the Torture Debate.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2009/04/29/the-religious-dimensions-of-the-torture-debate/**.

Pew Research Center. 2015. “Religious Landscape Study.” **http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/**.

Phelps, A. C., P. K. Maciejewski, M. Nilsson, T. A. Balboni, A. A. Wright, M. E. Paulk, et al. 2009. “Religious Coping and Use of Intensive Life-Prolonging Care near Death in Patients with Advanced Cancer.” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 301(11), 1140–1147.

Piedmont, R. L. 1999. “Does Spirituality Represent the Sixth Factor of Personality? Spiritual Transcendence and the Five-Factor Model.” *Journal of Personality* 67(6), 985–1013.

Piedmont, R. L. 2004. “Spiritual Transcendence as a Predictor of Psychosocial Outcome from an Outpatient Substance Abuse Program.” *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 18(3), 213–222.

Powell, K. L., G. Roberts, and D. Nettle. 2012. “Eye Images Increase Charitable Donations.” *Ethology* 118(11), 1096–1101.

Powell, L. H., L. Shahabi, and C. E. Thoresen. 2003. “Religion and Spirituality: Linkages to Physical Health.” *American Psychologist* 58(1), 36–52.

Powers, M. B., J. M. Halpern, M. P. Ferenschak, S. J. Gillihan, and E. B. Foa. 2010. “A Meta-Analytic Review of Prolonged Exposure for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” *Clinical Psychology Review* 30(6), 635–641.

(p. 551) Putnam, R. D., and D. E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Reber, J. S. 2006. “Secular Psychology: What’s the Problem?” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34(3), 193–204.

Rozin, P., L. Lowery, S. Imada, and J. Haidt. 1999. “The CAD Triad Hypothesis: A Mapping between Three Moral Emotions (Contempt, Anger, Disgust) and Three Moral Codes (Community, Autonomy, Divinity).” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 76(4), 574–586.

Rutjens, B. T., J. van der Pligt, and F. van Harreveld. 2010. “Deus or Darwin: Randomness and Belief in Theories about the Origin of Life.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46(6), 1078–1080.

Rutjens, B. T., F. van Harreveld, and J. van der Pligt. 2013. “Step by Step: Finding Compensatory Order in Science.” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22(3), 250–255.

Salsman, J. M., T. L. Brown, E. H. Brechting, and C. R. Carlson. 2005. “The Link between Religion and Spirituality and Psychological Adjustment: The Mediating Role of Optimism and Social Support.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31(4), 522–535.

Saroglou, V., O. Corneille, P. and Van Cappellen. 2009. “‘Speak, Lord, Your Servant Is Listening’: Religious Priming Activates Submissive Thoughts and Behaviors.” *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 19(3), 143–154.

Saslow, L. R., R. Willer, M. Feinberg, P. K. Piff, K. Clark, D. Keltner, and S. R. Saturn. 2012. “My Brother’s Keeper? Compassion Predicts Generosity More Among Less Religious Individuals.” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 4(1), 31–38.

Schnell, T., and W. J. F. Keenan. 2011. “Meaning-Making in an Atheist World.” *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 33(1), 55–78.

Schuurmans-Stekhoven, J. B. 2011. “Is It God or Just the Data that Moves in Mysterious Ways? How Wellbeing Research May Be Mistaking Faith for Virtue.” *Social Indicators Research* 100(2), 313–330.

Schuurmans-Stekhoven, J. B. 2013. “‘As a Shepherd Divideth His Sheep from the Goats’: Does the Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale Encapsulate Separable Theistic and Civility Components?” *Social Indicators Research* 110(1), 131–146.

Shariff, A. F., and A. Norenzayan. 2007. “God Is Watching You: Priming God Concepts Increases Prosocial Behavior in an Anonymous Economic Game.” *Psychological Science* 18(9), 803–809.

Shermer, M. 1999. *How We Believe: The Search for God in an Age of Science*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Shinall, M. C., and O. D. Guillamondegui. 2015. “Effect of Religion on End-of-Life Care among Trauma Patients.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 54(3), 977–983.

Shor, E., and D. J. Roelfs. 2013. “The Longevity Effects of Religious and Nonreligious Participation.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52(1), 120–145.

Slife, B. D., and J. S. Reber. 2009. “The Prejudice against Prejudice: A Reply to the Comments.” *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 29(2), 128–136.

Slife, B. D., and M. Whoolery. 2006. “Are Psychology’s Main Methods Biased against the Worldview of Many Religious People?” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 34(3), 217–231.

Smith, B., and R. Stark. 2009. “Religious Attendance Relates to Generosity Worldwide: Religious and the Secular More Charitable If They Attend Services.” Gallup. **http://www.gallup.com/poll/122807/religious-attendance-relates-generosity-worldwide.aspx**.

(p. 552) Smith, J. M. 2011. “Becoming an Atheist in America: Constructing Identity and Meaning from the Rejection of Theism.” *Sociology of Religion* 72(2), 215–237.

Smith, M. K., and B. M. Masser. 2012. “Principles and Popularity: The Interplay of Moral Norms and Descriptive Norms in the Context of Volunteerism.” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 51(4), 762–771.

Smith-Stoner, M. 2007. “End-of-Life Preferences for Atheists.” *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 10(4), 923–928.

Stavrova, O. 2015. “Religion, Self-Rated Health and Mortality: Whether Religiosity Delays Death Depends on the Cultural Context.” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 6(8), 911–922.

Stavrova, O., D. Fetchenhauer, and T. Schlösser. 2013. “Why Are Religious People Happy? The Effect of the Social Norm of Religiosity across Countries.” *Social Science Research* 42(1), 90–105.

Storm, I. 2015. “Civic Engagement in Britain: The Role of Religion and Inclusive Values.” *European Sociological Review* 31(1), 14–29.

Thomson, N. D. 2015. “Priming Social Affiliation Promotes Morality—Regardless of Religion.” *Personality and Individual Differences* 75(3), 195–200.

Tonigan, J. S., W. R. Miller, and C. Schermer. 2002. “Atheists, Agnostics, and Alcoholics Anonymous.” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 63(5), 534–541.

Tracy, J. L., J. Hart, and J. P. Martens. 2011. “Death and Science: The Existential Underpinnings of Belief in Intelligent Design and Discomfort with Evolution.” *PLoS ONE* 6(3), e17349.

Vollestad, J., M. N. Nielsen, and G. H. Nielsen. 2012. “Mindfulness- and Acceptance-Based Interventions for Anxiety Disorders: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *British Journal of Psychology* 51(3), 239–260.

Wachholtz, A. B., and K. I. Pargament. 2008. “Migraines and Meditation: Does Spirituality Matter?” *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 31(4), 351–366.

Watts, J., S. J. Greenhill, Q. D. Atkinson, T. E. Currie, J. Bulbulia, and R. D. Gray. 2015. “Broad Supernatural Punishment But Not Moralizing High Gods Precede the Evolution of Political Complexity in Austronesia.” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 282(1804), 2014.2556.

Weeden, J., and R. Kurzban. 2012. “What Predicts Religiosity? A Multinational Analysis of Reproductive and Cooperative Morals.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 34(6), 440–445.

Wiekens, C. J., and D. A. Stapel. 2008. “The Mirror and I: When Private Opinions Are in Conflict with Public Norms.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44(4), 1160–1166.

Wilcox, W. B., A. J. Cherlin, J. E. Uecker, and M. Messel. 2012. “No Money, No Honey, No Church: The Deinstitutionalization of Religious Life among the White Working Class.” In *Religion, Work and Inequality*, edited by L. A. Keister, J. Mccarthy, and R. Finke, 227–250. Bingley, U.K.: Emerald Group.

Winzelberg, A., and K. Humphreys. 1999. “Should Patients’ Religiosity Influence Clinicians’ Referral to 12-Step Self-Help Groups?” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 67(5), 790–794.

Worthington, E. L., J. N. Hook, D. E. Davis, and M. A. McDaniel. 2011. “Religion and Spirituality.” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 67(2), 204–214.

Xygalatas, D., P. Mitkidis, R. Fischer, P. Reddish, J. Skewes, A. W. Geertz, A. Roepstorff, and J. Bulbulia. 2013. “Extreme Rituals Promote Prosociality.” *Psychological Science* 24(8), 1602–1605.

Yeary, K., S. Ounpraseuth, P. Moore, Z. Bursac, and P. Greene. 2012. “Religion, Social Capital, and Health.” *Review of Religious Research* 54(3), 331–347.

(p. 553) Yilmaz, O., and H. G. Bahçekapili. 2015. “When Science Replaces Religion: Science as a Secular Authority Bolsters Moral Sensitivity.” *PloS One* 10(9), e0137499.

Zell, A., and R. F. Baumeister. 2013. “How Religion Can Support Self-Control and Moral Behavior?” In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by R. F. Paloutzian and C. L. Park, 2nd ed., 498–518. New York: Guilford Press.

Zuckerman, P. 2014. *Living the Secular Life: New Answers to Old Questions*. New York: Penguin.

**Luke Galen**

Luke W. Galen is Associate Professor of Psychology at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. His main areas of research are psychology of religion and the secularity of nonreligious people. He coauthored The Nonreligious: Understanding Secular People and Societies with Phil Zuckerman and Frank Pasquale.

# Secularism and the Science of Well-Being

David Yaden, Jonathan Iwry, Emily Esfahani Smith, and James O. Pawelski

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.34

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter draws from emerging research areas in positive psychology, the study of well-being, to consider evidence-based recommendations helping to fill some of the psychological and existential gaps in secular society. It discusses the development of positive psychology and its shift toward a meaning-oriented conception of human well-being, as well as scientific findings about meaning and its role in a flourishing life. Further, it argues for the importance of the humanities, alongside the methods of science, in exploring subjective and personal aspects of meaning. The chapter also discusses the study of self-transcendent experiences and how they can provide profound joy and meaning while influencing the relationship between the self and the world at large.

Keywords: secularity, positive psychology, well-being, human flourishing, self-transcendent, humanities

THE world becomes more secular with each passing year. Variously defined, secularism refers to the separation of religion from the center of political, social, or personal life. The many benefits of secularism have been articulated by scientists and scholars. Some argue that the expansion of secular thought and policy has contributed to making this the most peaceful time in the history of our species and has helped foster unprecedented scientific, medical, and technological advances (Pinker 2011; Wright 2001). In addition to reducing religious violence, secular society enhances personal liberty, which is robustly associated with happiness (Diener and Tov 2007).

Despite the myriad benefits of secular society, many also describe the troubling consequences from the decline of traditional religion in community life. As traditional, ready-made systems of meaning become less available in modern society, people have grown less confident that they have all the answers or that their lives are valuable. Specifically, increasingly individualistic cultural trends have contributed to a decline in community connection and an increasingly prevalent sense that life has little meaning (Durkheim 1912; Haidt 2008). The World Values Survey shows a steady decrease in meaning, even in countries where wealth and happiness are increasing. We call this “the meaning gap.”

Can the meaning gap in secular life be filled? In this chapter, we draw from emerging research areas in positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000), the study of well-being, to consider evidence-based recommendations that might help to fill some of the psychological and existential gaps in secular society. We discuss the development of positive psychology and its shift toward a meaning-oriented conception of human well-being, as well as scientific findings about meaning and its role in a flourishing life. Further, we argue for the importance of the humanities, alongside the methods of science, in exploring subjective and personal aspects of meaning. We also discuss the study of self-transcendent experiences and how they can provide profound joy and meaning while influencing the relationship between the self and the world at large.

## (p. 555) Secularism

Although secularism is not necessarily responsible for this decline in meaning, secular thought thus far has largely been about the negation of religious influence. To the extent that secular movements have striven for new and substantial contributions to nonreligious life, most focus solely on ethics. Some argue that an important next step for secularism is to restore the joy and connection that religion at its best can provide. As secularism continues to shape modern life, new sources of fulfillment may complement or replace religiosity. Put simply, there is still room for a "positive secularism"—one that affirms well-being, rather than simply denying dogmatism, and that asks not just what we ethically owe one another but what we can do to enrich our lives together.

In the absence of meaningful structure and guidance, some might look for alternative ways of distracting themselves from existential anxieties, including superficial but alluring hedonic goals. Yet most of us desire more constructive lifestyles—a healthy, realistic engagement with our lives and the universe in which we live. It should be possible to create new pathways to meaning, cultivating a sense of belonging and purpose in everyday life. And while the search for meaning might be partly personal and philosophical, there is reason to believe that the study of human behavior and experience will yield tangible guidance for people of all backgrounds, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Secularism, in a broad sense, involves the separation of religion from political and legal institutions. Notably, secularism does not itself judge the validity of religious doctrines, though agnostics and atheists often take secular positions based on their deep skepticism toward religion. Secularism does not argue for the abolition of religion—only that faith-based organizations should not wield state power and that the freedom to hold, practice, and pursue all personal religious beliefs should be protected *equally* under law. Thus, secularism is not atheism, as some mistakenly believe; rather, it is most usefully understood as a concerted effort not only to protect the state from religion but also to protect religion from the state. Neither is secularism equivalent to communism, which has been intolerant of religion altogether. Additionally, secularism can also be thought of more broadly as a general reaction against the dominant role of organized religion in society.

Secularism has become a dominant force both politically and socially. It can be seen in the constitutions and policies of democratic countries (and other forms of government in some cases), in which citizens are free to observe their own religions while respecting their neighbors' right to do the same. Citizens and governments in secular societies approach questions of public welfare nonreligiously (at least in theory), basing their decisions on universal interests rather than on beliefs about divinity. Many of these countries have also experienced a shift away from religious culture, in the sense that no one religion or set of religious rituals is the explicit center of social life. In Scandinavia, for example, members of the nonreligious population still gather at churches to observe holidays that have transformed from religious to cultural traditions (Zuckerman 2012).

The influence of secularism can be also be found in the rise of naturalistic worldviews, which seek to understand and explain reality strictly in terms of natural forces, rather than through gods, souls, or miracles. Secular philosophers and scientists take empiricism and logic as their central methods and distance themselves from supernatural accounts. Some (p. 556) scientists identify themselves as religious in private life (Ecklund 2010) but, regardless of their private metaphysical beliefs, use reason and evidence to guide their work in the professional scientific community.

Many argue that the rise of secularism has brought clear and tangible advantages to human life. There are fewer religious wars, fewer atrocities committed in the name of gods, and less civic strife overall (Pinker 2011; Wright 2001). Regions where secularism is prevalent tend to have lower murder rates than those with widespread religious influence (Zuckerman 2012). Secular governments have become commonplace across the developed world, and while voters might no longer enjoy the comfort of having the particular values of their religious tradition dominate public life, they have less reason to fear religious coercion—by members of their faith or any other. In addition, developed countries reap the countless benefits of scientific and technological innovation. From the systematization of medicine to the origins of modern computing, the Scientific Revolution's emphasis on reason and evidence as sources of knowledge triggered an unprecedented and ongoing increase in both span and quality of life (Seligman 2004).

Secularism's political and scientific advancements, however, are not without their costs, such as the meaning gap, which was likely caused, at least in part, by the departure of religion from the center of people's lives. Although secular philosophers argue for nonreligious moral systems and for the importance of creating loving communities, and both important sources of meaning, it is hard to deny that giving up the readily accessible pathways provided by religion makes doing so a lot more challenging. The public forum is no longer brought together by singular visions of an absolute system of moral and social order, leading to what Weber (1918) described as a spirit of "disenchantment." Can secular society become "re-enchanted" with meaning and community connection? Can the meaning gap be closed?

# Meaning

What is the meaning of “meaning”? Because of its inherently subjective nature, “meaning” has always suffered from roundabout definitions (which is ironic, given how familiar and central it is to our personal lives and how often the term is used). Perhaps meaning is less a single category than a set of related concepts bearing a “family resemblance” (Wittgenstein 1953). In *Meanings of Life*, psychologist Roy Baumeister (1991) recognizes the diversity of definitions of meaning but ends up characterizing meaning as a connecting concept. Elsewhere he writes, “the essence of meaning is connection” (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002: 608). Meaning can connect a word to an idea, events in a story to one another, or an object to a deeper significance. In other words, meaning is about the relationships between things and people.

In an existential sense, meaning comes from a connection to something that lies beyond the self. In the words of Martin Seligman (2011), the founder of positive psychology, in the meaningful life, “you use your highest strengths and talents to belong to and serve something you believe is larger than the self” (p. iv). The more self-transcendent that “something” is, the more meaning it gives (Seligman 2011). For people leading meaningful lives, meaning comes from the knowledge that they have done something worthy with their lives and, therefore, that their lives matter (Stillman et al. 2009). For psychologists, the meaningful life has two chief characteristics: coherence and significance.

(p. 557) Meaning has come to refer to a form of well-being complementary to, but distinct from, hedonic happiness. While traditional notions of happiness depend on the satisfaction of needs and pleasure-based desires, meaning is associated with acts of kindness toward others, self-expression, and self-realization. Unlike hedonic pleasure, the pleasure of meaningful pursuits is long lasting and stems from the accomplishment of personal goals and realization of personal values. Meaning has more to do with how we see ourselves as individuals and members of communities than with merely pleasurable experiences; it taps into a combination of beliefs and powerful emotions, and it seems to require a self-awareness that mere pleasure does not.

Meaning is also fostered by communities (Wong 2013) and relationships (Stillman et al. 2009) in which people feel a sense of belonging. People affiliate with others not just out of personal interest but also because they identify with one another’s values and because they themselves want to feel valued and accepted. This is why researchers have found that the top sources of meaning in people’s lives are their relationships—with relationships to friends and families being especially paramount (Lambert et al. 2013). Meaning is shared both in the sense that people form communities based on what they consider meaningful and also in the sense that being part of that community feels meaningful in itself. Social groups depend greatly on their constituents’ ability to build a system of meaning that can foster collective identity, belonging, and motivation—a task to which religion is particularly well suited.

The spread of secularism has brought with it a rise in individualist thought and culture. On one hand, individualism generally contributes to greater personal freedom and emphasizes people's right to pursue their own well-being (Diener and Tov 2007). On the other hand, it can prioritize the values of personal fulfillment over those of family, community, and duty (Durkheim 1912; Haidt 2008). While secularism does not directly imply individualism, it does imply the removal of traditional social adhesives from public life. As religion becomes less prevalent, people feel less tied to absolute systems of morality and order. A world of increased personal freedom holds new possibilities and encourages individual ambition, and the commitment to community life and values loses their sacredness. The upside is an aversion to conformity; the downside is a reduced appreciation for selflessness.

Even worse, people might feel that they have nothing left to live for. Sociologist Emile Durkheim ([1897] 1951) observed that as societies grow increasingly individualistic, people become more likely to commit suicide. He attributed this tendency to "anomie," a condition in which social norms, moral guidance, and community bonds are largely absent. Durkheim's research has been confirmed by more modern empirical researchers, such as Eckersley and Dear (2002), who found that suicide among young people is associated with several markers of individualism, such as personal freedom and control—values often associated with secular societies. Other research by Oishi and Diener (2014) has found that poor countries where people reported high levels of meaning, as in many African nations, had low suicide rates, while those in countries with low levels of reported meaning, like many in western Europe, had high suicide rates. The researchers also found that poorer countries are more religious. "As society becomes wealthier," they write, "religion becomes less central to people's life. As religion becomes less central to people's life, more people lose a sense of meaning in life" (427).

This trend is hardly new. Public thinkers have been skeptical about the modern shift toward secular, individualist, industrial societies ever since its inception. When Friedrich Nietzsche ([1882] 2001) declared that "God is dead," he meant not that God had literally died (p. 558) but that the idea of God had lost its place as the primary fixture of the Western worldview. Jean-Paul Sartre ([1943] 1956) claimed that if humans were created without a creator, and thus without purpose, then we are "condemned to be free." Albert Camus (1955) explicitly discussed suicide in *The Myth of Sisyphus*; he compared the human condition to that of Sisyphus—a Greek mythical figure doomed to repeatedly roll a boulder up a mountain for eternity—and claimed that the absurdity and apparent pointlessness of existence makes suicide a not irrational response. Though not all were addressing religion directly, the point of these thinkers rings clear: our old structures of meaning and security are being overturned. As religion becomes less central to public life, people risk growing disillusioned with the apparent lack of order or meaning.

Religion can tap into seemingly universal aspects of the human condition—and can provide some accessible answers. It can give people a sense of significance and purpose (Koenig et al. 2001). It creates common ground between individuals and across communities. It can provide the impression of order and security both during and after earthly life,

as well as unconditional love by an omnipresent guardian. It makes the universe intelligible and welcoming and imbues everyday life with meaningful qualities. The challenge of secularism is finding a way to preserve or create meaning in a society that has lost its traditional means of doing so.

# Secular Meaning-Making

Proponents of secular society and culture argue that while existence might not have intrinsic meaning, that does not mean our lives are doomed to meaninglessness. Rather, it is up to individuals and communities to take ownership of their condition and create meaning. Even those who are religious in private life can benefit from the collective endeavor to create new meaning. Secular people adopt a variety of views and lifestyles in order to do so.

Some nonreligious people find meaning in, essentially, not being "duped" by religion. Such individuals consider themselves free from dogma, arguing that human life might indeed be meaningless and that they would rather confront it with dignity. This view is often hostile toward the religious and seems to treat the pursuit of meaning with an emphasis on personal pride over collaboration. At worst, this is a conceit, since individual atheists can be just as closed-minded and dogmatic in their beliefs. At best, it is merely a negative source of meaning—a consolation for not having something more robust to value. Most secular people would argue that there is a great deal more to aspire toward.

A more constructive approach involves a deep sense of wonder for the natural world as a source of meaning. Scientists often view their practice as a path along the journey to make sense of who and what we are. Similarly to the way that Boyle and Galileo considered science a method of deciphering God's voice, many scientists of the secular age, including the late Carl Sagan, see its potential for awe and believe that learning about the universe and its contents can bring meaning to our lives by helping us appreciate physical existence. Nature, they argue, is mysterious and enchanting enough.

Some thinkers have suggested that a nontheistic religion could provide more meaning and community connection in secular society. Auguste Comte (1851–54) attempted to develop a secular church—an institution with liturgy, holidays, and other rituals. This "Religion of (p. 559) Humanity" was meant to carry the structure of the Catholic Church into a secular context, providing followers with a source of meaning and community without requiring belief in a divine entity (though his religious aspirations were often met with ridicule, they did pave the way for more recent attempts at secular organizations). Author Alain de Botton (2012) expresses a similar vision in *Religion for Atheists*, suggesting that certain practices and rituals from organized religion can be applied to secular contexts in order to cultivate virtues such as meaning, wisdom, kindness, and community. While he offers generally insightful observations about organized religion and human nature, an urgent need for empirically validated interventions remains. A cross-cultural classification of practices and rituals from every major world religion is currently underway

through a collaborative project between the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center and Tsinghua University's Positive Psychology Center.

Some secular movements work explicitly to inspire meaning and purpose. The Ethical Culture movement, founded by Felix Adler, a disillusioned rabbi-in-training, in 1876, promotes the separation of morality from theology. The movement also endorses "deed not creed," supporting concrete acts of social activism over abstract philosophizing about the good. Similarly, the American Humanist Association, founded in 1941, advocates a nonreligious life stance and oversees educational and lobbying efforts for secular humanism, as well as engaging in social activism and legal representation for religious minorities.

Doing the right thing, however, is only one part of the challenge for a successful secular meaning system. While focusing on human morality and the intrinsic value of doing good might help to reduce the pragmatic and political costs of individualism, it does little to address the human desire to feel connected with others. Not only that, it also fails to supply the most elusive, subjective aspects that can come from religious faith: feelings of sanctity and transcendence.

# Evidence-Based Approaches to Meaning

Empirical methods have become a primary source of knowledge in developed cultures. Positive psychology provides an example of a scientific field that empirically evaluates concrete and practically applicable approaches to pursuing meaningful and happy lives. In a world with developed and still-developing methods of secular investigation, science offers exciting pathways for understanding and cultivating meaning in modern life.

Positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000), known broadly as the study of well-being, offers to meet the scientific challenge of Comte's positive philosophy. The body of research and scholarship produced by this field addresses a wide range of issues, including the unique characteristics of meaning and how it correlates with health and other aspects of well-being. Positive psychology might inspire interventions to increase sense of meaning in life for the religious and secular alike. Positive psychology emerged as a response to what some considered the field of psychology's overemphasis on pathology. It began in the late 1990s, when Martin Seligman, who was then the president of the American Psychological Association, founded a movement dedicated to the scientific study of human happiness. Though psychologist Abraham Maslow (1964) had conceived of "positive philosophy" decades earlier, Seligman insisted on a more quantitatively empirical approach. He and his (p. 560) colleagues believed that psychology had focused for too long on the negative aspects of the human experience—depression, deviance, neuroses, and so on—at the expense of humanity's more elevated features, such as positive emotions, meaning, engagement, and healthy relationships. If features such as these are valuable to us, then we should search for ways of attaining them, rather than just avoiding the things that plague us. Put simply, instead of only studying dysfunction, scientists ought also to study healthy functioning.

Seligman (2012) expanded the aim of positive psychology from happiness, as measured through life satisfaction, to well-being—a broader conception of the defining quality of a life well lived. While a holistic conception of well-being was part and parcel of positive psychology from the beginning, early researchers tended to focus on more hedonic aspects of "happiness." Gradually, researchers shifted their attention to more eudaimonic, meaning-based aspects of well-being. Philosophers, artists, scholars of the humanities, and day-to-day observers of everyday life assert the centrality of deeper, more satisfying virtues that cannot be reduced to hedonic pleasure (Pawelski and Moores 2013).

Mood and pleasure by themselves fail to account for most of what makes a life well lived, both empirically and culturally, and chasing after them is often futile. Neither do all of the things we consider worthwhile lead to obvious forms of happiness; some pursuits might even reduce our happiness for a time, depending on how we define the term. For example, taking care of a dying family member for months on end would cause most people anguish, yet most would agree that helping others, especially family, is worthwhile. Helping people to live well required expanding the psychology community's conception of the good life to include engagement, community, and other elevated qualities of well-being. This shift is apparent in more recent positive psychology research.

This distinction is characterized nicely by Deci and Ryan (2008) as the distinction between hedonic well-being on one hand and eudaimonic well-being on the other. Hedonic well-being covers moment-to-moment experiences of cheer and pleasure, while eudaimonic well-being is defined in terms of meaning, purpose, engagement, growth, and autonomy. Ryan and Deci made it clear, pointing to both empirical research and Greek sources such as Aristotle, that the good life goes beyond basic happiness. In order for people to lead whole and full lives, they must also experience eudaimonic well-being—that is, they must also find meaning and human connection in their lives.

In making the transition from happiness to well-being, Seligman (2012) identified five characteristics essential to well-being, all collected under the acronym PERMA. Positive emotion, the most obvious of the five, encompasses feelings of enjoyment and contentment—those that most immediately reflect the quality of one's life (Fredrickson 2001). Engagement refers to our ability to immerse ourselves in our actions, engage the world, and, to some extent, lose our self-awareness—a state of being epitomized in Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) notion of "flow." Relationships play a considerable role in well-being, as people build much of their lives around maintaining strong personal bonds with others (Reis and Gable 2003). Meaning is characterized here as being part of something larger than oneself and having a sense of purpose to guide our actions in worthwhile directions (Park 2010). Finally, accomplishment refers to our drive to better ourselves, complete our goals, and experience the self-affirmation of success (Linley and Joseph 2004). Seligman's definition of meaning here is somewhat particular. Depending on how one uses the term, "meaning" in its ordinary sense might include a wide range of experiences in which we feel a sense of connection or the general class of things that people consider (p. 561) most important. Seligman's characterization is useful to the extent that it inter-

acts with other elements of PERMA and allows psychologists to examine how these broader qualities factor into a eudaimonic life.

One instrument for studying meaning is Steger's Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al. 2006), which asks those being surveyed to rate how strongly they agree with a list of statements concerning meaning and purpose, such as "I understand my life's meaning" and "I am seeking a mission or purpose for my life." In recent years, empirical research on meaning and eudaimonic well-being has taken off. While research on meaning had already been underway (Wong 1998; Ryff 1989) prior to 2001, there was a flourishing of empirical research on meaning after 2001. Baumeister and his colleagues (2013), for example, did a longitudinal study trying to understand the difference between meaning and happiness and found that when the two forms of well-being are isolated, the meaningful life is associated with more selfless and giving behavior, while the happy life is more associated with self-interested behavior. Fredrickson et al. (2013) have found that eudaimonic well-being, unlike its hedonic counterpart, is more associated with health.

# Sources of Meaning

Psychologists are now on their way to understanding the building blocks of meaning. Steger et al (2006) argue that the benefits of meaning are numerous and extend across emotional, cognitive, and physiological levels of analysis. Huta and Ryan (2009) argue that both eudaimonia and hedonia play important roles in determining general well-being but that people who are more oriented toward meaningful lives experience greater well-being in the long term. Research has also found that a sense of belonging with regard to family and friends is a major source of meaning in life and that a strong sense of meaning and purpose at work—a calling—is correlated with job satisfaction, productivity, and well-being (Lambert et al. 2013; Wrzesniewski 2003; Yaden et al. 2015). Another pathway to meaning for secularists is through community involvement. This might include community service, political advocacy, or other forms of leadership; purposeful interaction; and giving (Morrow-Howell et al. 2003). Doing so would help secular people to be part of something larger than themselves, help them put their efforts to good use, and bring them into a community defined by shared values.

In public life, certain social structures can promote public institutions that counteract the saturating effects of hedonism and materialism (Galbraith 1958). This might include creating more opportunities and institutions for people to engage each other in meaningful ways, such as expanding community service initiatives and encouraging involvement in local leadership and advocacy. We could strive to generate what Robert Putnam (1995) calls "social capital," creating richer networks of interaction and emphasizing the "horizontal" ties with peers, friends, and family that expand the individual's sense of communal identity. Overall, the goal should be promoting the message that there is more to life than pleasure—or even one's own happiness—and giving greater emphasis to the value of community involvement. As positive psychology researchers continue to study how meaning works, including what causes it and common outcomes, ways of optimizing meaning

in secular society will become increasingly clear. Quantifying meaning might be difficult, but a science devoted to the (p. 562) careful analysis of subjective qualities like meaning can both improve the quality of our lives and lay a foundation for future research into the mind and human nature.

Science has much to offer by way of studying empirical aspects of human existence, but other avenues of understanding might evade its grasp. The firsthand qualities associated with meaning—how it feels and how it fits into broader worldviews—seem to be more accessible through personal, subjective methods of investigation. If we aim to understand meaning from the standpoint of the individual person, self-expression and the study of self-expression can provide equally powerful insights. By studying cultural artifacts associated with seeking meaning in life, the humanities offer a way to bridge the perspectives of science with the existential goal of understanding and even promoting fulfilling secular lives (Pawelski and Moores 2013).

Some believe that science and the humanities are necessarily at odds—even radically opposed to one another. C. P. Snow's (1959) infamous "Two Cultures" lecture, the "science wars" of the 1990s, and the increasing specialization of advanced knowledge have led to a popular impression of a standoff between scientists and scholars of the humanities. Science is stereotyped as either cold and oblivious to the meaningful qualities of human life or a prophet of progress among uninformed skeptics and luddites. The humanities, in turn, are stereotyped as either nonsensical rambling about cloudy concepts or the final bastion of meaning and humanity in a world of mad scientists and heartless computation. However, what might seem to many like an impenetrable divide is really just a caricature.

Evolutionary biologist E. O. Wilson's (1998) *Concilience* advocates the unification of different fields of investigation—including between the humanities and the natural and social sciences—to solve comprehensive problems relevant to human affairs. Stephen J. Gould (2003), in even more outspoken defense of the humanities, wrote in *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox* that the humanities need not be absorbed entirely into the sciences for them to cooperate and that the two disciplines might instead acknowledge each other as fellow travelers whose goals and methods are often coextensive. The humanities, like the sciences, could shift toward a renewed appreciation for questions of well-being, happiness, and the good life (Pawelski and Moores 2013). Like the sciences, the humanities deal extensively with difficult and often dismal elements of human life. In doing so, however, they have often treated eudaimonia as something to pathologize or ignore. Although many consider literature a source of comfort and personal growth, literary studies in particular have fallen into a tendency to approach texts with an air of suspicion—one that aims to cut through what many consider the deceptiveness of rhetoric and narrative in order to expose hidden realities, particularly those reflecting political motives.

For this reason, some might argue that literary study risks losing touch with a fundamental aspect of what makes literature valuable. Literature's potential for subjective investigation extends beyond suspicion and critique; it can be used to analyze how well-being manifests itself and relates to other aspects of human experience. Rather than focusing

strictly on attacking the negative, using the critical methods of literary studies and other disciplines in the humanities to interpret and analyze, eudaimonia can help us to better understand well-being and how to make it a stronger presence in personal and public life (Pawelski and Moores 2013). When reading a nineteenth-century poem, for example, a Marxist critic might analyze the text's implicit portrayal of class identity or false consciousness. A postcolonialist critic might analyze the narrator's imperialist rhetoric. A psychoanalytic critic might argue that the narrator's ostensible happiness is simply a manifestation of latent anxiety or (p. 563) self-directed guilt. While each of these suspicion-oriented lenses might be fruitful in its own right, none of them addresses the ways that well-being might be expressed or examined proactively in the text. Rather than continuing to rely on interpretations targeted toward illnesses and the sinister, scholars can add perspectives seeking to affirm the good. Perhaps it is time to shift the humanities' efforts toward studying those elements of personal expression that embody, to put it one way, our will to flourish.

To clarify the importance of a "eudaimonic turn" in the humanities, Pawelski (2016) offers a thought experiment: imagine that one was granted superhuman powers but then had to choose between the power to vanquish *threats* to well-being and the power to bring about *causes* of well-being. Eliminating violence, disease, and other active sources of despair would do a great deal of service, but doing so would not automatically bring about harmony, meaning, justice, or most of the other forces that make life valuable to begin with. If fostering the beneficial, on the other hand, would bring value to our lives and enhance well-being, it would also reduce much suffering a fortiori.

One particular advantage of the humanities is their ability to inform our formal approaches to increasing eudaimonia. Researchers, therapists, and other undertakers of communal improvement depend on preexisting notions of the good on which to base their work. Yet the terms we use today are understood quite differently than they were in times past. Intuitive though they might appear, our language and philosophical outlooks have evolved over millennia of use; "eudaimonia" meant something more spiritual and lasting to the Greeks than the meaning of the modern English "happiness" with which it is often equated. Studying the intellectual history of concepts such as happiness, well-being, and pleasure—as well as their interrelationships—can help us situate our understanding of these concepts and the ways in which we use them today, including as scientific constructs.

Perhaps secularists would benefit from strengthening the role of the humanities in public life. Promoting education in the humanities—alongside the sciences, of course—might do substantial good by way of acquainting students with questions and themes relevant to the good life and the meaning of their other pursuits. The hope is that young people will become familiar with concepts of well-being early in life and that eudaimonia will become a strong framework for how they think about themselves and interpret their cultural surroundings as they develop. Studying and discussing well-being among their peers would help to foster a community oriented toward questions of meaning, and while jadedness and resistance to the drudgery of school are sometimes an unfortunate fact about education in general, presenting these as issues of both intrinsic value and personal impor-

tance might generate a greater sense of purpose and motivation for students to engage the humanities. This emphasis on eudaimonia and culture could be extended to private life as well. Secular adults might turn to arts and letters to create greater meaning in life. Reading and the arts enable us to tap into perspectives beyond our own and incorporate the viewpoints of others into our identities; they are a substantial way of being part of something larger than ourselves. Book clubs, museum outings, and general involvement in groups that appreciate the arts can not only help to cultivate meaning but also bring people together in searching for meaning and provide a sense of community.

Promoting self-expression is also a promising direction to increase meaning through the humanities. One of the ways that communal interactions provide meaning is by enabling individuals to express themselves and reflect on their experiences and values with others; in increasingly individualistic societies, creative work gives people a powerful outlet. This (p. 564) could be applied both publicly—such as through workshops and programs for communal creative participation—and privately. Expressive writing, for instance, asks individuals to think about a personally significant or troubling issue and write their deepest feelings out in free form. Pennebaker (1997), for example, found that people who engaged in expressive writing considered the exercise personally meaningful and showed greater subsequent physical and mental health. Forms of self-expression like writing interventions can help people evaluate their priorities and reorient themselves toward other, more meaningful pursuits.

# Meaningful Experiences without Religion

Those interested in finding meaning outside of religion might take inspiration from experiences traditionally relegated to religious interpretations. Many experiences that include perceived unity or contact with the divine are more than mere beliefs—they *feel* like something. Sources across the humanities have long described experiences related to feelings of ecstasy, epiphany, and self-transcendence. The reality of these experiences has been explored through personal descriptions of these experiences in William James's (1902) classic *Varieties of Religious Experience* and established through empirical methods in anthropology, sociology, psychology, and neurology (Durkheim [1912] 1951; Hood et al. 2009; Newberg and d'Aquili 2000). Whether or not these experiences are divinely inspired, and despite the fact that some may contain pathological elements, they are often potent sources of meaning in life. These experiences are often counted alongside marriage and childbirth as among the most meaningful experiences in people's lives and are robustly associated with a number of other long-term positive outcomes (Griffiths 2006, 2008; Miller and C'de Baca 2001).

Such experiences come in a variety of forms that often differ significantly. The fact that they are grouped together, though, is not an accident; they tend to converge around several key aspects. Specifically, religious, spiritual, and mystical experiences (RSMEs) often involve feeling connected to the world, transcending one's sense of self, and meaningful feelings of awe, ecstasy, serenity, and other intensely positive states (Beauregard 2011;

Hood et al. 2001; Newberg and d'Aquili 2000). Some people even leave these experiences with a new sense of calling—a sense of purpose or directive has been revealed to them, whether by supernatural forces, subconscious epiphany, or conscious self-reflection (Yaden et al. 2015). RSMEs tend to have features relevant to one's preexisting belief system (Katz 1992), though some experiences seem to have broader, perhaps universal qualities (Hood et al. 2001). Even without believing in God, secular people often undergo experiences with self-transcendent, even mystical qualities, similar to those experienced in association with religion (Yaden et al. 2015b). People who meditate or take psychedelic drugs, such as LSD, psilocybin, DMT, or mescaline, sometimes report feeling at one with the world and with other people, as well as having intensely surreal and subjective experiences capable of profoundly altering fundamental categories of experience such as one's sense of space, time, self, or language (Yaden and Newberg 2014).

One particular type of experience has been formalized as "self-transcendent experiences" (Yaden et al. 2015b). These are temporary mental states of perceived unity, which can range from gentler, more routine experiences of "getting lost in the music" or awe to more intense and potentially transformative forms, such as peak or mystical experiences (Yaden et al., 2016). (p. 565) Among the varieties of STE—consisting of mindfulness, flow, self-transcendent positive emotions, awe, peak experiences, and mystical experiences—all are generally associated with well-being, and many have even been related to altruistic behavior. These aspects of so-called spirituality are well known, are well studied, and require no particular belief system to enjoy. Such experiences can certainly have positive and transformative effects. For example, people who had mystical experiences in laboratory settings by consuming psilocybin experienced increased positive mood and prosocial motivation for at least eighteen months afterwards. Two-thirds of these participants listed their experiences among the top five most meaningful experiences of their entire lives (Griffiths 2006, 2008).

Unfortunately, secular society offers little by way of encouraging self-transcendent experiences. Although people claim to have them rather frequently, they are often written off as theobabble, reduced to hallucination and pathology, and regarded with a mixture of confusion, suspicion, and disdain (Hay 1990). Secular society has often looked down on experiences described in mystical or spiritual terms. According to Ehrenreich, Conrad exemplifies this trend in his *Heart of Darkness*, which depicts fictional African natives working themselves into ecstasy through ritual dancing as European pilgrims watch in horror. To many, altered states of consciousness and the collective rituals used to evoke them come with primal, savage connotations, and those outside of such traditions might react to them with fear or feel above them. This trend manifests itself in contemporary society, Ehrenreich claims, and is apparent in the lack of public festivals and gatherings devoted to self-transcendent states. Yet, in her words, "if we possess the capacity for collective ecstasy, why do we so seldom put it to use" (2007: 20)?

Even prominent figures in atheist communities have begun bringing interest to experiences such as these. Atheist author Sam Harris (2014) discusses the potential of a secular spirituality in *Waking Up*, which chronicles self-transcendent experiences he had sponta-

neously, while meditating, and while using psychedelic drugs. Ehrenreich (2014), also an avowed atheist, details a number of personally significant spiritual experiences in *Living With a Wild God*. This phenomenon has led to an extension of the "spiritual but not religious" label to "mystical but not religious or spiritual," a view exemplified by Harris and Ehrenreich (Yaden et al. 2015). As more and more secularists recognize the subjective fact of self-transcendent and related experiences, skepticism and disregard are rapidly giving way to a call for understanding.

Preliminary research on the neurochemistry of religious and spiritual experiences has already begun to assemble a scientific account of how such experiences are neurobiologically mediated. For example, Newberg and colleagues (2001) conducted a neuroimaging study in which they asked advanced meditators and Franciscan nuns to induce peak feelings of unity through meditation and prayer. They found that brain regions associated with the representation of one's physical self decreased in activity during self-transcendent states. Other meditation studies have shown similar alterations of self-boundary-modeling regions (for a review, see Hozel et al. 2011). It is important to keep in mind that neurological explanations of spirituality cannot comment on the existence of a spiritual or religious realities; neurological data can only help explain how the brain mediates these experiences. The ultimate cause of such experiences is a philosophical question about which reasonable people might disagree, regardless of empirical findings. Nonetheless, coherent scientific accounts can help us understand at least certain aspects of religious and spiritual experiences, as well as how they might be enhanced and made more attainable in other, possibly secular settings.

(p. 566) Psychology, too, would benefit from taking these types of experiences seriously. Until now, such experiences have hardly been celebrated in the field. Freud ([1930] 2005) (reluctantly) acknowledged that the "oceanic feeling" described by those who have had experiences of oneness were impossible to ignore, but he struggled to find a suitable explanation beyond neurotic regressions to the womb. Despite the efforts of psychologists such as James, Jung, and Maslow, this pathological perspective has been the norm in mainstream psychology. Only the most recent editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* have acknowledged that such experiences can be positive (Lukoff et al. 1992). Perhaps the shift toward an interest in optimal functioning represented by positive psychology will change that. As well-being, prosocial behavior, and meaning continue to grow prominent in contemporary psychology, so do questions of how altered states of consciousness and aspects of everyday life enable people to access those virtues. Seligman (2004), for instance, defines meaning as belonging to and serving something beyond oneself. But how does one get beyond oneself in the first place? Might self-transcendent experiences offer us insight into how the boundary between self and world dissolves—and how we can learn to enhance this process for seekers interested in embracing the greater whole (see Yaden et al. 2015b)?

Research into varieties of these experiences offers intriguing possibilities for increasing the sense of meaning and community among secular people. Using meditation as an aid in self-reflection could be an effective way of harnessing STEs and their positive out-

comes. Secular people might consider using prayer-like visualization practices, mantras, and related techniques to make their attempts at self-transcendence more substantial—reaching out to their conception of the divine as a metaphorical conduit to feeling at one with the world. Psychedelic drugs offer similar possibilities, though they remain controversial. Future research will hopefully shed light on whether these and other substances might be safely harnessed to create or contribute to meaningful experiences, both on a personal and interpersonal level (Yaden and Newberg, 2014).

Particular types of meditation might serve different advantages. One, called loving-kindness/compassion meditation, might help secular people to feel closer to others. It asks practitioners to imagine the people they care most about, focus on their own feelings of benevolence toward those people, and gradually extend those feelings outward to encompass strangers, enemies, and, eventually, the entire world. This exercise has been shown to make practitioners more sensitive and responsive to the emotions of others and even shows changes in affective processing on the neural level (Lutz et al. 2008). Perhaps loving-kindness/compassion meditation could facilitate the growth of loving communities among secular people by helping individuals to dispose themselves to altruistic behavior, orient themselves toward the concerns of others, and foster a view of personal well-being in which other community members play an active role.

Secular people might also choose to participate in communities that make use of group rituals, particularly those that require synchrony. Engaging in cooperative patterns of action with other people has been shown to boost affiliation between participants (Hove and Risen 2009), and communal events such as nonreligious holidays and celebrations would provide places in which to bring people together through ritual, capitalizing on the social benefits of religion while letting secular people assemble for causes that they identify with. Some might even gain inspiration from the self-transcendent qualities of religious settings; attending religious events might have the added benefits of fostering unity between religious and nonreligious people, boosting feelings of belonging and, perhaps, paving the way (p. 567) for cross-cultural understanding and cooperation in ways that would themselves provide meaning for all involved.

# Conclusion

The departure from singular and dominant sources of religious authority has had significant effects on the public and private lives of many modern people, and many of these changes will likely continue into the future. While many of them are surely for the better, cultural secularism must also grapple with the loss of universally accessible sources of personal and shared meaning in everyday life—what we call *the meaning gap*. We have proposed some candidate pathways to closing the meaning gap in secular society. These methods involve the combined efforts of science and the humanities to inform our understanding of what meaning is and how to pursue it through functional, evidence-based practices in both private and public life.

This is *not* a call to overthrow individualism or replace it with a collectivist outlook. Any serious democratic society must decide how best to reconcile the goals of individual identity and freedom with the merits of collective belonging. It is a call to study ways in which secular society can be augmented with certain evidence-based ways of pursuing a purposeful, connected, and fulfilling existence. To this end, the study of psychology, health, the humanities, and related aspects of the human experience offer new and promising insights into how we might proceed. There is reason to believe that a eudaimonic turn in the culture of secularism will enhance human flourishing.

## Bibliography

Baumeister, R. F. 1991. *Meanings of Life*. New York: Guilford Press.

Baumeister, R. F., and K. D. Vohs. 2002. “The Pursuit of Meaningfulness in Life.” In *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C. R. Snyder and S. J. Lopez, 608–618. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baumeister, R. F., K. D. Vohs, J. L. Aaker, and E. N. Garbinsky. 2013. “Some Key Differences between a Happy Life and a Meaningful Life.” *Journal of Positive Psychology* 8(6), 505–516.

Beauregard, M. 2011. “Neuroscience and Spirituality: Findings and Consequences.” In *Neuroscience, Consciousness and Spirituality*, edited by H. Walach, S. Schmidt, and W. B. Jonas, 57–73. Dordrecht: Springer.

Camus, A. 1955. *The Myth of Sisyphus.* Translated by J. O’Brien. New York: Random House.

Comte, A. 1851–1854. *Système de Politique Positive*, 4 vols. Paris: Comte, Carilian-Goeury and Dalmont.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.* New York: Harper & Row.

De Botton, A. 2012. *Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer’s Guide to the Uses of Religion*. New York: Vintage.

Deci, E. L., and R. M. Ryan. 2008. “Hedonia, Eudaimonia, and Well-Being: An Introduction.” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 9(1), 1–11.

Diener, E., and W. Tov. 2007. “Subjective Well-Being and Peace.” *Journal of Social Issues* 63(2), 421–440.

(p. 568) Durkheim, E. 1897. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Translated by J. A. Spaulding and G. Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951.

Durkheim, E. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by J. Spaulding and G. Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951.

Eckersley, R., and K. Dear. 2002. “Cultural Correlates of Youth Suicide.” *Social Science and Medicine* 55(11), 1891–1904.

Ecklund, E. 2010. *Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ehrenreich, B. 2007. *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*. New York: Macmillan.

Ehrenreich, B. 2014. *Living with a Wild God: A Nonbeliever’s Search for the Truth about Everything*. New York: Twelve.

Fredrickson, B. L. 2001. “The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions.” *American Psychologist* 56(3), 218–226.

Fredrickson, B. L., K. M. Grewen, K. A. Coffey, S. B. Algoe, A. M. Firestine, J. M. G. Arevalo, J. Ma, and S. W. Cole. 2013. “A Functional Genomic Perspective on Human Well-Being.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 110(33), 13684–13689.

Freud, S. 1930. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Translated by J. Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 2005

Galbraith, J. K. 1958. *The Affluent Society*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gould, S. J. 2003. *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister’s Pox: Mending the Gap between Science and the Humanities*. New York: Random House.

Griffiths, R. R., W. A. Richards, M. W. Johnson, U. D. McCann, and R. Jesse. 2008. “Mystical-Type Experiences Occasioned by Psilocybin Mediate the Attribution of Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance 14 Months Later.” *Psychopharmacology* 22(6), 621–632.

Griffiths, R. R., W. A. Richards, U. McCann, and R. Jesse. 2006. “Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance.” *Psychopharmacology* 187(3), 268–283.

Haidt, J. 2008. “Morality.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3(1), 65–72.

Harris, S. 2014. *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Hay, D. 1990. *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts*. London: Mowbray.

Hood, R. W. Jr., N. Ghorbani, P. J. Watson, A. F. Ghramaleki, M. N. Bing, H. K. Davison, and W. P. Williamson. 2001. “Dimensions of the Mysticism Scale: Confirming the Three-Factor Structure in the United States and Iran.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40(4), 691–705.

Hood, R. W. Jr., P. C. Hill, and B. Spilka. 2009. *Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. New York: Guilford Press.

Hove, M. J., and J. L. Risen. 2009. "It's All in the Timing: Interpersonal Synchrony Increases Affiliation." *Social Cognition* 27(6), 949–960.

Hozel, B. K., J. Carmody, M. Vangel, C. Congleton, S. M. Yerramsetti, T. Gard, and S. W. Lazar. 2011. "Mindfulness Practice Leads to Increases in Regional Brain Grey Matter Density." *Psychiatry Research* 191(1), 36–43.

Huta, V., and R. M. Ryan. 2010. "Pursuing Pleasure or Virtue: The Differential and Overlapping Benefits of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 11(6), 735–762.

James, W. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Katz, S. T. (ed.). 1992. *Mysticism and Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Koenig, H., D. King, and V. B. Carson. 2012. *Handbook of Religion and Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(p. 569) Lambert, N. M., T. F. Stillman, J. A. Hicks, S. Kamble, R. F. Baumeister, and F. D. Fincham. 2013. "To Belong Is to Matter: Sense of Belonging Enhances Meaning in Life." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 39(11), 1418–1427.

Linley, P. A., and S. Joseph. (eds.). 2004. *Positive Psychology in Practice*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Lukoff, D., F. Lu, and R. Turner. 1992. "Toward a More Culturally Sensitive DSM–IV: Psychoreligious and Psychospiritual Problems." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 180(11), 673–682.

Lutz, A., J. Brefczynski-Lewis, T. Johnstone, and R. J. Davidson. 2008. "Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise." *PLoS ONE* 3(3), e1897.

Maslow, A. H. 1962. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand.

Miller, W. R., and J. C'de Baca. 2001. *Quantum Change: When Epiphanies and Sudden Insights Transform Ordinary Lives*. New York: Guilford Press.

Morrow-Howell, N., J. Hinterlong, P. A. Rozario, and F. Tang. 2003. "Effects of Volunteering on the Well-Being of Older Adults." *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 58(3), S137–S145.

Newberg, A., A. Alavi, M. Baime, M. Pourdehnad, J. Santanna, and E. d'Aquili. 2001. "The Measurement of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow during the Complex Cognitive Task of

Meditation: A Preliminary SPECT Study." *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging* 106, 113–122.

Newberg, A., and E. G. d'Aquili. 2000. "The Neuropsychology of Religious and Spiritual Experience." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7(11–12), 251–266.

Nietzsche, F. 1882. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Oishi, S., and E. Diener. 2014. "Residents of Poor Nations Have a Greater Sense of Meaning in Life than Residents of Wealthy Nations." *Psychological Science* 25(2), 422–430.

Park, C. L. 2010. "Making Sense of the Meaning Literature: An Integrative Review of Meaning Making and Its Effects on Adjustment to Stressful Life Events." *Psychological Bulletin* 136(2), 257–301.

Pawelski, J. O. 2016. Defining the 'Positive' in Positive Psychology: Part II. A Normative Analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology 11*, 357-365. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2015.1137628.

Pawelski, J. O., and D. J. Moores (eds.). 2013. *The Eudaimonic Turn: Well-Being in Literary Studies*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Pennebaker, J. W. 1997. "Writing about Emotional Experiences as a Therapeutic Process." *Psychological Science* 8(3), 162–166.

Pinker, S. 2011. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and its Causes*. New York: Penguin.

Putnam, R. D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6(1), 65–78.

Reis, H. T., and S. L. Gable. 2003. "Toward a Positive Psychology of Relationships." In *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*, edited by C. L. M. Keyes and J. Haidt, 129–159. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Ryff, C. D. 1989. "Happiness Is Everything, or Is It? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-Being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57(6), 1069–1081.

Sartre, J.-P. 1943. *Being and Nothingness.* Translated by Hazel Barnes. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956.

Seligman, M. E. 2004. *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Seligman, M. E. 2011. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. N.Y.: Vintage.

(p. 570) Seligman, M. E. 2012. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Seligman, M. E., and M. Csikszentmihalyi. 2000. "Positive Psychology: An Introduction." *American Psychology* 55(1), 5–14.

Snow, C. P. 1959. *The Two Cultures*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Steger, M. F., P. Frazier, S. Oishi, and M. Kaler. 2006. "The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the Presence of and Search for Meaning in Life." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 53(1), 80–93.

Stillman, T. F., R. F. Baumeister, N. M. Lambert, A. W. Crescioni, C. N. DeWall, and F. D. Fincham. 2009. "Alone and Without Purpose: Life Loses Meaning Following Social Exclusion." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45(4), 686–694.

Wilson, E. O. 1999. *Concilience: The Unity of Knowledge.* New York: Vintage.

Wittgenstein, L. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wong, P. T. 1998. "Implicit Theories of Meaningful Life and the Development of the Personal Meaning Profile (PMP)." In *The Human Quest for Meaning: A Handbook of Psychological Research and Clinical Applications*, edited by P. T. P. Wong and P. S. Fry, 111–140. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wong, P. T. (ed.). 2013. *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Applications*. London and New York: Routledge.

Wright, R. 2001. *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny.* New York: Vintage.

Wrzesniewski, A. 2003. "Finding Positive Meaning in Work." In *Positive Organizational Scholarship*, edited by K. Cameron and J. Dutton, 296–308. San Francisco, Calif.: Berrett-Koehler.

Yaden, D. B., J. Eichstaedt, H. Schwartz, M. Kern, K. Le Nguyen, N. Wintering, … and A. Newberg. 2016. "The Language of Ineffability: Linguistic Analysis of Mystical Experiences." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8 (3), 244–252.

Yaden, D. B., J. Iwry, K. Slack, J. Eichstaedt, Y. Zhoa, G. Vaillant, and A. Newberg. 2016. "The Overview Effect: Awe and Self-transcendent Experience in Space Flight." *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice* 3(1), 1–11.

Yaden, D. B., T. D. McCall, and J. H. Ellens (eds.). 2015. *Being Called: Scientific, Secular, and Sacred Perspectives.* New York: Praeger.

Yaden, D. B. & Newberg, A. B. 2014. "A New Means for Perennial Ends: Self-transcendent Experiences and Noninvasive Brain Stimulation." In *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances*, edited by J. H. Ellens, vol. 2, 303–324. New York: Praeger.

Zuckerman, P. 2012. “Contrasting Irreligious Orientation: Atheism and Secularity in the USA and Scandinavia.” *Approaching Religion* 2(1), 8–20.

**David Yaden**

David Yaden is a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. He works in the Positive Psychology Center, the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience, and he participates in research on the psychology and neuroscience of self-transcendent experiences. He also serves as a Humanist Chaplain at Rutgers University.

**Jonathan Iwry**

Jonathan Iwry is a research assistant in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Besides his academic research, he is an online contributor to About.com on public policy topics, and he writes a weekly column for The Daily Pennsylvanian on topics at the intersection of religion, politics, and public thought in American life.

**Emily Esfahani Smith**

Emily Esfahani Smith holds a master’s degree in applied positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. She resides in Washington, DC., where she writes about culture, relationships, and psychology for The Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, The New York Times, and other publications. She is the author of The Power of Meaning: Crafting a Life That Matters.

**James O. Pawelski**

James O. Pawelski, Positive Psychology Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA

# Secular Spirituality

Robert C. Fuller

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.35

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter pursues some questions about religiosity's intersections with contemporary secularity. Traditional religiosity persists in economically advanced nations, such as the United States. The nones, those who have abandoned religious affiliations, continue to hold various kinds of religious belief. In addition, forms of contemporary religiosity often embrace most of secularism's basic premises. Eight central attributes of secular spirituality can be identified: eclecticism, self-growth, relevance to life, self-direction, openness to wonder, authenticity beyond churches, metaphysical explanations, and communal and ecological morality. The persistence of both traditional and nontraditional forms of religiosity and spirituality should adjust the current popular views of secularism.

Keywords: religion, new age thought, secular spirituality, feminist spirituality, metaphysical spirituality, alternative medicine

THERE is widespread agreement about the distinctive characteristics of modern culture. Our era differs from earlier periods of human history largely because of the natural sciences, technological innovation, the social sciences, global/multicultural awareness, and the fluid nature of social relationships. All of these defining features of modern life have had profound consequences for the cultural status of religion.

Science focuses on the efficient, proximate causes of events and uses tightly controlled experimental protocols to arrive at publically verifiable knowledge. The sciences have thus progressively rendered the supernatural obsolete. Technology applies scientific discoveries to the tasks of everyday living, giving us ever-greater control over the vicissitudes of human existence. As a result, technology renders rituals invoking supernatural powers irrelevant to the practical affairs of everyday living. The social sciences have replaced theology as sources of guidance in our personal and collective lives. Educators, jurists, and public officials contemplate the nature of "the good person" or "the good society" on the basis of empirical knowledge rather than biblical counsel. Travel, global communication, and unprecedented social pluralism alert modern citizens to the power of social conditioning in shaping a person's moral or religious views. So, too, have the rapid mobility and anonymity of modern urban living hindered any one religious congregation's

ability to socialize individuals into a cohesive community. Even the breakdown of traditional family structures has progressively undermined the social base that had previously sustained religious affiliations (Eberstadt 2013). There is thus widespread agreement that the distinctive features of modern civilization inevitably weaken traditional religion's role in such public spheres as government, the judiciary, education, or commerce.

There is less agreement about whether secularism undermines religiosity altogether or simply alters its mode of expression. Most theoretical reflections about secularism highlight recent cultural changes in western Europe. Weekly church attendance in countries like France, Belgium, England, Denmark, and Finland has dropped to somewhere between 3 percent and 15 percent of the population. Those under the age of thirty are particularly likely to doubt the existence of a theistically conceived Supreme Being and to deem traditional religious beliefs irrelevant to life in the modern world. The educated citizenry in most western European countries thus exhibit the progressive loss of religious conviction predicted by most scholars of modern secularism. The case with the United States, however, has always been something of an anomaly. Polls continue to show that up to 38 percent of (p. 572) the population attends church on an average weekend and that up to 90 percent believe in at least some kind of Supreme Being. Canadians appear to occupy a cultural middle ground in that, varying by province, their reported religiosity is somewhere between the relatively high rates in the United States and the lower rates of western Europe.

Because the United States is the principal outlier among industrially advanced Western nations, it is the most instructive. A 2012 report from the Pew Research Center states that the United States is increasingly bimodal in its religiosity. Theologically moderate groups are declining rapidly. Theologically conservative groups (Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic) are either growing or at least holding steady in terms of membership. Yet also growing is the category of individuals with no religious affiliation, commonly referred to as "nones" (i.e., "none of the above"). In the 1950s, only 2 percent of the American population reported no religious affiliation. In the 1970s this number grew to about 7 percent. The Pew Study found that by 2012 nearly 20 percent reported no religious affiliation whatsoever—and that the demographic profiles of these nones indicates they are precisely the individuals who have been most fully influenced by the intellectual and social dimensions of secularism.

Surprisingly, nones are not uniformly irreligious. Only about 30 percent of this group considers itself agnostic or atheistic. Most report some degree of personal religiosity. Indeed, 64 percent of all nones claim to believe in God or a universal spirit with "absolute certainty." Yet they proclaim such belief with minimal relationship to an organized religious organization. It is important to note, too, that even many people who still claim some religious affiliation nonetheless rarely attend and share the same basic viewpoints as those who report "none." Thus even some of the "churched" population seems to have privately brokered comprises with the basic premises of modern secularity.

Scholars continue to ponder a number of questions about the cultural implications of secularism. What are we to make of the fact that traditional religiosity persists in economically advanced nations? Why does traditional religiosity persist particularly robustly in the United States? What are we to make of the nones who continue to hold various kinds of religious belief? How does the persistence of either traditional or nontraditional forms of religion alter our views of secularism?

# The Meaning of Secularity, Religiosity, and Spirituality

Secularism refers first and foremost to the decreasing conspicuousness of religion in everyday life. The natural and social sciences have displaced distinctively religious notions from our understanding of the causal forces that influence our lives. We no longer attribute weather or natural disasters to supernatural agents. Consider, for example, the vast extent to which secularism is reflected in modern culture's understanding of illness and medical treatment. The biblical era knew nothing about bacteria, viruses, or genetic disorders. Diseases were consequently thought be due to spirit possession, and, consequently, the Bible depicts healing in terms of exorcising these evil spirits from the body. Yet today virtually no educated people understand disease in such starkly supernatural terms. Even those who otherwise claim conservative religious beliefs have managed to navigate this cognitive gap and (p. 573) have found ways to embrace scientific conceptions of the causal forces affecting their physical well-being. It is interesting to note that traditional religion's capitulation to secular medical science has placed those who embrace alternative healing practices in cultural "no man's land" outside the realms of either scientific medicine or traditional religion.

Secularism is not restricted to descriptive understandings of causality. It also affects the way we think about values, ethics, and ideal lifestyles. Secularism frames conceptions about the meaning of life in nonreligious ways. References to transcendent realities, whether phrased in biblical terminology or in philosophical ideas along the lines of Plato's ream of ideal forms, have largely disappeared from academic vocabularies. Characteristic of modern secular thought are the philosophical positions articulated by existentialists such as Jean Paul Sartre in the mid-twentieth century and by deconstructionists such as Jacques Derrida or Michael Foucault in the later twentieth century. Sartre flat out denied the existence of any kind of transcendental "essences." He and other existentialists located meaning in terms of what finite creatures create out of their own historically relative existence. Deconstructionists offer a slightly different version of secular relativism. In their view "truths" of any kind—religious or scientific—are culturally created constructions that invariably mask the interests of social power. Both existentialism and deconstructionism are quintessentially modern philosophical positions insofar as they are devoid of references to the transcendent or supernatural. They embrace both ethical and cultural relativism, casting further suspicion on traditional religions' references to moral and theological absolutes.

The long-term consequences of secularism are not fully known. It is certain that religious affiliation in such economically developed regions as Japan, Australia, western Europe, and North America has continued to decline over the past century. Yet there are still sizable minorities (probably a majority in the United States) who still proclaim traditional religious beliefs and attend religious worship services on a regular basis. This persistence of traditional religion poses a challenge to traditional theories of secularism as inexorably leading to a postreligious society. It is, of course, still possible that secularism will eventually undermine the viability of religion. We may only be witnessing the slow pace by which ideas—no matter how intellectually obsolete—are eradicated from human culture. More probable is the judgment that most theories of secularization are anchored in assumptions that overestimate the cultural components of human thought or behavior and underestimate the biological components that predispose every generation of humans to religiosity (Fuller 2013). Newly emerging research shows that humans possess genetically evolved cognitive and emotional systems that readily give rise to religion. These systems, arising from the human genome, are not themselves affected by cultural change, making it highly unlikely that humans will ever inhabit fully secular cultures. To this extent secularism should not so much be expected to eradicate religiosity as alter the patterns in which religiosity is expressed.

The continued existence of traditional religion is a fascinating cultural phenomenon. Traditional religion, is, after all, inherently inimical to the basic features of modern secularism, and its persistence thus poses important questions. We might repeat that a more biologically nuanced understanding of human nature makes this persistence less mysterious. We might also repeat that even so-called traditional religion continues to change over time and these changes bear the impress of modern secularism. Only a tiny fraction of religious people, for example, disavow modern medical science in favor of starkly supernatural understandings of illness. And, too, many traditional religious institutions are dwindling due to their lack of a distinct geographical territory within which to socialize new members while (p. 574) others (e.g., megachurches) flourish as they adopt socializing practices more appropriate to geographically scattered clientele. A broader examination of the persistence of traditional religion is unfortunately outside the scope of this chapter.

Equally fascinating are those forms of contemporary religiosity that actually embrace most of secularism’s basic premises. Many people living in economically advanced nations accept the historically conditioned nature of all religious truth claims. That is, they know that the various world religions’ sacred texts express the historically and scientifically limited views of ancient societies. They understand that a person’s religious faith is an accident of birth. And they eschew supernatural conceptions of causality in favor of worldviews informed by modern science and technology. Yet even secular individuals still wonder at the mystery of cosmic creation. Many also wonder about why the universe has given rise to intelligent life, what happens at the moment of death, and how they might best live their lives in a way that somehow conforms to what is universal or permanent in things. These people are thus prone to displaying some version of what Peter Van Ness terms “secular spirituality.” In his edited volume exploring this concept, Van Ness notes that “secular spirituality reflects an attempt to locate optimal human experience within a

nonreligious context of existential and cosmic meaning" (1996: 7). Van Ness's point is that there are millions of people across the globe who seek "existential and cosmic meaning" even though they otherwise embrace the basic features of modern secularity. It is important to note, however, that some who seek existential and cosmic meaning do so in a wholly secular, nonreligious way. Yet others do so in ways that, no matter how distanced from traditional religious considerations, are unmistakably religious or metaphysical.

The very term "secular spirituality" reflects the recent tendency to distinguish between the words religion/religious and spiritual/spirituality. The words have historically been synonymous. They both refer to the various ways that humanity has believed in the existence of supernatural beings or a supernatural order of things and organized their lives accordingly. Distinctive to what might variously be called religion or spirituality is what William James described as "the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto." ([1902] 1985: 51) Not every spiritual or religious system understands this "unseen order" in the same way. Some versions of religion have conceptualized the supernatural in impersonal terms, while most versions have thought of supernatural beings in essentially anthropomorphic terms. Nor do religious or spiritual systems need to agree about what beliefs and practices enable humanity to "harmoniously adjust ourselves thereto." Some versions of religion or spirituality have emphasized obedience to moral codes. Others have emphasized ritualized worship to facilitate union with a higher reality or being. Thus even though there have been vast differences in thought or practice, we have until recently used the words "religious" and "spiritual" interchangeably to refer to people's efforts to seek their supreme good by adjusting themselves to an unseen order of things.

Secularism has had discernible effects on the way citizens of developed nations approach topics like "optimal human experience" or "existential and cosmic meaning." The combined effect of the natural and social sciences, technology, and cultural pluralism is to undermine confidence that any one religious tradition has a monopoly on truth. Educated citizens in these nations cannot in good intellectual conscience embrace traditional religions' conceptions of any "unseen order" or the assured efficacy of any preset practices for harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto. Yet, as we have seen, this has not meant that people today are (p. 575) fundamentally different than people in any other era in seeking existential or cosmic meaning. For this reason, they often consider themselves to still be spiritual persons even though they are both cognitively and socially estranged from established religious traditions. Considered as a collective group separate from people who are traditionally religious or fully nonreligious/secular, these individuals might thus be considered a distinct third group that could be categorized as "spiritual but not religious" (Fuller 2001). The word "spiritual" here refers to the widespread human desire to seek existential and cosmic meaning by adjusting ourselves to some kind of unseen order. Being religious in this new usage is therefore a subset of the broader category of spirituality. Religiousness pertains to the doctrines and rituals of a specific historical tradition. Being religious means conforming to a specific tradition of conceptualizing life's "unseen order" and of engaging in practices that "harmoniously adjust ourselves thereto." A principal effect of secularism is thus its long-term consequence of decoupling spiri-

tuality in the broader sense from the traditional religious systems that had previously channeled most individuals' efforts to understand or adjust themselves to an unseen order.

Sociologist Robert Wuthnow provided one of the clearest descriptions of secular spirituality. Concentrating on the United States since the 1950s, Wuthnow chronicles the process whereby "seekers" gradually separate themselves from "dwellers." Religious dwellers are those who relate to the sacred through religious traditions and communities. In contrast, seekers relate to the sacred beyond the boundaries of organized religion. According to Wuthnow,

> a spirituality of seeking emphasizes negotiation: individuals search for sacred moments that reinforce their conviction that the divine exists, but these moments are fleeting; rather than knowing the territory, people explore new spiritual vistas, and they may have to negotiate among complex and confusing meanings of spirituality. (1998: 4)

There is, then, something fluid or even amorphous about the kinds of spiritual seeking distinctive to otherwise secular individuals. Psychologist Daniel Batson and his colleagues have even developed a scale that measures the degree to which modern individuals might approach spirituality while simultaneously embracing the basic features of modern secularity. Batson et al. (1993) propose the existence of what he calls a "Quest orientation" that displays a way of being religious displaying "complexity, doubt, and tentativeness" and "openness to change."

Not only does traditional religion persist into the twenty-first century, but some kinds of spirituality actually seem to flourish in otherwise secular societies. Understanding the full meaning and import of secularism must therefore include understanding what is variously labeled "seeker spirituality," the "quest orientation," or ways of being "spiritual but not religious."

# Defining Attributes of Secular Spirituality

When Friedrich Nietzsche in 1882 proclaimed that "God is dead," he did so as a philosopher who simultaneously championed humanity's inherent capacities for self-realization. Yet when radical theologian Thomas Altizer proclaimed the death of God in 1966, he was also (p. 576) making a sociological observation. "We must realize," Altizer observed, "that the death of God is an historical event, that God has died in our cosmos, in our history, in our *Existenz*" (Altizer and Hamilton 1966: 11). About the same year social theorists Herman Kahn and Anthony Wiener concurred, noting irreversible trends rendering Western culture "empirical, this-worldly, secular, humanistic, pragmatic, utilitarian, contractual, epicurean or hedonistic, and the like" (1967: 7). Fellow social theorists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1966) also observed that religion, understood to be a socially constructed conception of the world, loses its plausibility when the social structures that originally generated these conceptions dissolve. Scholars from disciplines across the

academy agreed that the social and cultural bases of traditional religion were progressively dissolving in favor of secular understandings.

Among the first social scientists to note the limitations of secularism both as a theory and as a historical reality was Peter Berger. Berger conceded that modern secularism made traditional religion both intellectually and culturally untenable. He noted, however, that there are really three basic ways one might go about constructing normative visions of the meaning and significance of human life. The first is what he called the "deductive possibility." The deductive approach to questions of meaning is the defining trait of traditional religion. Traditional religion accepts the authority of its scriptures and institutions. It then reasons deductively about meaning, morality, and truth. Berger concurred with the scholarly consensus that secularism had rendered both an intellectual and social deathblow to the continued viability of this deductive approach to religion. Yet Berger did not follow most social scientists in concluding that the demise of traditional, deductive religion mandates adopting the "reductive possibility" that characterizes nonreligious humanism. Secularism reduces all human thought to the natural and historical factors from which it arises. Secularism thus contends that humanity's religious beliefs can be traced back to humanity's own social and psychological natures. Berger pointed out that a secular theory "must, by its own logic, view religion as a human projection, and by the same logic can have nothing to say about the possibility that this projection may refer to something other than the being of its projector" (1969: 180). But this is where Berger flipped the secular social sciences on their head. He opened up a new possibility for approaching religion by suggesting that "humans project ultimate meanings into reality because that reality is, indeed, ultimately meaningful, and because our own being (the empirical ground of these projections) contains and intends these same ultimate meanings" (180). His point is that humans believe in sacred things because they belong to a universe that is itself ultimately sacred.

Berger rejected both the deductive and reductive approaches to thinking about the universe. He proposed instead what he termed the "inductive possibility." In doing this Berger aligned himself with the strategy adopted by Friedrich Schleiermacher who defended religion against Enlightenment-inspired rationalists in the early nineteenth century. Schleiermacher maintained that experience, not doctrine, is the core of religion. Schleiermacher argued that religion stands or falls on the existence of humanity's recurring "feeling of absolute dependence." By this Schleiermacher meant those unique experiences in which humanity, at a preverbal level, is afforded rare insight into the ontological gulf separating creation from the creator, the finite from the infinite, the secular from the sacred, and preliminary dependence from absolute dependence. Berger rephrased Schleiermacher by suggesting that religion arises out of a *sui generis* mode of human (p. 577) experience he referred to as "signals of transcendence." Berger maintained that human experience is replete with "signs and intimations of the infinite even in the most natural and common events. … experiences in which a metahuman reality is injected into human life" (1979: 119, 48). Berger's point was that such commonly recurring experiences furnish religion with its own empirical data. This empirical data can then be inductively as-

sembled into something like a science of humanity's relationship to an unseen, transcendent order of things.

Berger argued that the inductive approach to religion is both intellectually and culturally viable even in an otherwise secular world. The kind of approach to religion envisioned by Berger accommodates to secular intellectual standards. In so doing it simultaneously robs religion of its traditional dogmatic certainty and it claims to absolute truth. Writing as both a social scientist and an amateur theologian, Berger believed it possible to develop a cosecular, coscientific form of religiosity that is open-minded and flexible, revising its formulations in the light of new experience. Berger suggested that "those who have truly encountered the 'reality of the unseen' can *afford* the mellowness of liberality, both in their lives and in their thinking" (1979: 142).

Berger was picking up on themes long-grown in liberal Protestantism. Writing just a decade or two before Berger, theologian Paul Tillich found himself unable to affirm traditional biblical doctrines. Tillich could not, for example, affirm belief in an anthropomorphically conceived Supreme Being and instead referred to God in such impersonal terminology as "the ultimate source and ground of being." Tillich went even further by arguing that authentic religiosity is not restricted to religious institutions. He believed that religion is not a separate department of human existence but rather the "dimension of depth" in any and all departments of human existence. In Tillich's way of thinking, anyone who is motivated by ultimate rather than preliminary concerns is distinctively religious, even when they do so through such cultural activities as science, art, education, social work, or medical care. Tillich's ideas resonated with those found in many popular psychologists such as William James and Abraham Maslow. James and Maslow reached millions of college-educated individuals with their psychologically phrased belief that religion is not principally doctrinal or institutional. Both instead located the core of religion in the individual's own private experience of something "more." Theological doctrines and conventional religious beliefs were to them but secondary distortions of personal experiences that are fundamentally ineffable. The implication was that organized religions are the product of historical and cultural conditions and themselves, not the real essence of mature spirituality.

Scholarly writers such as Berger, Tillich, James, and Maslow were simultaneously creatures and creators of today's secular spirituality. They rank among the more scholarly voices associated with the kinds of spirituality we find in both Europe and North America among those who have no formal religious affiliation. Thus, even though traditional religion continues to have less sociocultural salience than it did just five decades ago, there is nonetheless a sustained viability for more personalized deistic, panentheistic, and eclectic spiritual outlooks (Warner 2010).

It is difficult to generalize about the personal spirituality of those who have no religious affiliation. Some have only the faintest interest in the "big questions" surrounding human existence. Others are motivated by their unmet needs to read a wide range of books about alternative spirituality or to actively seek out and attend lectures or workshops. It

seems (p. 578) safe, however, to make these initial generalizations about modern secular spirituality. Those drawn to secularized forms of spirituality:

**1.** Are deliberately eclectic. They display what historian Catherine Albanese (2007) calls “combinativeness” whereby they personally combine ideas and practices that are not formally or historically connected.
**2.** Tend to reject the Western conception that sin (i.e., disobedience to a Supreme Being’s commandments) is the principal spiritual problem confronting humanity. Affirming the self’s capacity for growth and creative expression, they focus more on overcoming humanity’s limited self-awareness.
**3.** Do not primarily think about spirituality in terms of the afterlife or even in terms of God. Instead, they expect spirituality to enhance the here and now of this life. They value religion largely to the degree that it is relevant to humanity’s mental, physical, and even economic well-being.
**4.** Consider it not just their right, but even their duty, to establish their own criteria for assessing the merits of religious beliefs or practices. Much like the Buddha counseled centuries before Jesus, they are determined to be “lamps unto themselves.”
**5.** Do not primarily think about religion in terms of truth. Instead of expecting religion to be about truth in the sense that mathematics or science are about truth, they expect religion to open up their sensibilities for hope, mystery, and wonder.
**6.** Distrust institutional religion, which they typically think of as the enemy of authentic spirituality.
**7.** Are surprisingly interested in metaphysical conceptions of life. Even though they have rejected biblically phrased supernaturalism (e.g., spirit beings who reside “up there,” miracles understood as divine intervention), they are nonetheless motivated to investigate the possibility of “higher” or “ultimate” dimensions of reality that might hold the secret to our mental, physical, and even economic well-being.
**8.** Do not understand morality in terms of obeying a male Supreme Being but instead think of morality in terms of actions that enable all living beings to live, live well, and express their full potentials. Concern for social justice and ecological sustainability typically replaces traditional concern for religious piety.

# Varieties of Secular Spirituality

Most humans throughout history have acquired their religious convictions and affiliations through ordinary socialization processes. There have, of course, always been individual differences about the personal salience of religion even within families owing to some combination of idiosyncratic experiences or differing genetic predispositions. Nonetheless, to a large extent *what* a person believes has largely been a function of upbringing. Yet secularism disrupts the ease with which religious congregations can effectively socialize new generations, leading both to increased levels of disaffiliation and to wholly unprecedented levels of “spiritual niche picking.”

There is as yet no single model explaining the kinds of spirituality found among citizens in developed nations. One theoretical model known as “rational choice theory” assumes that religion is like all other commodities and that in an open marketplace individuals will pick religious systems that seem mostly likely to maximize their personal or family fitness (Finke and Stark 1992, 2000). (p. 579) A second theoretical approach highlights the role that bodily and genetic predisposition play in guiding individual niche selection of spiritual systems (Fuller 2013). Both of these approaches comport well with the little bits of demographic information we have about individuals most likely to become involved in secularized forms of spirituality. Those attracted to secular spirituality are more likely than their traditionally religious counterparts to have a college education, to belong to a white-collar profession, to be liberal in their political views, to have parents who attended church less frequently, and to be more independent in the sense of having weaker social relationships (Roof 1993; Zinnbauer et al. 1997). We also know that they score lower on scales of authoritarianism (a personality complex defined in terms of readiness to submit to authority, inclination to display conventional behavior, and distrust of outsiders), lower on need for cognitive closure, higher on the personality trait known as openness to experience, and more comfortable with cognitive complexity. These socioeconomic and psychological variables surely account for some of the spiritual niche-picking observed in contemporary secular spirituality.

Seekers can choose from a wide array of secular spiritualities. They range from worldviews nearly devoid of anything one might consider overtly religious to those that are overtly metaphysical (i.e., based on belief in the causal relevance of more-than-physical realities or energies). One example of a secular spirituality with muted religiosity is what philosopher Robert Solomon (2002) calls “spirituality for the skeptic.” Solomon proposes a fully naturalized conception of spirituality based on a passionate concern for the here-and-now that demands actively engaging others. It is possible, Solomon argues, to view life as a gift and to sustain a cosmic trust in life without adopting supernatural perspectives. Other examples of secular spiritualities without metaphysical overtones are passionate devotion to such this-worldly causes as social justice and environmental protection.

Most advocates of this-worldly causes such as social justice or environmental protection believe that there is something precious or even sacred about life itself. Trying to protect human or natural life thus becomes what Paul Tillich terms an “ultimate concern.” Advocates for gender, racial, social class, or environmental issues believe they are identifying specific domains that determine whether humans do or do not accord their lives with what is ultimate in the grand scheme of things. Some radical ecologists, for example, adopt the notion of Earth as a living goddess, Gaia, to highlight humanity’s connection with an innately sacred web of life. For this reason Peter Van Ness’s (1996) edited volume on secular spirituality includes essays on “Social Justice Struggle,” “Ecological Activism,” “Naturalistic Recreations,” and even “Sports.” All represent arenas of life that provide opportunities for discarding a utilitarian, means-end orientation to life and instead adopting a mode of personal being that conforms to what is intrinsically meaningful.

Other forms of secular spirituality are more overtly metaphysical. Seekers have available to them a host of ready-made metaphysical systems (introductions to alternative spiritualities and influences on modern secular spirituality are included in the bibliography). These alternative spiritualities differ from social justice advocacy or ecological activism in that they are predicated on overtly metaphysical understandings of reality. That is, metaphysical philosophies affirm the existence of causal energies undetected by conventional science. They believe that, under the right conditions, these energies can flow into and exert salutary effects in the natural universe (including the human mind and body). From a cultural perspective it is important to note that adherents of these metaphysical philosophies have rejected biblical supernaturalism with its associated beliefs in a theistically conceived Supreme Being, miracles, and the sin-produced gulf separating humanity from the divine. Metaphysical (p. 580) religion believes the universe to be thoroughly lawful. It claims that there is a fundamental correspondence between the various levels or dimensions of the universe, meaning that the laws operating on any one dimension of life (physical or metaphysical) have their parallels on every other level. For this reason, metaphysical philosophies consider themselves to be scientific insofar as they believe that we can investigate and then apply the lawful principles governing our connection with "higher" dimensions of the universe. Metaphysical systems also assert that everyone is free to adopt and then later revise hypotheses about how we best align ourselves with higher spiritual realities. Questioning is thus valued more than obedience. Change, growth, and progress is preferred over steadfast adherence to fixed ideas. In short, metaphysical religion naturally attracts individuals with a quest or seeker orientation.

Historian Sydney Ahlstrom characterized these metaphysical forms of secular spirituality as differing expressions of "harmonial religion." Ahlstrom explained that harmonial religion "encompasses those forms of piety and belief in which spiritual composure, physical health, and even economic well-being are understood to flow from a person's rapport with the cosmos" (1972: 1019). Ahlstrom's notion of harmonial religion succinctly captures metaphysical religion's dual commitment to (1) the idea of "correspondence" affirming that the physical and nonphysical dimensions of the universe are intimately connected with one another and (2) that, under the right conditions, there is an automatic "influx" or inflow of spiritual energies from higher dimensions automatically into lower dimensions. It follows that any physical or psychological technique establishing proper correspondence with higher metaphysical dimensions will facilitate the inflow of powerful causal energies capable of promoting prosperity in all areas of human life. This simple formula unites a wide array of secular spiritualities that might be categorized as Eastern mysticism, human potential psychologies, spiritualism, neopaganism, parapsychology, and holistic healing systems. People interested in any one of these systems might not be interested in the others. More commonly, however, they explore across boundaries and mingle the different vocabularies and practices in highly eclectic ways. As Ahlstrom observed, harmonial religion "is a vast and highly diffuse religious impulse that cuts across all the normal lines of religious division." And, noting that harmonial religion also appeals to many who keep formal connections with institutional religion but nonetheless adopt a

seeker outlook, he adds that it “often shapes the inner meaning of the church life to which people formally commit themselves” (1972: 1020).

A few examples of metaphysical or harmonial spirituality are instructive. Westerners who find biblical religion untenable have been attracted to Asian religious beliefs and practices for more than a century. Both Buddhism (especially early Buddhist thought and Zen Buddhism) and Daoism catch the attention of those hoping to conceptualize optimal human experience within a nonreligious context of existential and cosmic meaning. Neither Buddhism nor Daoism require the kinds of theistic or supernatural beliefs that have lost relevance to many educated citizens of developed nations. They nonetheless provide inspiring conception of Nirvana, the Dao, or each person’s indwelling Buddha Nature that are sufficiently vague to be grafted onto worldviews ranging from wholly secular to overtly metaphysical. Zen Buddhism’s emphasis on attaining states of mind that subvert the subject-object structure of everyday rationality is particularly appealing to those who seek a “context of existential and cosmic meaning” while retaining a suspicious stance toward any and all forms of supernatural mysticism. Many who today avidly embrace Buddhist mindfulness exercises do so hoping to identify modes of human existence that are innately or intrinsically meaningful without requiring them to embrace biblical cosmology.

(p. 581) The majority of those who investigate Asian religions do so with a more pronounced harmonial agenda. Beginning with Emerson and Thoreau, Westerners have approached Eastern traditions with a host of implicit metaphysical assumptions. Emerson, for example, drew attention to how Hindu texts such as the Upanishads succinctly explain “correspondence” and “influx.” The Hindu phrase “That art Thou” reinforced Emerson’s conviction that our true self (the soul, or Atman) is forever connected with the Universal Soul (Brahman). Emerson’s Transcendentalism taught that by using physical and psychological techniques such as those described in yoga, each of us can open ourselves to the inflow of divine energy and wisdom. In this way Eastern religions provided exciting new vocabularies and practices through which otherwise secular-leaning individuals might conceptualize god in impersonal terms, affirm the inherent worth of the self, avoid commitment to institutions deemed irrelevant to modern life, and nonetheless sustain belief that spiritual composure and worldly well-being are available to all who establish inner rapport with the higher reaches of the universe.

It is difficult to know how many citizens of developed nations have seriously engaged Eastern religious philosophies or consciously appropriated any of their teachings. Terms such as *aura, chakras, qi*, and *feng shui* have all made their way into the everyday vocabulary of educated Westerners. Nearly all of these terms suggest that there are nonphysical dimensions to the universe, and, under the right conditions, we can avail ourselves of the energies that emanate from these nonphysical dimensions. Citizens of developed nations attend yoga classes, engage in energy-enhancing exercises such as qi gong, or attend workshops on mindfulness meditation. A recent search of books in print in the United States revealed over sixty with the word “Daoism” in the title and almost two hundred with the word “Zen.” Books with titles such as *The Tao of Management* and *The Zen of*

*Running* have tried to apply Eastern perspectives to almost every dimension of human life. Some of these are surely whimsical. But the fact remains that interest in nonbiblical religious ideas has steadily increased over the past two generations.

A final perspective on the role of Eastern religious philosophies in providing vocabularies for secular spirituality arises from the observation that approximately 800,000 Euro-Americans consider themselves to be Buddhist converts (this is not including "night-stand" or "coffee-table" Buddhists who occasionally read books about Buddhism but do so in wholly idiosyncratic ways). Convert Buddhists are typically well educated, white, and middle class. Their involvement with Buddhism differs from Asian-American Buddhists. Serious interest in Buddhism or any other Eastern religion entails a person's break from his or her family's traditional religious affiliation. And, whereas Asian American expressions of Buddhism tend to be integrated into both family and community life, convert Buddhists more typically practice Buddhism as individuals. Their involvement in Buddhism is thus more apt to express a personal search for fulfillment. It is also apparent that Westernized versions of Eastern traditions depart from their Asian origins in several ways. They place more emphasis on meditation and personal experience rather than group ritual; they are more democratic and antiauthoritarian, give more parity to women, encourage social action, and welcome Western psychology as useful in explain Eastern religions' goals of self-transformation. Religious studies scholar Peter Gregory has noted that, at least in the case of Buddhism, Americans justify their interest in Eastern religion ideas "in terms of values that are thought of as 'American'—such as self-realization, freedom, transforming relationships, getting in touch with one's experience, living more fully in the moment or the world, healing, and so forth" (2001: 20).

(p. 582) A second genre of secular spiritualities is the vast array of psychologies touting the cultivation of human potentials. Psychology might at first seem to represent the progressive secularization of Western thought about the self. Yet if we shift attention from the "supply side" of psychology (i.e., scholars in academic institutions conducting research according to rigorous scientific protocol) to the "demand side" (i.e., popular reading audiences who consume psychology by grafting ideas onto their own stock of assumptions about mind or self), it becomes clear that psychological concepts provide a ready-made vocabulary for secular spirituality. Religious or spiritual overtones could be heard in many seemingly secular psychological systems (Ross 1972; Fuller 1986; Heinze 2005). From the New Thought movement of the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century's humanistic psychology to today's positive psychology, there has been a steady stream of psychologically phrased regimens aimed at releasing humanity's inner potentials. Most alert us to the creative powers of the unconscious mind. Some of these references to the powers of the unconscious mind are not overtly metaphysical and instead focus solely on the mind's deeper reservoirs of environment-transcending impulses. The majority, however, hearken back to Ralph Waldo Emerson's notion that the unconscious mind is the portal through which receptive individuals might avail themselves of an instreaming metaphysical energy. Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Carl Jung, Viktor Frankl, M. Scott Peck, Norman Vincent Peale, James Redfield, and Rhonda Byrne are but a few

of those who have successfully articulated a psychologically phrased spirituality well-suited to the contours of modern secular culture.

Alternative medical systems constitute yet a third genre of secular spirituality. Labeling a disease is a profoundly cultural activity. It reveals cultural beliefs concerning the causal source of human suffering. Before the Scientific Revolution, religion exerted powerful influence over popular understandings of disease and medical treatment. The church focused on moral and spiritual reasons why humans might find themselves estranged from God's grace. Diseases were thought to be due to personal sin or the phenomenon of spirit possession. Appropriate treatments consequently included petitionary prayer, confession, or exorcism. Medical science emerged by repudiating this worldview, predicating its treatments on the belief that disease is caused by physical or material factors. The impressive advances made by medical science gradually pushed religious explanations to the far fringes of intellectual cultural respectability. Western religious institutions have had little choice but to concede the realm of medicine to secular science. True, there are still some religious sects that focus on supernatural healing. Yet the educated citizenry of developed nations have been comfortable with a clear-cut division of labor whereby scientific medicine assumes responsibility for the cure of our physical bodies while traditional churches minister to those who are interested in the cure of their souls.

The continued presence of alternative medical systems suggests that a sizable number of people in secular societies still explore beliefs that do not quite fit into conventional science or conventional religion. Not every system of alternative medicine has a spiritual dimension. For example, nutritional and exercise therapies usually seek to strengthen the body's own recuperative abilities and rarely make references to metaphysical energies. Many massage and breathing systems likewise make no claims concerning extrasomatic forces. Yet alternative systems find themselves labeled "unorthodox" precisely to the degree that they propound worldviews different from the one underlying scientific medicine. Their healing techniques are frequently predicated on the belief that under certain condition more-than-worldly energies enter into, and exert sanative influences on, the human body. Alternative (p. 583) medical systems consequently initiate patients into a religiously charged interpretation of reality (albeit one very different from the theology of traditional religious institutions).

Beginning with mesmerism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, alternative medical systems have proclaimed the existence of metaphysical energies not detected by conventional scientific methods. Chiropractic and osteopathic medical systems were both initially propounded as variations of the mesmeric model in which various physical or psychological techniques can be employed to make patients receptive to the inflow of a cosmic healing energy. Although chiropractic physicians typically downplayed the metaphysical underpinnings of their healing system during the 1950s and 1960s as they tried to gain greater access to governmental and insurance payment programs, many now openly advertise their eclectic adoption of both Eastern and Western metaphysical techniques. Other "higher energy" healing philosophies ranging from New Age crystal healing to therapeutic touch continue to promulgate the core themes of harmonial religion. Even

twelve-step programs adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous proclaim “a spiritual rather than a religious program” predicated on individuals opening their lives to a higher power. Recovery programs’ nonscriptural approach to spiritual regeneration make them at least slightly suspect to both traditional churches and medical science. Yet their open-minded and eclectic approach to personal transformation simultaneously makes them successful conduits for the transmission of secular spirituality.

Feminist spiritualities, neopaganism, continued interest in Western esotericism, spiritualism/Theosophy, and parapsychology would be further examples of different genres of contemporary secular spirituality. What they share in common is a deliberately eclectic approach to understanding the self in a larger metaphysical context. They also all find themselves navigating uneasy relationships with both traditional science and traditional religion.

# The Future of Secular Spirituality

Many social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s deemed secularism to be both inexorable and irreversible. They explained the persistence of traditional religion in terms of culture lag, certain that it would soon disappear among the educated populace. This has obviously not happened. The world’s major religious traditions remain viable. The reasons for this are varied, but it should be emphasized that the social sciences have traditionally overemphasized the degree to which humans operate according to deliberate rationality. The social sciences have also overemphasized the proportional role of the social environment in shaping human thought or behavior. Research now shows that most human cognition happens automatically at a level that is all but impervious to conscious or deliberate thought. Humans are born with numerous genetically evolved cognitive and emotional programs that have an important role in shaping thought and behavior. Many of these cognitive and emotional systems make it highly likely that humans will become religious. Our brains operate in a way that makes make it natural for us to believe in nonphysical agents. Our prosocial emotional tendencies not only incline us toward cooperative behavior but do so most effectively when we think that these nonphysical agents monitor our behavior. These same prosocial tendencies also predispose us to form tribes organized around shared beliefs and rituals that signal tribal loyalty. It is, in short, more “natural” for humans to be religious than nonreligious. (p. 584) Uncoupling the connection that our traditional religions have with these deeper sources of thought and feeling will prove far more difficult than was initially forecasted by theories focusing almost solely on environmental sources of human nature.

Secular spirituality emerged and continues for the same basic reasons that all religion emerges and continues. It comports well with both the biological and social dimensions of human nature. Its particular features are determined by the cultural contours of modern secularism. That is, secular spirituality represents the ongoing efforts of individuals to sustain some form of religious thought and behavior while yet accommodating the basic

features of secular society. The question arises: Can secular spirituality withstand the test of time?

A basic premise of secular spirituality is the distinction between the “private” realm of personal experience and the “public” realm of expressed beliefs and institutionally channeled ritual behavior. Secular spirituality allows minimal commitment to the public realm of religion while emphasizing the authority of experiences deemed distinct from those expected in a wholly secular universe. Friedrich Schleiermacher’s “feelings of absolute dependence,” Ralph Waldo Emerson’s inner communion with the Over-Soul, William James’s “experiences of the ‘more,’” and Peter Berger’s “signals of transcendence” all express the ways that secular spirituality depends on felt experiences of the sacred. It would seem that as long as people across the globe have such more-than-natural feelings or experiences, secular spiritualities will thrive alongside both traditional religions and nonreligious humanisms.

Is it possible, however, that such experiences are not what advocates claim them to be and are instead mistaken interpretations of wholly natural occurrences? In recent years secular science has rigorously studied these experiences and offered wholly nonspiritual analyses of what they actually entail (Hamer 2004; Newberg et al. 2001; Boyer 2001; Kirkpatrick 2005). Sophisticated brain imaging studies, for example, suggest that so-called mystical experiences are in fact wholly understandable from the standpoint of neurophysiology. It is thus quite possible that secular reasoning processes might erode the plausibility of secular spiritualities in much the way they undermined the plausibility of biblical and theological reasoning nearly a century earlier. Secular spiritualities might appear to future historians as little more than last-ditch efforts to forestall the inevitable progress of nonreligious secularism. The crucial issue, then, involves the confidence with which modern educated people can believe they have had experiences of a mysterious more, an unseen order of things in relation to which lies their supreme good. The viability of secular spiritualities would thus appear to depend on whether otherwise secular lifestyles nourish or undermine this confidence.

## Bibliography

Albanese, C. 2007. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Altizer, T., and W. Hamilton. 1966. *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill.

Batson, C., P. Schoenrade, and W. Ventis. 1993. *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berger, P. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

(p. 585) Berger, P. 1979. *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

Berger, P., and T. Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday.

Boyer, P. 2001. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Eberstadt, M. 2013. *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization*. West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Press.

Ellwood, R. 1979. *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ellwood, R. 1994. *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Finke, R., and R. Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America 1776–1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Finke, R., and R. Stark. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fuller, R. 1986. *Americans and the Unconscious*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fuller, R. 2001. *Spiritual But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fuller, R. 2013. *The Body of Faith: A Biological History of Religion in America.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gorski, P., D. Kim, J. Torpey, and J. VanAntwerpen (eds.). 2012. *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Societies*. New York: New York University Press.

Gregory, P. 2001. “Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America.” *Religion and American Culture* 11(2), 233–263.

Hamer, D. 2004. *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes*. New York: Doubleday.

Heinze, A. 2004. *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

James, W. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* Repr. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Kahn, H., and A. Wiener. 1967. *The Year 2000: A Framework for Speculation on the Next Thirty-Three Years*. New York: Macmillan.

Kirkpatrick, L. 2005. *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion*. New York: Guilford Press.

Lippy, C. 1994. *Being Religious American Style: A History of Popular Religiosity in the United States*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Newberg, A., E. d'Aquili, and V. Rouse. 2001. *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Roof, W. 1993. *A Generation of Seekers.* San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco.

Roof, W. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Ross, D. 1972. *G. Stanley Hall: The Psychologist as Prophet*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schleiermacher, F. 1799. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.* Translated by John Oman. New York: Harper, 1958.

Schmidt, L. 2005. *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality.* San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco.

Solomon, R. 2002. *Spirituality for Skeptics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Tillich, P. 1957. *The Dynamics of Faith*. New York: Harper & Row.

(p. 586) van den Broek, R., and W. Hanegraff (eds.). 1998. *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Van Ness, P. (ed.). 1996. *Spirituality and the Secular Quest.* New York: Crossroad Publishing.

Warner, R. 2010. *Secularization and its Discontents*. London and New York: Continuum.

Williams, P. 1980. *Popular Religion in America*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Wuthnow, R. 1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zinnbauer, B., K. Pargament, B. Cole, M. S. Rye, E. M. Butter, T. G. Belavich, K. M. Hipp, et al. 1997. "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzying the Fuzzy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36(4), 549–564.

**Robert C. Fuller**

Robert Fuller is Professor of Religious Studies at Bradley University in Illinois. He has authored more than a dozen books on psychology and religion, religious history, and religion in the United States, including Religious Revolutionaries: The Rebels

Who Reshaped American Religion and Spiritual, But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America.

# Nonreligious People in Religious Societies

Will M. Gervais and Maxine Najle

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.36

## Abstract and Keywords

Although secularism is on the rise, with fewer people identifying with a specific religion, atheists still face a significant degree of prejudice. This chapter discusses that social phenomenon and research efforts to reveal its causes and potential ways to reduce antipathy toward atheists. Social psychology can inquire into causes for prejudice and discrimination against the nonreligious, covering related matters such as origins of unbelief, how others respond to it, and how nonreligious people cope with these and other issues. This chapter also considers specific social movements within and around religious disbelief and offers some speculation on the impact of vocal atheist movements on the current state of interfaith (and nonfaith) relations.

Keywords: the nonreligious, atheism, psychology of unbelief, anti-atheist prejudice, atheist activism

IN 2013, a group of artisanal shoemakers based in Berlin began noticing an alarming trend in their shipments to the United States. Their US-based customers were complaining of delayed or lost packages, with some customers even asking for the company to change the special way they packaged their product. The company packaged their shoes with shipping tape including the company's name: Atheist Shoes (Figure 35.1).

While the tape had produced no noticeable problems in the past, the cobblers decided to run an experiment to see if the tape was in fact yielding different treatment in America. They shipped 178 packages to 89 people in 49 states: one with their normal atheist tape and one with regular unlabeled packing tape. They found that the atheist-packaged shoes, on average, got to their destination later than their counterparts, that atheist-branded packages were more likely to get lost or go missing, and that, in one instance, the atheist package arrived thirty-seven days later than the generic package (AtheistBerlin 2013). These results were found only in the United States and not in their control tests in Germany and Europe, making the shoemakers decide to stop packing their US shipments with atheist tape. Though this example may seem rather trivial, the act of tampering with mail in the United States is a federal offense. Further, it is far from the only example of discrimination against atheists (and atheist shoes) in the United States.

Despite the US Constitution explicitly forbidding religious tests for public office, there are still several laws on the books that allow specific discrimination against atheists for public office in states including Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and others (Bulger 2012). Though these laws are undeniably unconstitutional (Article VI, para. 3), Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia stated that he believed the separation of church and state mandated in the Constitution does not say that "the government cannot favor religion over nonreligion" (Ashtari 2014). In other countries, the laws discriminating against atheists are much more severe. Blasphemy laws, which carry varying weight and have different criteria from country to country, are still on the books in more than fifty countries. Specific laws making atheism punishable by death exist in thirteen countries, and thirty-nine countries (six of which are considered Western countries) mandate jail time for blaspheming (Evans 2013; International Humanist and Ethical Union 2013). Indeed, Saudi Arabia passed legislation in 2014 making atheism equivalent to terrorism (Human Rights Watch 2014). Thus, from mail fraud to (p. 588) execution as a terrorist, treating atheists worse than their religious counterparts is legally endorsed—and perhaps recommended—in many parts of the world.


*Figure 35.1* Shoes and packing tape used by Atheist Shoes, images reproduced with permission.

What is it about atheists that generates such discrimination? Why, when such laws have been struck down for most other minorities, are they still allowed for atheists? This chapter attempts to address these questions. We cover the literature on how atheism arises, how others respond to it, and how atheists cope with these and other issues. We cover specific social movements within and around religious disbelief, as well as some speculation on how vocal atheist movements may impact the current state of interfaith (and nonfaith) relations.

An important note for our coverage is that we approach all of our subjects as social psychologists, relying heavily on empirical research from social sciences and occasionally on public opinion reports. As such, we cannot cover everything, nor would we want to comment on subjects and research beyond our areas of knowledge and expertise.

Before engaging in a discussion on how nonreligious individuals fare in religious communities, it is important to be clear of what we mean by "nonreligious." There is debate about what the term specifically refers to. Some consider those who do not want to identi-

fy or align with a specific church “nonreligious,” and others consider the Secular But Not Religious movement to be included as well. Others consider those who give the lowest value of belief in a god or gods on continuous measures as different from those who self-identify as atheists. More in-depth coverage of this debate goes beyond the scope of this chapter. For our purposes, we will deal only with people who explicitly do *not* believe in a god or gods.

A final note on terminology: the use of the word “God” (capital G) is meant to imply a specific deity in a given context. The setting of a scholarly resource such as this one lacks a specific religious context. We cannot assume a given deity by stating “God,” and thus we will be intentionally more specific. As such, we will be talking about “a god or gods” in general terms and specific gods using unambiguous phrasing (the Abrahamic God, Yahweh, etc.).

## (p. 589) The Origins of Religious Disbelief

The ways in which individuals become atheists are the focus of much conversation and debate. A common belief is that atheists lose faith in a god or gods because they “think their way out of religion.” Richard Dawkins, a de facto face of atheism, has proposed atheists adopt the title “Brights” as a way of skirting the stigma associated with their current label while making it abundantly clear that they are smarter than theists, and Christopher Hitchens, another prominent atheist, was known for being antagonistic and condescending to believers in debates (we talk more about these activists in the “Social Movements” section).

Indeed, this is an understandably enticing argument for many atheists, and it is a position that has some limited support in the literature. Cognitive and evolutionary accounts of religion provide support for the cognitive biases that seem to predispose humans to belief in supernatural deities, making religious belief an intuitive default and atheism perhaps require a great amount of cognitive effort to overcome (Atran and Norenzayan 2004; Barrett 2000; Bloom 2007; Boyer 2001, 2008). By the same token, some recent research (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012a; Shenhav et al. 2012) found a causal relation between analytic thinking and religious disbelief. Though some interpret a causal relationship between analytic thinking and religious disbelief as evidence that atheists have all thought their way out of religion, the reality is, of course, much more complicated. Even where links between religious disbelief and analytic thinking have been found, the size of this effect is actually quite small and speaks little to the question of whether *all* atheists must have arrived at nonbelief through effortful cognitive reflection.

Another potential explanation for the difference between believers and nonbelievers is the issue of motivated cognition. Atheists report caring more about analytic thinking; therefore, they may assume they are better at it and arrived at their disbelief by being better analytic thinkers. Norenzayan and Gervais (2013) argue against the notion that the only way to become an atheist is to think more analytically. They identify four of the paths

to religious disbelief: *mind-blind atheism, apatheism, inCREDulous atheism,* and *analytic atheism*.

## Mind-Blind Atheism

Human beings are remarkably adept at mind reading—not literally reading other minds, but inferring the existence and contents of other minds. We cannot directly observe others' mental states, yet we have dedicated cognitive systems that allow us to perceive and infer mental states in others. We are good—although imperfectly so—at recognizing that the actions of others are driven by their goals, desires, and intentions. We can infer the hidden meanings in ambiguous speech (e.g., recognizing that sarcastic comments reveal intentions contrary to the actual content of an utterance), and we view the social world as driven largely by unobservable mental states held by ourselves and others. Collectively, the suite of cognitive processes enabling us to navigate the social world in this way are (p. 590) generally termed *mind perception, mentalizing*, or *Theory of Mind*. Recent research suggests that mentalizing might in fact be one key cognitive process underlying religious belief (Gervais 2013).

The majority of gods, both contemporary and throughout history, have been described as largely psychologically anthropomorphic entities with discernable feelings, desires, and intentions. They frequently engage physically with the world but almost always engage interpersonally with their adherents or creations. Indeed, many gods seem to have been conceptualized with the explicit purpose of understanding physical and natural events as an exchange between beings (e.g., Thor as causing lightning, Poseidon as governing floods and draughts, Pele as controlling volcanic activity). Thus, being able to conceptualize such gods requires having mentalizing abilities. As such, people who lack or have poor mentalizing abilities will find belief in a god or gods more challenging.

Research in cognitive neuroscience provides support for possibility that mentalizing abilities are perhaps a necessary prerequisite for belief in intentional supernatural agents. Mentalizing is central to belief in a god or gods (Norenzayan et al. 2012). Specifically, the act of thinking about or praying to a god activates the same parts of the brain used when interpreting the mental states of other humans (Kapogiannis et al. 2009; Schjoedt et al. 2009). Further, many of the biases that color mentalizing about other humans are at least as evident when people reason about God's mind (Epley et al. 2009). It appears as if the ordinary working of human mentalizing systems constrain people's representations of their gods' minds (Gervais 2013).

Combined, these lines of evidence converge to suggest that belief in a god or gods seems to require the ability to perceive other minds in general and to infer and represent others' thoughts and intentions. For those who find mentalizing more challenging, reasoning about and mentally representing supernatural agents might be similarly challenging. Consistent with this, atheists tend to be overrepresented among communities that also tend to face challenges with mentalizing. For instance, there tends to be a small but reliable gender difference in advanced mentalizing such that women tend to outperform

men. Interestingly, this gap mirrors gender gaps in religious belief: women tend to be more religious than men (Stark 2002). This gender difference is also found in rates of autism, where men tend to be overrepresented among those affected by autism spectrum disorders (Baron-Cohen et al. 2005). Furthermore, men tend to have lower mentalizing abilities than women (Krach et al. 2009; Schulte-Rüther et al. 2008) while being overrepresented among staunch atheists and overall having lower levels of belief in gods (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975; Lenski, 1953; Miller and Hoffmann, 1995). Recent research suggests that mentalizing abilities are instrumental in both autism–disbelief relationships and gender differences in religious belief (Norenzayan et al. 2012).

Ultimately, mentalizing is necessary but insufficient for the development of belief in a god or gods. Specifically, mentalizing may allow people to mentally represent gods, but it is a far step from mental representation to belief. Thus, other factors are predicted to substantially account for variability in religious belief. As is the case, the role of mentalizing does not mean that an autistic individual will necessarily be an atheist. Nor does it mean that all atheists are lacking mentalizing skills or are otherwise deficient mentally. When an individual has normal mentalizing abilities but still lacks belief, other factors may be contributing to this religious disbelief, as discussed in the following sections. When people find mentalizing challenging, nonbelief can emerge.

## (p. 591) Apatheism

Apatheism is “a disinclination to care all that much about one’s own religion” (Rauch (2003). Not all nonbelievers are strident opponents of religion—many of them just do not find religion particularly motivating. This term is useful for the next path to atheism, one in which the individual is simply apathetic about gods. Though they have normal mentalizing capabilities, they lack the motivation to believe that gods are real.

The reasons for this lack of motivation can vary, but some common motivations for caring about supernatural agents are a need for emotional comfort, meaning, or order. For example, human suffering and existential threats to meaning are powerful motivators of belief in gods, and such suffering and threats seem to be part of the human condition (Gray and Wegner 2010; Norenzayan and Hansen 2006).

Several common meaning and existential threats have been shown to increase and intensify belief in a personal god. These threats include such things as a heightened awareness of death and one’s own mortality (Dechesne et al. 2003; Jong et al. 2012; Norenzayan and Hansen 2006; Vail et al. 2012), human suffering in general (Gray and Wegner 2010), exposure to randomness and uncertainty (Kay et al. 2010; Rutjens et al. 2010), a perception of decreased personal control (Kay et al. 2010), and social isolation (Epley et al. 2008). When a god can satisfy the needs created by these various threats, motivation to believe increases dramatically.

A real-world example of this occurred in 2011, when a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, the country’s second most populous city. The devastation from the earthquake included more than 180 deaths and extensive damage to the

city and surrounding areas. A team of researchers (Sibley and Bulbulia 2012) conducting a longitudinal study that spanned the time preceding and following the catastrophe were able to track the shift in religiosity after the earthquake. Their analyses showed that religious belief, generally quite low in New Zealand, experienced an overall decrease in the population but increased among those individuals who were directly impacted by the damage of the earthquake. This conversion among those affected might be the result of a number of motivational factors previously discussed (mortality salience, awareness of suffering, lack of personal control, etc.).

Just as motivational factors may increase belief in gods with such things as natural disasters, removing these motivations often leads to decreases in belief. For instance, as existential security increases as a society grows more economically stable and its crime rates decrease, religious belief also declines (Inglehart and Norris 2004). As before, the motivation for religious belief maps onto the levels of religious belief. This link has been shown correlationally and quasi-experimentally in the aforementioned studies, but it has also been demonstrated experimentally. Kay and colleagues (2010) propose a hydraulic relationship between faith in gods and faith in governments such that when natural events or experimental manipulations force participants to have less faith in one, their faith in the other increases. The authors theorize this link between god and government to be a motivational concern related specifically to security and personal control, such that having a government take care of people's needs and keep them safe lessens their need for a god to do this and having a government fail to meet these needs drives them back to a god for these concerns. This relationship suggests that more secure and stable societies will likely (p. 592) be less religious than their more tumultuous and less secure counterparts, which is exactly what we observe in the world. European and Scandinavian counties are some of the most existentially secure that have existed, and they are also some with the lowest in belief in god (Zuckerman 2008). When life is unpredictable, dangerous, and short, people are motivated to seek out religion (Inzlicht et al. 2011). When life stabilizes, people may simply opt out of religion, and apatheism results.

## inCREDulous Atheism

Religious belief is often purported to be a default in humans, innate and inescapable except under peculiar circumstances (Barrett 2010). Countries such as New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden are thriving examples to the contrary. When individuals lack cultural support for religious belief and do not learn to believe in supernatural agents, as in these countries, then the third type of atheism can occur. These are termed inCREDulous atheists, a play on the term "credibility-enhancing displays," or CREDs (Henrich 2009). The basic premise of CREDs can be understood through an evolutionary context with a plausible example for early humans. Imagine a distant ancestor of ours is trying to navigate new terrain in a forest and comes across another human. This human offers the traveler a mushroom, encouraging him with hand gestures to eat it. Would our early human be more likely to eat the mushroom if the acquaintance simply gestured that it was safe to eat or if the other human ate one of these mushrooms himself? The obvious answer is if he ate one of the mushrooms; this is known as a CRED. Actions speak louder than words,

and naïve cultural learners pay keen attention to models who practice rather than merely preach.

Essentially, the same process is true for religious belief. Saying one believes in a god is one thing; showing one believes in a god by performing regular, time-consuming, or painful religious rituals is another—more compelling—thing. Thus, naïve cultural learners should evaluate not only what others tell them to believe about the supernatural but should pay keen attention to which beliefs motivate potentially costly behavior. Cultural support for religious belief is incredibly important for establishing belief in subsequent generations. When learning what is and is not true about the world, especially in ambiguous situations, children will look to their elders (usually family members) to fill in the blanks. This kin-biased learning strategy is key when picking up religious belief. Along with family, wider cultural support is important as well, as conformity norms will influence beliefs. Gervais and Najle (2015) explored the role of kin-biased transmission, conformist learning, and CREDs in the development of belief in gods worldwide, finding all were strong predictors of belief in a god or gods, contrary to the argument in some spheres of the cognitive science of religion that argue that little to no cultural support for religious belief is necessary (e.g., Barrett 2004; Bering 2010). Where learners witnessed multiple cues that one ought to believe in a given god, almost all individuals came to believe in that god. Where such cues were comparatively lacking, nonbelief flourished. In fact, religious belief can diminish drastically in very few generations with the decrease in CREDs of belief among those who would be transmitting the faith to the next generation (Lanman 2012), which highlights the importance of CREDs when dealing with the notion of religious belief and disbelief. In the absence of cultural cues to belief, nonbelief flourishes. (p. 593)

## Analytic Atheism

The final path to atheism described by Norenzayan and Gervais (2013) is the one most commonly discussed, although it has only received direct empirical investigation in recent years. These are the analytic atheists, those who override the intuitions that support belief in supernatural agents. The specifics of this conversion vary individually (e.g., active vs. passive; fluid vs. stable; rapid vs. gradual; opt out vs. never in), but in principle they share the analytic component of disbelief. Research has shown a correlational link between analytic thinking and religious belief (Pennycook et al. 2012; Shenhav et al. 2012) but also a causal link, such that when people are experimentally nudged to think more analytically, they also tend to report lower religious belief (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012a). For some people, a general tendency to process information analytically, rather than intuitively, leads to nonbelief.

Ultimately, there are many necessary but insufficient factors for belief in a god or gods. The right mental faculties (such as mentalizing) are necessary, but without proper motivation and cultural scaffolding, religious belief can fail to take hold. Additionally, even when these factors are met, many individuals still end up atheists if they tend to engage in analytic thinking to the degree that more intuitive beliefs about their cultures' deities are

overridden or to the degree that they value epistemic validity over such intuitive beliefs. Thus, there are four candidate factors that may explain different paths to nonbelief. In subsequent sections, we move from a discussion of where nonbelief comes from and speculatively consider broader questions about how nonbelievers (regardless of how they came to be nonbelievers) experience life in religious societies.

| Pathway | Characteristics |
|---|---|
| Mind-blind atheism | Intuitive difficulties in understanding religious agents; arises from deficits in mentalizing that erode the intuitive foundations of belief in a personal God, spirits, and other religious agents with rich mental states who are believed to interact with humans and respond to their wishes and concerns (such as in prayer) |
| Apatheism | Indifference to religious agents and practices found among individuals, as well as in contexts and cultures, that are characterized by existential security, such as longevity, physical and social safety, stability and controllability; closely related to inCREDulous atheism |
| InCREDulous atheism | Indifference towards religious agents and practices found in cultural or subcultural contexts where there is a relative absence of exposure to credible displays of faith in God or gods, such as frequent religious attendance, costly ritual participation, religious prosociality and religious sacrifice, typically in societies with strong secular institutions and effective governance that take on the prosocial functions of religion; closely related to apatheism |
| Analytic atheism | Explicit and implicit rejection of religious beliefs. Arises from habitual or situationally salient analytic thinking that blocks or overrides intuitions supporting religious beliefs and encourages religious skepticism |

*Figure 35.2* Four distinct origins of religious disbelief.

[Reproduced from Norenzayan and Gervais (2013)]

## (p. 594) Coping with Challenges

Among other things, religions offer people a sense of meaning and coherence, especially in the face of challenging times. A belief in a god or gods can ease fears of mortality by providing a narrative of a welcoming afterlife. A belief in a benevolent god can also aid in times of loss by adding meaning or purpose to the loss. It is a common saying, then, that a deceased loved one is in a better place or that their god had a plan for them to die when and how they did.

While these offers of condolence may be soothing to theists, atheists report finding these assurances less comforting. Anecdotally, atheists report how hearing such things from friends when a loved one has died can be quite harmful (Hagerty 2013). Being told repeatedly that their loved one is in a better place is very difficult for atheists to hear when they are grieving for what they believe is a more final end than many of their religious counterparts do. Without a belief in an afterlife, atheists believe that death is final. As such, no amount of telling them that their loved one is in a better place will assuage them. It seems a different coping mechanism would be beneficial to atheists, such as focusing on the good the deceased individual did in his or her life or the happy memories made because of him or her.

Experimentally, less is known about how atheists fare with coping than their counterparts who have to rely on faith. The majority of the literature that has examined religious coping and mental well-being has found a positive relationship between the two (Ellison, 1991; Fry 2000; Koenig 2001; Moreira-Almeida et al. 2006). At best, the relationship is

neutral, with no reported findings that show a negative association between religious belief and coping and mental well-being (for a review of many religious benefits might derive from largely secular sources, see Galen 2012). However, the differences between nonreligious and religious individuals may not be as stark as this literature implies. Horning and colleagues (2011), after observing that no studies looking at religiosity and well-being had included atheists in their samples in any meaningful way, looked at the differences between atheists, agnostics, and religious individuals on several metrics. Though previous literature had found a positive relationship between degree of religious belief and well-being, their analyses did not show this trend. They also failed to find a relationship between religiosity and satisfaction in their social support. One difference they did observe was in subjective meaning of life, with higher religiosity predicting higher degrees of meaning. However, because this difference did not affect subjective well-being, it appears that atheists and agnostics did not find meaning of life as an important component to well-being. In terms of coping, those higher in religiosity were more likely (perhaps unsurprisingly) to use religious coping. This study reveals important ways in which nonbelievers differ from believers but also the significant ways in which they do not differ.

Beyond the major trials of life, however, are there differences between nonbelievers and believers on a day-to-day basis? Ritter and colleagues (2014) looked at the content of almost 2 million tweets from more than 16,000 atheists and Christians users, identified from followers of major public figures for both groups. They analyzed the tweets using linguistic inquiry and word count and found that, on average, Christians had more happy tweets and fewer negative tweets than atheists, suggesting that atheists may have less positive outlooks or experiences. However, this effect was partially mediated by social connections and (p. 595) thinking styles. Christians had more tweets about social connections than did atheists, while atheists' tweets revealed more terms associated with an analytic thinking style. Because of this, the authors caution against strong interpretations that religion is a necessary condition for happiness or meaning.

# Perceptions of and Reactions to Atheists

Though the general climate of modern social graces calls for political correctness and blatant and overt prejudices are seen as socially unacceptable, atheists are one of the few groups that it is generally considered acceptable to dislike. Atheists still score very unfavorably in public opinion polls, where historically disliked groups such as African Americans and homosexuals have gained considerable footing. For instance, people are much more willing to say they would *not* vote for a presidential candidate who, all else held constant, was an atheist than they are to say the same about a black, Muslim, Hispanic, gay, or Mormon candidate (Pew Research Center 2007). Atheists are also less likely to be seen as sharing the same vision of American society or being acceptable romantic partners for respondents' children (Edgell et al. 2006). The foundation for these strong prejudices is surprising considering the nature of "atheists" as a group, as they lack any sense of real cohesion being defined by their lack of a particular belief and nothing else. As comedian

Ricky Gervais put it, “Saying ‘Atheism is a belief system’ is like saying ‘not going skiing is a hobby.” As a whole, atheists are more distinct than they are similar, and yet the antipathy toward them is real and lasting.

The driving force behind anti-atheists sentiments ultimately seems to stem from a sense of distrust of those who do not believe in some form of a higher power. Gervais and colleagues (2011) found that anti-atheist prejudice, but not antigay prejudice, was linked to feelings of distrust. They also found that vignettes of an untrustworthy individual were intuitively judged as more representative of an atheist target than of a Christian or Muslim target, though not significantly different from their intuitive judgments of the vignette being representative of a rapist target (Gervais et al. 2011). This trend has been replicated to show a general sense of untrustworthiness of atheists, with a myriad of moral transgressions (e.g., lying, cheating, stealing, disrespecting authority, incest, serial homicide, cannibalism, and necrobestiality) being intuitively linked with atheists.

The distrust makes intuitive sense when considering some elements of human behavior. For instance, participants have increased public self-awareness and answer in more socially desirable ways in surveys when they are asked to think about “God,” suggesting that feelings of being watched as might be induced when thinking about an omniscient god may induce more socially desirable behaviors (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012b). It is not in the least a surprising finding that people who feel watched, especially by a god, would be on their best behavior, as people generally inhibit their selfish urges when made to feel watched (Bateson et al. 2013; Bateson et al. 2006). In this light, it is also unsurprising that atheists, who by definition deny the existence of any sort of divine watcher, might be immune to these positive influences and thus be seen less trustworthy than theists. To paraphrase Dostoevsky, without God, isn’t anything (even reprehensible acts) possible? Of course, in reality, a belief in a god may not directly relate to better behavior, as is evidenced by the lower rates of crime in less theistic societies. One major reason for this is that humans are in the purview of not only (p. 596) divine authorities but also secular authorities. Thus while an atheist may not believe that committing a sin will result in divine punishment, they very well understand that committing a crime runs the risk of resulting in corporeal punishment. Though theists do not intuitively consider this fact, they can be induced to think of it. In this way, reminders of secular authority are effective at reducing anti-atheist prejudice (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012c). Likewise, increasing perceived prevalence of atheists decreases distrust of atheists, operating under the same notions that an underestimation of the local atheist population indicates that the presence of atheists is not as calamitous as intuitively might be assumed (Gervais 2011).

In addition to the basic premise that feeling watched increases prosocial behavior, distrust of atheists is also based in the belief that atheists lack moral knowledge. Najle and Gervais (unpublished data) have found that participants judged a vignette of an individual as more representative of an atheist when the individual lacked moral knowledge (i.e., did not know whether or not a moral transgression was wrong) as compared to when the individual knew it was wrong, with the opposite being true of a Christian target. The implication here is that people perceive religious instruction and belief as a prerequisite for

proper moral development. This is further supported by the fact that participants deem an atheist committing a moral act as more responsible for the act than a theist doing the same, with the religious instruction taking some of the credit in the theist's case (Gervais 2014). Unfortunately for atheists, experimental manipulations of the innate nature of morality does not decrease intuitive beliefs that atheists are untrustworthy (Mudd et al. 2015), suggesting that anti-atheist prejudice may be fairly difficult to reduce. Though it may seem odd to observe such negative sentiments against atheists when they are perceived as being ignorant or naïve of morality, it is important to note that atheism is largely considered to be a choice by theists, suggesting that they are choosing to be ignorant and thus are responsible for this ignorance.

# Social Movements

Though atheism has existed in some capacity throughout human history, in the twenty-first century it has developed as a new, multifaceted social movement. Often referred to as New Atheism, this movement has been characterized by outspoken, and often antitheist, rhetoric among its proponents.

The first of these organizations was founded by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, an outspoken atheist activist who gained national infamy in her lawsuits against Baltimore public schools requiring students to participate in Bible reading and later for her lawsuit against NASA astronauts reading from the Bible on missions. O'Hair founded the American Atheists, originally known as the Society of Separationists, in 1963, and it continues in operation today, engaging in much of the same activities for which O'Hair gained her notoriety. Another outspoken organization is the Freedom From Religion Foundation, founded by Anne Nicol Gaylor and Annie Laurie Gaylor in 1976. Although the organizations compete with one another for membership, their goals are largely the same. These organizations largely deal with matters of separation of church and state, litigating issues of state-sponsored religious activities or monuments. Their efforts frequently involve contesting the presence of religious symbols on government property, such as a nativity scene on a state capitol or a placard of the Ten Commandments in a courthouse.

(p. 597) Though these organizations have been active for many decades, New Atheism gained substantial recognition and earned atheists renewed antipathy with the popularization of books by atheist figureheads Sam Harris (*End of Faith, Letter to a Christian Nation*), Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*), and Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*). These books, along with their authors, were often characterized as vitriolic, antireligious sources, with their intent being to convince readers of the ills and illogic of religion and the merits and superiority of atheism. Dawkins and Hitchens frequently debated renowned Christians, apologists, and other theists in large forums, extolling the virtues of atheism and ridiculing belief as childish at best and violently dangerous at worst.

In addition to their writing and public appearances, they are occasionally involved in activism. Dawkins is perhaps the most engaged, with his own foundation, the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. One notable effort was his involvement and support of the Atheist Bus Campaign in Britain, a campaign developed by comedy writer Ariane Sherine. The campaign featured bus-side advertisements that read, “There’s probably no god. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” This campaign was received largely positively in the UK, with religious adherents appreciating it for encouraging the debate of religious topics. Similar billboards have been commissioned by the American Atheists across America and received with considerably less positive sentiments.

# Speculative Trends

Though secularism is on the rise, with fewer people identifying with a specific religion (Pew Research Center 2012, 2015) and research endeavors seeking ways to effectively reduce antipathy toward atheists, atheists still face a significant degree of prejudice. However, the process is a difficult one. Atheist stigma is so stark that common prejudice-reduction techniques seem ineffective. For instance, one technique commonly used is to imagine a positive interaction with the target group. This technique was attempted for atheist targets, but participants found the task unrealistic with the traditional instructions, many claiming that in order to have an interaction with someone they knew to be an atheist, the individual would have had to have identified themselves as an atheist to them, an act that they considered intrinsically negative (LaBouff 2014). This conception of atheists self-identifying as atheists necessarily being a derogatory or antisocial interaction from the atheist to the theist seems to stem directly from these vocally antitheist figureheads of atheism.

Unlike the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) movement, which has asked only for coexistence with and acceptance from the heterosexual majority, New Atheism has frequently ridiculed religion as childish belief, equivalent to an adult believing in an imaginary friend or in Santa Clause. If the LGBTQ movement had taken this approach, raising awareness of themselves by claiming that heterosexuality was an inferior lifestyle to their own, their recent advances would not likely have occurred. Thus, we speculate based on the limited available evidence that in order for atheism and religious disbelief to gain wider acceptance by their theist and religious counterparts, they would have more success taking a softer alternate approach. Reducing anti-atheist prejudice is far more likely if people view atheists as normal, rather than as argumentative. An atheist might well be advised to create (p. 598) relationships with believers, rather than arguments against belief. In principle, the separation of church and state initiatives of the American Atheists and the Freedom From Religion Foundation work toward the goal of normalizing nonbelief in a legal context. However, it is very much an open question whether their efforts will generalize to promote tolerance for nonbelief in everyday private life. In practice, the derogation of theists in the process has made progress in acceptance of nonbelief slow and difficult.

# Conclusions

An important factor to keep in mind when discussing nonreligious individuals is that they are not all the same, even in their lack of religion. There are many different ways to be nonreligious, and an analytic atheist may differ greatly from an inCREDulous atheist, for instance, in terms of the ways in which they integrate into their surrounding society or the ways in which they cope with adversity. Believing in a god or gods requires the use of mentalizing, and thus those with lower mentalizing abilities will be more likely to lack belief in a god than those with higher mentalizing capacities. An individual can have adequate mentalizing abilities and still not believe in a god, as is the case with the apatheists, inCREDulous atheists, and analytic atheists. Apatheists and inCREDulous atheists lack the motivation and cultural support for belief, respectively. Analytic atheists place higher value in epistemic validity than in faith arguments, actively rejecting religious beliefs rather than simply never picking up on the beliefs as in the other three types of atheism.

Despite these nuanced differences, atheists are largely treated as a homogenous group of questionable morals. They are distrusted in most societies, even by other nonbelievers, with fairly rigid negative prejudices existing around them now. Many of the social movements that have arisen from this antipathy have focused on giving atheists a sense of community and, at times, reducing the explicit negative associations people have with atheists or encouraging others to adopt lifestyles more similar to atheism. Despite these efforts, the negative attitudes toward atheists remain and will likely continue doing so unless a different approach, one of coexisting rather than competing, is adopted by these groups. Instead of thinking about what it means to be nonreligious in religious societies, it may be more fruitful to consider the varieties of nonreligious experience.

## Bibliography

Argyle, M., and B. Beit-Hallahmi. 1975. *The Social Psychology of Religion*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Ashtari, S. 2014. “Antonin Scalia Says Constitution Permits Court to ‘Favor Religion Over Non-Religion.’” *Huffington Post* (2 October). **http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/02/antonin-scalia-religion-government_n_5922944.html**.

AtheistBerlin. 2013. “USPS Discrimination Against Atheism?” **http://www.atheistberlin.com/atheist/?study**.

Atran, S., and A. Norenzayan. 2004. “Religion’s Evolutionary Landscape: Counterintuition, Commitment, Compassion, Communion.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 27(6), 713–730.

(p. 599) Baron-Cohen, S., R. Knickmeyer, and M. Belmonte. 2005. “Sex Differences in the Brain: Implications for Explaining Autism.” *Science* 310(5749), 819–823.

Barrett, J. 2000. “Exploring the Natural Foundations of Religion.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 4(1), 29–34.

Barrett, J. 2004. *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.

Barrett, J. 2010. “The Relative Unnaturalness of Atheism: On Why Geertz and Markusson Are Both Right and Wrong.” *Religion* 40(3), 169–172.

Bateson, M., L. Callow, J. Holmes, M. Roche, and D. Nettle. 2013. “Do Images of ‘Watching Eyes’ Induce Behaviour that Is More Pro-Social or More Normative? A Field Experiment on Littering.” *PLoS ONE* 8(12), e82055.

Bateson, M., D. Nettle, and G. Roberts. 2006. “Cues of Being Watched Enhance Cooperation in a Real-World Setting.” *Biology Letters* 2(3), 412–414.

Bering, J. 2010. “Atheism Is Only Skin Deep: Geertz and Markússon Rely Mistakenly on Sociodemographic Data as Meaningful Indicators of Underlying Cognition.” *Religion* 40(3), 166–168.

Bloom, P. 2007. “Religion Is Natural.” *Developmental Science* 10(1), 147–151.

Boyer, P. 2001. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Boyer, P. 2008. “Being Human—Religion: Bound to Believe?” *Nature* 455(7216), 1038–1039.

Bulger, M. 2012. “Unelectable Atheists: U.S. States that Prohibit Godless Americans from Holding Public Office.” American Humanist Association. **http://americanhumanist.org/HNN/details/2012-05-unelectable-atheists-us-states-that-prohibit-godless**.

Dechesne, M., T. Pyszczynski, J. Arndt, S. Ransom, K. Sheldon, A. van Knippenberg, and J. Janssen. 2003. “Literal and Symbolic Immortality: The Effect of Evidence of Literal Immortality of Self-Esteem Striving in Response to Mortality Salience.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84(4), 722–737.

Edgell, P., J. Gerteis, and D. Hartmann. 2006. “Atheists as ‘Other’”: Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society.” *American Sociological Review* 71(2), 211–234.

Ellison, C. G. 1991. “Religious Involvement and Subjective Well-Being.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 32(1), 80–99.

Epley, N., S. Akalis, A. Waytz, and J. T. Cacioppo. 2008. “Creating Social Connection through Inferential Reproduction Loneliness and Perceived Agency in Gadgets, Gods, and Greyhounds.” *Psychological Science* 19(2), 114–120.

Epley, N., B. A. Converse, A. Delbosc, G. A. Monteleone, and J. T. Cacioppo. 2009. “Believers’ Estimates of God’s Beliefs Are More Egocentric than Estimates of Other People’s Beliefs.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106(51), 21533–21538.

Evans, R. 2013. “Atheists Face Death in 13 Countries, Global Discrimination: Study.” Reuters. **http://www.reuters.com/article/us-religion-atheists-idUSBRE9B900G20131210**.

Fry, P. S. 2000. “Religious Involvement, Spirituality and Personal Meaning for Life: Existential Predictors of Psychological Wellbeing in Community-Residing and Institutional Care Elders.” *Aging and Mental Health* 4(4), 375–387.

Galen, L. W. 2012. “Does Religious Belief Promote Prosociality? A Critical Examination.” *Psychological Bulletin* 138(5), 876–906.

Gervais, W. M. 2011. “Finding the Faithless: Perceived Atheist Prevalence Reduces Anti-Atheist Prejudice.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37(4), 543–556.

Gervais, W. M. 2013. “Perceiving Minds and Gods: How Mind Perception Enables, Constrains, and Is Triggered by Belief in Gods.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 8(4), 380–394.

(p. 600) Gervais, W. M. 2014. “Good for God? Religious Motivation Reduces Perceived Responsibility for and Morality of Good Deeds.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 143(4), 1616–1626.

Gervais, W. M., and M. B. Najle. 2015. “Learned Faith: The Influences of Evolved Cultural Learning Mechanisms on Belief in Gods.” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 7(4), 327–335.

Gervais, W. M., and A. Norenzayan. 2012a. “Analytic Thinking Promotes Religious Disbelief.” *Science* 336(6080), 493–496.

Gervais, W. M., and A. Norenzayan. 2012b. “Like a Camera in the Sky? Thinking about God Increases Public Self-Awareness and Socially Desirable Responding.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(1), 298–302.

Gervais, W. M., and A. Norenzayan. 2012c. “Reminders of Secular Authority Reduce Believers’ Distrust of Atheists.” *Psychological Science* 23(5), 483–491.

Gervais, W. M., A. F. Shariff, and A. Norenzayan. 2011. “Do You Believe in Atheists? Distrust Is Central to Anti-Atheist Prejudice.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(6), 1189–1206.

Gray, K., and D. M. Wegner. 2010. “Blaming God for Our Pain: Human Suffering and the Divine Mind.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(1), 7–16.

Hagerty, B. B. 2013. “After Tragedy, Nonbelievers Find Other Ways to Cope.” National Public Radio. **http://www.npr.org/2013/01/16/168563480/after-tragedy-nonbelievers-find-other-ways-to-cope?**

Henrich, J. 2009. “The Evolution of Costly Displays, Cooperation and Religion: Credibility Enhancing Displays and Their Implications for Cultural Evolution.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 30(4), 244–260.

Horning, S. M., H. P. Davis, M. Stirrat, and R. E. Cornwell. 2011. “Atheistic, Agnostic, and Religious Older Adults on Well-Being and Coping Behaviors.” *Journal of Aging Studies* 25(2), 177–188.

Human Rights Watch. 2014. “Saudi Arabia: New Terrorism Regulations Assault Rights.” **http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/20/saudi-arabia-new-terrorism-regulations-assault-rights**.

International Humanist and Ethical Union. 2013. “You Can Be Put to Death for Atheism in 13 Countries around the World.” **http://iheu.org/you-can-be-put-death-atheism-13-countries-around-world/**.

Inglehart, R., and P. Norris. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Inzlicht, M., A. M. Tullett, and M. Good. 2011. “The Need to Believe: A Neuroscience Account of Religion as a Motivated Process.” *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 1(3), 192–212.

Jong, J., J. Halberstadt, and M. Bluemke. 2012. “Foxhole Atheism, Revisited: The Effects of Mortality Salience on Explicit and Implicit Religious Belief.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(5), 983–989.

Kapogiannis, D., A. K. Barbey, M. Su, G. Zamboni, F. Krueger, and J. Grafman. 2009. “Cognitive and Neural Foundations of Religious Belief.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106(12), 4876–4881.

Kay, A. C., D. Gaucher, I. McGregor, and K. Nash. 2010. “Religious Belief as Compensatory Control.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(1), 37–48.

Kay, A. C., D. A. Moscovitch, and K. Laurin. 2010. “Randomness, Attributions of Arousal, and Belief in God.” *Psychological Science* 21(2), 216–218.

Kay, A. C., S. Shepherd, C. W. Blatz, S. N. Chua, and A. D. Galinsky. 2010. “For God (or) Country: The Hydraulic Relation between Government Instability and Belief in Religious Sources of Control.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99(5), 725–739.

(p. 601) Koenig, H. G., and D. B. Larson. 2001. “Religion and Mental Health: Evidence for an Association.” *International Review of Psychiatry* 13(2), 67–78.

Krach, S., I. Blümel, D. Marjoram, T. Lataster, L. Krabbendam, J. Weber, et al. 2009. “Are Women Better Mindreaders? Sex Differences in Neural Correlates of Mentalizing Detected with Functional MRI.” *BMC Neuroscience* 10(1), 9. doi:10.1186/1471-2202-10-9.

LaBouff, J. 2014. “Imagining Atheists.” Paper presented at the fifteenth annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Austin, Tex. Preconference talk: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-tcCD292vo**.

Lanman, J. 2012. “The Importance of Religious Displays for Belief Acquisition and Secularization.” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27(1), 49–65.

Lenski, G. E. 1953. “Social Correlates of Religious Interest.” *American Sociological Review* 18(5), 533–544.

Miller, A. S., and J. P. Hoffmann. 1995. “Risk and Religion: An Explanation of Gender Differences in Religiosity.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34(1), 63–75.

Moreira-Almeida, A., F. Lotufo Neto, and H. G. Koenig. 2006. “Religiousness and Mental Health: A Review.” *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria* 28(3), 242–250.

Mudd, T. L., M. B. Najle, B. K. L. Ng, and W. M. Gervais. 2015. “The Roots of Right and Wrong: Do Concepts of Innate Morality Reduce Intuitive Associations of Immorality with Atheism?” *Secularism and Nonreligion* 4(1), 10. doi:10.5334/snr.bc.

Norenzayan, A., and W. M. Gervais. 2013. “The Origins of Religious Disbelief.” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 17(1), 20–25.

Norenzayan, A., W. M. Gervais, and K. H. Trzesniewski. 2012. “Mentalizing Deficits Constrain Belief in a Personal God.” *PLoS ONE* 7(5), e36880.

Norenzayan, A., and I. G. Hansen. 2006. “Belief in Supernatural Agents in the Face of Death.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32(2), 174–187.

Pennycook, G., J. A. Cheyne, P. Seli, D. J. Koehler, and J. A. Fugelsang. 2012. “Analytic Cognitive Style Predicts Religious and Paranormal Belief.” *Cognition* 123(3), 335–346.

Pew Research Global Attitudes Project. 2007. “Chapter 3: Views of religion and morality.” **http://www.pewglobal.org/2007/10/04/chapter-3-views-of-religion-and-morality/**

Pew Research Center. 2012. “Nones on the Rise.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/**

Pew Research Center. 2015. “America’s Changing Religious Landscape.” **http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/**.

Rauch, J. 2003. “Let It Be.” *The Atlantic* (May) **http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/05/let-it-be/302726/**.

Ritter, R. S., J. L. Preston, and I. Hernandez. 2014. “Happy Tweets: Christians Are Happier, More Socially Connected, and Less Analytical than Atheists on Twitter.” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 5(2), 243–249.

Rutjens, B. T., J. van der Pligt., and F. van Harreveld. 2010. “Deus or Darwin: Randomness and Belief in Theories about the Origin of Life.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46(6), 1078–1080.

Schjoedt, U., H. Stødkilde-Jørgensen, A. W. Geertz, and A. Roepstorff. 2009. “Highly Religious Participants Recruit Areas of Social Cognition in Personal Prayer.” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 4(2), 199–207.

Schulte-Rüther, M., H. J. Markowitsch, N. J. Shah, G. R. Fink, and M. Piefke. 2008. “Gender Differences in Brain Networks Supporting Empathy.” *NeuroImage* 42(1), 393–403.

Shenhav, A., D. G. Rand, and J. D. Greene. 2012. “Divine Intuition: Cognitive Style Influences Belief in God.” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 141(3), 423–428.

(p. 602) Sibley, C. G., and J. Bulbulia. 2012. “Faith after an Earthquake: A Longitudinal Study of Religion and Perceived Health before and after the 2011 Christchurch New Zealand Earthquake.” *PLoS ONE* 7(12), e49648.

Stark, R. 2002. “Physiology and Faith: Addressing the ‘Universal’ Gender Difference in Religious Commitment.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(3), 495–507.

Vail, K. E., J. Arndt, and A. Abdollahi. 2012. “Exploring the Existential Function of Religion and Supernatural Agent Beliefs among Christians, Muslims, Atheists, and Agnostics.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 38(10), 1288–1300.

Zuckerman, P. 2008. *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment*. New York: New York University Press.

**Will M. Gervais**

Will M. Gervais is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Kentucky, where he is Director of the Beliefs and Morality Lab. He investigates cognitive, evolutionary, and cultural forces facilitating beliefs about the supernatural. His publications also examine public attitudes toward the nonreligious and modes of cognition associated with nonbelief.

**Maxine Najle**

Maxine B. Najle is a doctoral student in Experimental Psychology at the University of Kentucky, where she participates in research conducted by the Beliefs and Morality Lab. A recent journal article is “Learned Faith: The Influences of Evolved Cultural Learning Mechanisms on Belief in Gods” with coauthor Will Gervais published in Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.

# The Challenge of Leaving Religion and Becoming Secular

Marlene Winell

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.37

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores the personal change from “religious” to “secular” and reasons why that change is such a significant paradigm shift for some people. It considers the lingering effects of religious indoctrination and the healing from trauma that it can require. A developmental perspective is applied to understand the arrested human development that occurs within a constricting religion and the stages people move toward upon leaving it. The chapter then employs a cross-cultural lens to examine cultural adaptation that can involve culture shock as people interact with an increasingly secular world. Finally, it examines aspects of healing and personal growth important to becoming secular.

Keywords: deconversion, conservative religion, culture shock, religious trauma

BECOMING secular after being deeply religious is no small matter. For the sincere believer, religion defines life, and giving it up challenges core assumptions about reality, personal identity, and relationships. The transition creates enormous opportunities for growth, but it can create challenges that add to earlier harms done by the religious indoctrination itself. Consider the range of emotion in the following quotations, which I have personally heard during my years of counseling:

> “It is as if the world has come alive for the first time since I was young, as if my senses and mind are waking up from the dead.”
>
> “Though it’s taken almost half my lifetime—and endless hours of therapy—to shed the anger, guilt, and self-hatred, my new life is demonstrably richer, fuller, and more meaningful than my narrow, fear-driven experience. I am not alone.”
>
> “It is like a death in the family as my god Jesus finally died and no amount of belief could resurrect him. It is an absolutely dreadful and frightening experience and dark night of the soul.”

This chapter explores the change from “religious” to “secular” and reasons why the change from religious to secular is such a significant paradigm shift for some people. We will look at the lingering effects of religious indoctrination and the healing from trauma that it can require. A developmental perspective is applied to understand the arrested human development that occurs within a constricting religion and the stages people move toward upon leaving it. Next we employ a cross-cultural lens to examine cultural adaptation that can involve culture shock as people interact with an increasingly secular world. Finally, we will look at aspects of healing and personal growth important to becoming secular.

## (p. 604) People in Transition

A significant exodus from organized religion is occurring, particularly in the United States. A survey by the Pew Research Center (2015) revealed that nearly one in five US adults (18 percent) were raised in a religious faith and now identify with no religion. We are hearing the stories from thousands of people in the media, in memoirs, and in emotionally charged discussions online. The struggles described can be heartbreaking, but the support from the virtual community is often impressive as well.[1] Other sources of data are clinical case studies and qualitative interviews, which have been the basis of my own work for over twenty years, with people I call “reclaimers”—this chapter also refers to them as former believers and ex-believers. They are reclaiming and rebuilding their lives after participation in religious beliefs, practices, and communities (Winell 2012).

The experience of reclaimers varies widely. Former believers who were indoctrinated at a young age seem to have a harder time recovering, and more so if the religion or family was strict and dogmatic. My own clinical observations indicate that personality differences matter, with sensitive, emotional personalities reacting with more distress to religious trauma, as does the depth of involvement. Devoted believers who try the hardest to conform and please also hurt the most when faith fails.

Traditionally, attention has been paid to fringe or cult-like groups when identifying problems in religion (Singer and Lalich 1996). These concerns have been legitimate and important interventions developed (Hassan 1990), but many of the issues associated with so-called cults also apply to conservative forms of mainstream religion. For reclaimers leaving groups characterized by rigid beliefs, authoritarian structure, and attempts at isolation from the larger culture, their departure presents a significant challenge to their entire worldview and sense of self. In some important ways, leaving religion is not like other life transitions. An example of an ordinary transition is leaving home—a challenging but normal developmental task. Individuals pack their belongings and make arrangements for a move. Counselors understand and can be supportive. Individuals have a context of many peers. In a normal developmental transition of this sort, you do not have to reconstruct your own identity, other people, the world, the future, life, death, the afterlife, meaning, values, and life plans. You can continue to trust your feelings and intuitions and exercise

critical thinking. You do not have reality ripped out from under you. By contrast, a former minister and the author of *Godless*, Dan Barker, has said that losing faith

> "was like tearing my whole frame of reality to pieces, ripping to shreds the fabric of meaning and hope, betraying the values of existence. It hurt. It hurt badly. … It was sacrilege. All of my bases for thinking and values had to be restructured." (2008: 39)

Religion provides a framework for meeting deep and important human needs. It provides a place to belong—a tribe. To echo Eric Hoffer (1951) in *The True Believer*, religion provides cosmic meaning for those who need a cause. Disillusionment is a massive loss. Leaving religion is less like moving houses and more like deconstructing an entire house and then building a new one from the foundation up.

## (p. 605) Paradigm Shift

To borrow the language of philosopher and historian of science, Thomas Kuhn, an individual goes through a personal *paradigm shift* in order to become a secular person. The concept of "paradigm shift" or "scientific revolution" was famously developed by Kuhn (1962) as a way of understanding scientific progress. According to Kuhn, a paradigm "stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (Kuhn 1970, 175)." A paradigm shift happens when "anomalies" appear, leading to questioning of the paradigm, then a stage of crisis, and then the development of a broader science with a new paradigm. Periods like this have happened many times in the history of science, such as Copernican revolution, the Darwinian revolution, or the theory of relativity by Einstein.

This model can be applied to leaving religion and becoming secular. A person who has been indoctrinated in a rigid, conservative form of Bible-based Christianity acquires and lives with unconscious, all-encompassing assumptions on the daily, cellular, experiential level that touch on every aspect of reality. Here are some of the assumptions, held personally and by the surrounding social environment:

> Humans live in a world of sin and danger, dominated by Satan.
>
> Earthly life is taking part in "spiritual warfare," along with real spiritual entities of good and evil.
>
> There is a timeline for all existence set by God, starting with Creation and ending with the earth's destruction and Final Judgment.
>
> Values, morals, and all things important are eternal and unchanging, authored by God who answers to no one.
>
> Humans are sinful by nature, guilty and needing salvation.

> Human life on Earth is unimportant in the cosmic scheme. Pleasure is for the afterlife, and the “flesh” is sinful. Life’s purpose is to serve God.
>
> Ultimately God is in control and will have justice. Humans do not need to understand His mysterious ways, only have faith and not question.

These assumptions crumble when leaving religion, and replacements are not immediately apparent. This can touch off an emotional breakdown or a complete existential crisis. Because social supports often fall away and professionals do not understand, it can be a lonely time as well—a dark night of the soul requiring courage and stamina. From the ruins, the former believer must construct a new identity and a framework for living life with meaningful new commitments.

At its most fundamental, a “religious” stance in life involves a supernatural worldview concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe. “Secular” involves a worldview that is completely natural in its explanations. Consider these two different paradigms for looking at the world:

> The supernatural paradigm from antiquity posits the existence of an unseen spiritual world with supernatural laws and forces to explain the material world. The unseen is beyond human understanding but has ultimate power over human destiny. Human response to this condition is generally passive, while seeking guidance and mercy from an external deity and waiting for a better existence.
>
> (p. 606) The natural paradigm views the universe as unitary and natural, vast but available for human investigation. Explanations are sought within the natural order, since natural laws are the rules that govern the structure and behavior of the natural universe, and the changing universe at every stage is a product of these laws. Human agency is generally considered the preferred method of improving the world.

These paradigms are radically different, and any person who moves in their personal orientation from one toward the other goes through a seismic shift.

In Figure 36.1, the Copernican revolution is depicted as an example of a scientific paradigm shift, which was an upheaval in science. It meant that the universe did not center around the earth. The lower part of the graph depicts philosophical paradigm shifts, on the personal and societal levels. The change in worldview from supernaturalism to naturalism is an example occurring on both levels simultaneously. Within the societal shift are the individual paradigm shifts of individual people who are giving up their supernatural assumptions about reality in favor of a natural understanding of the world.

Consider the parallels to a scientific paradigm shift. The initial worldview of Christianity is, like a scientific paradigm, a tightly knit system of core assumptions. The believer goes through stages of doubt and questioning when “anomalies” are discovered that challenge what is assumed to be true. These may be problems with the “scriptures” or with the church, moral issues, or scientific conflicts. Gradually, information accumulates that con-

tradicts the paradigm until it no long holds and a crisis is reached. The individual must release much or all of the old paradigm and find a new paradigm for life. This process can be just as painful and revolutionary as any scientific paradigm shift since it can turn reality upside down for a sincere believer. Many report resisting the change for some time, just as scientific paradigms have been opposed because the new reality seems too shocking.

When individuals leave Christianity, an interesting and problematic aspect is the way personal paradigm shifts are embedded within a much larger shift in society. A massive shift has been going on for hundreds of years in Western society from a religious culture to a more secular one, creating enormous conflict each time a new practice or “heresy” disturbs the old order. (Controversies over teaching evolution in schools and allowing reproductive rights for women serve as current examples.) Since there have been many shifts within it along the way, we could call this a “meta-paradigm” shift because it is so comprehensive. A major feature of this meta-paradigm shift is the transition from exclusive supernaturalism toward accepting naturalism. As humanity learns about the natural world, there has been a move from a supernatural view of causation by forces of good and evil to a naturalistic explanation. For Western civilization, the Enlightenment marked this radically new understanding of reality. Today the Christian church no longer rules Europe and cannot burn witches for causing epidemics. Gods and demons are less often used for explaining natural disasters, crop failures, or disease. Despite progress, the world is still in the agonizing middle stages of the meta-paradigm shift, stranded in a wasteland where religionists shout scripture while scientists scratch their heads. The societal shift does not always support personal progress. For example, a person may try to live free of religion but still be surrounded by churches and bombarded with religious reminders at Christmas and Easter. In some areas of the United States billboards proclaim that “Hell is Real.” **(p. 607)**

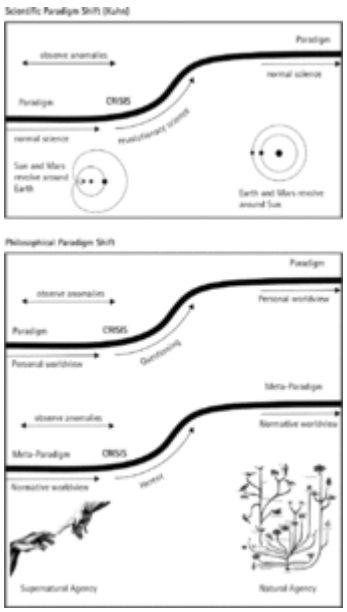


*Figure 36.1* Scientific and Philosophical Paradigm Shifts.

(p. 608) In this context, embracing a secular worldview or paradigm is not only possible for the reclaimer; but a new framework for living is a necessity to proceed with life. Contrast the following secular (humanist) viewpoints with that conservative religious worldview described earlier. This list is not exhaustive but selects some that challenge conservative religion and may provide considerable relief for reclaimers. (For example, number 4 allows one to stop judging people as saved or damned.)

1. Meaning is created.
2. Nothing is certain except change.
3. Each is responsible for his or her own life.
4. Everyone is equal and innocent.
5. Death is final.
6. Reality is a matter of perspective.
7. Complexity and ambiguity are normal and everywhere.
8. Humans have a moral compass without god.
9. Earth is our only home.
10. Pleasure is a good thing.

From my clinical observations, finding a new philosophy of life is the primary task in recovery from religion. However, for a person undergoing that transition, views such as these are far from obvious. Even if the outdated realities have been stripped away, many believers were taught that there are no other coherent versions of reality. Consequently, even thinking about any of these views are part of the outcome of *crisis* in that paradigm shift.

# Lingering Religious Trauma

Religious indoctrination is often early, deep, and optimized to get past cognitive defenses. Consequently, the effects last well beyond leaving the faith, and a discussion of becoming secular would be incomplete without addressing them. Raising questions about toxic beliefs and abusive practices in religion violates a social taboo—yet religion can truly be harmful. Religious practices can harm children by promoting physical, sexual, and mental maltreatment (Heimlich 2011). For example, in Alice Miller's (2002) research on the serious long-term consequences of corporal punishment, a direct connection is made to parental authoritarianism in relation to the Fourth Commandment, "Honor thy father and mother." While religion is not well recognized as a source of trauma in the field of mental health, it is gradually getting more attention. The American Psychiatric Association's (2000) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* includes "Religious or Spiritual Problem" (741) with examples including "distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith." There is still little writing from psychologists about religious harm, with the exception of my work and that of Valerie Tarico (2010), who has been my collaborator (Winell and Tarico 2014).

The following cases illustrate the lingering effects of religious indoctrination:

> A young woman who has left her faith is covered with scars from cutting herself because she was constantly judged for masturbating.
>
> (p. 609) A young man has no idea what to do for work because life seems meaningless and he can't make decisions after always looking for "God's will."
>
> A woman drives past a billboard that says "Where will you be if you die tonight?" on her way to work and has an anxiety attack, causing her to miss work.

Some harm from religion can be described as a form of complex posttraumatic stress disorder. This concept was developed by Judith Herman (1997), author of *Trauma and Recovery*, to describe trauma that is not just a one-time event but a repeated stressor such as continuing child abuse.

# Religious Trauma Syndrome

With religious trauma syndrome (RTS), a theoretical concept I have developed (Winell 2011), the trauma is twofold. First, the actual teachings and practices of a restrictive religion can be toxic and create lifelong mental damage. Second, departing a religious fold adds enormous stress as an individual struggles with leaving one world for another. Leaving can precipitate significant and sudden loss of social support at the time when such support is most needed when one is facing the task of reconstructing one's life. Reclaimers are often ill-prepared to deal with this. They have been taught to fear the secu-

lar world; skills like self-reliance and independent thinking have been suppressed or underdeveloped.

Key dysfunctions in RTS are

> Cognitive: Confusion, difficulty with decision-making and critical thinking, dissociation, identity confusion.
>
> Affective: Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, suicidal ideation, anger, grief, guilt, loneliness, lack of meaning.
>
> Functional: Sleep and eating disorders, nightmares, sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, somatization.
>
> Social/cultural: Rupture of family and social network, employment issues, financial stress, problems acculturating into society, interpersonal dysfunction.

Certain theories and empirical work in the field of trauma offer insight into recovery from religion. Kaufmann's (2002) "shattered assumption framework" has been used to understand traumatic loss such as the death of a loved one but can easily be applied to loss of faith. In this view,

> The assumptive world concept refers to the assumptions or beliefs that ground, secure, stabilize, and orient people. They are our core beliefs. In the face of death and trauma, these beliefs are shattered and disorientation and even panic can enter the lives of those affected.
>
> (Beder 2005: 255; see also DePrince and Freyd 2002)

According to research on this framework, the most damaging traumas are those that are human-caused and involve interpersonal violence and violation (Janoff-Bulman 1992), which would describe indoctrinating children in fear-based religion. This approach names four basic assumptions held about the world that are shattered with these traumas: the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, the self is worthy, and others are trustworthy. This **(p. 610)** model applies well to religion if one thinks of the "world" as that created and maintained by the religious group. It is noteworthy that all of the most controlling, authoritarian religions make sweeping, ultimate promises along with demands for devotion. The fact that sincere and dedicated individuals seem to be the ones most traumatized when their religious world crumbles would make sense from Kauffman's perspective that shattered assumptions cause the self to fragment into pieces. As he puts it, "The assumptive world order is the set of illusions that shelter the human soul" (2002: 206).

As an example of "loss of the assumptive world," losing one's religion is a special and potentially extreme case. For many people who leave their faith, it is like a death or divorce. Their "relationship" with God was a central assumption, such that giving it up feels like a genuine loss to be grieved. It can be like losing a lover, parent, or best friend who has always been there. Many former believers have anger about the abuse of growing up in a

world of lies. They feel robbed of a normal childhood, honest information, and the opportunity to develop and thrive. They have bitterness for being taught they were worthless and in need of salvation yet never able to be sure they were good enough to make it. They have anger about terrors of hell, the "rapture," demons, apostasy, unforgivable sins, and the evil world. They resent not being able to ever feel good or safe. Many are angry that the same teachings are inflicted on more children continuously. They have rage because they dedicated their lives and gave up everything to serve God. They are angry about losing their families and their friends. They feel enormously betrayed. As one person expressed, "Depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts ruled my life for about two years as I realized that everything I was taught, everything I believed, and everything I was living for *was a lie*."

"Betrayal trauma theory" approaches the subject of trauma from a different angle by acknowledging emotions like anger rather than fear as a response. It also advocates recognizing sociocultural forces at play, not just the pathology of individual trauma survivors. The theory points out that society is resentful of the ways in which victims of trauma shatter our illusions of safety and often engages in victim blaming in order to order to maintain basic assumptions (Kolk et al. 1996). Applied to religious survivors, it is easy to see how they are blamed for their own distress. Betrayal may also come in the form of response the survivor receives from others following the event, such as disbelief, minimizing, or otherwise devaluing the individual's experience. In the case of individuals recovering from religion, the present state of awareness of religious issues in society is such that these responses are a problem. People frequently report difficulties being heard or helped, even by therapists. In the case of ongoing, repeated abuse, it is critical to focus on relational issues (DePrince and Freyd 2002). The pathology is not just in the mind of the survivor. Relevant questions include who did the betraying, what the betrayal was about, the relationship to the perpetrator, and the societal response to the events.

# Addiction and Domestic Violence

Dependence on a religious group has been compared to other forms of addiction (Booth 1989). Arterburn and Felton write about "toxic faith," explaining that "because of the lack (p. 611) of self-worth and the need to feel good about self, addictions develop. Addictions are about finding safety and relief from feelings of worthlessness and pain" (2001: 207).

Within a conservative religious worldview, the ordinary person is an unworthy sinner and comes to the faith to confess, be forgiven, and be saved. However, life happens, and more sin occurs. Guilt always follows, since Jesus is quoted as saying, "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Mistakes are never acceptable and perfectionism becomes an obsession. The person who has "sinned," no matter what the minor offense, comes back to confess and be cleansed again and experiences the relief again. This works until the next sin and the next wave of guilt and need for repentance.

The addictive “fix” can be understood and easily compared to cycles in domestic abuse as well. Like domestic violence, the victim does not suspect that the self is innocent and the situation is to blame. When inklings of that fact do occur, getting out is not easy. The self-blame has been internalized, just like in the violent home. The challenge for those leaving a rigid religious group is to resist internalizing blame for problems and to resist returning for another “fix” due to guilt and shame. Here’s one way that I have heard this expressed: “I do things that are taboo in the religion I was in like dance, drink alcohol, and occasionally go out with friends to a bar to socialize. It is still difficult at times to do these things without having feelings of shame and fear but I am determined to burn new pathways in my brain so that it gets to be a habit to have fun and enjoy the now.” Unfortunately, there is no support structure for people addicted to religion as there is for those addicted to alcohol. In addition, those who turn to alcohol to medicate themselves are unable to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings because they have no tolerance for the “higher power” language that organization employs.

# Harmful Doctrines

While the full extent of damage possibly caused by religious indoctrination has been explored elsewhere (Winell 2007, 2011), certain doctrines are worth discussing here because they create such liabilities for becoming secular.

## A Damaged Sense of Self

Conservative religious groups generally teach a sense of self that is negative and degraded. In Christianity, this self is lost and damned and in need of salvation. Due to original sin, the self is fundamentally bad and cannot be trusted. This is because all good things are considered from God, while a person is just a channel and can be led astray. As an empty shell, a person’s thoughts are inadequate and misleading, feelings are irrelevant, and basic drives are selfish and destructive. Illustrating the dependence that is fostered, Jerry Falwell said, “Start your day off by ridding yourself of self-reliance” (1982: 56). In this environment, confidence in one’s own judgment is diminished. Of course, for the Christian believer, this problem of worthlessness and weakness is solved by the atonement of Christ (although even then there is no way to be sure of one’s salvation). But the ex-believer no (p. 612) longer has this faith and is left with a self that still feels bad, weak, and empty. There is little awareness of having inner resources of love and strength and wisdom to embark on a new life journey.

In secular psychology, an active self with personal responsibility is considered desirable, not a liability or sin. Empirical research demonstrates that beliefs about one’s ability and related skills to be self-directing are related to human happiness and effectiveness (Winell 1987; Bandura 1977; Seligman 1975). But former believers, who have been taught to denigrate themselves look to outside authorities and search for “God’s will,” often struggle with decision-making and overwhelming stress. The damage to self also causes problems at the core level of basic identity. A true believer identifies as *being* a Christian or

Catholic or another label. Beyond something one believes; this is something one *is.* Thus losing one's faith is experienced to some extent as losing oneself. This can be quite a loss as the old identity unravels, including such things as being a child of God with an important mission in life. The transition to secular life then involves discovering one's new identity and rebuilding the self.

## Fear and Phobia Indoctrination

The most challenging recovery issue for ex-believers is dealing with fear, according to my observations. The faithful are taught to fear eternal consequences after they die and to be very afraid of spiritual and earthly disasters in the here and now. Thus, the self cannot be trusted and neither can the outside world. Without a doubt, the threat of severe, eternal punishment is the worst doctrine of all in conservative religious groups. In fundamentalist churches, teaching about abject torture in hell starts in early childhood with vivid imagery. Mormons warn about "outer darkness," and Jehovah's Witnesses fear Armageddon. The ex-believer who rejects the belief system may intellectually dismiss the fear but be haunted emotionally by the question, "What if it's true?" Some experience anxiety or nightmares for an extended time beyond leaving the faith.

Aside from worries over what will happen after death, believers in conservative religious groups are taught to despise and fear "the world." Christians are taught to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, living cautiously among unbelievers. Verses from the Bible are used to great effect: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15); true believers are accustomed to being "in the world but not of the world" (John 17:14-19), which is considered fallen and the domain of Satan.

It is said that leaving the faith and venturing into the world is likely to result in terrible times—misery, depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, divorce, crime, or worse. Satan and his minions are everywhere seeking to devour. If one leaves the protection of God and the fellowship of believers, one will be open to the attacks of the Evil One. All of this is very frightening, and horror stories are told to back it up. Nonbelievers are said to lack any moral core and to have no real joy or happiness or meaning in life because that is not possible outside of the faith. Anything that looks that way is Satan's deception and cannot last. One woman who had left her faith quoted C. S. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*: "God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing" (1952: 72). Despite rejecting the statement intellectually, she found herself harboring (p. 613) a near-constant gut fear that it was true. Specific doctrines are used to warn believers about leaving. One concerns "apostasy." which is the warning that once a person leaves the faith, he or she cannot return and the consequence is worse than if the person had never believed in the first place. For the apostate, there is no hope of redemption and this life will be miserable as well. Even disgusting imagery is used—a dog returning to its vomit or a sow wallowing in mire (2 Peter 2:22). Apostasy is

an unforgiveable sin, and there are others such as blaspheming the Holy Spirit, but this one is clear.

The “world” can indeed be an alarming place, but virtually all conservative, restrictive religious groups paint a picture of conditions getting much worse. “End times” books and movies have a big impact, especially on children; the classic *Thief in the Night* movie about the “rapture” resulted in nightmares for many.[2] The “signs of the end” are supposedly everywhere—war, natural disasters, changing morality, even peace-making. When the attacks on the United States on 9/11 occurred, many panicked, becoming more religious. Numerous ex-believers have memories from childhood of finding a parent missing and thinking with horror that they had been left behind. Even as adults they may experience abandonment anxiety, which persists regardless of any rational analysis.

## Loss and Rejection

Not all former believers leave their religious group willingly or easily. Expressing doubts, questioning authority, and not conforming can result in expulsion. For example, Paul is quoted as saying “[I have decided] to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5). A client of mine was told explicitly by his church of thirty years that he had been “turned over to Satan” after he had failed to attend for a while. Another was “disfellowshipped” from a Jehovah’s Witness congregation for asking questions. A common experience is to go to a pastor or leader with questions and, rather than getting help, be told that doubting is a sin. For groups with severe sanctions for leaving or breaking rules, the isolation from family and community is extremely painful.

Aside from formal shaming and shunning, losing closeness with friends and family is painful for many reclaimers. This is a much bigger issue than in other life transitions. For some, their entire circle of friends is at their church and their social activities are largely church-related. Leaving the group means losses on several fronts. Religious groups often provide opportunities for music, teaching, working with children, service experiences, and even athletics. Attending church regularly provides structure and contact with others on a regular basis, and this is not easily replaced. Most of all the tension with family can be intense, causing ruptures that are very difficult to handle. Even more cruelly, many conservative church groups consider these breakdowns in relationship to be the natural outcome of believers falling away from the faith. The true family, in this view, is the family of God. A Bible quote to support this is, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

In summary, the healing process after leaving a religious group can be extensive. Some individuals may be aware of these issues and get professional help, while others undergo it on their own, typically struggling for some time.

## (p. 614) A Developmental Perspective

In addition to healing from the harmful effects of religious indoctrination, many former believers need to make up for developmental deficits. This is due to indoctrinated religious beliefs that limit growth in important psychological and intellectual areas and also the isolating, sheltered nature of many religious environments. For example, because critical thinking is devalued compared to rote learning of approved material, individuals need to learn to think for themselves. A verse used to denigrate a person's intelligence and "worldly" wisdom (evolution and the rest of science, for example) is I Corinthians 3:18-19: "Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God." Former believers have to learn to fully sense and respect their own emotions and desires, and to do this, maturation is essential. Sexuality is one area that is usually underdeveloped because religious groups frequently limit access to sexual information and enforce restrictions. Becoming secular entails becoming comfortable with one's body and learning to navigate sexuality in relationships.

Other aspects of relationships are also in need of development. Many religious groups provide the entire social life of the members so they learn very little about making friends. The church community is familiar and always present. Upon leaving the fold, ex-believers have to learn skills for meeting people and building relationships. Finally, maturing is needed in managing personal responsibility and freedom. Without the strict moral code of the religious group, newly secular people can feel lost developing ethical and moral guidelines, sometimes requiring a period of experimentation.

In light of several theories in human development, it appears that a conservative religious mindset is associated with a lower level of psychological development, perhaps even causing arrested development. But it also follows that some growing individuals may want to break out of the rigid framework of a conservative group as they mature naturally. With personal development, they are drawn to a larger world. Upon leaving the confines of their faith, they are then free to continue developing in all the ways theorists describe—cognitively, emotionally, morally, socially, and more.

Illustrating this progression is the work of developmental psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1973) who extensively studied moral reasoning and developed a stage theory of moral development from childhood to adulthood that paralleled the stages of cognitive development by Piaget (1977). Interestingly, the most basic level, while usually describing children, compares most closely to the reasoning of rigid religious thinking: Stage 1, Obedience and Punishment, takes rules to be fixed and absolute. Obeying the rules is important because it is a means to avoid punishment. Stage 3, Interpersonal Relationships, is another stage that is familiar to a religious orientation. This "good boy and good girl" stage is focused on living up to social expectations and roles, with an emphasis on conformity. Stage 4, Maintaining Social Order, is the last stage that reflects religious thinking

and also the last of Kohlberg's "conventional" stages. At this stage, one focuses on law and the social order, doing one's duty, and respecting authority.

The final two stages in this model represent "postconventional" morality, which requires adults to base morality on reasoned decision-making, considerations about the wider social good, and the value of universally applicable norms, such as human rights. Pursuing these (p. 615) higher levels of reasoning would necessarily put one in conflict with rigid religious thinking. Former believers who have matured appear to have added those two stages to their moral thinking.

# A Cross-Cultural View

As former believers become secular, they are in many ways moving from one world to another. In addition to the *mental* paradigm shift, they experience a *social* "crisis" stage analogous to "culture shock." To understand this transition in full, we must consider religion as culture and not just a belief system. Anthropologist David Eller (2010) asserts that Christianity, like any religion, is both part of a culture and *is a culture*. Michael Zapf explains that "A culture can be understood … as a network of shared meanings that are taken for granted as reality by those interacting within the network" (1991: 105). Restrictive Bible-based religious groups have their own subcultures within mainstream Western culture. Core assumptions and values, rules, norms, customs, language, and shared meanings differentiate them from the broader culture. It makes sense, then, to look at the transition to secular life as a kind of cross-cultural adaptation. For many reclaimers, this could include "culture shock," a term introduced by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg to mean "anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (1954: 1). New, strange stimuli may seem to have no meaning (Hall 1959; Adler 1975).

For the former Bible believer, the culture of Christianity was not considered just one of many worldviews. It was the one that was absolute and perfect, resting on *reality*. Therefore moving out into "the world," even with the nominal trappings of Christianity, is a feeling of being at sea. It is leaving the "rock of ages" to be untethered in a universe of obscure beliefs and ambiguous cultural ways. Like cross-cultural adaptations, the move from religious to secular worlds may include a sense of discovery and excitement as well as anxiety. One trend over time that has been identified is the U-curve hypothesis. In this model, initial feelings of optimism and challenge give way over time to deep frustration and confusion as the person is unable to interact in a meaningful way in the new culture. Eventually these difficulties are alleviated or resolved, so that confidence is regained and integration is achieved. For the former believer, the parallel at the beginning would be in the relief felt in leaving all the negatives of the religion—the intellectual problems, the moral issues, the hypocrisies, the behavioral restrictions—for the adventure of a new life in "the world." This relief is often described as one that is a long time coming, often after coping with much cognitive dissonance during years of trying to make a religion work. But relief may be followed by feeling lost in the secular world, as if in an unfamiliar coun-

try or on another planet. Another frequent comment is feeling like a child. One person said, “I feel like a child in an adult world, like I’m a little girl in a violent and evil world.”

Reclaimers are in many ways like refugees—not just immigrants but traumatized newcomers. From the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2015), we get a description of relevant refugee issues, which include (1) traumatic stress related to an intense event affecting emotional and physical well-being, (2) resettlement stress experienced while trying to make a new life, and (3) acculturation stress related to grieving losses and adjusting to a new culture and fitting in. Former believers also go through isolation and alienation, they often experience literal “resettlement,” they are adjusting to a new culture, and they are stressed (p. 616) both by the traumas of their religion and leaving their religion. It is no wonder that so many feel displaced and not at home in the world.

The cultural adjustment from a religious world to a secular one is massive. For the most part, cultural assumptions are unconscious and take time to realize and change. This can help us understand the extensive adaptation necessary in the transition to becoming secular. The following are just a few examples.

## The World

*In a conservative religious culture*, “the world” is fallen and considered temporary; eventually the world will be destroyed and replaced. Life is not to be enjoyed for itself but only for the sake of glorifying God and working to save others for the afterlife. *In secular culture*, this world and this life is all there is. People aspire to “live life to the fullest.” They think of Earth as humanity’s home for the far future. These views can inspire devotion to ideals such as peacemaking, justice, and environmentalism.

## Parenting

*In a religious worldview*, parents are responsible and have authority over their children, as given by God. They teach obedience as a primary virtue, and they assume their children are prone to sin and must be disciplined in order to be good. Passing on their religion is their primary goal. *Secular parenting* assumes influences of both “nature” and “nurture” in creating a unique human being. There is more interest in child development. Values are creativity and critical thinking and expression rather than obedience and conformity.

## Sex

*From a religious viewpoint*, sex is only permitted within very constrained conditions, usually heterosexual marriage. Even then, the importance is in procreation, not pleasure. All sex outside marriage is so condemned as to be called sin that is worse than all other sin—the subject of many sermons, producing much guilt. *From a secular viewpoint*, sex is a natural human need, just as normal as other animal needs like food, including masturbation as a normal behavior. Sexual relations are part of social relations more broadly and

subject to numerous complexities rather than simply being right or wrong depending on marital status.

## Work

*In the religious culture*, one is to find livelihood that falls in line with "God's will." Most are taught that "God has a plan for your life," so individuals seek to discern this. High-status jobs involve some kind of "ministry." *For secular people,* work is usually an important domain of life and a continuing challenge. It is a personal responsibility to find meaningful employment or career.

## (p. 617) People

*In the religious culture,* people are evaluated according to their standing in the religion, and this provides guidance for relating to them. If they are "in the fold," they are objects of fellowship and safe for contact or friendship. If they are "outside the fold," they are either objects of temptation and thus to be avoided (feared) or objects of conversion and subjects to proselytize. From the *viewpoint of secular culture*, people are just people and part of the animal kingdom. They have basic instincts but are not essentially good or bad. Getting to know people is direct and immediate. People are of all kinds and some interactions are more pleasant than others, but there is no need to categorize them or judge.

Another aspect of the cultural adjustment undergone by former believers is the strange experience of a kind of Rip Van Winkle effect. This is the feeling of waking up after being asleep for many years and needing to catch up on what's going on in the world. Getting up to date on pop culture, learning how to dance, navigating a night club, and even ordering coffee at a café—these are examples of specific things that might need to be learned and may be potential sources of embarrassment. Broader knowledge areas usually need supplementation too. Ex-believers may want to learn about evolution if they were taught only creationism. They might want to know more about a lot of subjects, and from a secular point of view in particular, such as history, science, psychology, philosophy, sex, politics, and anthropology. For those who were homeschooled or attended religious schools, this education can be very important. Many find that their religion has colored their views on politics and social issues, so changes can occur in these areas as well.

In general, the formerly religious can be surprised to find out that there is a rich, philosophical history of thought in the secular world dealing with values and meaning. To recover from the idea that there is only one correct (religious) way of thinking, a helpful endeavor is to read and study other religious views, philosophical views, and especially humanism and naturalism. As George Holyoake, the first promoter of the term "secularism," said, "Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life" (Holyoake and Bradlaugh 1870: 74). This is a welcome adventure of discovery.

# Healing and Growth

The former believer now living in the secular world is not without hope. The traumas and liabilities may be real, but new opportunities are just as present. Without the strict rules and authoritarianism of a religious group, former believers can explore freely and exercise their own cognitive and emotional capacities. New friends, connections, and activities are available. This is all exciting despite being daunting. As one person put it, "My life is more real now … Having an imaginary friend is ok when you're a little child but at some point you have to grow up. And feeling like you're growing up is just exhilarating. Just knowing that 'Hey, I'm starting to get some of this, and I'm not as bad as I thought I was. People aren't evil, and they're not all out to get you and there is no great conspiracy and life is what it is. The meaning of life is to sing and dance while the music is on.'"

(p. 618) "Reclaimers" is an apt term for people in this situation. Rather than surviving or recovering or even transitioning, reclaimers are in the process of reclaiming their lives. This includes reclaiming their identities, their ability and right to think for themselves, their feelings, their creativity, their sexuality, their bodies, and everything else about them. It involves healing from trauma and pain, making up for delayed development, and moving forward with new personal growth. It can mean getting help in therapy, online, or from special groups.[3] Reclaimer, refugee, immigrant, secular person—by whatever label for one stage or another, this is about gradually healing and rebuilding a life in "the world." It is an all-consuming life task. The wounds of religion need attending to and may be serious, depending on the particulars of the group concerned. Indoctrination goes deep into the unconscious, and this can be a lot of work for some time to come. The developmental delays can be apparent, especially at times of stress, and the remedial education can be significant. But life moves on from the time a person makes a break from religion and matures in the ways of the secular world. It becomes less frightening, despite not being perfect. Unlike those who seek a different religious experience and change churches, rarely does the fully liberated reclaimer choose to return to religion.

Former believers usually find that they also retain strengths from their religious legacy. Some of the values and habits of thought are still relevant. They have experience thinking about important matters and feeling deeply. They understand caring about others. They know about gratitude, humility, grace, and generosity. They have experience in a community and have given of themselves in service. Upon leaving the fold, they also learn a healthy skepticism that serves them well in life. All of these strengths may not be apparent to an individual at first, but in time they become more evident. The personalities that were most passionate about their faith bring their passion to new domains in life. As they find their way in a world with new freedoms, life opens up. They become more fearless and express themselves more fully. With the unique experience of transitioning out of religious commitment and learning all the lessons that entails, they finally arrive in the secular world with much to offer that world.

Despite all the struggles, former believers gradually discover that the secular world is not the empty, meaningless wasteland they were led to believe. While still having challenges, it is full of joy and meaning, and this is such a huge relief after all the fear. Personal identities are reformed and lives are rebuilt on new terms. With maturity, the newly secular person willingly lets go of promises for existence by and by for a real life here and now. One reclaimer expressed it like this: “I feel free to explore the world, knowing that I’m no different than anyone else. I also feel free to pursue friendships that I would never have dreamed of. I feel I’ve got a long road ahead of me, but it’s my road. I’ll make mistakes, but I’ll also have triumphs too. All that said, I only wish I had left religion sooner!”

## Bibliography

Adler, P. S. 1975. “The Transitional Experience: An Alternative View of Culture Shock.” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 14(4), 13–23.

American Psychiatric Association. 2000. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 4th ed., text rev. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.

Arterburn, Stephen, and Jack Felton. 2001. *Toxic Faith.* Colorado Springs, Colo.: Shaw Books.

Bandura, A. 1977. “Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavior Change.” *Psychological Review* 84(2), 191–215.

Barker, Dan. 2008. *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America’s Leading Atheists.* Berkeley, Calif.: Ulysses Press.

Beder, Joan. 2005. “Loss of the Assumptive World—How We Deal with Death and Loss.” *Omega* 50(4), 255–265.

Booth, Leo. 1989. *Breaking the Chains: Understanding Religious Addiction and Religious Abuse.* Long Beach, Calif.: Emmaus.

DePrince, Anne, and Jennifer Freyd. 2002. “The Harm of Trauma: Pathological Fear, Shattered Assumptions, or Betrayal?” In *Loss of the Assumptive World*, edited by Jeffrey Kauffman, 71–82. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Eller, D. 2010. “The Cultures of Christianities.” In *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails*, edited by John Loftus, 25–46. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Falwell, Jerry. 1982. *Finding Inner Peace and Strength*. New York: Doubleday.

Hall, E. 1959. *The Silent Language*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Hassan, Steve. 1990. *Combatting Cult Mind Control*. Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press.

Heimlich, Janet. 2011. *Breaking Their Will: Shedding Light on Religious Child Maltreatment*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Herman, Judith. 1997. *Trauma and Recovery.* New York: Basic Books.

Hoffer, Eric. 1951. *The True Believer*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Holyoake, G., and C. Bradlaugh. 1870. *Secularism, Scepticism, and Atheism*. London: Austin.

Janoff-Bulman, R. 1992. *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma.* New York: Free Press.

Kauffman, Jeffrey. 2002. "Safety and the Assumptive World." In *Loss of the Assumptive World*, edited by J. Kauffman, 205–211. New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Kohlberg, Lawrence. 1973. "The Claim to Moral Adequacy of a Highest Stage of Moral Judgment." *Journal of Philosophy* 70(18), 630–646.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lahaye, T., and J. Jenkins. 1995–2004. *Left Behind.* 12 vols. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House.

Lewis, C. S. 1952. *Mere Christianity.* San Francisco, Calif.: Harper Collins.

Lysgaard, S. 1955. "Adjustment in a Foreign Society: Norwegian Fulbright Grantees Visiting the United States." *International Social Science Bulletin* 7(1), 45–51.

(p. 620) Miller, Alice. 2002. *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, 3rd ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network. 2015. "Refugee Services Toolkit." Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma. **http://learn.nctsn.org/mod/book/view.php?id=4518&chapterid=6**.

Oberg, Kalervo. 1954. *Culture Shock*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill.

Peterson, Dylan. 2009. "*A Thief in the Night* Keeps Me Awake." Movie review (30 April). **http://dylanclub.blogspot.com/2009/04/thief-in-night-keeps-me-awake.html**.

Pew Research Center. 2015. "America's Changing Religious Landscape." **http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/**.

Piaget, Jean 1977. *The Essential Piaget*. Edited by H. Gruber and J. Voneche. New York: Basic Books.

Seligman, Martin. 1975. *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*. San Francisco, Calif.: W. H. Freeman.

Singer, Margaret, and Janja Lalich. 1996. *Cults in Our Midst*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass.

Tarico, Valerie. 2010. *Trusting Doubt: A Former Evangelical Looks at Old Beliefs in a New Light.* Independence, Va.: Oracle Institute Press.

Van der Kolk, B. A., A. C. McFarlane, and O. Van der Hart. 1996. "A General Approach to Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder." In *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*, edited by B. Van der Kolk, A. C. McFarlane, and L. Weisaeth, 417–440. New York: Guilford Press.

Winell, Marlene. 1987. "Personal Goals: The Key to Self-Direction in Adulthood." In *Humans as Self-Constructing Living Systems: Putting the Framework to Work*, edited by D. Ford and M. Ford, 261–287. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Winell, Marlene. 2007. *Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving their Religion*. Oakland, Calif.: Apocryphile Press.

Winell, Marlene. 2011. "Religious Trauma Syndrome: It's Time to Recognize It." *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Today*. **http://www.babcp.com/Review/RTS-Its-Time-to-Recognize-it.aspx**.

Winell, Marlene. 2012. "Reclaimers." Exchristian.net. **http://new.exchristian.net/2012/07/reclaimers.html**.

Winell, Marlene, and Valerie Tarico. 2014. "The Crazy-Making in Christianity: A Look at Real Psychological Harm." In *Christianity Is Not Great: How Faith Fails*, edited by John Loftus, 376–401. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Zapf, M. 1991. "Cross-Cultural Transitions and Wellness: Dealing with Cultural Shock." *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling* 14(2), 105–119.

## Notes:

(1.) For example, ExChristian.net is encouraging for deconverting and former Christians.

(2.) The most prominent may be Tim Lahaye and Jerry B. Jenkins's *Left Behind* series of twelve adult books and forty young adult books, published from 1995 to 2004. Dylan Peterson (2009) reviews *A Thief in the Night*.

(3.) In addition to numerous online forums, Recovery From Religion (recoveryfromreligion.org) offers a secular therapist referral service, a hotline, and in-person support groups around the United States. Journey Free (journeyfree.org) provides individual recovery coaching, retreats, and a confidential recovery group online.

**Marlene Winell**

Marlene Winell is a psychologist and holds a doctorate in Human Development and Family Studies. She is a consultant, educator, and writer in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her clinical expertise on psychological trauma from religion can be accessed at

JourneyFree.com. She is the author of Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving Their Religion.

# Agency and Responsibility in a Natural World

Erik J. Wielenberg

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.38

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the question of whether key features expected from moral conduct, such as freedom, choice, agency, and responsibility, can sufficiently exist within the natural world as understood by science. A secular, naturalistic view of the universe excludes the existence of nonphysical souls standing outside of the physical universe yet able to causally influence it, and it excludes the existence of a nonphysical deity that could be responsible for human agency and responsibility. Absent those possibilities, this chapter considers the prospects for freedom in a naturalistic universe, together with the issue of what sort of freedom (if any) is required for agency and moral responsibility. Three models of naturalistic agency are explained and discussed: compatibilism, event-causal libertarianism, and agent-causal libertarianism.

Keywords: morality, freedom, free will, agency moral responsibility, naturalism, compatibilism, libertarianism

WE commonly think that people are *moral agents*—that is, that they sometimes act in moral or immoral ways and that in at least some of these cases they are responsible for their moral or immoral actions. In order for this widely held and perhaps innocuous-seeming view to be true, certain other claims about us and our universe must be true as well. We must be beings who can act rather than merely beings to which things happen. We must also be able to act for reasons; this in turn requires that we are beings with intentional or representational states—we must be able to have thoughts that are *about* other things. Additionally, it must be the case that some actions are moral whereas others are immoral. And we must have some capacity to distinguish moral and immoral acts. Finally, we can be morally responsible for what we do only if we our actions are free, although there is significant disagreement about which type(s) of freedom are necessary for moral responsibility.

A secular, naturalistic view of the universe excludes the existence of nonphysical souls standing outside of the physical universe yet able to causally influence it, and it excludes the existence of a nonphysical deity that could be responsible for human agency and responsibility.[1] Some have claimed that without nonphysical souls or God, genuine moral

agency cannot exist (e.g., Craig 1997). Accordingly, the central question of this chapter is: What are the most plausible models of moral agency in a naturalistic universe? Because limitations of space make it impossible to examine all the requirements for moral agency in depth, the discussion to follow is somewhat selective. I focus on the prospects for freedom in a naturalistic universe, together with the issue of what sort of freedom (if any) is required for moral responsibility. I examine what I take to be three models of naturalistic agency that are worth taking seriously: (i) compatibilism, (ii) event-causal libertarianism, and (iii) agent-causal libertarianism.

## (p. 624) Compatibilist Approaches to Freedom and Responsibility

Many philosophical discussions of freedom center on the question of whether free action is compatible with *determinism*, the thesis that "there is at any instant exactly one physically possible future" (van Inwagen 1983: 3). *Incompatibilism* is often taken to be the view that the falsity of determinism is logically necessary for the existence of freedom and *compatibilism* is often taken to be the view that freedom and determinism are compatible with one another. However, it is increasingly recognized that there are many varieties of freedom, and some may be compatible with determinism (see, e.g., Kane 1996: 15).[2] Incompatibilists, however, hold that some very important—perhaps the most important—types of freedom are incompatible with the truth of determinism. Robert Kane, for example, describes what he calls a "deeper freedom" as "the power of agents to be the ultimate creators and sustainers of their own ends or purposes" (1996: 32), and he holds that this deeper freedom is incompatible with determinism. Because we can be responsible for our actions only if we possess this deeper freedom, Kane infers that moral responsibility is also incompatible with determinism (74). Accordingly, for the purposes of this chapter I take incompatibilism to be the view that there is at least one variety of freedom that is both incompatible with determinism and logically necessary for moral responsibility, and I take compatibilism to be the denial of incompatibilism. Finally, I take *libertarianism* to be the view that incompatibilism is true and that some agents are morally responsible for some of their actions (and hence determinism is false).

In this section I first discuss some important compatibilist approaches to freedom and responsibility. I then consider some of the criticisms that have been raised against such approaches. In the following section I turn to libertarian approaches to freedom and responsibility, paying particular attention to Robert Kane's version of libertarianism as well as so-called agent causation libertarianism.

It will be helpful to have before us some examples to think about. One much-discussed example is due to J.L. Austin (1961: 218) involving golf. I will make use of a basketball example instead. On 1 January 1990, I attempted to tip-in a rebound off a missed free-throw attempt by one of my teammates. Had I succeeded, the game would have been tied with just a few seconds remaining. I managed to tip the ball up onto the left side of the basketball hoop where it proceeded to roll all the way around the rim before falling off the other

side. It seemed (and seems) to me that I could have tipped the ball in, despite my actual failure to do so. Austin claims that if determinism is true, then in fact I could not have tipped the ball in since at any time prior to my tip-in attempt, there was only one physically possible future—one in which I missed the tip-in attempt. Daniel Dennett, by contrast, proposes that even if determinism is true, there are situations "*very similar* to the actual occasion in question" in which I make the basket and hence it was possible for me to tip the ball in "in an *important everyday sense* of the word ['possible']" (2003: 76–777). Dennett's position points toward a compatibilist construal of the much-discussed phrase "could have done otherwise." One compatibilist understanding of that phrase has it that S could have done other than A in circumstances C if S would have done other than A in circumstances slightly different from C. This construal of "could have done otherwise" implies that in some cases agents could have done otherwise even if determinism is true (see Walter 2001: 164; Mele 2006: 21–22). Contemporary (p. 625) compatibilists sometimes appeal to chaos theory in discussing this issue (see Dennett 2003: 75–76). An important feature of chaotic systems is that tiny differences in initial conditions can result in huge differences a short time later (Walter 2001: 167). Importantly, chaotic systems can be entirely deterministic (Walter 2001: 165). Henrik Walter claims that there is empirical evidence suggesting that the brain is a chaotic system (2001: 173–175). If that is correct, then even if determinism is true, it may be the case that even if in actual circumstances I, for example, raise my right arm and not my left, there are very similar possible circumstances in which I raise my left arm and not my right, and so on a compatibilist construal of "could have done otherwise," I could have raised my left arm even though in fact I raised my right. According to this approach, even if S is morally responsible for doing A only if S could have done other than A, determinism does not (on the basis of that principle at any rate) exclude moral responsibility.

However, Dennett and Harry Frankfurt have both offered counterexamples to the principle that S is morally responsible for doing A only if S could have done other than A. Dennett's example involves Martin Luther. Asked to recant his ideas at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther refused, allegedly saying: "Here I stand; I can do no other." Dennett writes:

> Luther claimed that he could do no other, that his conscience made it *impossible* for him to recant. … [I]n … cases … like Luther's, when I say I cannot do otherwise I mean that I cannot because I see so clearly what the situation is and because my rational control faculty is *not* impaired. It is too obvious what to do; reason dictates it; I would have to be mad to do otherwise, and, since I happen not to be mad, I cannot do otherwise. (1984: 555–556)

In Luther's case, let us suppose, there is no set of slightly different circumstances in which Luther would have done otherwise; thus, he could not have done otherwise. Yet by Dennett's lights, Luther's act is in fact a paradigmatic example of a free act and one for which Luther is morally responsible. If that is true, then being able to do other than one does is not a necessary condition for being responsible for what one does.

Frankfurt's critique of the principle that a person S is morally responsible for doing A only if S could have done other than A is perhaps the most discussed contemporary argument about freedom and moral responsibility. Frankfurt's key insight is that

> there may be circumstances that constitute sufficient conditions for an action to be performed by someone and that therefore make it impossible for him to do otherwise, but that do not actually impel the person to act or in any way produce his action. (1969: 830)

Here is one of the examples of this sort that Frankfurt offers:

> Suppose someone—Black, let us say—wants Jones to perform a certain action. Black is prepared to go to considerable lengths to get his way, but he prefers to avoid showing his hand unnecessarily. So he waits until Jones is about to make up his mind what to do, and he does nothing unless it is clear to him (Black is an excellent judge of such things) that Jones is going to decide to do something *other* than what he wants him to do. If it does become clear that Jones is going to decide to do something else, Black takes effective steps to ensure that Jones decides to do, and that he does do, what he [Black] wants him to do. … Let Black give Jones a potion, or put him under hypnosis, and in some such way as these generate in Jones an irresistible inner compulsion to perform the act Black wants performed … Or let Black manipulate the minute processes of Jones's brain and nervous system in some more direct way so that causal forces running in and out of his synapses along the poor man's nerves (p. 626) determine that he chooses to act and that he does act in the one way and not in any other. … Now suppose that Black never has to show his hand because Jones, for reasons of his own decides to perform and does perform the very action Black wants him to perform. In that case … Jones will bear precisely the same moral responsibility for what he does as he would have borne if Black had not been ready to take steps to ensure that he do it. (1969: 835–836, subscripts removed)

Common to Dennett and Frankfurt's examples is the thought that there can be cases in which actions flow from their agents in such a way that moral responsibility for the actions lies with the agents despite the fact that it is also the case that the agents could not have done otherwise than they did. In this way, Dennett and Frankfurt seek to undermine the claim that because determinism implies that no one can ever do otherwise, determinism also implies that no one is ever morally responsible for anything.

Dennett writes: "Nicholas Maxwell … defines freedom as 'the capacity to achieve what is of value in a range of circumstances.' I think this is about as good a short definition of freedom as could be" (2003: 302). In seeking to explicate a sort of freedom that suffices for moral responsibility, compatibilists typically point toward features of agents' psychology to which the truth or falsity of determinism is irrelevant.[3] David Hume, for example, maintains that free actions are connected with "motives, inclinations, and circumstances" in such a way that the former "follow with a certain degree of uniformity" from the latter and that the essence of freedom is responsiveness of one's body to one's choices—a re-

sponsiveness that is compatible with determinism ([1777] 1975: 95). Gary Watson (1975) defends an account of freedom along the lines of Maxwell's remark praised by Dennett earlier. On Watson's account, we act freely to the extent that we act in accordance with our beliefs about what is valuable; the possibility of unfree action arises from the fact that our desires do not always correspond with such beliefs and hence our own desires may prevent us from pursuing what we most value (as in kleptomania, for example). Frankfurt (1971) proposes that people act of their own free will (and are morally responsible for their actions) to the extent that they are moved to act by desires that they want to move them to act. And John Fischer and Mark Ravizza (1998) develop an account of what they call *guidance control*, a kind of control that involves both (i) being disposed to recognize and respond to reasons (including moral reasons) in a particular way (1998: 81) and (ii) seeing oneself as a responsible agent (1998: ch. 8) and is (according to Fischer and Ravizza) both compatible with determinism and sufficient for moral responsibility. Another important compatibilist account along similar lines is given by Alfred Mele (2006: 200).

Compatibilists often look to our actual practices of holding people responsible for their actions as a guide to moral responsibility. When a tornado kills a lot of innocent people, we do not assume that the tornado is morally responsible for the deaths, but when a person kills a lot of innocent people, our initial assumption is usually that the person is morally responsible for the deaths. What underlies our differing attitudes toward killer tornados and killer persons? A possible answer is that we recognize that rewarding or punishing tornados will have no impact on their future behavior, whereas rewarding or punishing people often will. As Walter puts it: "Attributing responsibility is a social strategy for getting people to behave according to standards" (2001: 38). Similarly, Dennett suggests that "our current practices and presumptions about responsibility … concern the assessment of the inevitability … of particular features of particular agents … Can you teach these old dogs new tricks, or not?" (2003: 295). The central idea here is that agents are morally responsible for their actions to (p. 627) the extent that rewarding or punishing them for those actions would influence their future behavior.

Manuel Vargas endorses a similar approach to moral responsibility. A distinctive feature of Vargas's view is that he proposes a compatibilist approach to moral responsibility as a *revisionary* account—that is, not as an account of our existing common-sense ways of thinking of moral responsibility but rather as a "replacement and upgrade of common-sense" (2007: 163). On this proposed upgrade, "[a]ssessments of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness … play a special role in getting us to be moral beings, agents better attuned and more appropriately responsive to moral considerations and the reasons they generate" (155). Thus, many compatibilists are united in seeing the primary justification for our practices of holding each other morally responsibility as shaping people's character and actions for the better. Such an approach to moral responsibility coheres with compatibilist approaches to freedom in that acts that are free in a compatibilist sense tend to be products of psychological features of agents that are susceptible to modification by punishment or reward. These compatibilist approaches to freedom and responsibility fit nicely into a naturalistic universe. The psychological characteristics upon which freedom

and responsibility allegedly depend can presumably be instantiated in the brain; at any rate, such characteristics do not require the existence of nonphysical souls.

Critics of compatibilism tend to see compatibilist accounts of freedom and responsibility as mere shadows of the real thing; Kant famously labeled compatibilism a "wretched subterfuge," and Kane characterizes compatibilist views as offering "pallid substitutes" for genuine free will (2007b: 181).[4] As noted already, many incompatibilists concede that some kinds of compatibilist freedoms are valuable but that determinism nevertheless excludes the most important kinds of freedom. Kane presses this sort of worry about compatibilism by appealing to what he calls *covert nonconstraining control* (CNC). Nonconstraining controllers "do not get their way by constraining or coercing others against their wills, but rather by manipulating the wills of others so that the others (willingly) do what the controllers desire" (1996: 64). The subjects of this sort of control "do not feel frustrated or thwarted" and they "act in accordance with their own wants, desires, or intentions" (64–65). In *covert* nonconstraining control, "the controlled agents are unaware of being manipulated" (65).

According to Kane, CNC makes trouble for compatibilist accounts of freedom because agents can possess compatibilist freedom of the highest order while at the same time being subject to CNC and hence not fully free. Kane further claims that it makes no difference to freedom or responsibility whether one is controlled by mad scientists, gods, or entirely natural processes (1996: 68).[5] If determinism is true, then all of us are subject to CNC (or at least NC) and hence lack an important kind of freedom. In particular, we lack the "power to be the ultimate *source* or *origin*" or our own ends or purposes (70). And, if we lack that power, then, whatever the practical benefits of treating people as if they are morally responsible for their actions, genuine moral responsibility does not exist. If we are not ultimately responsible for our own character, then we cannot truly be said to *deserve* one thing rather than another, and being deserving in this way is inextricably linked with morally responsibility (Clarke 2003: 103). On this view of things, the real worry about determinism is not that it deprives us of alternative possibilities but rather that it prevents us from being the ultimate sources of our own actions (Pereboom 2001: 3–5). But what is required for us to possess the self-shaping power that Kane claims is so important? In the next section we consider two approaches to explicating this deeper freedom: Kane's approach and an agent-causal approach.

## (p. 628) The Power to Shape Oneself

The incompatibilist worry that determinism threatens an important kind of freedom is an ancient one. The ancient Greek atomist Democritus held that the fundamental constituents of reality were "atoms and the void" (Cartledge 1999: 11). The first-century Roman atomist Lucretius famously credited a swerve in the motions of the atoms[6] to make room for free will:

> [I]f all motion is always one long chain, and new motion arises out of the old in order invariable, and if first-beginnings do not make by swerving a beginning of motion such as to break the decrees of fate, that cause may not follow cause from infinity, whence comes this free will in living creatures all over the earth, whence I say is this will wrested from the fates by which we proceed whither pleasure leads each, swerving also our motions not at fixed times and fixed places, but just where our mind has taken us? For undoubtedly it is his own will in each that begins these things, and from the will movements go rippling through the limbs. (1975: 115)

However, a little reflection reveals that the appeal to such a "swerving" may not help matters much. If the "new motion" that arises from such swerving occurs randomly, it is hard to see how we could truly be said to have control over the subsequent movements rippling through our limbs. Indeed, a popular objection to libertarian approaches to freedom and responsibility has it that the presence of indeterministic events or processes in the universe sheds little light on how free action can occur and, indeed, that the involvement of indeterministic processes in action actually prevents agents from having control over or being responsible for such actions (van Inwagen 1983: 126–150; O'Connor 2000: 23; Wegner 2002: 323; Clarke 2003: 57; Kane 2007a: 23; Balaguer 2010). Accordingly, an important challenge for libertarians is to provide a plausible positive account of what they take to be the important variety of freedom—an account that helps us to understand how indeterministic processes contribute to freedom and responsibility. As Helen Steward puts it: "It is apparently essential to a sa-tisfactory indeterministic resolution of the free will problem not merely to make place for indeterminacy in the universe, but to make the *right* place for it" (2012: 10).

An important division among libertarian accounts that take up this challenge is between those that "place the important indeterminacy prior to the moment of choice" and those that "place the important indeterminacy *at* the moment of choice" (Balaguer 2010: 16). Kane's account is of the latter type.[7] To understand his strategy for dealing with the worry that indeterminacy interferes with control and responsibility, let us return to the case of the missed tip-in discussed in the previous section. Suppose that "a sudden undetermined twitch" in my arm caused me to miss the basket (Kane 1996: 54). Nevertheless, if I had made the basket, the fact that my doing so was not determined would not have prevented me from being responsible (and highly praiseworthy!) for making the basket. Kane writes: "What we are talking about here is probabilistic causation, and the point is that such causation is often good enough for ascriptions of power and responsibility" (1996: 55). However, missing the basket is not something I did intentionally or willingly and, according to Kane, deeper freedom requires the ability to do otherwise *willingly* (115).

At the heart of Kane's account is what he calls *self-forming willings* (SFWs). One of the examples Kane offers to illustrate SFWs involves "a woman on the way to an important sales meeting who witnesses an assault or mugging in an alley" and is torn between stopping and calling for help or pressing on to the meeting to make an important sale (1996: 126). Kane (p. 629) proposes that cases of this sort involve a divided will in which the agent is trying to make two incompatible choices at the same time. There are thus two si-

multaneous efforts of willing taking place. And, suggests Kane, these efforts may involve indeterministic neural processes:

> [I]n soul-searching moments of moral and prudential struggle, when agents are torn between conflicting visions of what they should become … the outcomes are influenced by, but not determined by, past motives and character. The uncertainty and inner tension that agents feel at such moments are reflected in the indeterminacy of their neural processes. (1996: 130)

Unlike the attempted tip-in case, this case is such that regardless of its resolution, the woman will be responsible for the outcome. She both wills to succeed in overcoming the temptation to press on to the meeting and wills to fail and succumb to the temptation, and her effort to make each choice functions as an obstacle to her effort to make the other choice (Kane 2009a: 35). Consequently, whether she stops and calls for help or presses on, the resulting action is one that she wills and for which she is responsible (Kane 1996: 132). Moreover, the choice she makes will to some extent shape or form her character: "By choosing one way or another in such cases, the agents would be strengthening their moral or prudential characters or reinforcing selfish or imprudent instincts" (127). Since the choice is not determined by antecedent conditions, it originates with the agent and shapes the agent's character. In this way, claims Kane, SFWs allow for the deeper freedom of having ultimate responsibility for one's own ends or purposes.

On Kane's view, it is not only actions produced by SFWs that can be free. Of Dennett's example of Luther, Kane declares:

> If Luther's affirmation did issue inevitably from his character and motives at the time it was made, then his moral accountability for it would depend on whether he was responsible *for being the sort of person he had become at that time*. (1996: 39, emphasis in original)

Thus, the occurrence of a character-shaping SFW in a person's lifetime opens up the possibility of free action for that person at times long after the SFW itself. In this way, Kane can agree with Dennett's contention that Luther was responsible for his refusal to recant even if he could not have done otherwise while at the same time maintaining that the truth of determinism is incompatible with Luther being responsible for his act. Kane's treatment of Frankfurt's example involving Jones and Black is slightly more complex. There are two cases two consider. In one case, Jones's action flows deterministically from his own character. Kane's diagnosis of that case is the same as his diagnosis of Dennett's case: Jones is morally responsible for his act only if, in virtue of a previous SFW, he is responsible for the character that produces that act (2006: 42). The other case is one in which Jones's act itself is a result of an SFW. Kane argues that in that case, Black faces a dilemma:

> Since the SFW is preceded by an indeterminate effort, it is undetermined whether choice A or B will occur until one or the other of them actually does occur. The controller [Black] cannot know which one is going to occur beforehand unless he

> predetermines one of them to occur. He can therefore wait until he finds out whether the agent will do A or B, but then it is too late to control the choice. Or he can intervene in the brain, shutting down the indeterminacy or its effects before either choice occurs, thereby determining the outcome he wants. (2006: 142)

To be sure that Jones does what Black wants him to do, Black must prevent an SFW from occurring, in which case Jones could not have done otherwise but also is not the ultimate (p. 630) source of the act and therefore is not responsible for it. If Black allows the SFW to occur, then Jones is morally responsible for the act—but it is also the case that he could have done otherwise. The upshot, according to Kane, is that Frankfurt-style examples involving SFWs are impossible.[8]

Like the compatibilist views discussed in the previous section, Kane's libertarian view does not require the existence of nonphysical souls. It does, however, require the existence of a certain kind of indeterminism in the universe. While it is relatively uncontroversial that our universe contains indeterminacy at the quantum level, the existence of indeterminacy at the macro level is more controversial, and Kane's SFWs require the latter sort of indeterminacy (1996: 172–174). Kane sketches how such indeterminacy might arise in our universe; his core idea is that chaotic processes (as described in the previous section) might magnify indeterminacy at the quantum level to generate indeterminacy at the macro level (1996: 129; see also Kane 2007a).[9] He suggests that when SFWs occur—when we are "torn between competing visions of what we should do or become"—there is "a kind of 'stirring up of chaos' in the brain that makes it sensitive to micro-indeterminacies at the micro-level" (2009b: 39). We cannot settle the debate over the existence of this sort of indeterminacy here; future empirical discoveries may validate or discredit it (Vargas 2007: 142–145; Balaguer 2010: ch. 4).

There are philosophical objections to Kane's view as well. Some critics question whether the indeterministic component of Kane's account contributes anything of value. Both Dennett and Randolph Clarke consider agents who undergo fully deterministic versions of the sort of internal struggles Kane describes in his discussion of SFWs. Dennett claims that deterministic and indeterministic versions of such struggles "differ in no discernible regard that could make such a special difference [between having morally responsibility and lacking it]" (2003: 272). And Clarke claims that the presence of indeterminism in no way contributes to or enhances the agent's control over his or her actions and hence the indeterministic agent is "no more deserving, and not deserving in any other way, of praise or blame, reward or punishment" than the deterministic agent (2003: 103-104; see Kane 2007b: 175–178). Similarly, Alfred Mele presses the point that experiencing an indeterministic SFW is not sufficient for acting freely. He imagines a manipulator who compels a given agent to try simultaneously to choose two incompatible actions—actions that the agent otherwise would never try to choose. Mele suggests that even if it is not causally determined which effort ultimately succeeds, the agent in this scenario is such that "whatever he chooses, he does not choose it freely—especially when the sort of freedom at issue is the sort most closely associated with moral responsibility" (2006: 52). Despite

these objections, Kane's approach represents an important model of naturalistic agency that merits further exploration.

# Agents and Decisions

Mark Balaguer (2010) has developed an account of free decisions that is, broadly speaking, in the tradition of Kane's account, though there are some important differences as well. At the heart of Balaguer's approach are *torn decisions*:

> A *torn decision* is a decision in which the person in question (a) has reasons for two or more options and feels torn as to which set of reasons is strongest, that is, has no conscious belief as (p. 631) to which option is best, given her reasons; and (b) decides without resolving this conflict—that is, the person has the experience of "just choosing," (2010: 71)

Unlike Kane's SFWs, torn decisions are not undetermined by definition, they do not involve conflicting efforts of will, and they need not (though they may) contribute to the formation of the agent's character (Balaguer 2010: 73–74). Balaguer suggests that despite the fact that many torn decisions are individually trivial, they are collectively important because "[o]ur lives are shaped, to a very large extent, by a huge plethora of 'unimportant' decisions (112). He claims that it is an open empirical question whether torn decisions are causally undetermined, but if they are, this fact about them enhances rather than diminishes that agent's control over his or her decision (2010: 96–106). In this way, Balaguer's account may be thought of as Kane-ism 2.0, owing much to Kane and tackling the challenges raised by Dennett, Clarke, and Mele. Still, compatibilists and agent-causal libertarians alike are dissatisfied with event-causal libertarian approaches like those of Kane and Balaguer. Compatibilists argue that compatibilism already allows for real freedom and moral responsibility so there is no need to posit indeterminism to secure these things whereas agent-causal libertarians argue that agent causation is an essential ingredient in real freedom and moral responsibility. Accordingly, let us turn to consideration of agent-causal versions of libertarianism.

At the heart of such views is a "conception of causation according to which an agent, which is a substance and not an event, can nevertheless be the cause of an event" (Taylor 1991: 48). Hume championed compatibilism in the eighteenth century. Agent causation had a champion in that century as well: Thomas Reid. Reid wrote:

> I consider the determination of the will as an effect. This effect must have a cause which had the power to produce it. … If the person was the cause of that determination of his own will, he was free in that action, and it is justly imputed to him, whether it be good or bad. ([1788] 1977: 273)

Note Reid's identification of the *person* (rather than an event) as the cause of the determination of the will in free action. Importantly, agent causation (a-causation) is not reducible to mere event causation (e-causation). When I a-cause some event, this is not

equivalent to my possession of certain properties at a time causing the event in question. Rather, I simply bring about the event directly. One of the alleged attractions of this sort of approach is that it gives agents a kind of control over their own actions that cannot exist within the context of compatibilism or event-causal libertarianism. If I a-cause an event, and it was not causally determined that I a-cause the event in question, and the event that I a-cause has consequences that shape my character, then surely I possess the "deeper freedom" that Kane takes to be so important. Roderick Chisholm rather dramatically describes agent-causal libertarianism this way:

> If we are responsible … then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—or no one—causes us to cause those events to happen. ([1964] 2002: 55–56)

Among the most developed contemporary defenses of agent-causal versions of libertarianism are those of Timothy O'Connor (2000) and Helen Steward (2012). O'Connor holds that a-causation lies at the heart of every free action. He asserts that any adequate account (p. 632) of human free agency must both (i) provide an account of "agent control"—"the manner in which a particular piece of behavior is connected to, controlled by, or an 'outflowing" of the agent" and (ii) "allow for there being alternative courses of action that are genuinely open to the agent" (2000: 23–24). By O'Connor's lights, only a version of agent-causal libertarianism can satisfy both of these requirements. In every case of free action, the agent a-causes an intention to act, and that intention sets in motion a further series of events, often including movements "rippling through the limbs," as Lucretius puts it. O'Connor proposes that "[a]n agent-causal event is intrinsically a doing, an *exercise* of control" (2000: 59). (Consult O'Connor (2000: 18–22) for his treatment of Frankfurt-style examples.) Additionally, the nature of a-causation is such that when I a-cause a certain intention, that event (my a-causing of the intention in question) cannot itself have a cause—it is necessarily uncaused (O'Connor 2000: 61). Consequently, when I a-cause an intention to act, it is both the case that the intention is controlled by me and that I could have a-caused a different intention instead.

On Steward's view, a-causation is at the heart not just of free action but of action *simpliciter*. Whereas O'Connor appeals to a-causation to distinguish free acts from unfree acts, Steward appeals to agent causation to distinguish actions from things that merely happen. She holds that actions are "agents' causings of movements and changes in their own bodies" (2012: 200). In order to act at all, according to Steward, one must be able to *settle* certain facts about the world, and because one "cannot settle what is *already* settled," determinism (which implies that everything is already settled) is incompatible not just with free action but with action of any kind (2012: 26).

With its commitment to the existence of nonreductive a-causation, agent-causal libertarianism seems to have the most robust metaphysical commitments of the views we have considered. O'Connor does characterize his position as developing a "freewheeling metaphysical picture" (2000: 108). For example, he argues that the existence of a-causation is

incompatible with “reductive analyses of causation along Humean lines” according to which there is a “general connection between certain types of causes and effects” or causation just is some sort of counterfactual dependence (68; see also Pereboom 2001: 59–60, and Clarke 2003: 187). And Steward proposes a pluralistic approach to causation according to which there are (at least) three fundamentally different kinds of things that can function as causes: substances (or collections of substances), “Davidsonian” events, and facts (2012: 212–213). She sees agent causation as a species of substance causation, which she takes to be “both omnipresent and utterly unproblematic” (206). (See Steward (2012: 176–196) on her treatment of Frankfurt-style examples).

Whereas compatibilism and Kane’s event-causal libertarianism seem to fit easily into a naturalistic universe, whether agent-causal libertarianism is compatible with a naturalistic universe is a matter of some debate.[10] At the very least, it appears that defenders of agent causation have some explaining to do with respect to their “freewheeling metaphysical picture” (O’Connor 2000 108). To that end, O’Connor and Steward both make the case that nothing in their views is at odds with, as O’Connor puts it, “the emerging scientific picture of the world” (108), and as Steward puts it, “the natural world as our best science believes it to be” (2012: 198). O’Connor’s case for that claim focuses on emergent properties, where an emergent property is “a nonstructural [i.e., simple], natural property that is exemplified by objects or systems that attain the appropriate level and kind of organizational complexity that exerts (p. 633) downward causation” (2000: 111). O’Connor explains the crucial notion of downward causation this way:

> In contrast to the operation of an ordinary structural macroproperty, such as the mass of this book, whose causal influence occurs through the activity of the microproperties that constitute it, a structurally simple property bears its influence in a direct, “downward” fashion on the object’s microstructure. (2000: 111)

Emergent properties are causally produced but not constituted by lower-level microproperties; they are something above and beyond the properties that generate them. The possibility of emergent properties is essential to agent-causal libertarianism, according to O’Connor, because that view posits the emergence of a property that “enables the individual that has it in a certain range of circumstances to freely and directly bring about (or not bring about) any of a range of effects” (2000: 121). According to O’Connor, nothing rules out the possibility of an entirely physical being possessing this property and, moreover, the instantiation of such a property by a physical being is entirely compatible with the emerging scientific picture of the world; in particular, “contemporary scientific knowledge is sufficiently incomplete to not rule out an emergentist picture of some factors within some highly organized phenomena” (114).

Steward’s discussion has a somewhat different emphasis. She characterizes what she takes to be the central challenge for agent causal theories this way:

> [W]hat we have to make sense of in the case of agent causation is the possibility that a whole substance (an animal) may somehow come to act on its own parts, and yet not in such a way that its action can simply be reduced to the action of

> *parts* on parts. But how can that be? Doesn't the action of a complex whole have to consist in the combined actions of its parts? (2012: 225)

Whereas O'Connor's discussion focuses on the possibility of the existence of emergent properties, Steward's discussion focuses on the workings of the downward causation that such properties are thought to produce. As the passage quoted indicates, Steward frames the problem of understanding downward causation as that of understanding how a whole could act on its own parts. One requirement for the occurrence of this sort of causation that Steward identifies is that the laws of physics constrain but do not dictate "every detail of what occurs" (2012: 230). Drawing on this assumption, Steward considers the example of a whirlpool. She supposes that at each moment of its existence, the state of the whirlpool supervenes upon the states of the molecules that make up the whirlpool. However, in accordance with the claim that the laws of physics constrain but do not dictate details, she supposes that it is not the case that the complete states of the molecules that make up the whirlpool at a given instant necessitate the states of the molecules that make up the whirlpool at the next instant. She writes:

> So far as causality is concerned, the pertinent fact is that once a whirlpool has formed certain forces tend to sustain it in existence unless and until the delicate equilibrium that maintains the whirlpool is disturbed by the intervention of some further factor. The complex arrangement that constitutes each individual supervenience base therefore has a cause only insofar as it is a whirlpool-instantiating phenomenon … So it is more accurate to think of the causality here as a kind of causality in which the phenomenon of the whirlpool creates the subsequent **(p. 634)** supervenience bases that then contribute to sustaining it, rather than the other way around. (2012: 242).

In this way, according to Steward, the whirlpool itself causes its various micro-states that constitute it at each moment of its existence. Of course, whirlpools are not agents. So what does the example of the whirlpool teach us about agency? Steward's remarks on that topic are somewhat sparse; of course, as she points out, the details of agency are at least in large part empirical matters. She does, however, offer the following remarks:

> [A]s with the whirlpool, the key to seeing how the action of the animal is more than the sum of the actions of its parts is … the idea that higher-level processes can dominate and dictate the evolution and distribution of certain lower-level ones, so that, so far as the important causal metaphysics is concerned, the explanation of how a certain complex neural state of affairs has come to be depends upon higher-level processes and ontologies. (2012: 244)

In more complex animals, Steward says, we find "*discretion*: the creature itself becomes a special sort of object with a power selectively to control certain of its own subsystems in the light of constantly updated information" (2012: 245). Unlike whirlpools, agents can settle things—including the microphysical states of their own bodies.

O'Connor's discussion of emergent properties and Steward's discussion of wholes causally affecting their own parts raise many questions, but I think that they helpfully serve to bring out some of the central commitments of agent-causal versions of libertarianism. Whether those commitments will ultimately be vindicated or disproven remains to be seen. However, like compatibilism and the event-causal libertarian approaches of Kane and Balaguer, agent-causal libertarianism represents a model of agency in a natural universe worth exploring further. I conclude this section by describing what I take to be the most serious challenges for agent-causal libertarianism of either a secular or theistic variety.

Perhaps the most popular objection to agent-causal libertarianism is that the concept of a-causation itself is mysterious or even unintelligible. Thomas Nagel famously claims that by appealing to the notion of a-causation, agent causation theorists accomplish nothing more than "giving a name to a mystery" (1986: 115). Clarke disagrees, claiming instead that "there are good reasons to think that agent causation, though it can be made comprehensible, is not possible" (2003: 186). One alleged source of trouble for a-causation has to do with the different ways that events and substances (of which agents are a particular sort) are related to time. Whereas an event "occurs at a time (or during a temporal interval) … [a] substance is in time only in that events involving it … are directly in time" (201). This difference makes trouble for the possibility of a-causation because "[e]ffects are caused to occur at times, and it might be argued that this can be so only if their causes likewise occur at times" (201). Because substances are not the sorts of things that can occur at a time, and it appears that causes must be the sorts of things that can occur at a time, it appears that substances (including agents) cannot be causes. This is an objection that confronts agent-causal theorists of all sorts, secular and theistic alike.[11]

Another interesting challenge for agent-causal libertarianism is pressed by Mele. Mele argues that such theories, like many versions of libertarianism, suffer from a problem of luck:

> Assume that agent-causal libertarianism provides agents with a species of control that is not available in compatibilist and event-causal libertarian theories. Even then, it seems to be just a (p. 635) matter of luck that an agent exercised his agent-causal power at t in deciding to A rather than exercising it at t in any of the alternative ways he does in other possible worlds with the same past and laws of nature. (2006: 68)

When Mele says that it is "just a matter of luck" that the agent a-causes one event rather than another, he means that there is no fact that can possibly explain why the agent a-caused the event in question (2006: 70). And, according to Mele, when events are lucky in this way, then they are not the sorts of things for which agents can be morally responsible, and hence even agent-causal libertarian theories fail to overcome the basic worry that the presence of indeterminism in the universe tends to function as an obstacle to

control and responsibility. Again, this is a challenge for all versions of agent-causal libertarianism.

# Conclusion

While there is not, at present, a single universally accepted picture of agency and responsibility in a naturalistic universe, this chapter surveys basic elements to three of the more promising models of such agency. Each model faces certain challenges, and an adequate understanding of human agency surely awaits the fruits of future scientific work on the human nervous system. Nevertheless, any claim that human agency requires a god, or a world this god made, is hardly the intuitive or easily defended position to take against naturalism.

## Bibliography

Austin, J. L. 1961. “Ifs and Cans”. In *Philosophical Papers*, edited by J. L. Austin and J. O. Urmson, 153–180. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balaguer, Mark. 2010. *Free Will as an Open Scientific Problem*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Cartledge, Paul. 1999. *Democritus*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chalmers, David. 1996. *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chisholm, Roderick. 2002. “Human Freedom and the Self.” In *Free Will*, edited by Robert Kane, 47–58. Oxford: Blackwell. (Originally published 1964.)

Clarke, Randolph. 2003. *Libertarian Accounts of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Craig, William Lane. 1997. “The Indispensability of Theological Meta-Ethical Foundations for Morality.” *Foundations* 5, 9–12.

Dennett, Daniel. 1984. “I Could Not Have Done Otherwise—So What?” *Journal of Philosophy* 81(10), 553–565.

Dennett, Daniel. 2003. *Freedom Evolves*. New York: Penguin.

Ekstrom, Laura Waddell. 2000. *Free Will: A Philosophical Study*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

Epicurus. 1964. *Letters, Principal Doctrines, and Vatican Sayings*. Translated by Russel M. Geer. New York: Macmillan.

Fischer, John Martin, and Mark Ravizza. 1998. *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Frankfurt, Harry. 1969. “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility.” *Journal of Philosophy* 66(23), 829–839.

Frankfurt, Harry. 1971. “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person.” *Journal of Philosophy* 68(1), 5–20.

Hume, David. 1777. *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd ed. Repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Kane, Robert. 1996. *The Significance of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kane, Robert. 2007a. “Libertarianism.” In *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, 5–43. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Kane, Robert. 2007b. “Response to Fischer, Pereboom, and Vargas.” In *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, 166–183. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

(p. 637) Kane, Robert. 2009a. “Free Will and the Dialectic of Selfhood: Can One Make Sense of a Traditional Free Will Requiring Ultimate Responsibility?” *Ideas y Valores* 58(141), 25–43.

Kane, Robert. 2009b. “Libertarianism.” *Philosophical Studies* 144(1), 135–144.

Kane, Robert (ed.). 2002. *Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kane, Robert (ed.). 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lucretius. 1975. *On the Nature of Things*. Translated by W. Rouse. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Mele, Alfred R. 2006. *Free Will and Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mele, Alfred, and D. Robb. 1998. “Rescuing Frankfurt-Style Cases.” *Philosophical Review* 107(1), 97–112.

Mele, Alfred, and D. Robb. 2003. “BBs, Magnets and Seesaws: The Metaphysics of Frankfurt-Style Cases.” In *Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities*, edited by M. McKenna and D. Widerker, 127–138. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nielsen, Kai. 1971. *Reason and Practice*. New York: Harper & Row.

Nielsen, Kai. 1973. *Ethics Without God*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

O’Connor, Timothy. 2000. *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pereboom, Derk. 2001. *Living without Free Will*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Pereboom, Derk. 2007. “Hard Incompatibilism.” In *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, 85–125. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Plantinga, Alvin. 2011. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reid, Thomas. 1788. *On the Active Powers of Man*. Repr. New York: Garland, 1977.

Steward, Helen. 2012. *A Metaphysics for Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, Richard. 1991. *Metaphysics*, 4th ed. New York: Pearson.

Tse, Peter. 2013. *The Neural Basis of Free Will: Criterial Causation*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Van Inwagen, Peter. 1983. *An Essay on Free Will*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vargas, Manuel. 2007. “Revisionism.” In *Four Views on Free Will*, by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas, 126–165. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

Walter, Henrik. 2001. *Neurophilosophy of Free Will: From Libertarian Illusions to a Concept of Natural Autonomy.* Translated by Cynthia Klohr. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Watson, Gary. 1975. “Free Agency.” *Journal of Philosophy* 72(8), 205–220.

Wegner, Daniel M. 2002. *The Illusion of Conscious Will*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

## Notes:

(1.) This understanding of a naturalistic universe can draw on views of Alvin Plantinga and David Chalmers. Plantinga takes naturalism “to be the thought that there is no such person as God, or anything like God” (2011: ix). Chalmers suggests that central to a naturalistic picture of the universe is the causal closure of the physical, according to which every physical event that has a cause at all has a complete physical cause so that “there is no room for a mental ‘ghost in the machine’ to do any extra causal work” (1996: 125).

(2.) The contrary stance is exemplified in the stance taken by Helen Steward, who argues that if determinism is true then there are no actions at all, and hence no freedom of any kind (2012: 116).

(3.) One popular approach here has it that S could have done otherwise (and acts freely in the sense required for moral responsibility) just in case *if* S had chosen otherwise, S *would* have acted otherwise (e.g., Nielsen 1971: 62). However, I take it that this view has been decisively refuted (Chisholm [1964] 2002; van Inwagen 1983: 114–125).

(4.) An influential argument for incompatibilism (and hence against compatibilism) of a different sort is van Inwagen's consequence argument (1983: ch. 3). I lack the space to examine that argument here, but Kane (1996: ch. 4) offers a useful discussion.

(5.) Other important anticompatibilist arguments along similar lines include van Inwagen's discussion of undetectable Martian-implanted devices (1983: 109–114), Pereboom's "four case" argument (2001: 110–117, 2007: 94–98), and Mele's "zygote argument" (2006: 189).

(6.) Epicurus first posited this sort of swerve, and Lucretius did as well, but the extant sayings of Epicurus do not explicitly connected the swerve with free will (Epicurus 1964: xxxiii).

(7.) Accounts of the former sort are developed in Ekstrom (2000) and Mele (1995, 2005). For a useful critical discussion of this sort of approach, see Clarke (2003: ch. 4).

(8.) Mele and Robb (1998, 2003) attempt to develop Frankfurt-style examples that overcome Kane's objection.

(9.) Tse (2013: ch. 7) defends another kind of libertarianism that depends on the amplification of indeterminacy at the micro-level.

(10.) Pereboom argues that agent-causal libertarianism is implausible in light of what contemporary science tells us (2001: 69–88, 2007: 111–114).

(11.) Steward appeals to her pluralistic approach to causation to address this objection (2012: 220–221).

**Erik J. Wielenberg**

Erik J. Wielenberg is Associate Professor of Philosophy at DePauw University. He works primarily in meta-ethics, moral psychology, and the philosophy of religion, and is author of Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and God and the Reach of Reason: C. S. Lewis, David Hume, and Bertrand Russell (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

# The Evolution of Sociality, Helping, and Morality

Dennis Krebs and Kaleda Denton

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.39

## Abstract and Keywords

Evolutionary theory offers an explanation for the emergence of, and variations in, sociality, helping behavior, and morality in both animals and humans. These traits evolved in some species to help them adapt to their environments. Humans possess them in abundance not because God created humans in his own image but rather because these traits were especially beneficial to early humans. To flesh out this general explanation, this chapter considers the ways in which social and moral adaptations helped humans and members of other social species (but not members of nonsocial species) propagate their genes. Humans are among the most social of all animals, and the structure of human groups has undergone several significant changes over time, adding stresses on moral motives. People can make impartial moral judgments, even when they do not foster personal interests, thanks to evolved processes enhancing motivations to make fair moral judgments.

Keywords: sociality, cooperation, bonding, morality, evolution, reciprocity, intelligence

IN this chapter we review evidence of sociality, helpfulness, and morality in the animal kingdom, paying special attention to the human species. Following this descriptive review, we ask why species vary in these traits. After considering a religious explanation and dismissing it as inadequate, we advance an evolutionary account.

# Sociality in the Animal Kingdom and Human Sociality

Members of such species as sharks, sea turtles, tigers, jaguars, pandas, koala bears, polar bears, and orangutans spend most of their lives alone, interacting with others only to mate and, when necessary, to tend their offspring. Other species are more social. For example, beavers and many bird species form pair bonds for extended periods of time. Canines and lions form mixed-sex groups containing kin and nonkin. Chimpanzees and elk form same-sex gangs, and wildebeests and zebras live in herds.

The highest level of sociality in the animal kingdom has been labeled eusociality. Such eusocial animals as bees, wasps, ants, and termites form large colonies containing thousands of members, organized in caste systems consisting of Queens, reproductive males, nonreproductive workers, and soldiers. Among mammals, only two species have been classified as eusocial—the naked mole rat and the Damaraland mole rat.

Humans are among the most social of all animals. The structure of human groups has undergone several significant changes over the course of evolution (Boehm 2012). Before the Pleistocene era, humans lived in relatively small hierarchically organized groups similar to those of other primates. Between 45,000 and 150,000 years ago, humans formed larger, more egalitarian groups similar to those of contemporary hunter-gatherers. After this era, some neighboring bands united into tribal coalitions containing from a few hundred to a few (p. 639) thousand members. Approximately 12,000 years ago, with the advent of agriculture, humans formed even larger groups. The final change in human sociality occurred approximately 5,000 years ago, when humans formed large city-states marked by complex divisions of labor, social classes, designated authorities, and hierarchical political structures (Richerson and Boyd 2005).

As human sociality evolved, the later-evolving social structures encompassed the earlier ones, like a nested set of concentric circles. Although most modern humans live in large societies with complex social orders (the outer, most recent ring of the circle), they also are members of many other smaller groups, including groups that are similar to the egalitarian groups of hunters and gatherers and the hierarchically ordered groups of other primates, as well as extended families, nuclear families, pair bonds, clubs, sororities, and so on.

# Helping Behavior in the Animal Kingdom and Human Societies

Although members of nonsocial species do next to nothing for their cohorts, members of social species typically help one another in a variety of ways. For example, male members of bird, butterfly, fruit fly, and katydid species give gifts of food to potential mates as part of their courtship rituals, a phenomenon called nuptial gift giving. In other species, pair-bonded mates collaborate in the care of their offspring. In some bird species, older siblings contribute to the care of their younger siblings—a phenomenon called helpers at the nest. In other species, grandparents, uncles, and aunts may chip in, and in still other species, nonrelated members of groups may make significant contributions to the care of the young—a phenomenon called alloparenting. For example, female Japanese macaques that have not had offspring often care for genetically unrelated infants.

Many social animals join forces to protect their groups from predators. For example, murders of crows swarm predators such as hawks. Groups of lions, hyenas, and hunting dogs join forces to defend their territories. When a herd of muskoxen is threatened, the bulls and cows form a protective circle around the calves. Belding’s ground squirrels and

Gunnison's prairie dogs emit alarm calls upon spotting a predator, alerting members of their group to the danger. Eusocial insects sacrifice their lives to defend their groups.

Although between 80 percent and 95 percent of carnivores hunt alone, species such as lions, wild dogs, hyenas, and chimpanzees engage in cooperative hunting, sometimes killing game six to twelve times the weight of any individual hunter (Alcock 2005). Pods of dolphins hunt cooperatively as well, encircling schools of fish. Social animals also may collaborate in the construction of communal dwellings. For example, sociable weavers, a species of bird, build nests large enough to house over a hundred families. Social insects collaborate in the building of hives and nests, and mole rats collaborate in the building of tunnels.

Finally, some social animals trade goods and services. Most of the reciprocity that has been observed in the animal kingdom is immediate—in effect, animals give with one hand and take with the other. However, some species have been found to engage in delayed forms of reciprocity. For example, Wilkinson (1990) found that vampire bats that received regurgitated blood from members of their groups when they were starving were more likely to (p. 640) regurgitate blood for their donors when they were starving than they were to regurgitate blood for those who did not help them. Other investigators have found that chimpanzees engage in calculated forms of delayed reciprocity in which they remember who has helped them, track credits and debts to particular partners, and repay them either in kind or in some other currency. For example, de Waal and Luttrell (1988) found that chimpanzees shared food with members of their groups who groomed them earlier in the day.

Humans display all the forms of helping that other animals display and many more. They give nuptial gifts during courtship, help relatives and nonrelatives care for their offspring, and join forces to protect their groups. They collaborate in complex forms of hunting and gathering. They build cooperative housing complexes and engage in highly sophisticated ways of exchanging goods and services. The range of recipients that humans help is greater than that of any other species. In addition to helping their friends, relatives, and colleagues, they assist strangers whom they will never meet and members of other species. No other animal donates blood to blood banks, gives money to charity, and helps starving children from third-world countries.

A great deal of human helping is indirect. For example, people contribute to unions, companies, and their societies as a whole (e.g., through taxes) that support their welfare. In such systems, the delay between giving and receiving tends to be longer than that in other social animals, the number of individuals involved tends to be larger, and the systems of exchange tend to be more impersonal. Finally, humans are better than other animals at figuring out what others need and how to help them in appropriate, precise, and effective ways. When humans exchange goods and services, they invoke complex principles to determine what each individual deserves. Even in relatively small hunter-gather groups, members allocate the food they obtain from foraging in ways that sustain a fair balance

between the amount of effort they exert and the proportion of food they receive, taking into account their needs and abilities (Hill 2002).

# Variations to Morality and Precursors in Other Animals

We know that humans possess a sense of morality because they categorize acts as right and wrong, fair and unfair, and they characterize people as good and bad. They possess a sense of what they and other people ought and ought not do, and they experience moral emotions such as guilt, gratitude, and righteous indignation. In addition, they think about moral issues and invoke moral reasoning to solve moral problems.

Many, if not most, people believe that humans are the only species in the animal kingdom with a sense of morality. Clearly, no other species verbalizes moral judgments or invokes moral reasoning to solve moral dilemmas. However, there is some evidence that other social animals experience something akin to moral emotions and that they make something akin to primitive moral judgments.

Many people have witnessed domestic dogs behave in ways that suggest that they feel guilty after they misbehave. They look sheepish, cower, and hide in the corner. Although such responses are probably best viewed as conditioned fear responses in anticipation of (p. 641) punishment (Aronfreed 1968), they may stem from primitive sources similar to those possessed by humans. According to Moll et al. (2005), human guilt stems from “the blending of elementary subjective emotional experiences which are ubiquitous in mammals, with emotional and cognitive mechanisms that are typically human” (4).

Flack and de Waal (2000) have reviewed evidence that chimpanzees and other apes experience primitive forms of empathy and sympathy, as revealed in succoring and consoling behaviors. Other investigators have adduced evidence that some primates possess a primitive sense of justice. For example, Brosnan and de Waal (2003) arranged for capuchin monkeys to observe cohorts receiving a highly desirable reward (a grape) after performing a task, then gave the observers a less desirable reward (a cucumber) after they performed the same task. These researchers found that the observers became angry at this inequity—sometimes even throwing the cucumber back at them—and reacted especially negatively when the monkeys they observed receiving grapes did not work for them. Brosnan and de Waal concluded that “capuchin monkeys thus seem to measure reward in relative terms, comparing their own rewards with those available and their own efforts with those of others” (48).

To summarize the discussion to this point, there are significant differences among species in the extent to which members socialize with one another, help one another, and experience a sense of morality. The question that arises is why. Why do species vary in sociality, helping behavior, and morality? Why are humans among the most social and helpful of all animals? Why do humans possess a uniquely strong and elaborate sense of morality?

Faced with questions such as these, some people look to religious sources for answers, whereas other people look to scientific sources. Let us compare the answers offered by the Old Testament of the Bible with the answers offered by the theory of evolution.

# A Religious Account of Sociality, Helping Behavior, and Morality

The Bible does not offer an explanation for why species vary in sociality or helpfulness. That is all right; the Bible is not obliged to offer an explanation for everything. The Bible does, however, offer an explanation for why some species behave aggressively toward other species. According to the Old Testament, God originally created all species, including humans, as vegetarians. However, after the biblical flood, God permitted some animals to eat meat, and this caused the previously peaceful animal kingdom to become a competitive arena. The Book of Isaiah predicts a Second Coming of Christ that will restore vegetarianism—and therefore peace—to the animal kingdom:

> The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat … The lion shall eat straw like the ox. … They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.” (11:6–9)

With respect to variations in the moral sense, passages in the Book of Genesis suggest that God created some animals to be pure, or “clean,” and other animals to impure, or “unclean” (7:2–3). Only clean animals are acceptable to be sacrificed to God—“Noah built an altar to (p. 642) the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings” (8:20).

If, as the Book of Genesis says, “God created man in his own image” (1:27), the first humans were pure. However, these first humans were tempted by a serpent to eat from the forbidden “tree of knowledge,” which enabled them to know good from evil (2:15). Following this, Adam and Eve realized that they were naked, felt embarrassed, and sewed fig leaves together to make clothing. No other species ate from the tree of knowledge, so no other species acquired the ability to distinguish good from evil.

According to the Old Testament, humans did not behave themselves very well in the years after they were created, so God gave Moses a talking-to on Mount Sinai and issued the Ten Commandments—detailed instructions on moral behavior. Moses gathered the people of Israel and relayed God’s prohibitions against worshiping any other gods or any idols, taking the name of God in vain, forgetting the Sabbath, showing disrespect to their parents, murdering, committing adultery, stealing, lying, and coveting other people’s belongings. These commandments were specific to humans and more specifically to Jews. Presumably, God did not deem any other species or group worthy of such attention.

The Old Testament does not really offer an account of why species differ in sociality and helping behavior. It does not explain why God would create some animals clean and other animals unclean, or why God would decide that “He” should permit some animals to eat

meat after the flood. Why would anyone want to reprogram animals he created to eat other animals he created? The Old Testament also does not explain why God would create so many animals that behave in so many disgusting and reprehensible ways, why "He" would create one regnant species in his own image, why eating fruit from a "tree of knowledge" would be forbidden, why eating from the tree of knowledge would cause someone to feel embarrassed, or why "He" would issue a highly limited set of moral prohibitions. Really, little or nothing in the Old Testament pertaining to variations in sociality, helping behavior, or morality makes sense. In contrast, the theory of evolution offers a plausible explanation of them all.

# An Evolutionary Account of Sociality, Helping Behavior, and Morality

Species differ from one another in all kinds of ways. Some have fur, some have feathers, and others have skin. Some have two legs, some have four legs, some have hundreds of legs, and some have no legs at all. Such differences did not occur because a god created each species to be unique for some incomprehensible reason; they occurred because each species evolved to adapt to its environment in a different manner. In ancestral environments, members of species that inherited traits that enabled them to survive, to reproduce, and to propagate their genes passed these traits on to future generations. In some environments, individuals with white fur were more likely to survive and to reproduce than individuals with black fur were; in other environments, the opposite. So also with social and moral traits. In some environments, individuals who inherited dispositions to socialize, to help others, and to experience a sense of morality were more likely than other members of their (p. 643) species to pass their genes on to future generations, thus causing their species to become social, helpful, and moral. This does not mean that there were not—and more important are not now—any costs to sociality, helping, and morality. There surely were. It means that the biological benefits of these traits outweighed the costs in the environments in which they were selected.

Evolutionary theory offers an explanation for variations in sociality, helping behavior, and morality. These traits evolved in some species because they helped them adapt to their environments. Humans possess them in abundance not because God created humans in his own image but rather because these traits were especially beneficial to early humans. To flesh out this general explanation, we need to consider the ways in which social and moral adaptations helped humans and members of other social species (but not members of nonsocial species) propagate their genes.

If animals could survive and propagate their genes on their own, we would not expect them to associate with other animals. Hanging out with other animals tends to make individuals more conspicuous to predators, more susceptible to diseases, and more likely to be forced to compete for food, territory, and mates. Dispositions to socialize evolve in species that benefit from associating with others. One of the most pervasive benefits of living in groups is protection from predators. For example, wildebeests grazing by them-

selves are easy pickings for lions, but if they join a group of, say, 99, they reduce their odds of getting picked off to one in a hundred. Adaptations for sociality evolved in the human species because early humans lived in hostile environments in which solitary humans were vulnerable. Humans needed other humans to survive and to propagate their genes.

At first glance, documented incidences of animals helping one another seem to challenge the theory of evolution. How could dispositions to help others evolve if they increased the fitness of recipients and reduced the fitness of the helpers? This question plagued Darwin (1874) who considered the altruistic behavior of social insects potentially lethal to his theory. Accounting for the seemingly altruistic behavior of social animals has led to significant refinements in the theory of evolution.

Helping behaviors that have been observed in the animal kingdom can be classified into two types—those that produce ultimate biological benefits for the helpers (so are biologically selfish) and those that are biologically costly to the helpers (so are biologically altruistic). It is the second type that poses a problem for Darwin's theory. Biologically selfish helping behaviors can evolve by increasing helpers' chances of surviving and/or their chances of reproducing. Biologically altruistic helping behaviors can evolve in two ways—by propagating copies of helpers' altruism genes possessed by those they help and as maladaptive by-products of other evolved mechanisms.

Many, if not most, helping behaviors increase the fitness of helpers and recipients. For example, when penguins snuggle up to other penguins in cold weather, they warm those who warm them. When small fish eat parasites from larger fish, they gain nutrition for themselves while cleaning their hosts. When animals join forces to build shelters, to hunt, and to defend themselves, they help others in the process of helping themselves. Coordinating efforts enables each member of the group to reap greater biological benefits that he or she could obtain by going it alone.

Engaging in reciprocal exchanges also may increase animals' fitness through gains in trade. In effect, animals trade relatively cheap goods and services for goods and services that (p. 644) are worth more to them. In delayed forms of reciprocity, individuals suffer an immediate loss that is compensated for later when they are repaid. Game theorists have demonstrated that reciprocal strategies such as Tit for Tat (help those who help you; do not help those who do not help you) can produce greater gains in fitness than more selfish and more altruistic strategies (Axelrod and Hamilton 1981). Game theorists also have found that generous, forgiving, and contrite versions of Tit for Tat that enable players to break self-defeating cycles of retribution can pay off even better than Tit for Tat does (Axelrod 1988). In addition, game theorists have found that systems of indirect reciprocity (helpers get repaid by third parties), can evolve in small groups if observers track the behaviors of others and select those who behave altruistically as exchange partners (Nowak and Sigmund 1998). It is, however, unclear whether the conditions necessary for the evolution of altruism via indirect reciprocity can be met in larger groups in which it is more difficult to identify cooperators and cheaters (Richerson and Boyd 2001).

It is important to note that social animals could increase their chances of surviving by making countless small sacrifices for members of their groups over long periods of time, as long as these sacrifices increase the likelihood of the recipients helping them when their welfare is in jeopardy. It could be in individuals' biological interest to give a thousand small tits in return for one life-saving TAT, in effect investing in others as insurance policies that they can cash when they are in need (Tooby and Cosmides 1996).

Mental mechanisms have evolved in many species that dispose them to form social bonds with, and support, those on whom their fitness is dependent—whether relatives, friends, exchange partners, or members of coalitions and groups (Brown and Brown 2006). The sacrifices that members of groups make for those on whom their fitness is dependent may reap long-term benefits because they build or preserve resources they need to survive. As explained by Flack and de Waal,

> Inasmuch as every member benefits from a unified, cooperative group, one expects them to care about the society they live in, and to make an effort to improve and strengthen it similar to the way the spider repairs her web and the beaver maintains the integrity of his dam. Each and every individual has a stake in the quality of the social environment on which its survival depends. In trying to improve this quality for their own purposes, they help many of their group mates at the same time. (2000: 95)

# Evolution and Human Helping Behaviors

Because animals that survive without reproducing fail to contribute any of their genes to future generations, it may be in animals' evolutionary interest to risk their chances of surviving in order to increase their chances of reproducing. They may, for example, engage in costly competitions for mates, trade survival benefits for reproductive benefits (e.g., nuptial gifts, food for sex), invest in the biological welfare of mates over long periods of time, and even put on costly displays of altruism to impress potential mates (Zahavi and Zahavi 1997). Potential mates may prefer partners who put on altruistic displays for two reasons—because the displays signal that the actors will treat them and their offspring altruistically and because the displays signal "good genes" that render those who possess them powerful enough to survive in spite of the costs of putting on the displays of altruism.

(p. 645) Pushing the reckoning of evolutionary costs and benefits to its endpoint, it may be in individuals' ultimate genetic interest to suffer survival and reproductive costs in order to help others propagate replicas of the genes they share with them. It is not uncommon in the animal kingdom for parents and grandparents to sacrifice themselves for their offspring and grandchildren (Alcock 2005). In addition, individuals may sacrifice their survival and reproductive success in order to increase the fitness of more distant relatives—a phenomenon accounted for by what has been called kin selection. The basic idea underlying kin selection is that genes that dispose individuals to behave in biologically altruistic

ways may increase in frequency if they help relatives who possess copies of the genes survive and reproduce. Hamilton (1964) demonstrated that altruistic dispositions could evolve if the fitness costs of altruistic behaviors were less than the fitness benefits they bestowed on recipients, multiplied by their degree of relatedness ($C < rB$). Hamilton's insights made it clear that what counts in evolution is not animals' fitness but rather their inclusive fitness, assessed by the number of genes that individuals contribute to the next generation directly, by producing offspring, and indirectly, by helping their kin. Kin selection offered an explanation for the extreme altruism of eusocial insects that Darwin found so problematic to his theory.

Finally, some theorists have refined an idea originally advanced by Darwin—that biologically altruistic dispositions can evolve through group selection (Sober and Wilson 1998; Wilson and Wilson 2007). For group selection to mediate the evolution of altruism, altruistic groups must fare better than selfish groups do in group-against-group competitions at a rate that exceeds the tendency for selfish individuals to fare better than altruistic individuals within the altruistic groups. Although this could happen if groups varied significantly in the number of altruists they contained and if altruistic groups budded, dispersed, or reformed at optimal points in time, the conditions necessary for the group selection of altruism are rare in the animal kingdom. In addition, biologists have demonstrated that the mathematics of group selection can be reduced to the mathematics of kin selection (Grafen 2008). In essence, kin selection and group selection constitute two ways of looking at the same process.

Although most of the helping behaviors that have been observed in the animal kingdom have evolved because they increase animals' inclusive fitness, some are clearly maladaptive. Animals may, for example, help potential mates who end up rejecting them, kin who fail to reproduce, nonkin whom they mistake for kin, group members who fail to reciprocate, and groups that ostracize them. Even though evolved mechanisms tend to be refined through natural selection, they are nonetheless imperfect, and changes in environments can render even the best of evolved strategies maladaptive, which is why species that once dominated the earth have gone extinct. In addition, it is in the biological interest of animals to exploit the imperfections in the evolved mechanisms of other animals, manipulating them into behaving in ways that benefit the manipulators. Cuckoo birds that sneak their eggs into the nests of other birds that suffer costs to nurture them are a case in point. The alloparenting alluded to earlier may occur because nurturing dispositions are activated by the offspring of other animals.

Viewed in terms of evolutionary theory, humans are extraordinarily helpful because genes that disposed early humans to help others were extraordinarily effective in increasing the probability that those who inherited them would survive, reproduce, and propagate replicas of these genes. All forms of selection—natural selection, sexual selection, social selection, kin selection, and group selection—probably contributed to the evolution of helping strategies in the human species.

(p. 646) Controlling for body size, human brains are among the largest in the animal kingdom. Large brains probably affected the evolution of helpfulness in two overriding ways. First, large brains forced the premature birth of highly dependent offspring (before their heads grew too big for their mothers' birth canal), who required a great deal of assistance to survive. Second, human brains grew in order to house a set of mental abilities that were conducive to helping. Prominent among these abilities were the cognitive sophistication to interpret and refine primitive emotional reactions, to engage in complex forms of cooperation and social exchange, to communicate symbolically through language, to take the perspective of others, and to create, refine, and transmit culture.

The extreme dependency of human infants could have mediated the evolution of helpfulness in two ways: (a) through sexual selection, by putting a premium on mates who signaled a willingness to help with childcare, and (b) through kin selection, by making it in the genetic interest of relatives to help with childcare. Burkart et al. (2014) found a high positive correlation between spontaneous helping behavior in primates and the extent to which members of groups other than mothers aided in the care of offspring—a phenomenon referred to technically as cooperative breeding or allomaternal care.

We would expect the precision of the mental mechanisms that dispose individuals to help kin to depend on the net genetic costs of helping nonkin in ancestral environments. If the costs were low and the benefits high (e.g., because of the value of nonkin in cooperative hunting and defense), there would have been little selective pressure for precision. The evidence suggests that humans are relatively poor at distinguishing kin from nonkin, relying on kin-recognition cues such as similarity, proximity, and familiarity (Johnson et al. 2003), so we can infer either that the mutations necessary for precision did not occur and/or that there were collateral benefits from helping nonrelated members of one's group.

A suite of evolved emotional reactions that includes empathy, sympathy, gratitude, guilt, and shame disposes humans to help members of their groups. These emotions originate from primitive areas of the brain shared by humans and other primates. As humans' brains enlarged to endow them with increasingly sophisticated rational abilities, humans acquired the ability to refine their primitive emotional reactions. Consider empathy, for example.

Humans and other animals experience hard-wired vicarious reactions to the pains and pleasures of other members of their species that stem from primitive structures in the core of their brains. As humans' brains evolved, new structures grew around the older structures in a "Russian doll" manner (de Waal 2006). The newer structures enabled humans to understand the causes of the emotions they experienced, which induced them to experience a primitive form of sympathy. According to de Waal, humans and apes (and some large-brained birds), but not monkeys, experience sympathetic reactions.

With further brain expansion and the acquisition of increasingly sophisticated perspective-taking abilities, humans acquired the capacity to experience more refined forms of sympathy. De Waal (2006) suggests that the cognitive ability to distinguish one's self from

others and to understand how others are feeling on their own terms is the crucial determinant of this mental refinement. In support of de Waal's Russian doll model, studies have found that empathic reactions in humans are produced by an interaction between primitive types of emotional contagion stemming from old parts of the brain and more complex cognitive processes located in more recently evolved parts of the prefrontal cortex, which "exert a top-down control" on the primitive emotional reactions (Decety 2005).

## (p. 647) Complex Forms of Cooperation

On their own, early humans would have been vulnerable to more powerful prey, and they would not have been proficient at hunting large game. Early humans who inherited dispositions to coordinate their efforts to defend themselves, to obtain food, and to build shelters would have fared better than those who did not. If, as theorists such as Alexander (1987) have suggested, one of the greatest threats to the welfare of early humans was other human groups, there would have been a premium on group size, cooperation, and altruism. Sober and Wilson (1998) have argued that the conditions in which early humans evolved were ideal for the group selection of altruism.

As expressed by Trivers,

> during the Pleistocene, and probably before, a hominid species would have met the preconditions for the evolution of reciprocal altruism: for example, long lifespan, low dispersal rate, life in small, mutually dependent and stable groups, and a long period of parental care leading to extensive contacts with close relatives over many years. (1985: 386)

The expansion of the ability to remember past events and, even more important, to anticipate the future consequences of actions, also would have favored early humans' inclination to make long-term investments in members of their groups at immediate costs to themselves. Such dispositions could have paid off for early humans because the people they supported ended up helping them, either directly when their fitness was in jeopardy or indirectly, by upholding their groups.

The evolution of intelligence also would have enabled early humans to create complex systems of exchange such as those that involve divisions of labor and indirect forms of reciprocity. Alexander (1987) has outlined the evolution of reciprocity in the human species. In the first stage, early humans who were naturally inclined to help their mates, their offspring, and members of their extended families formed small bands to cope with relatively harsh environments. Dispositions to engage in direct forms of reciprocity evolved in this context as mating effort (e.g., I give you food; you give me sex) and/or as an extension of altruism directed toward kin. In the second stage, after humans formed intermediate sized tribes, it paid off for members of groups to initiate exchanges with those whom they perceived as altruistic and cooperative and to establish a reputation for being cooperative and altruistic, which mediated the evolution of systems of indirect reciprocity. In the third stage, after humans developed large technological nations, complex

systems of indirect reciprocity generated increasingly large returns. Alexander (1987) suggested that in this milieu, it would have paid off for individuals to behave in "indiscriminately altruistic" ways.

## Social Dilemmas

The main obstacle to the evolution of systems of cooperative exchange is cheating. Although it is in the interest of every member of a group to preserve the systems of exchange from which they benefit, it also is in their interest to give less than their share and to take more. The problem is, if cheating and free-riding pay off in fitness, the proportion of cheaters in groups (p. 648) will increase until, ultimately, there are no cooperators left to exploit, and everyone loses. Systems of indirect reciprocity are particularly susceptible to cheating because it is more difficult to determine whether people pay back a third party than to determine whether they pay back those who helped them. However, early humans could have solved this free-rider problem by adopting practices that enable them to identify and reward cooperators and catch and punish cheaters.

## Strategic Interactions

Evolutionary theory leads us to expect members of groups to adopt strategies aimed at maximizing their gains and minimizing their losses from group living. Strategic interactions create arms races in which better offensive strategies create a selective pressure for better defensive strategies, which create a selective pressure for better offensive strategies, and so on. One consequence of such arms races is the ongoing refinement of cooperative strategies. Another consequence is the relatively rapid expansion of structures in the human brain that enable individuals to adopt sophisticated strategies. Individuals who inherit brain structures that enable them to engage in adaptive forms of cooperation produce social systems—that is to say, environments—that favor the selection of individuals who have inherited similar brain structures. Individuals who inherit brain structures that are not conducive to cooperation fare poorly, causing them and their brain structures to go extinct.

Perspective-taking abilities are invaluable tools in strategic interactions. Such abilities enable people to construct cognitive representations of others; store them in their minds; view events from their perspectives; understand what others are thinking, feeling, and planning; and imagine how others will respond to their behavior. Perspective-taking abilities enable players to anticipate others' moves in social games, others' reactions to their moves, others' reactions to their reactions to others' moves, and so on. According to Alexander (1990), the adaptive value of the ability to "see ourselves as others see us so that we may cause competitive others to see us as we wish them to" (7) played an important role in the rapid expansion of the human brain.

The evolution of brain structures that endowed early humans with the capacity to speak with—and about—other members of their groups must have played an important role in their willingness to help one another and to do their share to uphold systems of coopera-

tive exchange. Language would have enabled early humans to refine their collaborative techniques in hunting, defense, and the building of shelters. It would have enabled them to communicate their needs to others, persuade others to help them, understand the needs of others, negotiate deals, and make long-term commitments. As pointed out by Nesse (2001) and others, it may be in people's biological interest to honor costly commitments because of the benefits people gain from a reputation for keeping their word. The acquisition of language also would have increased early humans' ability to engage in sophisticated forms of strategic interaction, to catch and to punish cheaters, and to reward cooperators and altruists. Gossip aimed at enhancing and diminishing reputations probably played a significant role in this process. Finally, language plays an important role in the transmission of cultural norms.

The expansion of the human brain and a facility with language would have endowed early humans with the capacity to create, transmit, and refine culture. The creation of tools, (p. 649) weapons, and other artifacts would have increased the adaptive value of divisions of labor and reciprocal exchanges. Ideas that originated in one generation, including cultural norms upholding helping behaviors, could be conveyed to members of new generations. Human parents work with children over long periods of time to help them hone their cognitive skills in ways that induce them to uphold the systems of cooperation that have evolved in their cultures.

# The Evolution of Morality

To account for the evolution of morality, we must identify the adaptive functions that moral sentiments, moral judgments, moral reasoning, and moral behaviors served in ancestral environments or explain how morality evolved as a by-product of other adaptive processes. The overriding function of moral sentiments was—and still is—to induce individuals to behave in ways that uphold the groups and social orders that enable them to reap the benefits of sociality and cooperation (Krebs 2011). Feelings of loyalty, duty, and other tribal instincts motivate individuals to invest in their groups. Love, empathy, and sympathy motivate individuals to support those on whom their fitness is dependent. Gratitude, forgiveness, righteous indignation, guilt, and shame motivate people to uphold systems of reciprocity (Trivers 1985). Affective experiences such as these give rise to a primitive moral sense. For example, guilt and righteous indignation instill the sense that it is wrong for individuals to exploit others, and feelings of gratitude instill the sense that people should help those who have helped them.

To account for the evolution of morality we must explain how the primitive moral sentiments experienced by humans and other animals became supplemented by the capacity to make moral judgments and engage in moral reasoning. The key to unlocking this puzzle lies in viewing moral judgments and moral reasoning as tools invoked by early humans to foster their interests in strategic interactions. In early stages of evolution, humans would have attempted to induce members of their groups to behave in ways that benefitted them in much the same manner that other primates do—by begging, threaten-

ing, administering physical and material rewards and punishments, and signaling their approval and disapproval through facial expressions and verbal expressions that conveyed gratitude, anger, disgust, and so on. However, the dynamics of strategic interaction would have changed significantly when early humans acquired the capacity to transmit ideas symbolically through language and to engage in moral reasoning. With language, they would have been able to express their approval and disapproval with words such as "good" and "bad," to pass judgment on people and the acts they committed in the past, to make judgments about events that could occur in the future, and to share these judgments with other members of their groups. With the ability to engage in moral reasoning, early humans would have been able to buttress their prescriptive and prohibitive moral judgments with arguments, explanations, and justifications designed to increase their persuasive power. In addition, moral reasoning would have enabled them to resolve their conflicts of interest through negotiation. Therefore, somewhat ironically, moral judgments and moral reasoning probably originated as tools of social influence and tactics in strategic interaction that early humans used to manipulate others to foster their adaptive interests.

(p. 650) So it is with perspective-taking. Although perspective-taking abilities probably evolved because of their value in strategic interactions, they ended up increasing early humans' capacity for empathy (as discussed), and they also endowed them with the ability to make fair moral decisions. Kohlberg (1984) and his colleagues have shown that the growth of perspective-taking abilities is necessary, but not sufficient, for the growth of moral reasoning and the refinement of a sense of justice. People must be able to put themselves in others' shoes and view moral issues from their perspectives in order to consider their claims in a fair manner. In addition, perspective-taking abilities may have mediated the evolution of the human conscience. When people misbehave, they anticipate how others will react to their transgressions. The imagined approval and disapproval of others (the little voice in people's heads) activates emotions such as guilt, fear, shame, and pride (Aronfreed 1968).

Inasmuch as moral judgment and moral reasoning originated as tools early humans used to manipulate members of their groups into behaving in ways that fostered their interests, we would expect them to be biased in self-serving ways. As expressed by Trivers (2006), "an attachment to fairness or justice is self-interested and we repeatedly see in life … that victims of injustice feel the pain more strongly than do disinterested bystanders and far more than do the perpetrators" (77). From an evolutionary perspective, we would expect people to use moral judgments to persuade others that they—the people making the judgments—deserve more, and owe less, than their share and to hold others to higher moral standards than the standards that they apply to themselves. We would expect people to use moral judgments to justify their immoral acts and to deflect responsibility onto others, diminishing their transgressions, excusing their misdeeds, avoiding responsibility, and exaggerating the blameworthiness of adversaries' immoral behavior. These expectations have been supported by research (see Krebs and Denton [2005] for a review). In addition, studies have found that people use moral judgments and moral rea-

soning to enhance their reputations, inducing others to believe that they are more cooperative and altruistic than they really are.

Although evolutionary theory alerts us to self-serving biases, it does not imply that people are incapable of making fair moral judgments and engaging in impartial moral reasoning. Humans are able to apply the kinds of deductive reasoning that enable them to solve problems in the physical world to complex moral dilemmas, and they sometimes use these tools to deduce the fairest and most impartial solutions. The question about human morality is not whether people can make impartial moral judgments; the question is whether they are inclined to make them when they do not foster their interests. Fortunately for the evolution of morality, several processes are equipped to increase people's motivation to make fair moral judgments.

First, self-serving moral judgments face the same evolutionary obstacles as selfish tactics do in social exchanges and Prisoner's Dilemma games: it is not in recipients' interest to let others exploit them, and if interacting individuals invoke selfish strategies, they end up doing one another down. Inasmuch as early humans were able to gain more by cooperating than they were by attempting to advance their interests in self-serving ways, we would expect them to be inclined to make cooperative and fair moral judgments. Second, people may make fair moral judgments in order to cultivate a reputation for fairness. Third, expressing moral judgments to others, especially in the context of moral argumentation, tends to hoist individuals on their own petards. Evoking standards of fairness and arguing that others are morally obliged to conform to them binds individuals to the principles they preach and enables others to turn their arguments back on them. Fourth, people may persuade (p. 651) themselves that the moral principles they preach are valid in the process of persuading others. Believing the prescriptive judgments one makes to others may increase their persuasive power (Trivers 2000). Finally, people may internalize the standards of fairness they generate during moral negotiations because they actively participated in generating them, because they are supported by others, because they are backed up by reasons, and because they enable people to resolve their conflicts of interest in optimal ways. As explained by the philosopher Singer, the rational arguments that people invoke in moral negotiations tend to generate universal and impartial moral principles:

> if I claim that what I do is right, while what you do is wrong, I must give some reason other than the fact that my action benefits me (or my kin, or my village) while your action benefits you (or your kin or your village) …. Ethical reasoning, once begun, pushes against our initially limited ethical horizons, leading us always toward a more universal point of view. (1981: 118–119)

# The Evolution of Moral Norms

Most people believe that social learning and culture are the most significant sources of human morality. Moral norms originate in moral judgments preached by members of groups in the context of strategic interactions. Recipients accept and repeat some moral judgments but reject others. When recipients are more receptive to some moral judgments than they are to others, they serve as agents of selection, determining which judgments succeed, get repeated, develop into moral norms, and become part of their culture. After moral norms are entrenched, members of groups preach them to others and transmit them to future generations.

## Universal Moral Norms

The adaptive value of resolving conflicts of interest in mutually beneficial ways paves the way for the evolution of such universal moral norms as the norm of reciprocity and the Golden Rule. Inasmuch as cooperative strategies evolved because they paid off genetically, people from all cultures should be receptive to moral judgments that induce them to adopt these strategies in appropriate conditions, and, therefore, all cultures should contain moral norms upholding them.

## Culturally Relative Moral Norms

Many people assume that the cultural relatively of some moral norms proves that they are the product of social learning, not biological evolution. This assumption is misguided in two ways. First, it implies a false dichotomy between nature and nurture. The mental mechanisms that mediate social learning evolved because social learning has tremendous adaptive value, enabling individuals to learn from others and to pass their insights on to those who help them propagate their genes. (This does not, however, mean that these mechanisms (p. 652) are perfect and immune from manipulation. Parents, teachers, and charismatic leaders may teach children all kinds of maladaptive ideas, and they may brainwash members of groups into adopting all kinds of arbitrary and silly morals and religious beliefs.) Second, this assumption incorrectly implies that evolved mechanisms are insensitive to variations in environments. In fact, natural selection usually designs flexible, context-sensitive mechanisms that enable individuals to accommodate to variations in the form that adaptive problems assume in different environments. For example, moral norms sanctioning infanticide and suicide in elders tend to evolve in harsh environments such as those occupied by the Inuit to ensure the preservation of relatives with the greatest reproductive potential. In a similar vein, different food prohibitions evolve to support the well-being of individuals in environments that contain different foods (Durham 1991). In addition, culturally-relative moral norms may evolve because people from different cultures derive different solutions to the same adaptive problems and because powerful authorities or coalitions force or persuade others to conform to norms that foster their interests.

# Conclusion

Species differ in the extent to which they socialize, help one another, and possess a sense of morality. Religious sources fail to offer a plausible explanation for these differences. In contrast, the theory of evolution offers an account that is supported by a spate of evidence. Humans and other animals socialize with and help others because these types of behavior helped their ancestors adapt to their environments, causing the genes that disposed them to behave in these ways to be selected. A sense of morality evolved in the human species in the same way. Moral traits were selected in the context of strategic social interactions among members of groups.

Early humans who inherited genes that disposed them to experience moral emotions, to make moral judgments, and to engage in moral reasoning fared better than those who did not because these traits enabled them to reap the benefits of sociality. Their main function was to enable early humans to reap the long-term biological benefits of cooperation and to induce them to uphold the social orders that fostered their inclusive fitness. With the aid of cognitive development, the acquisition of language, and perspective-taking abilities—all of which probably evolved as tools in strategic interaction—human morality took on a life of its own, endowing people with the ability to make fair and impartial moral judgments in some contexts.

## Bibliography

Alcock, J. 2005. *Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach,* 8th ed. Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates.

Alexander, R. D. 1987. *The Biology of Moral Systems*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Alexander, R. D. 1990. *How Did Humans Evolve? Reflections on the Uniquely Unique Species.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Aronfreed, J. 1968. *Conduct and Conscience.* New York: Academic Press.

(p. 653) Axelrod, R. 1988. “The Further Evolution of Cooperation.” *Science* 242 (4884), 1385–1389.

Axelrod, R., and W. D. Hamilton. 1981. “The Evolution of Cooperation.” *Science* 211, 1390–1396.

Boehm, C. 2012. *Moral Origins: The Evolution of Virtue, Altruism, and Shame*. New York: Basic Books.

Boyd, R., and P. J. Richerson. 1992. “Punishment Allows the Evolution of Cooperation (or Anything Else) in Sizable Groups.” *Ethology and Sociobiology* 13, 171–195.

Brown, S. L., and M. Brown. 2006. “Selective Investment Theory: Recasting the Functional Significance of Close Relationships.” *Psychological Inquiry* 17, 30–59.

Burkart, J. M., O. Allon, F. Amici, C. Fichtel, C. Finkenwirth, A. Heschl, et al. 2014. “The Evolutionary Origin of Human Hyper-Cooperation.” *Nature Communications* 5. doi: 10.1038/ncomms5747.

Darwin, C. 1874. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex.* New York: Rand McNally.

Decety, J. 2005. “Perspective Taking as the Royal Avenue to Empathy.” In *Other Minds: How Humans Bridge the Divide between Self and Others,* edited by B. F. Malle and S. D. Hodges, 143–157. New York: Guilford Press.

de Waal, F. B. M. 1996. *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

de Waal, F. B. M. 2006. *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

de Waal, F. B. M. 2013. *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism among the Primates*. New York: W. W. Norton.

de Waal, F. B. M., and S. F. Brosnan. 2006. “Simple and Complex Reciprocity in Animals.” In *Cooperation in Primates and Humans,* edited by P. M. Kappeler and C. P. van Schaik, 85–105. Berlin: Springer.

de Waal, F. B. M., and L. M. Luttrell. 1988. “Mechanisms of Social Reciprocity in Three Primate Species: Symmetrical Relationship Characteristics or Cognition?” *Ethology and Sociobiology* 9, 101–118.

Durham, W. 1991. *Coevolution: Genes, Culture and Human Diversity.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Flack, J. C., and F. B. M. de Waal. 2000. “‘Any Animal Whatever’: Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes.” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7(1–2), 1–29.

Grafen, A. 2008. “The Simplest Formal Argument for Fitness Optimisation.” *Journal of Genetics* 87(4), 421–433.

Hamilton, W. D. 1964. “The Evolution of Social Behavior.” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 7(1), 1–52.

Hill, K. 2002. “Altruistic Cooperation during Foraging by the Ache, and the Evolved Human Predisposition to Cooperate.” *Human Nature* 13(1), 105–128.

Johnson, D., P. Stopka, and S. Knights. 2003. “The Puzzle of Human Cooperation.” *Nature* 421(6926), 911–912.

Kohlberg, L. 1984. *Essays in Moral Development: The Psychology of Moral Development,* vol. 2. New York: Harper & Row.

Krebs, D. L. 2011. *The Origins of Morality: An Evolutionary Account.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Krebs, D. L., and K. Denton. 2005. “Toward a More Pragmatic Approach to Morality: A Critical Evaluation of Kohlberg’s Model.” *Psychological Review* 112(3), 629–649.

Moll, J., R. Zahn, R. di Oliverira-Sourza, F. Krueger, and J. Grafman. 2005. “The Neural Basis of Human Moral Cognition.” *Nature Neuroscience* 6(10), 799–809.

(p. 654) Nesse, R. M. (ed.). 2001. *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Nowak, M. A., and K. Sigmund. 1998. “Evolution of Indirect Reciprocity by Image Scoring.” *Nature* 393(6685), 573–577.

Richerson, P. J., and R. Boyd. 2001. “The Evolution of Subjective Commitment: A Tribal Instincts Hypothesis.” In *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment,* edited by R. Nesse, 186–219. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Richerson, P. J., and R. Boyd. 2005. *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Singer, P. 1981. *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Sober, E., and D. S. Wilson. 1998. *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Tooby, J., and L. Cosmides. 1996. “Friendship and the Banker’s Paradox: Other Pathways to the Evolution of Adaptations for Altruism.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 88, 119–143.

Trivers, R. 1985. *Social Evolution*. Menlo Park, Calif.: Benjamin Cummings.

Trivers, R. 2000. “The Elements of a Scientific Theory of Self-Deception.” In *Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Reproductive Behavior,* edited by D. LeCroy and P. Moller, pp. 114–131. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Trivers, R. 2006. “Reciprocal Altruism: 30 Years Later.” In *Cooperation in Primates and Humans,* edited by P. M. Kappeler and C. P. van Schaik, 67–84. Berlin: Springer.

Wilkinson, G. S. 1990. “Food Sharing in Vampire Bats.” *Scientific American* 262(2), 76–82.

Wilson, D. S., and E. O. Wilson. 2007. “Survival of the Selfless.” *New Scientist* 196(2628), 42–46.

Zahavi, A., and A. Zahavi. 1997. *The Handicap Principle*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Dennis Krebs**

Dennis L. Krebs is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. He has been a Woodrow Wilson Fellow and Fellow of Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. He coedited Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology with Charles Crawford and authored The Origins of Morality: An Evolutionary Account.

**Kaleda Denton**

Kaleda K. Denton is currently in the Ecology, Behavior and Evolution program at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has published encyclopedia entries on group selection, mutualism, and the Prisoner's Dilemma as well as an article entitled "Rational and Emotional Sources of Moral Decision-Making: An Evolutionary-Developmental Account" in Evolutionary Psychological Science.

# Ethics, Secular and Religious: An Evolved-Cognitive Analysis

John Teehan

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.40

## Abstract and Keywords

Morality from an evolutionary perspective is a code of conduct that regulates behavior within a group in order to promote social cohesion and stability. Both religion and secularism are grounded in the same moral psychology. How should the distinction between secular and religious ethics be assessed? Religious morality is a late-comer to the natural history of morality, reinforcing much of morality with a worldview about unnatural powers that humans' brains are prone to projecting onto reality. However, the natural history of morality reveals that religious moral traditions do not originate moral rules but instead reinforce ancient moral intuitions. Secularism as a worldview works within an immanent frame, compared to the transcendent frame of religious worldviews. This distinction is helpful in understanding the relationship between religious violence and secular-ideological driven violence.

Keywords: morality, evolution, secular ethics, humanism, secularism, religious violence

"IF there were no God, then all would be permitted." This claim from Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* is perhaps the most famous formulation of what many take to express a firm truth about morality: its necessary grounding in religion. For a religious believer, the connection between morality and God is both obvious and compelling. God, understood to be morally perfect, is the source of moral values. If there were no God, then those values would have no force. Even avowed atheists such as Nietzsche and Freud recognized the deep connection in the human psyche between god and morality and the danger of ensuing moral anarchy that could follow from the "death of God."

Evidence of the continuing relevance of this view is found in studies of anti-atheist prejudice. There are numerous places in the world today where denial of the existence of God is punishable by death, and while things are not so dire for atheists in, for example, western Europe and the United States, polls and studies still attest to widespread distrust of atheists (Gervais et al. 2011). This distrust is very much to the point: atheists cannot be trusted because they do not believe in God, and so their values, such as they may be,

must ultimately be based on self-interest and prudence. Without “the fear of God” then what motivation do people have to be moral?

These are, of course, general attitudes, often expressing untutored personal biases. As religious diversity has increased, and the visibility of various stripes of unbelief has increased, a softening of this attitude can be detected. Many religious believers seem more willing to concede that nonbelievers can still be morally decent, principled people. Some people, at least, do not need God in order to be good. This, however, is often a practical concession, not a rejection of the necessary connection between God and morality. We often find this stance among more liberally minded theologians: individuals may hold a sincere and even philosophically sophisticated ethical system and live morally righteous lives without religion or belief in God—but ultimately there is still something deficient about secular ethics, a certain “queerness” (Mavrodes 1986). The problem with a secular ethical system is that, without being grounded in some transcendent reality, such a system cannot square up with the reality of our ethical commitments, with our innate sense of moral realism. A secular (p. 656) ethics ultimately renders morality subjective and tied to personal preferences or cultural traditions, while our intuitive moral sense is that some things are just wrong, regardless of what someone or some culture thinks (Byrne 1992; Ritchie 2012).

Secular critics of religion, of course, are quick to point out that this proposed objective religious grounding of ethics does not prevent religious people from often acting in highly unethical ways. The sex abuse scandal within the Catholic Church is just one of the most recent notable, and morally repugnant, examples; the long, sordid history of wars fought in the name of God, with all the attendant atrocities, is too well known to require further elaboration. If all of this is possible with belief in God and the influence of religion, then the “queerness” of secular ethics does not seem too significant a problem. A common apologetic response to such charges is to deny an actual connection between religion and immoral violence. These are, instead, examples of individuals failing to live up to the ethical demands of their religion, or of people abusing religion to justify their behavior, which is motivated by other factors.

The relationship between ethical behavior and belief, or disbelief, in a religion is a complex one, and disentangling the various elements is difficult. This chapter approaches the issue from the perspective of evolved-cognitive science. Cognitive scientific accounts of morality and of religion, based in an evolutionary framework, are opening up new and fruitful ways to understand the relationship between religion and morality, and this perspective has much to say about the genesis of violence. I will first set out a general account of the cognitive evolution of both our moral and our religious mind and then use that model to assess the nature of secular and religious ethics and the role of religion in examples of ostensibly religious violence.

However, before we turn to this, we must come to grips with a conceptual problem. While the terms “secular’ and “religious” are casually used with confidence, they are highly contested terms within religious studies. If we do not know how to distinguish the secular

from the religious, then nothing in the following discussion will make sense, and yet some deny that we can ultimately disambiguate these terms. That may be taking things too far, but a more nuanced understanding of the terms is called for, and at least a working definition is needed.

# What Is It To Be Secular? To Be Religious?

In one sense, to be "secular" seems the most obvious of issues: it is to be nonreligious. But, of course, a "secular" society is not a society without religion; it is a society in which religion is held to be a private issue, separate from the public sphere. Just how that is worked out is complicated and varies across "secular" societies, so "secular" can have different connotations in different situations. What, then, does it mean when it qualifies "ethics"? Here, again, it seems clear that it means an ethical system not grounded in or justified by a religion—and that would be perfectly clear, if we had a clear understanding of what is meant by "religion," but this is far from the case. Indeed, "religion" is one of the most contested terms in religious studies, a fact that can be quite puzzling to those outside that discipline.

"Religion" strikes many as an unproblematic term, but this is due to our bringing a default model of religion, Christianity, to bear on the issue. Leaving aside the considerable problem (p. 657) of defining "Christianity," given the broad and often incompatible versions of what is professed to be Christianity, the deeper problem is that this understanding of "religion," even this understanding of Christianity, is a particularly modern and Western view. It is the product of a peculiar constellation of events arising during the early modern period, starting with the Reformation and coming to fullness during the Enlightenment, and it bears all the concerns and biases of that set of events (e.g., Asad 2003; Taylor 2007, 2011; Casanova 2011). Indeed, it is argued that "religion" is "a product of Western secular modernity" (Casanova 2011: 61). A bifurcation of existence into the profane, secular realm and the sacred, spiritual realm had "not existed in any other human culture in history" claims Taylor (2011: 33). Consequent to this was a shift in religious focus away from collective religious experiences and toward concerns with personal belief and commitment (Taylor 2007). Mark Juergensmeyer points out that, in contrast, non-Enlightenment religion is "a broad framework of thinking and acting that involves moral values, traditional customs, and publically articulated spiritual sensibilities" (2011: 193). Within this traditional conception of religion, that is, one common to non-Western societies and pre-Enlightenment Western societies, separation of "secular" and "religious" is not readily conceivable. Since the processes that led to the modern conceptualizations of these terms were specific to European Christianity, as we move beyond Western contexts we should expect to find "multiple competing secularisms" (Casanova 2011; 63; see also Asad 2003; Warner et al. 2010).

Recognizing the historically contingent nature of the secular–religious divide, and the diverse nature of both secularisms and religions, we still need some working definition of the secular in order to meaningfully distinguish secular and religious ethics, or even to

determine if there is a meaningful distinction. Here, Taylor (2007) provides a model. In his magisterial treatment of secularism (2007). Taylor sets out a very specific answer to what it is to be secular or, in his terminology, to live in "a secular age." To live in a secular age is to live our lives and pursue our goods within an "immanent frame." The key feature of the "immanent frame" is that

> 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 difficult, even "weird." 500 years ago in Western civilization, this wasn't so. Unbelief was off the map, close to inconceivable, for most people (Taylor 2011: 49–50).

While this immanent frame makes unbelief possible, it does not compel it (Taylor 2007: 544). The distinctive character of the secular age is that it is possible to conceive of a life lived completely within worldly boundaries, on naturalistic terms.

This conception of an immanent frame provides a useful way of distinguishing secular from religious ethics. Taylor defines this in terms of what he calls "exclusive humanism":

> I mean by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything beyond human flourishing … a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people. (2007: 18–19)

We will use this notion of the immanent frame and the exclusive humanism that derives from it as setting the conditions for deeming an ethical system "secular." We need to recognize that it is not humanism, and the focus on human flourishing that defines an ethical system as secular, since there are religious humanisms as well. It is seeing the possibilities (p. 658) and conditions of human flourishing as situated within the immanent frame that marks such systems as secular.

It is the concept of the immanent frame that allows us to disambiguate "secular" and "religious." As has been pointed out, "secular" may often simply designate a focus on worldly concerns. From a non-Enlightenment religious perspective, such worldly concerns—for example, regulating marriage/reproductive pursuits, defining the norms of social intercourse, the allocation of resources—could be conceptualized as secular and the values informing such practices as secular values without at all implying an immanent frame. In such traditions, it would make little sense to talk of addressing such "secular" concerns outside of the framework of religious meanings and beliefs. The issue for us to consider is not whether a particular ethical system distinguishes "secular" and "religious" in a manner consistent with modern, Western definitions but whether its understanding of what constitutes, and contributes to, human flourishing is worked out within an immanent frame.

While I believe that defining "secular ethics" in this way properly focuses our discussion, it does not answer the critiques of secular ethics noted earlier. Indeed, since, according to

this reading of the genealogy of the secular, the secular is a product of religious dynamics, critics of secularism may argue that this is evidence of the derivative nature of secular values—that they are simply religious values hidden under secular language and that consequently they derive their validity, and their power to motivate, from that religious grounding. Without this religious grounding morality, the demands of morality simply do not make sense and perhaps are ultimately impotent in the face of those darker, antisocial drives in human nature. To address this, we need to explore the natural history of morality and of what we might call, in keeping with Taylor (2007), the transcendent frame.

# Evolution and the Moral Mind

Morality from an evolutionary perspective is a code of conduct that regulates behavior within a group in order to promote social cohesion and stability. Successful social coordination is a key adaptation for humans. It is the ability to act in concert with others in facing the challenges of survival that makes it possible for social species to succeed in the struggle for existence. The necessary condition for social coordination is that individuals be willing to subject their immediate interests to the good of the group. However, since evolution favors behavioral strategies that promote the genetic interests of individual agents, meeting this condition is something of an evolutionary puzzle. Eusocial species, such as ants and mole rats, solve this puzzle through high levels of genetic relatedness within the group. In this case, sacrificing for the group functions as a long-term investment in one's own genetic legacy. While earliest human groups were largely kin based, the level of kinship never reached eusocial levels, and certainly as groups expanded, they became more genetically diverse. Still, human evolution led hominins on a path toward larger and more diverse social units, to the point where humans came to live in the largest complex groups on the planet (Richerson and Boyd 2005). No species has the degree of social fluidity of human groups, nor the high rate of genetically unrelated group members. Explaining how humans came to be unrivaled (p. 659) social cooperators is a complex story with a rich and extensive literature that cannot be presented here. It will suffice to set out just some of the basic elements that contribute to our evolved moral psychology. This should not be read as an exhaustive account—it is an intentional simplification, without, hopefully, being simplistic.

Theorists have long recognized the evolutionary value of direct and indirect reciprocity (Trivers 1971; Axelrod and Hamilton 1981; Axelrod 2006; Alexander 1987). Cooperation provides an advantage to kin and so contributes to our inclusive fitness, as well as to unrelated individuals. Cooperation is such a valuable strategy for social creatures and failure to reciprocate (i.e., cheating or defecting) is such a threat that our cognitive evolution has led to mental tools to negotiate these situations. The human brain, shaped by natural selection, functions to enable humans to successfully negotiate their environments and meet the various challenges involved in survival and reproduction. Humans, as social creatures descended from an ancient lineage of social creatures, developed cognitive/emotional processes necessary to succeed in a group. Humans have inherited a natural

predisposition to cooperate with others, along with an acute sensitivity to cheaters and to signals of untrustworthiness. We have powerful negative emotional reactions to cheating and a strong motivation to punish those who cheat, even if this comes at a substantial cost to the punisher. (e.g., Boyd and Richerson 1988; Dunbar 1997; Henrich and Boyd 2001; Nesse 2001; Fehr and Gachter 2002; Vanneste et al. 2007; Verplaetse et al. 2007; Henrich et al. 2010).

Moral intuitions are the outputs of evolved cognitive processes that manage various aspects of social life. These outputs promote prosocial behavior, while guarding against antisocial behavior, and this allows individuals to benefit from the advantages of group living. The target of these moral intuitions is the in-group—that is, the group comprised of those individuals situated to contribute to the success of the group in which I pursue my inclusive fitness. Individual who are not part of my group occupy a different moral space. They are not situated so as to reliably reciprocate my acts of altruism; they do not stand to benefit from the strength and cohesion of my group and so have no ultimate motivation to contribute to my group; in fact, members of other groups—groups that may stand as competitors to my group—may constitute a threat to my group, and so to my inclusive fitness. Such individuals do not trigger our innate predisposition to cooperate, at least not to the degree that in-group members do. They may instead trigger our cheater-detection tools and our threat-avoidance tools. There is a wealth of empirical studies and anthropological studies that attest to this moral in-group/out-group bias (e.g., Alexander 1987; Cashdan 2001; de Waal 2008; Ruffle and Sosis 2006; Mahajan et al. 2011).

Not only is there anthropological and psychological experimental evidence, but there is a growing body of neuroscientific evidence attesting to this bias as well. Humans are more sensitive to detecting pain of in-group members; they are more likely to interpret neutral faces of out-group members as threatening; they have less aversive reactions to the sufferings of out-group members; and in some case they get a neuro-chemical reward from witnessing such sufferings. In fact, some out-group members are not even processed as persons but instead activate neural disgust circuits (Fiske 2000; Phelps et al. 2000; Han and Northoff 2008; Van Bavel et al. 2008; Xu et al. 2009; Avenanti et al. 2010; Chiao and Mathur 2010; Hein et al. 2010; Greene 2013). All of this happens at the neurological, preconscious level. Individuals may respond to surveys and questionnaires with moral egalitarianism, even quite sincerely, and yet exhibit a moral bias on a neurological level. This a vitally important finding.

**(p. 660)** We have been discussing how evolved moral strategies shape behavior, but these strategies are the ultimate causes for the moral psychology we have; it is an origins story for our moral mind. It does not follow that humans are consciously applying these strategies, or making these evolutionary evaluations, when coming to a moral decision. We are not calculating degrees of kinship or probability of return on altruistic investment, nor are we deliberatively assessing the moral status of an out-group member. All of these strategies and mental tools constitute the preconscious conditions that give rise to our moral perceptions. These are not tools we think with so much as tools we perceive with. They give shape to our intuitive apprehension of moral situations and generate the moral

intuitions and emotions that motivate behavior. Cognitive science argues that our moral thinking, like our thinking in general, is largely shaped by preconscious cognitive/emotional processes that are neurologically instantiated (e.g. Haidt 2001; Kahneman 2011; Greene 2013).

This does not mean that reason, or conscious deliberations, cannot play a decisive role in moral judgments. Instead it highlights just how much of moral cognition is driven by processes outside of conscious control. Daniel Kahneman (2011) has usefully discussed human cognition as being a dual processor: System 1 is composed of these preconscious cognitive processes that result in quick, automatic, often emotionally valenced judgments, while System 2 processes are slower, more deliberative, more rational judgments. Often these two systems work in concert, with System 2 coming in to provide rational explanation to or justification of judgments generated by System 1; at times, System 1 processes conflict and System 2 comes in to reconcile those conflicts. Sometimes, however, the judgments of System 2 conflict with the judgments of System 1. In such conflicts, System 2 processes, being intuitively and perhaps emotionally compelling, have a distinct advantage. However, top-down processes, such as deliberative reasoning, can resist and/or modify System 1 outputs. This is, in effect, what learning is—bringing in new information, new experiences, new patterns of behavior, to modify, condition, or replace the outputs of preconscious cognitive processes and habits. Individual deliberative reasoning is one such top-down process, but for social beings such as ourselves, a much more powerful and effective top-down process is culture.

The patterns of behavior and belief we are exposed to from an early age have a significant influence on how cognitive processes are given expression and how the outputs of those processes are reinforced. The diverse ways in which these processes can be expressed creates the conditions for the diversity of cultures we find throughout the world, which in turn helps to explain the moral diversity we find throughout the world. Despite this diversity, from an evolved-cognitive perspective, moral traditions are all built from the same basic cognitive templates.

It is at this point that we begin to understand the role of religion in the natural history of morality. Religion is one of the older and most ubiquitous cultural practices in human history. It has had greater influence on morality than any other cultural practice, but that influence is to give specific expressions to moral-cognitive processes that originate much earlier in our evolutionary past. Indeed, certain aspects of this moral psychology, for example, reciprocation exchanges and, more important, the in-group bias, are found not only in our closest relatives, chimpanzees, but are found in many primate species, as well as in other mammals such as dolphins and rats (de Waal 1996; Mahajan et al. 2011). Religious morality is a late-comer to the natural history of morality.

# (p. 661) Evolution and the Moral Function of Religion

An evolved-cognitive science also uncovers the processes that underlie religious beliefs and behaviors. Researchers in the field that has come to be known as the cognitive science of religion (CSR) are developing an empirically grounded, experimentally assessable, naturalistic model of the origin of religion. A central tenet of this field is that

> Belief in gods requires no special part of the brain. Belief in gods requires no special mystical experiences … Belief in gods requires no coercion or brainwashing … Rather, belief in gods arises because of the natural functioning of completely normal mental tools working in common natural and social contexts.
>
> (Barrett 2004: 21)

Cognitive science sees religious beliefs (e.g., god beliefs) as generated by numerous cognitive processes that evolved because they provided a survival/reproductive benefit to our earliest human ancestors. For example, humans have a well-attested predisposition to interpret the world in terms of agency. Given the importance, and the potential danger, of undetected agents in our environment, evolution would have designed this agency-detection device (Barrett 2004) to be hypersensitive, producing a preponderance of false positives (perceiving an agent when none is present) over false negatives (failing to perceive an agent). The perception of an agent triggers our Theory of Mind system, leading us to ascribe mental states to those agents (e.g. Boyer 2001; Atran 2002; Purzycki and Sosis 2011). We perceive agents as acting with intention, having desires, emotions, plans, and so on. This also has clear survival value—we need some sense of what the detected agent might be planning so we can prepare an appropriate response.

The fact that the agent we have detected is not physically evident is not an obstacle to ascribing intentions to it. Research reveals we have different cognitive systems for dealing with physical bodies and mental events, making it cognitively easy to conceive of bodies without minds and minds without bodies (Bloom 2007). Not only do we naturally ascribe intentions to all sorts of agents, but we are cognitively predisposed to look for patterns and purpose—we are “teleologically promiscuous” (Kelemen 2004). Understanding what something is *for* is an important step in understanding how to respond to it, and this provides an adaptive advantage. Wondering about the meaning of life and our purpose in the universe are natural extensions of this pattern-seeking tendency. And in wondering about a purpose or design, we are naturally led to wonder about agency and intentions: Whose purpose? Whose design? The universal human tendency to believe in gods, ghosts, spirits, and so on is grounded in these evolved cognitive predispositions (Guthrie 1993; Boyer 2001; Atran 2002; Atran and Norenzayan 2004; Barrett 2004). This makes religious beliefs cognitively natural, which also can make them intuitively compelling.

The fact that religion comes naturally says nothing about whether or not religious claims are true. In fact, this evolutionary approach challenges the truth-value of religious beliefs. As belief in God is generated by tools that evolved to promote survival, not to find god, God beliefs seem to arise as a misfiring of these tools. There is a robust debate within CSR about the philosophical and theological implications of these findings (Barrett 2009; Murray and Goldberg 2009; Shults 2014; Teehan 2014); however, we need not go into this debate here. (p. 662) Whether or not religious beliefs are misfirings, the fact is that they do persist. That religions play, and have played, such a significant role in human history suggests that such beliefs provided some advantage to humans during our evolutionary history. From an evolutionary perspective, religions developed to promote prosocial behavior within groups as human societies became larger and the challenges of social cooperation became greater (e.g., Teehan 2010; Norenzayan 2013). The function of religion was to bind groups into moral communities and to extend the circle of ethical concern beyond the limited tribal boundaries of early human society. Religion, it appears, assumed a key moral function in human evolution.

Our moral mind evolved during an extended period of small, largely homogeneous groups, characteristic of hunter-gatherer societies. In such groups, it was relatively easy to recognize who was an in-group member, which members were reliable social cooperators, and who was not to be trusted. The regular, repeated interactions such a society afforded made it simple to keep track of one another's behavior and so made successful cheating difficult. The suite of evolved moral intuitions worked effectively to bond the group together. However, in even the earliest human civilizations, societies consisted of hundreds or thousands of individuals. In these larger, more anonymous groups, knowing who was an in-group member worth cooperating with and who might be a potential cheat, or even an out-group member looking to benefit from altruism before defecting, became increasingly difficult. This strained our moral psychology and seemed to limit the effective size of groups. Yet we know that under the competitive pressure from intergroup conflict, human populations swelled—and religion was at least one factor in making this possible.

This is a complex issue, but there are two basic ways religions came to assume a moral function in human cultural evolution. One was through providing a system of signals of commitment that distinguished in-group from out-group; the other was through shared belief in supernatural agents (e.g., gods) who assumed the role of moral enforcer of the group's codes and mores. Rituals and customs can serve to mark out who is a member of the group (Sosis and Alcorta 2003; Sosis 2006); that such signals are often costly in terms of investment of time and resources, or arcane and without apparent logic, contributes to their effectiveness (Irons 2001; Bulbulia 2004). Willingness to undergo a ritual of scarification, or to keep all the requirements of, say, kosher regulations, indicates commitment to the group that makes such demands, and by signaling in-group status one becomes subject to all the moral benefits that follow. Such practices also signal devotion to the god that oversees the moral code of the group. A shared belief in a moral God—one who provides a grounding for the group's code and who metes out rewards and punishment accordingly—is a very effective means for policing the behavior of in-group members when

the group has grown too large for regular, direct observation. Humans are sensitively attuned to the perception of being watched, and even symbolic suggestions of being watched can increase prosocial behavior and diminish cheating (Fehr and Fischbacher 2003; Bering and Johnson 2005; Nowak and Sigmund 2005).

Religions trigger these evolved elements of our moral cognition and so function to extend the domain of our moral intuitions beyond the small, homogeneous groups they were designed to serve. By creating the conditions for larger and yet still cohesive groups, religion came to be a cultural adaptation that provided a competitive advantage in the struggle for resources between human groups. Groups with this cultural adaptation outcompeted and therefore out-reproduced groups without religion—which helps to explain why religion is a human universal (Wilson 2002; Bulbulia 2004; Alcorta and Sosis 2005; Johnson and Kruger 2004; Atran and Henrich 2010; Norenzayan 2013). Rather than being the source of morality, (p. 663) this evolutionary model argues that religion is a moral adaptation. Moral rules may be portrayed by religion as coming down from on high, but the form and function of those divine commands have been shaped by our evolutionary heritage (Teehan 2010, 2012). This allows us to see the relationship between religious and secular ethics in a different light.

# The Secular Basis of Religious Ethics

We began with the Dostoyevskian quotation, “If there were no God, then all would be permitted” to express the ostensibly necessary connection between morality and religion. This connection can be understood several ways, but I want to focus on just two: genealogical and motivational. An evolved-cognitive perspective provides us with a fresh approach to each of these connections.

The impact of a cognitive science of both religion and morality is perhaps clearest in regards to the genealogical connection, which holds that God is the source of our moral obligations and the author of our moral rules. In this case, if there were no God, then there would be no moral rules—all would be permitted, as there would be no moral proscriptions. However, the natural history of morality reveals that religious moral traditions do not originate moral rules but rather give extended force to more ancient moral intuitions. Religious moral codes, such as the Mosaic Law, function to promote behavior that promotes in-group cooperation while discouraging antisocial behavior. They provide a system of signals of commitment that identity in-group members and set the boundaries of moral concern. These are the requirements of any moral system that effectively binds a group into a stable and cohesive unit. How these requirements are met, how these evolved moral intuitions are expressed, varies widely—there is no one way to succeed as a culture, and so there will be no one expression of moral rules or of divine commands. But these diverse, divine commands will be cultural expressions of an underlying evolved moral cognitive system (Teehan 2010).

If we use the term “secular” in accord with its Latin root, *saecularis*, as belonging to the world or to a worldly age, then we can claim a wholly secular origin and function for morality and, by extension, of religious morality as well. Morality predates religion; indeed, religion, as a cultural institution, arises in response to the evolved dynamics of morality.

In regard to the motivational connection between morality and religion, the issue is less straightforward but more urgent to grasp. The proposition is that without the watchful eye of God, humans would have no motivation to follow a moral rule that conflicted with their self-interests. On one level, an evolved-cognitive account of morality shows this to be incorrect, and evidence both experiential and experimental attests to this. As many of the studies cited here show, humans have a natural propensity to feel empathy and moral concern for others. Even in studies that showed the mitigating effects of out-group status on our empathetic systems, there still were empathetic responses, albeit diminished, for the well-being of others—even when those others were strangers. And while “watched people make for nice people,” even studies that demonstrate that being able to “get away with it” reduces people’s generosity nevertheless reveal encouraging levels of honesty and generosity—that is, even when people have no fear of consequences, significant numbers will still “do the right thing,” even at a cost to their own self-interests. We have evolved a moral sense that is sensitive to the sufferings of others, that is emotionally invested in fairness, that inclines toward cooperation (p. 664) and reciprocation, and in which “self-interest” is intimately connected with group interests. These cognitive moral predispositions, as System 1 processes, are triggered quickly, automatically, and in a compelling manner without the need of religious motivations or the fear of God. Humans have naturally grounded motivations, that is, secular motivations, for being moral. Religion is not necessary to motivate ethical behavior.

Still, we have also learned that this innate morality, grounded in secular concerns, is deeply biased toward the in-group and was designed to function in small, homogenous groupings. These conditions likely posed few problems for our earliest forebears, but in a global society, with diverse and shifting demographics, these cognitive moral constraints, which constitute a deep predisposition to xenophobia, can be tragically problematic. Religions arose to mitigate just this problem—the parochial, tribal nature of our evolved moral psychology. Religion extended the reach of our moral intuitions, allowing humans to extend the boundaries of moral concern to encompass the large, complex, and heterogeneous groups that characterize human civilization. While a secular ethics may suffice to motivate ethical concern on a small scale, can it be effective on a large enough scale to avoid a moral regression to violent tribalism? Do we need religion to motivate morality on a societal scale?

Much has been made of the success of European countries in establishing stable societies with high levels of quality of life, along with low levels of religiosity and a compartmentalizing of religion to the private sphere—especially Scandinavian societies (Zuckerman 2008). This stands as evidence that religion is not necessary for larger, modern societies to flourish. However, these countries, while incredibly diverse when compared to ancient

prehistorical groups, are still relatively homogenous; and the stability of these societies can be attributed to their economic affluence and well-established judicial systems. Studies suggest that these are just the sort of social conditions conducive to the spread of nonreligious attitudes and belief systems (Barrett 2004; Gervais and Norenzayan 2012). These conditions, however, are not representative of societies throughout much of the world; and, not coincidentally, we find religiosity and the public role of religion to be much higher across the globe—Europe is the outlier. This has significant implications: if secular societies only flourish under conditions of economic affluence and strong social institutions, then perhaps religion is necessary to stabilize society to the point where secularism can flourish; and even once established, secular societies remain vulnerable to the re-emergence of religion, given the advent of destabilizing factors.

We can see this playing out in secular European societies as they respond to the effects of recession and to the influx of immigrants of predominantly Muslim heritage. One effect of these changing conditions is the rise of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence across Europe. This is consistent with what we know about the workings of the moral mind. When the in-group is perceived to be threatened, whether through direct attack or from fear of loss of resources, in-group status becomes more salient (Greenberg et al. 1990; Burke et al. 2010). This follows from the evolutionary origins of human psychology. The group is the locus of our strivings for inclusive fitness—it is the key human adaptation in the struggle for survival—so when that survival seems threatened, cleaving to the group and strengthening the group is the natural response. The consequence to this is an increased out-group aversion and moral desensitization to out-group members, that is, a rise in xenophobia—and this xenophobia need not take on religious trappings. A nationalistic ethnocentrism can provide the rhetorical and justificatory grounds for xenophobia just (p. 665) as effectively. Here we see the difficulty in assessing secular and religious ethics in terms of their role in promoting the sort of societies that create the conditions for human flourishing.

The religionist could argue that a society without God has an inadequate moral grounding. While such a society might do well when conditions are good, they collapse into xenophobic violence and discrimination when things become difficult. Only a God-based moral system can ground and motivate a truly universal moral commitment. Without fear of divinely administered punishment, there is nothing to hold back the worst excesses of xenophobia, particularly when it is harnessed to a cult of personality, or sense of national exceptionalism, and the history of the twentieth century is evidence of this. Without God, the Motherland or Fuhrer steps into the breach with horrendous results. There is some legitimacy to this concern, but its implication—that a God-based morality would protect us from such violence—is demonstrably false. The horrors perpetrated in the name of religion are too numerous to count and too common to need enumerating. The religious apologist, we have seen, may counter that such acts are not legitimately religious in nature. They are an abuse of religion, a violation of the true nature of religion, which is invariably deemed to be peaceful and loving. Even nonreligious commentators often downplay or dismiss the religious element of violence done under the banner of religion, even when

the actors explicitly cite religion as part of their justification. CSR allows us to see how such apologetic responses misunderstand the role of religion in religious violence.

Let us look at a specific example of religious violence. On the morning of 7 January 2015, two men walked into the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and opened fire, killing eleven people. The assailants attacked the magazine for its portrayals of the Prophet Muhammad, which they deemed blasphemous and deserving of death. They specifically targeted individuals responsible for the offensive drawings, and during their escape loudly proclaimed they had done this in defense of Islam. Was this not clearly an act of religious violence? One might think so, but numerous prominent voices argued that it was not. Much of this can be dismissed as knee-jerk religious apologetics, or politically grounded strategy, but there were more sophisticated analyses that rejected the religious dimension of this attack as well. For example, noted journalist Chris Hedges wrote,

> It was not about radical Islam. … It was a harbinger of an emerging dystopia where the wretched of the earth, deprived of resources to survive, devoid of hope, brutally controlled … lash out in nihilistic fury. (2015).

While Hedges is correct about the social-economic conditions that underlie such acts, to eliminate religion from this analysis is to miss an important aspect of the story (Teehan 2015). Religions function as markers of identity with a group, as well as of commitment to that group. This triggers deep and powerful moral intuitions that lead us to act in defense of the group. These same mental tools also generate out-group antipathy, especially under situations of threat or instability. A situation, such as that surrounding the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, is perfectly suited to set off both aspects of these cognitive tools. We have two individuals who at some stage of their lives came to identify with Islam, and so the Muslim in-group. They lived in a society in which Muslims are a distinct minority, and by which they feel disrespected—that is, their in-group lives under social stress. Then, from within the established out-group, comes an act that directly insults the symbol of the Muslim in-group identity, the Prophet Muhammad. While the dominant out-group defends this as an act of free speech, (p. 666) that is not how this is processed through the dynamics of in-group psychology—it is a direct attack on the group, violating a sacred value that defines the group. Such attacks must be answered or the group invites further attacks.

Responses to that threat need not come through violence, and, indeed, the vast majority of French Muslims did not respond with violence. However, a violent response is an option, a particularly costly option, and we know that costly signals of commitment in defense of the group—a willingness to accept a great loss in order to punish those who attack the group—has powerful emotional appeal and promises great benefits for the reputation of those incurring the cost. All societies confer prestige on those willing to sacrifice for the greater good—soldiers, police, firefighters, emergency workers, and so on. That prestige is part of the social motivational structure that leads individuals to take on such dangerous roles, and this has particular appeal to young males—who have always been the major source of volunteers for these social roles. For young males, who feel unat-

tached to the larger social structures and find little meaning or hope in that society, the draw of making a meaningful sacrifice in defense of the greater good (i.e., the in-group) can be irresistible. This psychological structure of violence is not restricted to or unique to religion, but the issue at hand is not whether only religion can spur on such violence but whether it ever does, and the answer is, clearly, yes. When a religion, such as Islam, serves as a marker of identity with an in-group, it primes the dynamics of in-group/out-group moral psychology. When that group is perceived to be under threat by an out-group, the moral bias comes into play: self-sacrifice in defense of the religious group and moral desensitization toward the potential suffering of the out-group. While any marker of in-group identity can do this—for example, nationalism, ethnicity, soccer club affiliation—religion, because of its ancient evolutionary ties to moral psychology, is particularly powerful in this respect.

To grasp the religious nature of "religious violence," it is important to note that the individuals committing the violence need not be particularly religious. It has been noted that so-called religious terrorists are often not church/synagogue/mosque-going believers, well versed in sophisticated theological understanding of their faith and that in numerous cases these individuals showed little interest or involvement in religion before committing their acts in the name of their religion. Judging that religion could not be a causal factor ignores the cognitive dynamics of the situation. Religion plays a role in religious violence not through particular teachings or doctrines—at least not primarily—but through its cognitive-moral function as a trigger for the in-group/out-group bias. It is identification with a religion, not necessarily believing in or following a religion, that implicates religion as a source of violence.

This does not mean that the doctrines of a religion do not contribute to violence. All three monotheistic faiths supply a textual basis for justifying, even advocating, sanctified violence, and studies show how reading authoritative religious texts can increase willingness to act out aggressively and to promote an uncritical acceptance of the text (Bushman et al. 2007; Atran and Ginges 2012; Neuberg et al. 2014). Immersion within a religious tradition that emphasizes an insular worldview, that perceives itself under siege from a hostile, powerful out-group, and that provides divine sanction for actions in defense of the group makes for a particularly lethal mix. This moral-cognitive analysis does not support the converse view that religion is precisely the problem. Such human behaviors are far too complex to be reduced to any one causal story, but religion is part of the causal explanation. Religious apologists can rightly point to numerous secular examples of in-group identity leading to (p. 667) horrific violence and denigration of others. While religious identity may be particularly powerful, it does not constitute a distinct kind of danger in relation to secular ideologies.

# What Can a Secular Ethics Offer?

If both religion and secularism are grounded in the same moral psychology, how then are we to assess the distinction between secular and religious ethics? Is there in fact a moral-

ly significant distinction? There is another way of casting the issue that might offer insight—and here we need to return to Charles Taylor. As we discussed, Taylor (2007) characterized secularism as a worldview that works within an immanent frame, compared to the transcendent frame of religious worldviews, and this distinction is helpful in understanding the relationship between religious violence and secular-ideological driven violence.

It has been argued that secular ideologies such as communism, fascism, and Nazism can function as religions. They each certainly set forth a clearly marked in-group, imbued with sacred value. They identified an out-group threat that needed to be defeated. They developed signals of commitment to and identity with the in-group, and they all inspired and justified widespread, lethal violence in defense of the group. While these secular ideologies may have lacked a god, or a notion of a supernatural force supporting the group, they operated within a transcendent frame—that is, they all defined their worldview in terms of a final good that transcended the limits of the present age or of any worldly age. They all looked forward to a future period where the triumph of the group would usher in a higher stage of human existence, a social order that would leave behind the messy instability of historical societies. They taught that commitment to achieving this final good outweighed any personal sacrifice endured in the here and now and imbued that sacrifice with a meaning that no ordinary endeavor could match. In service of this good, no price was too high, no sacrifice of self or other too costly. It is this transcendent frame that set the conditions for so many of the atrocities that have marred human history—whether done in the name of God or in the name of the state—and that poses an exponentially greater threat in a world with weapons of mass destruction.

It is in this sense that a secular worldview, one that understands the greater good to reside within an immanent frame, can claim the advantage. Within an immanent frame, all goods are valued because of their contribution to human flourishing. These are secular goods in the sense of having their fulfillment in this age and this world. This does not mean sacrifice will not be called for or justified, but those sacrifices—which take place in the here and now—must be outweighed by goods to be realized in the here and now. Such goods need not be merely individual goods. There may still be a greater good, but that greater good will be conceived in terms of contributing to human flourishing and justice, not in abstract, idealized terms. Also, in limiting the fulfillment of the good to this age and world, an immanent frame does not require a temporal myopia. Many of the goods worth struggling for and sacrificing for may not, and perhaps cannot, be fulfilled within the lifetime of any particular individual or even generation. For example, social justice and the establishment of truly democratic polity are long-term goals, of uncertain success, but working for such long-term goals can still bring benefits to the here and now—whether in terms of making small but concrete steps toward the goal, in the meaning gained from working for something larger than the (p. 668) individual self, or in terms of the practical benefits that may accrue to a society that commits to such long-term goals. This also works on less grand, though no less noble, social scales. The sacrifices that people regularly make in the here and now so that their children and grandchildren will have a better life is also an example of a long-term, uncertain good that will find its fulfillment in a fu-

ture yet still immanent timeframe. An immanent frame will not do away with the potential danger inherent in our evolved in-group/out-group bias, but it may limit the extent of the damage that bias can wreak when unconstrained by the real-world measurements of success and failure.

Taylor (2007) identifies humanism as the worldview operating within an immanent frame. It is important to recognize that while humanism is secular in terms of working within secular conditions and a secular time frame, it need not be secular in terms of being non-religious. Religious humanism is a worldview that, while informed by a religious tradition and religiously inspired moral vision, sees the focus of that moral vision to be human flourishing and social justice within an immanent frame. For example, we may count Martin Luther King Jr. as a religious humanist. He was a Christian minister, with a Bible-based value system, but saw the actualization of that religious moral vision to require the struggle for social justice and the improvement of human life in the here and now. Even if that "here and now" did not encompass his lifetime, its fulfillment was to be sought within a secular time frame—it could not wait for the Kingdom of God. While King is a very special example, his religious humanism is not an exceptional case or an aberration. All the major religions contain within them a vision of social justice and human good to be sought and valued within completely secular terms, even if that vision is understood to be divinely inspired.

The significant distinction between secular and religious ethics is not whether it has a "religious" or "secular" articulation but whether it operates within a transcendent or an immanent frame. The moral significance of "secularism" is in its defining the secular conditions under which we pursue our vision of the good and its privileging of humanistic values that those secular conditions demand, not the ostensible origins—worldly or otherworldly—of those values.

# Bibliography

Alcorta, C., R. Sosis. 2005. "Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols: The Evolution of Religion as an Adaptive Complex." *Human Nature* 16 (4), 323-359.

Alexander, R. 1987. The *Biology of Moral Systems: Foundations of Human Behavior.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Asad, T. 2003. *Formations of the Secular*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Atran, S. 2002. *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Atran, S., and J. Ginges. 2012. "Religious and Sacred Imperatives in Human Conflict." *Science* 336(6083), 885–887.

Atran, S., and J. Henrich. 2010. "The Evolution of Religion: How Cognitive By-Products, Adaptive Learning Heuristics, Ritual Displays, and Group Competition Generate Deep Commitments to Prosocial Religions." *Biological Theory* 5(1), 18–30.

Atran, S., and A. Norenzayan. 2004. “Religion’s Evolutionary Landscape: Counterintuition, Commitment, Compassion, Communion.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 27 (6), 713–730.

(p. 669) Avenanti, A., A. Sirigu, and S. Aglioti. 2010. “Racial Bias Reduces Empathic Sensorimotor Resonance with Other-Race Pain.” *Current Biology* 20(11), 1018–1022.

Axelrod, R. 2006. *The Evolution of Cooperation,* 2nd ed. New York: Basic Books.

Axelrod, R., and W. Hamilton. 1981. “The Evolution of Cooperation.” *Science* 211(4489), 1390–1396.

Barrett, J. 2004. *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.

Barrett. J. 2009. “Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology.” In *The Believing Primate*, edited by J. Schloss and M. Murray, 76–99. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bering, J., and Johnson, D. 2005. “‘O Lord … You Perceive My Thoughts from Afar’: Recursiveness and the Evolution of Supernatural Agency.” *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 5(1–2), 118–142.

Bloom, P. 2007. “Religion Is Natural.” *Developmental Science* 10(1), 147–151.

Boyd, R., and P. Richerson. 1988. “The Evolution of Reciprocity in Sizable Groups.” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 132, 337–356.

Boyer, P. 2001. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Bulbulia, J. 2004. “The Cognitive and Evolutionary Psychology of Religion.” *Biology and Philosophy* 19(5), 655–686.

Burke, B., A. Martens, and E. Faucher. 2010. “Two Decades of Terror Management Theory: A Meta-Analysis of Mortality Salience Research.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(2), 155–195.

Bushman, B. J., R. Ridge, E. Das, C. Key, and G. Busath. 2007. “When God Sanctions Killing: Effects of Scriptural Violence on Aggression.” *Psychological Science* 18(3), 204–207.

Byrne, P. 1992. *The Philosophical and Theological Foundations of Ethics*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

Casanova, J. 2011. “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 54–74. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Cashdan, E. 2001. “Ethnocentrism and Xenophobia: A Cross-Cultural Study.” *Current Anthropology* 42(5), 760–765.

Chiao, J. Y., and V. A. Mathur. 2010. “Intergroup Empathy: How Does Race Affect Empathic Neural Responses?” *Current Biology* 20(11), 478–480.

de Waal, F. 1996. *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

de Waal, F. 2008. “Putting the Altruism Back into Altruism: The Evolution of Empathy.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 59, 279–300.

Dunbar, R. 1997. *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Fehr, E., and U. Fischbacher. 2003. “The Nature of Human Altruism.” *Nature* 425(6960), 785–791.

Fehr, E., and S. Gachter. 2002. “Altruistic Punishment in Humans.” *Nature* 415(6868), 137–140.

Fiske, S. T. 2000. “Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination at the Seam between the Centuries: Evolution, Culture, Mind, and Brain.” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30(3), 299–322.

Gervais, W., A. Shariff, and A. Norenzayan. 2011. “Do You Believe in Atheists? Distrust Is Central to Anti-Atheist Prejudice.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101(6), 1189–1206.

(p. 670) Gervais, W. and A. Norenzayan. 2012. “Reminders of Secular Authority Decrease Believers’ Distrust of Atheists.” *Psychological Science* 23 (5) 483-491.

Gill, M. 2006. *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, J., T. Pyszczynski, L. S. Solomon, A. Rosenblatt, M. Veeder, S. Kirkland, and D. Lyon. 1990. “Evidence of Terror Management Theory II: The Effects of Mortality Salience on Reactions to Those Who Threaten or Bolster the Cultural Worldview.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58(2), 308–318.

Greene, J. 2013. *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap between Us and Them.* New York: Penguin.

Guthrie, S. 1993. *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haidt, J. 2001. “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment.” *Psychological Review* 108(4), 814–834.

Han, S., and G. Northoff. 2008. “Cultural-Sensitive Neural Substrates of Human Cognition: A Transcultural Neuroimaging Approach.” *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 9(8), 646–654.

Hedges, C. 2015. “A Message from the Dispossessed.” Truthdig.com. **http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/a_message_from_the_dispossessed_20150111**.

Hein, G., G. Silani, K. Preuschoff, C. D. Batson, and T. Singer. 2010. “Neural Responses to Ingroup and Outgroup Members’ Suffering Predict Individual Differences in Costly Helping.” *Neuron* 68(1), 149–160.

Henrich, J., and R. Boyd. 2001. “Why People Punish Defectors: Weak Conformist Transmission Can Stabilize Costly Enforcement of Norms in Cooperative Dilemmas.” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 208, 78–89.

Henrich, J., J. Ensminger, R. McElreath, A. Barr, C. Barrett, A. Bolyanatz, et al. 2010. “Markets, Religion, Community Size, and the Evolution of Fairness and Punishment.” *Science* 327(5972), 1480–1484.

Irons, W. 2001. “Religion as a Hard-to-Fake Sign of Commitment.” In *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment*, edited by R. Nesse, 292–309. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Kahneman, D. 2011. *Thinking: Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kelemen, D. 2004. “Are Children ‘Intuitive Theists’? Reasoning about Purpose and Design in Nature.” *Psychological Science* 15(5), 295–301.

Johnson, D., and O. Kruger. 2004. “The Good of Wrath: Supernatural Punishment and the Evolution of Cooperation.” *Political Theology* 5(2), 159–176.

Juergensmeyer, M. 2011. “Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence.” In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 185–203. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Madsen, R., and T. Strong. 2003. *The Many and the One: Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Mahajan, N., M. Martinez, N. Gutierrez, G. Diesendruck, M. Banaji, and L. Santos. 2011. “The Evolution of Intergroup Bias: Perceptions and Attitudes in Rhesus Macaques.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100(3), 387–405.

Murray, M., and A. Goldberg. 2009. “Evolutionary Accounts of Religion: Explaining and Explaining Away.” In *The Believing Primate*, edited by J. Schloss and M. Murray, 44–75. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(p. 671) Mavrodes, G. 1986. “Religion and the Queerness of Morality.” In *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, 213–226. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Nesse, R. 2001. *Evolution and the Capacity for Commitment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Neuberg, S., C. Warner, S. Mistler, A. Berlin, E. Hill, J. Johnson, G. Filip-Crawford, R. Millsap, G. Thomas, M. Winkelman, B. Broome, T. Taylor and J. Schober. 2014. "Religion and Intergroup Conflict: Findings from the Global Group Relations Project." *Psychological Science* 25 (1) 198–206.

Norenzayan, A. 2013. *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Nowak, M. A., and K. Sigmund. 2005. "Evolution of Indirect Reciprocity." *Nature* 437, 1291–1298.

Phelps, E. A., K. J. O'Connor, W. A. Cunningham, E. S. Funayama, C. J. Gatenby, J. C. Gore, and M. R. Banaji. 2000. "Performance on Indirect Measures of Race Evaluation Predicts Amygdala Activation." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 12(5), 729–738.

Purzycki, B., and R. Sosis, 2011. "Our Gods: Variation in Supernatural Minds." In *Essential Building Blocks of Human Nature,* edited by U. J. Frey, C. Störmer, and K. P. Willführ., 77–93. Berlin: Springer.

Richerson, P., and R. Boyd. 2005. *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ritchie, A. 2012. *From Morality to Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ruffle, B., and R. Sosis. 2006. "Cooperation and the In-Group-Out-Group Bias: A Field Test on Israeli Kibbutz Members and City Residents." *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 60(2), 147–163.

Shook, John R. 2012. "The Design of Morality." In *Origin(s) of Design in Nature*, edited by L. Swan, R. Gordon, and J. Seckbach, 163–190. Berlin and New York: Springer.

Shults, F. L. 2014. *Theology after the Birth of God: Atheist Conceptions in Cognition and Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sosis, R. 2006. "Religious Behaviors, Badges, and Bans: Signaling Theory and the Evolution of Religion." In *Where God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion*, edited by P. McNamara, 61–86. New York: Praeger.

Sosis, R., and C. Alcorta. 2003. "Signaling, Solidarity, and the Sacred: The Evolution of Religious Behavior." *Evolutionary Anthropology* 12(6), 264–274.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. 2011. "Western Secularity." In *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by C. Calhoun, M. Juergensmeyer, and J. VanAntwerpen, 31–53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Teehan, J. 2010. *In the Name of God: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Ethics and Violence.* Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Teehan, J. 2012. “Empathy, Cruelty, and Religion.” In S*cience and the World’s Religions*, edited by P. McNamara and W. Wildman, vol. 2, 123–156. New York: Praeger.

Teehan, J. 2014. “Cognitive Science and the Limits of Theology.” In *The Roots of Religion: Exploring the Cognitive Science of Religion*, edited by R. Trigg and J. Barrett, 167–182. Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate.

Teehan, J. 2015. “Islam, Violence, and the Religious Mind.” *Science, Religion and Culture* 2(1), 12–16.

Trivers, R. 1971. “The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism.” *Quarterly Review of Biology* 46(1), 35–57.

(p. 672) Van Bavel, J. J., D. J. Packer, and W. A. Cunningham. 2008. “The Neural Substrates of in-Group Bias.” *Psychological Science* 19(11), 1131–1139.

Vanneste, S., J. Verplaetse, A. Van Hiel, and J. Braeckman. 2007. “Attention Bias toward Noncooperative People. A Dot Probe Classification Study in Cheating Detection.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 28(4), 272–276.

Verplaetse, J., S. Vanneste, and J. Braeckman. 2007. “You Can Judge a Book by Its Cover: The Sequel. A Kernel of Truth in Predictive Cheating Detection.” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 28(4), 260–271.

Warner, M., J. VanAntwerpen, and C. Calhoun. 2010. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, D. S. 2002. *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Xu, X., X. Zuo, X. Wang, and S. Han. 2009. “Do You Feel My Pain? Racial Group Membership Modulates Empathic Neural Responses.” *Journal of Neuroscience* 29(26), 8525–8529.

Zuckerman, P. 2008. *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment*. New York: New York University Press.

**John Teehan**

John Teehan, Department of Religion, Hofstra University

# Secular Ethics, East and West

Sor-hoon Tan

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.41

## Abstract and Keywords

One can find secular ethics in Aristotle's philosophy; one can also find secular ethics in Confucianism. Debates about the religious status of Confucianism date back several centuries and continue today. Ethical concepts in the Classical Confucian texts and the ethical life they advocate can be accepted on their own, independent of any otherworldly religious beliefs. This chapter reconstructs a Confucian secular ethics from the textual resources of Classical Confucianism—Analects, the Mencius, and the Xunzi. It then considers possibilities for reconciling ethics, science, and religion within secular Confucian perspectives by comparing two modern treatments of Confucian ethics, one inspired by Immanuel Kant and the other by sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Finally, a third treatment is presented: a pragmatist treatment of Confucian secular ethics based on John Dewey's reconstruction of the religious.

Keywords: virtue ethics, Chinese ethics, Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, secular ethics, pragmatism, John Dewey

SECULAR ethics locates ethical values, the source of normativity, and the means of ethical knowledge and ethical achievements entirely in this world. Secular ethical values are based on human experience and needs, on facts about human beings and their world; they can be known and achieved with human capacities in human activities. The capacity to behave ethically lies in human nature, and reasons for acting ethically are to be found in the facts of this world, which human beings can discover and understand with their senses, their ability to think, and the tools they have created. Secular ethics excludes reference to religious beliefs in the other-worldly, such as sacred, transcendent, and supernatural entities. It rejects religious authority as the arbiter of what is ethical. It does not recognize religious revelation and other supernatural sources of knowledge, nor does it rely on religious faith to motivate ethical actions. Secular ethics need not be secularist, that is, self-consciously opposed to all religions (Habermas 2008: 27). If the scope of what can count as a religion is enlarged sufficiently—for example, to the point where "God" can mean just about anything or becomes dispensable (Epstein 2005: 14)—some religions are compatible with secular ethics.

Rational and this-worldly attitudes toward religions pervaded ancient Greek and Roman learning, which was revived in Renaissance humanism and became the source for the birth of modern secular ethics during the Enlightenment. Philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who liberated reason from all external authority, including and perhaps especially religious authority, shifted the frame of reference for ethical life from divine commandments and religious revelation to human nature and what David Hume (1978: xvi) described as the "science of man." The secularization of ethics was part of a broader secularization process in which various domains became separated from religion, which gradually lost the supreme dominance it had over all spheres of life during the Middle Ages. As modern science and its methods increasingly dominate human knowledge, similar epistemological standards and methods are applied to the study of ethical experience. Paul Kurtz's contemporary ethics of secularism maintains that science can help us make wiser ethical judgments, as scientific inquiry liberates us from the supernaturalism of ancient nomadic and agricultural tribes and gives us "more appropriate principles and values that better reflect the experiences of the urban, (p. 674) industrial, technological, informational, and planetary communities that have emerged" (2008: 19).

Charles Taylor (2007) considers the "secular" an invention arising from a specific set of complex historical processes. Among them are the church domination of all worldly domains in medieval Europe, internal pressures for reform to achieve higher standards of spirituality, and the anthropocentric shifts of providential deism during the Age of Reason. However, this cultural and historical specificity does not preclude the concept's applicability to other ages and other cultures, even though it is ethnocentric to insist that secularization is the only path of modernization or development and a universal norm for all societies. One can find secular ethics in Aristotle's philosophy; one can also find secular ethics in Confucianism. Debates about the religious status of Confucianism date back several centuries and continue today. Ethical concepts in the Classical Confucian texts (circa sixth to third century BCE) and the ethical life they advocate can be accepted on their own, independent of any otherworldly religious beliefs, regardless whether Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi themselves resorted to such religious basis for ethics.[1] This chapter reconstructs a Confucian secular ethics from the textual resources of Classical Confucianism—*Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Xunzi*. It then considers possibilities for reconciling ethics, science, and religion within secular Confucian perspectives by comparing two modern treatments of Confucian ethics, one inspired by Immanuel Kant and the other inspired by sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. Finally, a third treatment is presented, a pragmatist treatment of Confucian secular ethics based on John Dewey's reconstruction of the religious.

# Confucian Secular Ethics from Classical Sources

Classical Confucian ethics is an ethics of personal cultivation taking place within, and contributing to the growth of, social relationships. The aim of personal cultivation is to

become an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子) and, at a higher (idealized) level, a sage. One becomes a *junzi* by living according to *dao* 道 (way/path)—the ethical way of life—and acquiring *de* 德 (virtue/excellence), which gives a person some kind of normative influence over others. Living ethically, choosing what is good (*shan* 善) over bad (*e* 恶), requires humaneness (*ren* 仁), appropriateness (*yi* 义), ritual propriety (*li* 礼), wisdom (*zhi* 知), trustworthiness (*xin* 信), and courage (*yong* 勇), to name a few of the most common characteristics of Confucian ethical exemplars that have been compared with virtues.

Interpreting Confucian ethics as a form of virtue ethics is a popular approach among Anglophone philosophers. Van Norden (2007: 21) finds four elements of a "thin characterization of virtue ethics" in Confucianism: accounts of what a "flourishing" human life is like, what virtues contribute to leading such a life, how one acquires those virtues, and what humans are like such that they can acquire those virtues so as to flourish in that kind of life. Confucian virtue ethics need not share the teleologies or individualistic philosophical psychologies of specific virtue ethics in Western traditions (Aristotle's, for example). It is not preoccupied with decision-making and evaluation that treats actions as separate episodes (p. 675) but is concerned more with conduct as actions connected within a life and in a community. Although terms such as "*ren* 仁" "*yi* 义" "*li* 礼" or "*zhi* 知" often refer directly or indirectly to qualities of character that one could understand as virtues in the sense of dispositions toward desirable or valued conduct, they also encompass other usages. For example "*li* 礼" often refers to rites themselves, while "*zhi* 知" can be translated as "to know" or "knowledge," including empirical and propositional knowledge. In general these terms also refer directly to actions, and there is no discussion of dispositions as separate from actions. It is debatable which is primary; is this ethics of conduct implying virtues or an ethics of virtue articulated through conduct? Notwithstanding these qualifications, a virtue vocabulary is useful for reconstructing a secular Confucian ethics.

The Confucian texts' depiction of an exemplary person's life provides an account of a flourishing life, in which one has opportunities for learning and putting one's learning into practice, in which one lives harmoniously with others. This begins with family members, includes neighbors and friends, and extends to an ever-widening circle of people one meets while engaging in various activities at different stages of life. It is a life of companionship and shared aspirations with friends, of contributing to community through teaching, holding political office, or benefitting others in different ways. Living such a life requires various excellent qualities of character or dispositions one might call virtues, although not every one of them is described by a specific term. It requires and is constituted by a lifelong process of personal cultivation in relationships with others: "one cultivates oneself by bringing accord to people" (*Analects* 14.42). According to Mencius (3A4), education begins with teaching people how to conduct themselves within the basic human relationships between father–son, ruler–minister, husband–wife, elder–younger brothers, and friends.[2] This depiction of a flourishing life values interpersonal relationships, especially family relationships, very highly. Rather than aiming for individual perfection with relationships as secondary input in an individualistic process, Confucian ethics is a relational ethics in which human ethical growth, which could be understood for the most part but not solely in terms of the acquisition of virtues, takes place only in hu-

man relationships, and the ethical achievements of persons are understood within those relational contexts.

This brief reconstruction of Confucian secular ethics focuses only on the texts' discussion of humaneness, appropriateness, ritual propriety, and wisdom. The virtue of wisdom (*zhi* 知) that makes one aware of one's ignorance disposes one to seek knowledge and wisdom; the same virtue guides us in teaching others with a proper assessment of one's own knowledge and wisdom (*Analects* 2.17). In the course of learning, one also needs deference, careful attention, perseverance, flexibility, and open-mindedness (without dogmatism or stubbornness). Love of learning is an important emotion associated with the virtue of wisdom. It ensures that one's quest for virtues results in truly virtuous conduct. For example, if one is not fond of learning, fondness for humaneness leads one to be easily duped; fondness for trustworthiness puts one in harm's way; and fondness for courage causes unruliness (*Analects* 17.8). Ignorance and lack of understanding and judgment due to a lack of fondness for learning will prevent other virtues from contributing to a flourishing life. Other emotions, such as reverence, shame, grief, joy, appropriate to specific situations are important elements of Confucian ethical life.

Though the earliest usage of the term for ritual propriety (*li* 礼) refers to religious rites and continues to do so, for Confucian personal cultivation it refers to the excellence cultivated in fulfilling the norms for interacting with others. It is relevant to all conduct: looking, (p. 676) listening, speaking, and acting (*Analects* 12.1). It also refers to rites themselves, the norms of civility that cultivate excellent habits or dispositions, enabling us to behave well in social situations and contribute to better relationships. The most important function of *li* is to bring about harmony (*Analects* 1.12). Though comparable to social habits, *li* is in no way mechanical or routine. The virtue of appropriateness (*yi* 义) ensures that each act, even when fulfilling ritual norms, is appropriate by appreciating the specific circumstances of each unique situation (*Analects* 4.10). *Yi* involves personal investment of significance through which one makes every act uniquely one's own. It ensures that one behaves toward others according to the significance of their particular (actual and potential) relationships to oneself in specific circumstances. In the *Mencius*, the concept is similar to the idea of justice, in the sense of "treating like cases alike and different cases differently" (Xiao 1997: 534). It is often used in discussing treatment of others and responses to them. *Yi* disposes one to resist the temptation of materialistic profits and selfish gains that often lead people to mistreat others and give them less consideration than appropriate, or to ignore the ethical significance of human relationships (*Analects* 4.16; *Mencius* 1A1).

Overcoming selfishness, even self-centeredness, is central to Confucian relational ethics. The important virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) requires "self-discipline and observing ritual propriety" (*Analects* 12.1). In so doing, one avoids giving one's own desires and interests more weight than ethically warranted. *Ren* is also explicated in terms of "loving others," "establishing others in seeking to establish oneself," and "not doing to others what one does not wish others to do to oneself" (*Analects* 6.30, 12.2, 12.22). Ethical consideration for others begins at home, where a virtuous person is filial (*xiao* 孝) toward her parents

and cares for her younger siblings (*ti* 悌) (*Analects* 1.2). When serving the public by holding political office or in other capacities, a virtuous person strives to be trustworthy, live up to his or her words (*xin* 信), and does his or her best (*zhong* 忠) in all undertakings (*Analects* 1.8, 3.19, 12.7). A good government is possible only when those who govern are virtuous enough to put the welfare of those they serve above their own selfish interests. Mencius (1A7) characterized ideal government as humane government, which prioritizes the welfare of the people—beginning with the most needy—and assures everyone a decent livelihood, education, and material and social conditions in order to live ethically. The highest ethical exemplar, a sage, is not only an outstanding individual but a person who "is broadly generous to the people and able to help the multitude" (*Analects* 6.30).

Emulating ethical exemplars is an important way to become virtuous and live a flourishing life (Tan 2005). Ethical life actually begins not with an ethical theory or even explicit articulation of what is good or bad and right or wrong but with an admiration for certain characters we encounter personally in life or imaginatively in narratives (Olberding 2012). Such admiration on its own is not enough; it must be accompanied by a desire to learn from them. This desire arouses a real effort to learn, which requires practice. Perplexity in practical situations, being troubled by the question of what one should do in a given situation, motivates learning (*Analects* 15.16). The process of personal cultivation also requires thinking about what one is learning (*Analects* 2.15), whether the way one is going about it will achieve the desired results, when and how to apply what one has learned. Confucius's conversations with students show that one can learn by observing and reflecting on others' conduct, seeking advice from those whose character and conduct we admire, and studying texts that record the wisdom and exemplary practices of earlier generations. Learning is (p. 677) not complete until the understanding and knowledge thus acquired transform one's own actions and eventually one's character. In the *Analects*, we can read about the learning, thinking, and practice occurring inside the community of Confucius and his students, in their varied endeavors at home and abroad, in the activity of politics, and among family and friends. The text records many discussions of the meanings of *ren, yi, li*, or *zhi* and what kinds of conduct in various situations may be described by such concepts, usually through discussions of specific characters who receive praise or condemnation for their conduct from situation to situation.

The *Analects* does not offer any explicit philosophical psychology or a theory of human nature to ground a virtue ethics. However, based on its content, an account can be constructed of what humans are like, which enables them to acquire *ren, yi, li*, and *zhi* for living the flourishing life of exemplary persons. While the *Analects* hardly discusses human nature, this topic (if "*xing* 性" is translated as "human nature") gives rise to two different psychological accounts in the *Mencius*'s and the *Xunzi*'s elaborations of the process of personal cultivation and their attempts to provide a basis for Confucian ethics.

To defend the possibility of virtuous action, Mencius (2A6, 6A6) maintained that human nature is good and all human beings are born with the "sprouts" of *ren, yi, li*, and *zhi*, which are respectively feelings ("heart-minds") of compassion, of shame, of respect, and of right and wrong. If they are not neglected and abused, these sprouts grow naturally in-

to virtues. Spontaneous reactions and attitudes in basic relationships and familiar situations provide the bases for acting appropriately in other comparable or analogical relationships and situations (*Mencius* 1A7). Personal cultivation is a process of nurturing the sprouts of virtues by appropriate extension of those spontaneous reactions and attitudes; this process requires personal effort, relational support, and material conditions.

As for Xunzi, instead of a process of spontaneous growth, he compared personal cultivation to processes in which craftsmen use force and tools on materials they work with. He attacked Mencius's doctrine of good human nature, insisting that human beings at birth are bad and allowing natural desires and feelings free rein will lead to chaos. Virtues and ethical conduct are the result of "conscious exertion" (*wei* 伪), exemplified in the deliberate actions of sages, virtuous rulers, and teachers, who established models, instituted rites and laws, and clarified distinctions and standards in order to teach, guide, and regulate people to live an ethical life (*Xunzi* 3: ch. 23).

The classical texts depict the virtues and flourishing life of Confucian exemplars, their ethical relationships, and flourishing communities by discussing decisions and conduct in concrete situations encountered in daily life. The process of personal cultivation, of growing excellence in relationships, the accompanying philosophical psychologies and sociopolitical visions, could be understood without any religious framework, regardless of the religious beliefs of Confucius and his followers. The philosophical psychologies in both the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi* could be understood within entirely secular frameworks. In fact, a growing body of contemporary works draws on the resources and findings of modern psychology and cognitive science to elaborate, explain, and defend these ancient texts' insights.

The next sections expand on a secular reconstruction of Confucian ethics by addressing two challenges: the central ethical concept of *li* might be inherently religious in a way problematic for secular ethics, and the role of *tian* 天 (heaven) seems important in Confucian ethics.

## (p. 678) Confucian Secular Attitudes toward Religious Rites

Recent studies have brought to life for modern readers the rich religious life of the Chinese during ancient times (Keightley 1998; Puett 2002). Many ancient Chinese expressed beliefs about ghosts and spirits, gods of various descriptions, and personifications of natural phenomena. It is far from clear that such things were conceived as supernatural entities existing in an "unnatural" realm (Ivanhoe 2007). In any case, although Confucius participated in the religious activities of his time and did not deny the existence of "ghosts" and "spirits," he emphasized this-worldly social functions rather than anything supernatural in religious rites. He rejected the *do ut des* or "worship for favors" religious attitudes that were common during his time (and still persist in Chinese folk religions today). Sacrifices should not be performed in expectation of "favors" or assistance from the dead but

should be undertaken as an ethical responsibility that continues what is required in one's relationship with one's parents when they are alive and extends to a more general respect and reverence toward more distant ancestors. Confucius considered it "obsequious" "to offer sacrifice to the spirit of an ancestor not one's own" (*Analects* 2.24). The obsequious expects to win favors with his or her behavior. This is the most likely reason anyone would offer sacrifices to ancestors not one's own—indeed, if sacrifices could "buy" favors from the dead, then the potency of the dead receiving the sacrifice matters far more than whether they are kin to oneself. What Confucius disapproved of is the unethical relationship implied in such worship. It would be as if children were to treat their parents well only to increase the chances that the latter would help them or leave them an inheritance—something that Confucius would condemn as highly unethical.

Confucius defended the practice of three years mourning in terms of the reciprocity of parent–child relationship, the appropriate feelings one should have toward parents who took care of oneself during infancy (*Analects* 17.21). In conducting funerals, it is the feeling of grief that is most important. When his student Zilu asked how the spirits of the dead and the gods should be served, Confucius chided him "You are not able even to serve man. How can you serve the spirits?" (*Analects* 11.12). Though no doubt appreciative of his student's concern, his question in response to Zilu's desire to pray for his recovery from illness (*Analects* 7.35) suggests that Confucius considered his entire life a show of reverence to the gods. If Confucius was religious, his was a secular religiosity where right understanding and due reverence for the divine are inseparable from the ethical quest. Religion is not the radically transcendent source of the ethical; instead, the higher reaches of ethical life give access to religious experience.[3]

Xunzi's treatise on the rites maintains that they were created by ancient kings for the purpose of regulating social life to achieve order and optimal satisfaction under conditions of scarcity and competing needs and interests. Rites operate through their effects on human emotions and attitudes that play important roles in social interactions. His treatise defends various details of mourning and sacrificial rites as extensions and transformations of the personal relationships between the departed and the living and offers interesting insights into how some mourning practices provide ways of managing the potentially harmful emotion of grief, reconciling mourners to the loss, and the ethical value of remembrance (*Xunzi* (p. 679) 3: ch. 19). There is no suggestion that funereal or sacrificial rites should be carried out to influence the behavior of the spirits of the departed that might affect the living. The *Xunzi* explicitly rejects common superstitions of that time, by denying any supernatural function to such rites as praying for rain, "saving" the sun or moon during eclipses, or divining with bone and milfoil. "We do these things not because we believe that such ceremonies will produce the results we seek, but because we want to embellish such occasions with ceremony" (*Xunzi* 3:19).

Unlike its role in the *Xunzi, li* does not hold as central a position in the *Mencius*, which gives *ren* and *yi* more attention. Mencius (1B16) had to defend himself against criticisms that he failed to follow ritual norms. Concern with the topic mostly focuses on respect for tradition, the relational implications and social consequences of following or deviating

from ritual norms. Mencius justified mourning rites as expressions of spontaneous feelings one has toward the departed rather than any concerns about the possible behavior of ghosts and spirits or the plight of the departed in another world or dimension beyond death (*Mencius* 2B7, 3A5). One reference to religious rites occurs in a passage discussing the proper way of succession to the throne as a gift not from the previous monarch but from "heaven." Mencius (5A5) referred to the sacrifices conducted by a candidate for the throne being "enjoyed by the hundred gods" as a sign of the candidate's "acceptance by heaven," which must be accompanied by "acceptance by the people." The passage then elaborates with an account of the succession of legendary sage-king Shun to the throne being "brought about by heaven" that ends with a quote from the *Book of History*, "Heaven sees with the eyes of its people. Heaven hears with the ears of its people." This seems to reduce acceptance by heaven to acceptance by the people; certainly there is no mention of any supernatural occurrences in relation to how heaven "reveals itself by acts and deeds."

# The Role of Tian in Confucian Ethics

Some might question an entirely secular interpretation of the classical sources by arguing that the role of *tian* in those texts implies a religious ethics. Some have gone so far as to equate "*tian* 天" with "God" in monotheistic religions (Legge 1880). It is undeniable that, as the recipient of sacrifices, *tian* has religious meaning in ancient Chinese texts, but it remains to be seen whether *tian*'s role in Confucian ethics renders that ethics religious, so that religious beliefs are necessary in order to justify or make sense of it even today. Confucius referred to *tian* as the source of his virtue to explain why he would not worry about his enemies' intention to harm him (*Analects* 7.23, 9.5). This suggests a belief in *tian* as some supernatural power that rewards the virtuous and punishes the vicious and in general ensures ethical order beyond human agency, thereby justifying ethical conduct in much the same way God in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1993: 131) ensures happiness is proportional to morality in Kant's conception of the highest good. Despite some concern resembling this issue, classical Confucianism eventually dispenses with any such religious guarantee or justification for ethics.

Some passages in the *Analects* (in particular Sima Niu's fatal illness in 6.10 and the death of Yan Hui in 11.9) and the broader context of Confucius's political failure already question the belief that *tian* justifies ethical conduct by ensuring ultimate reward or success. The (p. 680) *Mencius* also offers mixed and often confusing usages of *tian* in this regard. Perkins (2006) argues convincingly that on the whole *tian* in that text does not guarantee that the virtuous will always succeed and triumph over the vicious. Rather than supernatural intervention, Mencius explained the connection between virtue and reward, when it existed, in terms of patterns of human conduct and natural causes. Elsewhere, the text redefines success or dismisses the relevance of rewards conventionally understood in dealing with the discrepancies between them and virtue. The *Xunzi* (3: ch. 17) is even more explicit in its portrayal of *tian* as indifferent to ethical conduct; it portrays *tian* as the natural environment with regularities that human beings must take into account but

can never completely control in their endeavors. The period from the life time of Confucius to that of Xunzi saw an erosion of beliefs in supernatural intervention in human affairs. That erosion could be viewed as a secularization of Chinese ethics and politics among the intellectual and political elite, who "gradually arrived at the conclusion that human affairs should be settled here and now, without resort to divine authority" (Pines 2002: 56). Even where the texts attribute intentions and agency to *tian* and refer to it as a cosmic force ensuring ethical order, that order was always of this world. None of the classical Confucian texts ever suggests that the virtuous, however they suffered in this world, would receive their just rewards in another world beyond this world of living human beings.

If *tian*, understood as "religious," makes ethical conduct possible by being its ultimate source, then religion may seem indispensable to Confucian ethics, albeit this "ethical warrant" may differ significantly from that of religious ethics deriving from the Judeo-Christian tradition (Ivanhoe 2007: 218–219). The *Analects* and the *Mencius* refer to moral missions from *tian*. Confucius's ethical quest has a religious basis if *tian* has a religious meaning and the "Way" is actually "Heaven's plan for human beings" (Cline 2012: 120). However, the only understanding we have of this "plan" is in terms of human virtues in human experience of this world, known to sages because of their ethical virtuosity in this world, since "heaven does not speak" (*Analects* 17.19).

Moreover, Confucius's reverence for *tian* is not expressed in prevailing religious rites—even though he had no objection to their performance—but through his lifelong commitment to the pursuit of ethical excellence. Mencius's (2A5, 2B8) "heaven-appointed officers" are identified only by their virtuous conduct in governing this world. "Heaven, in producing the people, has given to those who first attain understanding the duty of awakening those who are slow to understand" (*Mencius* 5A7, 5B1)—sages awaken others through teaching and exemplifying virtuous conduct, not by citing divine revelation. Many contemporary scholars share the view that Confucianism "is not a tradition that seeks liberation outside the world, but rather one that affirms the spirituality of becoming more fully human within the world" (Tu and Tucker 2003–2004, vol. 1). From this perspective, some deny *tian*'s transcendence but maintain that the total immanence of Confucianism is nevertheless religious (Hall and Ames 1998: 189–252), while others argue for immanent-transcendence (Liu 1972). Such religiousness does not oppose the sacred to the secular. It does not imply a religious ethics that exclude secular ethics. More important for our secular reconstruction, no religious conversion or faith in *tian* is needed to embark on the Confucian quest for ethical excellence, and no comprehension of *tian* or obedience to its commands is required to persist and make progress in that endeavor. The ethical concepts and teachings of Confucian ethics are entirely comprehensible and sufficient for practical guidance today without even mentioning *tian*. (p. 681) This would be considered an advantage for those who believe religions of past ages have no credibility in the modern world but are open to the possibility that Confucian ethics remain relevant.

Despite attributing his virtue ultimately to *tian*, Confucius's teachings emphasize the human effort of personal cultivation and resulting ethical conduct, which is what distinguishes ethical exemplars from petty persons, for "human beings are similar in their natural tendencies, but vary greatly by virtue of their habits" (*Analects* 17.2). Mencius strengthened the role of *tian* in this respect by defending the possibility of ethical actions on the basis of good human nature, which is endowed by *tian*.[4] "Heaven, in producing the people, endows them with constant nature," and people are drawn to virtue if they "hold on to this nature," which comprises the "sprouts" of virtues (*Mencius* 6A6). According to Mencius (6A7), everyone has the capacity to be ethical because human heart-minds are "pleased by reason and rightness." Sages receive the same endowment of nature from *tian* as other human beings. They are able to "awaken others" ethically not because they receive any revelation of divine commands denied to others but because, through personal cultivation and ethical practice, they attain what is common to all human minds first. The difference in ethical accomplishments lie in what people do with the same natural endowments—whether they nurture the spontaneous feelings that are the sprouts of virtue through personal cultivation and ethical practice (*Mencius* 4B19, 6A8, 6A11) and whether they employ the heart-mind as "the organ of thinking" to discriminate what is of greater or lesser importance and direct their lives accordingly (*Mencius* 6A15). If *tian* involves religious transcendence, it is ethical experience that provides the basis for religious experience and not the other way round.

> For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature he is serving Heaven. (*Mencius* 7A1)

Mencius, like Confucius in the *Analects*, views religious experience not as the precondition but as the culmination of ethical experience.

Xunzi criticized Mencius's claim that human nature is good and the same in sages and ordinary people. As the foundation for ethics, this universal possibility fails to isolate the difference between ethical and unethical persons and, if taken as real capability, would render ethical exemplars, rites, models of appropriateness, and personal cultivation redundant.[5] The source of virtue and ethical conduct that really matters, in Xunzi's view, is to be found in deliberate practices that lift human existence above animal existence—dependent on physical environment, subject to conditions of scarcity, and mired in conflict. He singled out the ancient king's establishing of rites and models as the most significant of such practices, followed by continued efforts of sages, teachers, and virtuous rulers in teaching, guiding, and regulating everyone's conduct. Xunzi's ethics gives rites the highest priority in all domains of life as the rites tell us what to choose, how to act, and how to live (*Xunzi* 1: 141). Xunzi focused on this-worldly effects of rites in personal learning and ethical conduct and in government and achieving social order, security, and prosperity for the people; he resisted superstitious beliefs in the supernatural.

Some argue that Xunzi elevated rites to a "metaphysical principle" in association with *tian* and *dao* (Sato 2003: 235, 335–36): "Ritual has three roots. Heaven and earth are the root of life. … Thus, rituals serve heaven above and earth below" (*Xunzi* 3: 58).

(p. 682) Does this give Xunzi's ethics a religious basis? The text explicates "serving heaven and earth" in terms of the *junzi*'s ethical conduct "bringing orderly pattern (*li* 理) to heaven and earth" as "the triadic partner (*can* 參) of heaven and earth" (*Xunzi* 2: 103). This passage is preceded by a discussion of how a good ruler should manage natural resources, which supports the most common reading *tian* as referring to the natural environment. A secular reconstruction would eschew metaphysical speculation to interpret such passages in the *Xunzi* as acknowledging an ethical responsibility and accompanying respect for our natural environment, which nurtures biological life, including our own.[6]

Although Xunzi rejected Mencius's claim that human nature endowed by *tian* is good, he does not preclude *tian* playing other roles in making ethical conduct possible. Not everyone agrees that *tian* in the *Xunzi* means "nature," at least not all the time. According to Eno (1990: 132–133, 157–165), the text sometimes adopts conventional usages "as god, as ethical precept, or as fate," and even when it means "nature," the idea may have ethical significance, providing the basis for ethics in the normative components of human psychology and serving as a prescriptive model for ethical emulation. The *Xunzi* (2: 96) justifies the distinction between superior and inferior in his ethics by comparing it with the difference between heaven and earth, implying that natural hierarchy justifies social hierarchy. *Tian* is also cited as the model of constancy for the *junzi*.[7] Despite their differences, both Xunzi and Mencius gave *xin* 心, the heart-mind, a key role in their moral psychologies. Xunzi described it as "the lord provided by *tian*" (*tianjun* 天君), as it governs our five physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, which are "faculties given us by *tian*" (*tianguan* 天官). *Tian* endows us with the capacity for ethical conduct that harmonizes with the "achievement of *tian*" (*tiangong* 天功), and achieving that harmony is to "know *tian*" (*Xunzi* 3: 16). Whether or not such passages imply a religious Confucian ethics depends on how *tian* is interpreted. For those convinced that "nature" is the primary (even if not the only) meaning of *tian*, the moral psychology in the *Xunzi* does not imply a religious ethics but instead points to some kind of ethical naturalism. I defend a secular reconstruction of Confucian ethics on the grounds that the texts' introduction of *tian* into their ethical discourse adds nothing substantive to the apparently secular articulation of ethical life, and the concept is either dispensable or offers only a sense of the religious that does not undermine secular ethics.

# Naturalistic versus Transcendental Confucian Ethics

Edward Machle (1993: 7–8) attributes the popularity of interpreting *tian* in the *Xunzi* as close to the modern scientific view of "nature" to a desire to link China's quest for modern science with its own tradition. Given the power and dominance of science today, it is not surprising that there is a strong trend to adopt scientific perspectives in understand-

ing human nature as the basis for Confucian ethics. Donald Munro (2005: 47–48) argues that Confucian ethics will be taken more seriously if its advocates emphasize its biological basis, even though he allows that interpreting Confucian ethics as based on beliefs about a "heavenly way" is consistent with the Confucian tradition and there could be psychological and aesthetic benefits in such beliefs. He points out findings of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology (p. 683) that coincide with Mencius's insights into human nature and development: common human nature consisting in universal traits coexisting with human malleability; love and sympathy is among our universal traits; altruism is reciprocal; ethical concepts owe more to innate social emotions than traditionally recognized by Western psychologists or ethicists emphasizing reason opposed to emotion; human beings are innately predisposed to learn through imitation (Munro 2005: ch. 4). For Munro (ch. 5), what will survive of the *Mencius* is a naturalistic ethics based on a biological-psychological theory of human nature that can be empirically tested. Naturalistic Confucian ethics such as Munro's share contemporary secular ethics' positive attitudes toward science and the belief in the need to extend the use of scientific method in solving human problems, including ethical problems (Kurtz 2008: 16).

Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), a key figure in the modern Neo-Confucian movement, resisted naturalistic reconstructions of Confucian ethics as reducing human beings to things and insisted what makes Confucian ethics distinctive and superior is a moral metaphysics that gives Confucianism a transcendence that is very different from that found in Western monotheistic religions. The Chinese from ancient times have located transcendence not in a personal creator God but in *tian*, which is both immanent as it descends into human beings as human nature and transcendent as it provides objective and metaphysical basis for ethical conduct (Mou 1963: 20). Transcendence is important for ethics because it renders ethical standards, as *tian*'s way or *tian*'s principles (*tianli* 天理), "eternal and immutable" (Mou 1963: 21). Mou criticized Kant for placing the transcendent out of human reach by maintaining that intellectual intuition is impossible for human beings. In Mou's transcendental Confucian ethics, *tian*-endowed nature gives human beings a moral mind that is capable of innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知) of the ethical.[8] This concept, present in the *Mencius* (7A15) as "knowing without having to reflect," is contrasted with knowing of phenomena that comes from the physical senses and empirical inquiries. Rooted in moral nature, innate knowing proves that intellectual intuition is possible because it is the knowing of *tian*'s principles, which are noumenal.[9] Ultimate reality, the noumenal, is ethical in Mou's moral metaphysics. According to Mou ([1968] 1999, vol. 1: 159), metaphysics is moral because the cosmos and human morality share the same transcendent source and because ultimate reality is approached through moral practice. What makes something ultimately real, transcendent, and absolute is its moral nature and value.

According to Mou, the experience of "seeing *tian's* principles" appears to be a kind of metaphysical or mystical state of illumination, beyond ordinary, bodily, worldly experience. Mou (1963: 73) admitted that "knowing *tian*" is negative knowledge, not the positive knowledge of science but a tacit or ineffable understanding based on "doing one's best with one's heart-mind." This is possible only after a long period of dedication to ethical conduct: Confucius first "knew *tian*'s mandate" only at fifty (*Analects* 2.4). To see

*tian*'s principles is also to embody them by striving to bring them about in everything and every event (Mou 1963: 83). Despite allowing for some kind of other-worldly experience, Mou's concept of immanent transcendence begins and ends with practice in this world. Insofar as it provides a guide for daily life, Confucian ethics is based on the norms and practices established by the Duke of Zhou (Mou 1963: 98–99). Confucian "religiousness" begins with this-worldly moral practice and progresses to "express a kind of spiritual life, which comes about from the rational subject revealed in personal awakening, that is, from inner morality" (Mou [1959] 2003: 54). The religious framework of Mou's transcendental Confucian ethics does not invoke an external religious authority that undervalues human capacity and devalues freedom. Despite the pragmatic aspect of its spirituality and the rejection of authoritarian religion, one might still worry that the requirement for a drastically (p. 684) different—vaguely understood because ineffable—"knowledge" of noumenal ethical standards risks dogmatism and potentially oppressive absolutism, because those who claim to "know the transcendent" by means of an ineffable experience place themselves beyond criticism as anyone contradicting them by their denial would be dismissed as not having had the requisite experience. Chad Hansen (2001: 200) argues that "the ancient Chinese theorists who do rely on claims to have special capacities of transcendence (epistemological) or access to a transcendent realm (ontological) to justify their moral insights are essentially dogmatic and authoritarian." Such concern would incline one toward secular reconstruction of Confucian ethics instead of Mou's transcendental interpretation.

A secular Confucian ethics is not limited to the choice between a naturalistic approach that completely excludes religiousness and a transcendental approach that preserves the religious elements in the classical texts at the risk of authoritarian dogmatism. Confucius himself abhorred coercion, which may bring about conformity but cannot bring about ethical transformation (*Analects* 2.3, 12.19); and the *Analects* endorses a concept of authority that is not authoritarian (Tan 2010a). Should one be ethically accomplished enough to intuit ethical standards intellectually, or "see *tian*'s principles" through the activation of one's *liangzhi*, one's sagely behavior would not be dogmatic or authoritarian but authoritative in a manner that influences others through their voluntary appreciation and emulation (*Analects* 15.5). While the religious experience acknowledged by religious interpretations of Confucianism may give those who actually have direct religious experience of *tian* and its transcendence an additional sense of conviction regarding their ethical beliefs, such experience and belief in its possibility is not necessary to Confucian ethics, either as justification or as means of discovery of ethical values and standards.

Mou's transcendental reconstruction of Confucian ethics may not be authoritarian, but it is explicit in limiting the role of science in the ethical domain: science cannot deliver the highest ethical knowledge, which is knowledge of ultimate reality, that is, of the ethical as noumenal. This attitude toward science contrasts with that of contemporary secular ethics, which believes that scientific methods should be further developed and extended to the ethical domain. Confidence in scientific inquiry as the source of knowledge can coexist with an awareness of its inadequacies, dangers, and threats and openness to new understandings of, and developments in, human capacities and tools for acquiring knowl-

edge. Being skeptical about transcendental sources of knowledge and normativity need not completely exclude the religious. There are various forms of religious empiricism and naturalism compatible with a reconstructed secular Confucian ethics, including John Dewey's conception of the religious in *A Common Faith*.

Dewey (1934: 8) sought to emancipate the "religious" as "attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal" from religion understood as "a special body of beliefs and practices having some kind of institutional organization loose or tight." As a quality of experience, the religious does not exist separately as a special kind of experience but belongs to aesthetic, scientific, moral, or political experience—whenever experience achieves deep and enduring adjustment in life so significant that it gives meaning to, and compels belief in, invisible powers that unify the self and the world. The religious refers not to such invisible powers existing beyond the natural realm but to the experience of deep and enduring values in this world attributed by our idealizing imagination as effects of those powers. Borrowing Dewey's framework, we could view *tian* in the Confucian texts as one example of such "invisible powers" presented by imagination conditioned by a specific (p. 685) culture; *tian* performs the religious function of unifying self and world through its "principles," which are the inclusive ideal ends that, according to Dewey, are the proper objects of faith. The Confucian ethical quest certainly fits Dewey's (1934: 19) description of any activity that is religious in quality: being "pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value."

However, Dewey would object to the suggestion that knowledge of *tian* and its principles requires a special power the equivalent of Kant's "intellectual intuition." For him, knowledge can only be acquired through

> patient, cooperative inquiry operating by means of observation, experiment, record and controlled reflection … the religious function in experience can be emancipated only through surrender of the whole notion of special truths that are religious by their own nature, together with the idea of peculiar avenues of access to such truths. (1934: 23)

Supernatural existents and special truths are not necessary for ethical life. The basis of ethical life and other values lies in that which we find most precious in significant moments of climatic experience (Dewey 1934: 33); this is one possible view of Mencius's reference to the spontaneous feelings and attitudes in basic human relationships providing the basis for ethical conduct. The object of religious faith exists as ends, not supernatural entities, and is real in its effect in the natural world. Dewey is concerned that intellectual belief in the existence of invisible supernatural powers known through peculiar avenues undermines the power of inclusive ideal ends to transform ourselves and the world in the process of realizing such ideals, which give experience their religious quality. Confucians, even when they maintain the transcendence of *tian*, are better able to avoid this tendency because of Mencius's (7A1) emphasis that *tian* can only be known through ethical practice realizing fully the heart-mind and thereby enabling us to know our nature, which is to

know *tian*. Whether or not modern Confucians can accept the value of scientific methods, of cooperative inquiry through pragmatic intelligence, depends on how well these can be incorporated into a secular reconstruction of Confucian ethics.

Dewey's (1934: 36) conception of the religious resists "the exclusive preoccupation of both militant atheism and supernaturalism with man in isolation" since a religious attitude "needs the sense of a connection of man, in the way of both dependence and support, with the enveloping world that the imagination feels is a universe." The collective modes of practice either come first in the historical development of religions or are more important (40). Instead of intellectual debates about the existence of supernatural entities, transcendence, and other metaphysical issues, he urges us to admit what is verifiable—that "human relations are charged with values that are religious in function"—and to concentrate our thought and energy on realizing those values (48). Dewey sees the common faith of mankind as a practical faith in ideal ends, which "assume concrete form in our understanding of our relations to one another and the values contained in these relations" (57). This common faith is sustained and flourishes in the continuity of human communities and their interactions with nature:

> The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. (1934: 57–58)

(p. 686) Besides strongly resonating with the Confucian worldview in its emphasis on human relations, Dewey's conception of this common faith also overlaps with an ancient Confucian view about immortality in a discussion about the meaning of an ancient saying, "to die but not decay" (*si er buxiu* 死而不朽): "The highest meaning of this saying is to establish virtue, next is to accomplish successful service, and next to establish wise words. When these endure without being abandoned, there is death without decay."[10] All three meanings of Confucian "immortality" signify the "conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values" received. A secular Confucian ethics, pursued to its highest levels, gives to experience a religious quality that unifies the self not only with one's own immediate community and the world one lives in but also past and future generations. Ethics, science, and religion can be reconciled in such a secular ethics.

## Bibliography

Ames, Roger T. 2011. *Confucian Role Ethics*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Ames, Roger T., and David L. Hall. 2001. *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhong Yong*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

(p. 687) Billioud, Sebastien. 2012. *Thinking Through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics*. Leiden: Brill.

Bunnin, Nicholas. 2008. “God’s Knowledge and Ours: Kant and Mou Zongsan on Intellectual Intuition.” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35(4), 613–624.

Chan, N. S. 2011. *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*. Leiden: Brill.

Ching, Julia. 1993. *Chinese Religions*. London: Macmillan.

Cline, Erin. 2012. *Confucius, Rawls, and the Sense of Justice*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Dewey, John. 1934. *A Common Faith*. In *John Dewey: The Later Works*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 9, 1–58. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.

Eno, Robert. 1990. *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Epstein, Greg M. 2005. *Good Without God*. New York: Harper Collins.

Fraser, Chris, Dan Robins, and Timothy O’Leary (eds.). 2011. *Ethics in Early China: An Anthology*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. “Notes on Post-Secular Society.” *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25(4), 17–29.

Hall, David L., and Roger T. Ames. 1998. *Thinking From the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hansen, Chad. 2001. “Metaphysical and Moral Transcendence in Chinese Thought.” In *Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions*, edited by Bo Mou, 197–227. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court.

Hume, David. 1978. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ivanhoe, Philip J. 2007. “Tian as a Source for Ethical Warrant in Early Confucianism.” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 6(3), 211–220.

Kant, Immanuel. 1993. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Lewis White Beck. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Keightley, David N. 1998. “Shamanism, Death, and the Ancestors: Religious Mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000–1000 B.C.).” *Asiatische Studien* 52(3), 763–831.

Kurtz, Paul. 2008. *Forbidden Fruits: The Ethics of Secularism*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Legge, James. 1880. *The Religions of China: Confucianism and Daoism Described and Compared with Christianity*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Legge, James. 1970. *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 3. Translated by James Legge. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Liu, Shu-hsien. 1972. “The Confucian Approach to the Problem of Transcendence and Immanence.” *Philosophy East and West* 22(1), 45–52.

Machle, Edward J. 1993. *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Meinert, Carmen (ed.). 2015. *Traces of Humanism in China: Tradition and Modernity*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript Verlag.

Miller, James (ed.). 2006. *Chinese Religions in Contemporary Society*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio.

Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三. 1959. *Moral Idealism* 道德理想主义. Repr. Taipei: Lianjing, 2003.

Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三. 1963. *Distinctive Nature of Chinese Philosophy* 中国哲学的特质. Taipei: Student Book Co.

(p. 688) Mou, Zongsan 牟宗三. 1968. *Ultimately Real Mind and Ultimately Real Nature* 心体与性体. 3 vols. Repr. Shanghai: Ancient Text Publishing, 1999.

Munro, Donald. 2005. *A Chinese Ethics for the New Century*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Olberding, Amy. 2012. *Moral Exemplars in the Analects*. London and New York: Routledge.

Perkins, Franklin. 2006. “Reproaching Heaven: The Problem of Evil in Mengzi.” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 5(2), 293–312.

Pines, Yuri. 2002. *Foundations of Confucian Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Puett, Michael. 2002. *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ren, Jiyu 任继愈 (ed.). 2000. *Collected Essays in the Debate on Confucian Religion* 儒教问题争论集. Beijing: Beijing Religious Culture Press.

Sato, Masayuki. 2003. *The Confucian Quest for Order: The Origin and Formation of the Political Thought of Xunzi*. Leiden: Brill.

Shook, John R. 2015. “Humanism, Moral Relativism, and Ethical Objectivism.” In *Blackwell Handbook on Humanism*, edited by A. Grayling and A. Copson, 403–425. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Tan, Sor-hoon. 2005. “Imagining Confucius: Paradigmatic Characters and Virtue Ethics.” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 32(3), 409–426.

Tan, Sor-hoon. 2010a. “Authoritative Master Kong (Confucius) in an Authoritarian Age.” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 9(2), 137–149.

Tan, Sor-hoon. 2010b. “Secular Religiosity in Chinese Politics: A Confucian Perspective.” In *State and Secularism: Perspectives from Asia*, edited by C. L. Ten and Michael Siam-Heng Heng, 95–122. Singapore: World Scientific.

Tan, Sor-hoon. 2012. “Li (Ritual/Rite) and Tian (Heaven/Nature) in the Xunzi: Does Confucian Li Need Metaphysics?” *Sophia* 51(2), 155–175.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Rodney. 1990. *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Tu, Weiming, and Mary Evelyn Tucker. 2003–2004. *Confucian Spirituality*. 2 vols. New York: Crossroad Publishing.

Van Norden, Bryan. 2007. *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press.

Weber, Max. 1922. *Religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Translated by Hans Gerth. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

Xiao, Yang. 1997. “Trying To Do Justice to the Concept of Justice in Confucian Ethics.” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 24(4), 521–551.

Zhang, Rongming 张荣明. 2001. *State Religion of China* 中国的国教. Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press.

## Notes:

(1.) Treatments of Confucianism as a religion include Weber ([1922] 1964), Legge (1880), Taylor (1990), Ching (1993), and Miller (2006). For essays debating the question in China during the 1980s and 1990s, see Ren (2000) and Zhang (2001).

(2.) The centrality of relationship, especially family relationships, has led Ames and Rosemont to interpret Confucian ethics as role ethics, which is also secular as the roles are those of a this-worldly network of human relationships (Ames 2011: ch. 4).

(3.) *Analects* (2.4); *Mencius* (7B25). For a more extensive argument for Confucian secular religiosity, see Tan (2010b).

(4.) The *Zhongyong* also makes this connection between *tian*, human nature, and ethical life: “What *tian* commands (*ming* 命) is called natural tendencies (*xing* 性); drawing out

these natural tendencies is called the proper way (*dao* 道); improving upon this way is called education (*jiao* 教)" (Ames and Hall 2001: 89).

(5.) Xunzi's (3: 159) distinction between *ke* (possibility) and *neng* (real capacity) may be illustrated by the difference between "everyone who is not mute can speak Greek" and "one who has learned Greek can speak Greek."

(6.) See Tan (2012) on whether Xunzi's ritual ethics requires a metaphysical basis.

(7.) *Xunzi* (1: 178, 3: 17). The *Analects* (8.19, 17.19) and the *Mencius* (3A4) also refer to *tian* as the model for ethical emulation.

(8.) The metaphysical source of this capacity distinguishes it from the "moral sense" acknowledged by Kurtz (2008: 31); the latter is universal and innate but evolved and can be developed by education.

(9.) For detailed discussions of Mou's engagement with Kant on the complicated topic of intellectual intuition, see Bunnin (2008), Chan (2011), and Billioud (2012: chs. 2, 3).

(10.) Duke Xiang twenty-fourth year, in Zuo's *Commentary on the Spring & Autumn Annals* (Zuo Zhuan 左传). Author's translation based on Legge (1970, 3: 505–507).

**Sor-hoon Tan**

Sor-hoon Tan is Associate Professor of Philosophy at National University of Singapore. Her books include Challenging Citizenship: Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age; The Moral Circle and the Self: Chinese and Western Perspectives; and Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction of Confucianism.

# Secularism, Humanism, and Secular Humanism: Terms and Institutions

Joseph Blankholm

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.42

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter considers recent American attempts to recognize secular humanism as a religion in light of more than a century of debates over the religiosity of secularism and humanism. It offers a history of these terms' codependent evolution in the United States by focusing on the individuals, groups, and institutions that have adopted them and shaped their meanings. The chapter also argues that those who use these terms today bear forth a fraught and sometimes self-contradicting inheritance. In order to recognize the stakes of contemporary struggles over the meaning and purpose of secularism, one needs a deeper understanding of how the term has come to bear its traces and how it fits within a shifting constellation of labels and concepts.

Keywords: secularism, humanism, secular humanism, secular activism, separation of church and state

IN October of 2014, a federal district judge in the state of Oregon ruled that secular humanism is a religion, at least for legal purposes involving the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution's First Amendment. The judge sided with the lawsuits' plaintiffs, who argued that a humanist inmate at a federal prison should receive certain rights reserved solely for religious groups. The decision arrived a year after the US Army began recognizing humanism as a religious preference, and in the lawsuit's wake, the Federal Bureau of Prisons granted the same formal recognition. This was not the first time that federal courts have called secular humanism a religion, nor does it settle the question of its religiosity for humanists and their opponents. It did, however, signal a victory for humanists who consider themselves religious and for those who affiliate with the American Humanist Association (AHA), whose members mostly identify as secular.

For other avowedly secular humanists, and especially for those affiliated with the Center for Inquiry, the court's decision is a source of anxiety. They fear a return to the hard-fought battles of the 1970s and 1980s in which "secular humanism" was a bugaboo that provided religious and political conservatives with leverage to attack the neutrality of secularism and secular education. These conservatives argued in courtrooms and legislatures that secular humanism is a religion and that its norms pervade the secular state in

violation of the Establishment Clause. For secular humanists who had hoped those debates were over, recent declarations of secular humanism's religiosity are cause for alarm, and they draw attention once again to conflicts over what humanism is, what secularism is, and how both relate to religion.

In this chapter, I explain their concerns by providing a partial history of the closely related terms "secularism," "humanism," and "secular humanism." I will also give an account of several of the American institutions that adopted these terms as their identifying labels. In so doing, it will become clear that secularism, humanism, and secular humanism have been fought over for a long time and used in a variety of ways (see also Blankholm 2014). By charting their English-language evolution, this chapter accounts for traces that each term bears and helps explain the fraught commitments that those who use them sometimes unwittingly (p. 690) inherit. Though it might seem curious at first to focus so centrally on humanism in order to shed light on secularism, this chapter maps a terrain that includes them both and helps us understand how we arrived at present conflicts and what remains at stake in their solution. Ultimately, I leave it to readers to assess the seriousness of dangers that might attend calling secular humanism a religion. The aim of this chapter is far more modest: to provide an historical overview of the uses of these terms and some of the people and institutions who have adopted them in order to make manifest the working assumptions of contemporary debates and the tortuous paths they have followed to the present.

# Secularism Becomes an –Ism

Secularism was first popularized by British freethinker George Jacob Holyoake in 1851 (Holyoake 1896). "Freethinker" was a common nineteenth-century label for a variety of religious and political dissenters, including, among others, atheists, rationalists, spiritualists, and socialists (Jacoby 2004: 4). Like many British freethinkers, Holyoake apprenticed in a trade, working under his father as a tinsmith before becoming active in the socialist circles of northern England. Following six months in prison for a blasphemy conviction, he moved to London, where he took over as editor of *The Reasoner*, the journal through which he founded and organized the Secularist movement (Royle 1974). Holyoake wanted to distinguish his ideas from atheism, which he considered too certain in its denial of God. The word "agnosticism" would not be coined by Thomas Huxley until nearly twenty years later, in 1869 (Holland 2007).

Over the half century in which Holyoake promoted his capital-*S* Secularism, he expanded and refined its definition. In a later work, he offers a succinct version:

> Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: 1. The improvement of this life by material means. 2. That science is the available Providence of man. 3. That it is good to do good. (1896: 34–35)

Holyoake opposed his Secularism to theology, but its relationship with religion was more ambiguous. At times, he would describe it as rejecting or superseding religion; at others, he acknowledged that Secularism could be a kind of religion depending on how one understands the term. Quoting an essay that John Stuart Mill wrote on Auguste Comte, he uses "religion" in "the modern sense" of "binding" one to duty, morality, and humanity—distinct from binding one to God (1896: 80). "Religion," in this usage, defined an ethics established through the bonds one has with others.

Open Court Publishing in Illinois published Holyoake's *English Secularism* because it recognized a complex yet fruitful relationship between Holyoake's Secularism and religion. Writing in the work's preface, the publisher's manager, Paul Carus, distinguishes Open Court's mission from Holyoake's and advocates for "the reformation of religion and religious institutions" rather than their opposition (1896: xi). He argues that Secularism's "antagonism to the religion of dogmatism does not bode destruction but advance. It represents the transition to a purer conception of religion" (1896: xi). According to Carus, this kind of religion (p. 691) sacralizes the secular rather than separates the sacred and secular spheres. "Religion" imbues the everyday with meaning and points to deeper truths, but it does not contradict what science learns about nature. With fellow travelers like Carus, Holyoake remained sensitive to religion's polysemy and the nuances of its complicated relationship with Secularism. Holyoake understood that in some senses "religion" could describe his Secularism, and in others, the two were opposed.

Holyoake further distinguished between his Secularism and "secular instruction," where the former is a set of beliefs about the world that should not be taught as truth in schools and the latter is a way of approaching pedagogy that brackets the sorts of moral claims that Secularism and theology make. These subtleties are worth dwelling on because they show us that the tensions haunting secularism and the secular today were present at the term's beginning and acknowledged by the man who invented it to describe his worldview and the movement he led. In a passage that opens *English Secularism*, Holyoake draws distinctions worthy of a 1980s courtroom debate over the religiosity of secularism humanism:

> One purpose of these chapters is to explain how unfounded are the objections of many excellent Christians to Secular instruction in State, public, or board schools. The Secular is distinct from theology, which it neither ignores, assails, nor denies. Things Secular are as separate from the Church as land from the ocean. And what nobody seems to discern is that things Secular are in themselves quite distinct from Secularism. The Secular is a mode of instruction; Secularism is a code of conduct. Secularism does conflict with theology; Secularist teaching would, but Secular instruction does not. (1896: 1)

Making no mention of the coincidence of their shared root, Holyoake carefully distinguishes between his Secularism, which he analogizes to theology, and secular things and secular instruction, which are "secular" more in the sense of *this-worldly* and *neutral* than capital-*S* Secularist. Holyoake promoted both Secularism and secular instruction, but he

did not believe that the latter rested upon or required the former. Updating Holyoake's parlance to a contemporary idiom, we might say that one need not be a humanist to advocate for the separation of church and state and the secularity of public education. Touching briefly on the shared root of worldview and political secularisms (see also Quack this volume), I then offer a wide-ranging history that helps to explain why Holyoake and American secular humanists share such similar concerns. In the process, I show some of the reasons why secularism's polysemy remains a source of conflict today.

# Humanism, Unitarianism, and the Free Religious Association

As an –ism, "humanism" was introduced in the early nineteenth century as a variant of the term "humanist," which was coined a little more than three hundred years prior "to designate a teacher and student of the 'humanities' or *studia humanitatis*" (Kristeller 2007: 113). As it was first used, humanism described "devotion to the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome, and the humane values that may be derived from them" (Mann 2004: 1–2). This remains the understanding that organizes the scholarly study of Renaissance humanism. (p. 692) As an English-language term for a human-centered view of the world that does not affirm traditional views of theism or the supernatural, it dates to at least the mid-nineteenth century.

In *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) and *Principles of Philosophy of the Future* (1843), Ludwig Feuerbach argues that objects are only real in their relationship to humans. By extension, God is an object made real through the human subject. In a sense, Feuerbach inverts the roles of God and man, ceding creative power to the latter even while reasserting the importance of religion and man's relationship with God. The term "humanism" appears in English translations of and commentaries on Feuerbach's work, but as the *Oxford English Dictionary* observes, it is also a term adopted by his critics. In his 1853 book *Infidelity: Its Aspect, Causes, and Agency*, Reverend Thomas Pearson calls Feuerbach and his student Karl Grün "the great teachers of humanism," which he describes as "a system which finds everything in man, which ignores all power but the human will, and which is as intolerant of the existence of religion as of private property" (390). Humanism is not yet a philosophy in its own right but a term available to describe a view of the world in which the human, as opposed to God, is central. Like the term "secular humanism" in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, "humanism" in the mid-nineteenth is more epithet than self-appellation.

Writing in 1870 for the third edition of his *Principles of Secularism*, Holyoake describes humanism as one of the four "leading ideas of Secularism," along with moralism, materialism, and "utilitarian unity" (28). He elaborates only briefly on his understanding of the term "humanism," describing it as "the physical perfection of this life" (28). His understanding of humanism is similar to Feuerbach's so-called humanism: the human is both the measure and the aim. Holyoake writes: "Secularism," of which humanism is a part, "relates to the present existence of man, and to action, the issues of which can be tested

by the experience of this life—having for its objects the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point" (11). In Holyoake's framework, humanism is still not a freestanding system of thought. It fits within his Secularism, referring positively to one of its central ideas.

Holyoake's Secularism was well known among the Americans who founded the Free Religious Association (FRA), a group that was a forerunner of the avowedly humanist groups that arose in the 1920s (see Olds 1996; Radest 1969). The FRA was formed in 1867, in response to the 1865 and 1866 national conventions of the American Unitarian Association, during which Unitarian leaders like Henry Whitney Bellows pressed for the adoption of an explicitly Christian platform (Vaca 2013). More theologically radical Unitarians, such as Octavius Brooks Frothingham, William James Potter, and Francis Ellingwood Abbot, sought to form an association that could provide a big tent for a wide range of religious views while prioritizing the principles of free inquiry and individual judgment (Olds 1996; Potter 1892). Frothingham became the organization's first president, and Ralph Waldo Emerson was the first to sign as a member (Warren 1943). The group was eclectic, with its initial officers coming from Unitarianism, Universalism, Quakerism, spiritualism, Judaism, and the "unchurched" (Potter 1892: 15). According to its first constitution, the FRA was organized "to promote the interests of pure religion, to encourage the scientific study of theology, and to increase fellowship in the spirit" (Potter 1892: 16). It was also organized so that membership was not exclusive; those joining the FRA could be members of other groups, including the American Unitarian Association.

In 1873, Frothingham published *The Religion of Humanity*, in which he develops a theology that aids in providing a bridge between Unitarianism and the avowedly non-Christian, (p. 693) nontheistic religious humanism of the twentieth century. Frothingham takes his title from Auguste Comte's positivist religion, which Comte (1858) also called the "Religion of Humanity." In a book with no kind words for Catholicism, Frothingham finds Comte's system insufficiently free of its origins: "The Church of Humanity was modeled in every respect on the Catholic plan. … It is the Roman Church over again without its theology" (1873: 33). In his own Religion of Humanity, Frothingham seeks to correct what Comte has "corrupted and perverted" (33). Unlike Comte, his theology self-consciously reinscribes Christianity more than it attempts to replace it.

By expanding and reimagining Christian concepts like the Bible, Christ, and atonement, Frothingham transforms Christianity into the vehicle of a new dispensation. This new religion, the Religion of Humanity, is naturalist and materialist, yet it avoids being reductionist by stretching the notion of existence in a way that is deeply indebted to Feuerbach. Frothingham credits even misrepresentations of God as pointing indirectly to something real in humanity and the world: "The Christ of Humanity is the *human element in all Mankind*. … He is the symbol of that essential human nature which is the Messiah cradled in the bosom of every man" (1873: 90, 109). Much like the religious humanism of the twentieth century, Frothingham's Religion of Humanity embraces naturalism but refuses to relinquish the language and even the organizing concepts of the Unitarian Christianity out of which it grows. He finds kernels of truth in all religions, though he sees those reli-

gions through the salient concepts of liberal Protestant Christianity rather than on their own terms. By imagining a universal religion accessible in its plurality, and by fixating especially on the incarnation and immanence of God in the world and in the human, Frothingham also presages by nearly a century elements of both the perennialism of Aldous Huxley (1945) and the death of God theology of Thomas Altizer (1966).

# The Origins of Political Secularism in Free Religion and Liberalism

Francis Ellingwood Abbot, another of FRA's three founders, appropriated Holyoake's Secularism to create a distinctly American version that would contribute to later forms of organized humanism. His expressly political secularism would also help create the tensions the term still bears in the present day. Abbot was the founding editor of *The Index*, a journal that began in 1870 as the de facto mouthpiece of the FRA (Ahlstrom 1951). More politically and religiously radical than Frothingham, Abbot broke with the Unitarian Church following the adoption of its Christian platform and soon after resigned from his position as minister of the Unitarian Society in Dover, New Hampshire. Parishioners who still considered themselves Unitarian filed and won a lawsuit that ended Abbot's brief stint as minister of Free Religion for an Independent Society that met in the same Dover Meeting House. In 1869, Abbot was welcomed by a congregation in Ohio, which agreed to his demand to break from the American Unitarian Association and reconstitute itself as the First Independent Society of Toledo. In 1880, he would also leave the FRA, in part out of frustration with members whom he viewed as overly Christian and insufficiently "liberal"—as in "free"—in their religion and politics (Ahlstrom 1951).

(p. 694) In the years following the Civil War, the noun "liberal" allowed a meaning that has since fallen out of use. In the parlance of Abbot and his interlocutors, "liberals" frequently referred to advocates of Free Religion and included a wide variety of Christians, Jews, spiritualists, atheists, and other freethinkers (see also Hamburger 2002: 294–296). By the mid-1870s, being liberal could also imply support for Abbot's "Demands of Liberalism," a nine-item list he published in *The Index* on 6 April 1872 and which was later reprinted on the front page of every issue (Abbot 1872). Abbot composed the "Demands" in response to ongoing attempts by the National Reform Association to pass a Christian amendment to the constitution (Ahlstrom 1951; Hamburger 2002). Nationwide support for the "Demands" inspired the founding of dozens of local "Liberal Leagues" throughout the country, and in 1876, Abbot and others formed a parent organization, the National Liberal League.

That same year, Abbot played an important role in the development of American secularism. Writing in the 6 January 1876 issue of *The Index*, in an article called "The Unfinished Window," Abbot merged Holyoake's Secularism with his idiosyncratic version of liberalism, imbuing the former with another distinct but related meaning (Abbot 1876: 6–7). In addition to "philosophical," capital-*S* Secularism, Abbot advocated "political" secularism, which he understood to mean the separation of church and state (see also Putnam 1894:

506). Abbot's conflation allowed him to discursively merge the trans-Atlantic Secularist movement with the Free Religion movement he had helped to found with the FRA and the Liberal movement he had inspired with the "Demands of Liberalism." As historian Tisa Wenger (2010) observes, this conflation contributes to an ongoing confusion over the definition of "secularism." Recovering the term's origin can help us understand how and why it came to acquire the meanings and significance it has today.

# Free Religion and Ethical Culture

The FRA also played an important role in Felix Adler's founding of the first Society for Ethical Culture in New York City, a key antecedent of early-twentieth-century religious humanism. Unlike Abbot's fleeting associations, Adler built a movement that would last. The New York Society remains an active community today, and since 1910 it has owned and occupied a large stone building located at the corner of 64th Street and Central Park West. Born in Alzey, Germany, in 1851, Adler and the rest of his family moved to New York City when he was a child in order for his father, Samuel Adler, to become rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, the wealthiest congregation in the United States and one of its leading Reform synagogues (Olds 1996). After graduating from Columbia College in 1870, Adler returned to Germany where he received his doctorate in semitics at the University of Heidelberg. Expected to succeed his father at Temple Emanu-El, he gave the Sabbath sermon upon his return in 1873; he titled it "The Future of Judaism" (Radest 1969: 17). Adler's radical vision for secularizing Judaism went over poorly with his father's congregation, foreclosing the possibility of his becoming their rabbi. He did, however, make a good impression on a minority of its members. With their help, he secured a short-term appointment at newly founded Cornell University and soon became involved in the American Freethought movement.

In 1878, when Ethical Culture was still nascent, Adler became the second president of the FRA, replacing an aging Frothingham. Imagining an ambitious future for the young (p. 695) organization, Adler pursued a platform that included a school for training free religious leaders and a plan for endowing university chairs (Radest 1969; Ahlstrom 1951). Like Abbot, he was also interested in social and political activism that would extend beyond the FRA's annual meetings. Wary of the institution-building necessary for concrete action, the FRA resisted Adler's new initiatives, and in 1882 he resigned from its presidency. Despite his frustration, the connections that Adler formed in New England had a strong influence on Ethical Culture, and in his role as president, he was able to attract a number of men who would become the leaders of his new movement (Friess 1981). His experience with the FRA inspired him to pursue his institutional vision with Ethical Culture: independent societies, supplied with trained leaders by a national organization, and with a focus more on social action than intellectual debate or ritual communion.

In 1910, the New York Society for Ethical Culture decided to amend its original charter. The new document articulated explicit understandings of "religion" and "religious" while emphasizing morality and refusing to take a position on the supernatural:

> Interpreting the word “religion” to mean fervent devotion to the highest moral ends, our Society is distinctly a religious body. But toward religion as a confession of faith in things superhuman the attitude of the Society is neutral. Neither acceptance or [*sic*] rejection of any theological doctrine disqualifies for membership.
>
> (quoted in Ericson 1988: 12)

Conscious of Cthical Culture’s proximity to the boundary of the religious, Adler approached it carefully. Ethical Leaders today often paraphrase a passage from a lecture he once gave: “The Ethical Movement is religious to those who are religiously-minded and to those who interpret its work religiously, and it is simply ethical to those who are not so minded.” (Adler 1946: 68). His “ethical religion”—Adler’s own phrase (67)—would undergo a number of significant changes over the next century and a half. Though he founded an international movement that would have an enormous impact on present-day humanism, throughout his life Adler strived to distinguish Ethical Culture from the organized humanism that emerged in the 1920s. He considered humanism far too naturalistic to be compatible with Ethical Culture’s Kantian metaphysics, and up through his death in 1933, he refused to align himself with the nascent Humanist movement (Olds 1996).

# Ethical Culture and the Rise of Humanism

The Ethical Culture movement became international when Stanton Coit arrived in London in the late 1880s (Radest 1969; MacKillop 1986). Coit had trained in New York under Adler, who then arranged for him to pursue graduate work at the University of Berlin. Upon returning, Coit founded the first settlement house in the United States—two years before Jane Addams’ Hull House in Chicago. After a brief stint as minister of London’s South Place Unitarian congregation, Coit began establishing the British Ethical movement, eventually founding the British Ethical Union (Budd 1977). Like Adler, Coit distanced himself from humanism and did not want others to refer to the Ethical Culture movement as the Humanist movement (MacKillop 1986). Despite Coit’s reservations, it was out of Britain’s Ethical Societies, and in close relationship with the Secularist and Rationalist movements, that freethinkers first began describing their efforts as “humanism” (Walter 1994). The term (p. 696) joined an already complex constellation of labels that had long included references to the “religion of humanity,” a phrase that was popular among followers of Comte (and, as in Frothingham’s case, with those seeking to correct him; see Wright 1986).

One of the term’s earliest adopters was Frederick J. Gould, an apprentice of Coit who played a prominent role in founding the British Ethical movement. He broke with Coit in 1899 and began using the term “humanism” around the same time (MacKillop 1986). Gould recognized that a wide array of labels had proliferated among his fellow freethinkers, but he did not treat them as mutually exclusive. In an article published in October of 1900 he wrote that “true Rationalism includes humanism” (quoted in Walter 1994: 69). In another article the following month he listed his affiliations: “I am a Freethinker, Atheist, Agnostic, Secularist, Positivist, Ethicist, Rationalist.” Gould would go on to write

an autobiography in 1923 titled *The Life-Story of a Humanist*, and he preferred the term "humanism" above all others throughout the rest of his life.

By the time *The Humanist*, an English journal, published its first issue on 1 January 1917, references to "religious humanism" and "humanist religion" had been circulating for well over a decade. The journal announced its mission in its very first article, "The Religion of Humanism":

> We seek to widen and deepen the whole concept of religion; to get it out from the stifling prison in which the Churches have, for long ages, confined it—out into the air, where it can breathe and flourish and grow magnificently. … It is in order to stimulate the will of the people, and of the rulers, that this journal will devote itself to the promulgation of the religion of Humanism.
>
> (Gorham and Smith 1917: 1–2)

*The Humanist* was a mouthpiece for the British Ethical Societies, but it was published by the Rationalist Press Association (RPA), an organization founded in 1899 by Charles Watts and George Jacob Holyoake (Budd 1977). Through Holyoake's role in the RPA, which Gould also helped to found, he had a hand in the creation of two of the most influential –isms in the history of institutionalized nonbelief: secularism and humanism.

# Organized Humanism: A New Religious Movement

The organized humanism that developed in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s was spearheaded by a number of clergymen, former clergymen, and scholars. Three of those clergymen played a particularly important role in the formation of humanist institutions in the United States: John H. Dietrich, Curtis W. Reese, and Charles Francis Potter. Like the publishers of Holyoake's *English Secularism*, they sought to expand the category of religion such that it could contain practices and beliefs that were oriented only to the present, material world. They transformed the Unitarian Church to make room for their humanism and, in the case of Potter, expanded beyond its institutional boundaries. Decades later, their religious humanism gave rise to an avowedly secular humanism that distinguished itself from religion and affirmed the division between secular and religious that came to prevail in the second half of the twentieth century.

(p. 697) John H. Dietrich began using the term "humanism" around 1915, shortly before becoming minister of the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis. He borrowed it from an article he read by Gould that appeared in the British Ethical Culture journal, *Ethical World* (Olds 1996). Though the term originated with Gould and his RPA and Ethical Culture colleagues in Britain, Americans would be the first to formally institutionalize humanism. Dietrich set the wheels in motion by using the term in his sermons and writing, and it was Dietrich who introduced it to Reese in 1917 when they met at the Western Unitarian Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Though Reese had been using a phrase of his own

creation, the “religion of Democracy,” he eventually accepted Dietrich’s appellation, and the two became some of the first to popularize religious humanism in the United States (Olds 1996).

By the height of his career, Dietrich had developed what he called a “Religion without God.” His theology was not atheistic, at least not according to his understanding of atheism: “I do not use the term, atheist. Atheism, I believe, is properly used as a denial of God; and my attitude towards the idea of God is not that of denial at all; it is that of inquiry” (Dietrich 1928a: 19). Dietrich minimized the importance of belief in God, arguing that it refers to many different understandings, and no circumscription could ever be adequate:

> And after all, men and women, no one can affirm or deny the existence of God without defining the term; and they are wisest who attempt no definition of the undefinable. … So long as a man believes in the integrity of the universe and of himself, names and symbols are relatively unimportant. Titles can bear little relation to the infinite. (1928b: 14)

He praises the atheist who “does not try to penetrate beyond the veil of natural phenomena” and strives for the betterment of humanity, and he criticizes the nihilistic and self-serving atheism that justifies itself by the axiom “might makes right” (1928b: 18). He personally saw no grounds for doing away with all uses of the term “God,” nor did he think belief in God is necessary for “religious worship” (1934: 1–2). Like his colleagues Reese and Potter, he saw in the structures and rituals of religion the means to exalt nature and humanity.

Charles Francis Potter was also ordained in the ministry of his youth, and he became a Baptist pastor despite his growing theological liberalism. Born in Marlboro, Massachusetts, in 1885, Potter became a minister in 1908, the same year as Reese. He joined the Unitarian Church around the same time as Dietrich, in 1914, and it was from Dietrich that he first learned of humanism. After Potter began as minister of a Unitarian congregation in Edmonton, Alberta, one of his parishioners observed that his theology of “Personalism” strongly resembled the “Humanism” he had heard a minister named Dietrich preach in Spokane, Washington. Though Potter was not known for his humanism as early as Dietrich and Reese, he reached wide renown as a humanist from 1930 on, and he played a significant role in creating a movement that could stand apart from Unitarianism (Olds 1996). Potter established his national reputation in a series of debates with John Roach Straton, the theologically conservative pastor of New York City’s Calvary Baptist Church. In 1919, Potter had become minister of the city’s West Side Unitarian Church, and his congregation was thriving. In late 1923, he agreed to debate Straton on a range of issues, the first being the Bible as “the Infallible Word of God” (Olds 1996). Potter won the debate, along with the next two, and Straton won the fourth. Though Potter is hardly an exemplar of theological modernism, Straton published his side (and not Potter’s) in 1925 as *The Famous New York Fundamentalist–Modernist Debates*.

(p. 698) The heavily publicized events with Straton earned Potter a reputation as a formidable proponent of evolution, and he was asked to be an expert for the defense in the 1925 trial of John T. Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee. For the rest of his career, Potter would stand apart from humanist Unitarians like Dietrich and Reese but also from the vocal opponents of conservative religion like Scopes's defense attorney Clarence Darrow and trial reporter H. L. Mencken. By 1929, Potter was deemed too radical for his new congregation, New York City's Universalist Church of the Divine Paternity. In September of that year he broke with Unitarianism and founded the First Humanist Society of New York. Though the new society never provided a sustainable income, it marked the first independent humanist institution, and the books and articles Potter wrote to earn his living remain touchstones in the movement's early history (Olds 1996).

Curtis W. Reese was born in 1887 to a devout Baptist family in North Carolina. Like Dietrich and Potter, he set his sights on the ministry and eventually made a break with the church of his youth. In 1926, while working in Chicago as secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, Reese became a member of the board of Meadville Theological Seminary and played an important role in its relocation from Meadville, Pennsylvania. Securing a large donation from a wealthy businessman, Reese outmatched competing offers from Ithaca and Cleveland and negotiated the seminary's affiliation with the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. He would later oversee the incorporation of Lombard College in 1933, resulting in the Meadville Lombard Theological School that exists today (Olds 1996). Among contemporary humanists, Reese is best known for his role in editing the *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933, for helping to found the AHA in 1941, and for serving as the organization's president for its first fourteen years. In 1936, Reese and University of Chicago professor Albert E. Haydon founded the Humanist Press Association in Chicago, serving as its first president and vice president, respectively. In 1941, they oversaw the organization's transition to the AHA and the beginning of its publication of *The Humanist* (Olds 1996). Five years later, the AHA filed for a tax exemption as an educational organization, as opposed to a religious organization, marking another new institutional trajectory for humanism, separate from the Unitarian Church (Flynn 2002: 40).

# Secularism Wanes and Waxes

Testimony from a US Congressional hearing held in 1915 offers a glimpse into the transition from secularism to humanism among organized nonbelievers and underscores the transatlantic movement of labels and ideas among nonbelievers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his testimony, John D. Bradley, president of the Washington Secular League, defined his worldview for a bemused Congressman: "Secularism is the religion of humanism, the religion of the renaissance; it represents the move of modern civilization; it is founded upon the experience of this life, the only experience that any of us knows anything about" (US Congress 1915: 44). Bradley interweaves disparate intellectual threads in order to locate secularism and humanism within a shared, legitimate tradition. He equates Holyoake-style secularism with a religion called humanism, which he then conflates with the humanism of the Renaissance. He locates this triad within the

movement of modern (p. 699) civilization—a narrative of progress in which modernity brings a secular focus and a turn away from “supernatural religion.”

While humanism ascended, the popularity of capital-*S* Secularism declined. In the 1920s, lacking strength as a movement and thus lacking defenders, secularism became the bugaboo of religious leaders in England and the United States. Members of the interwar Protestant ecumenical movement viewed secularism as the result of God’s eviction from the earth, and they adopted the defeat of “secular civilization” as a rallying cry (see Jerusalem Report 1928). Writing in *The Crisis* in 1937, Baptist minister Benjamin E. Mays names secularism as the shared enemy that inspired the formation of the World Council of Churches:

> Regardless of the theological differences of the churches assembled, they were all conscious of a common peril—secularism and materialism. In some countries of Europe it is the domination of the nation-state. In the United States and England it is the peril of a highly mechanized material civilization. The recognition of a common enemy helped create unity. (1937: 316)

Only after World War II did secularism reenter popular discourse as more than a bugaboo, and, surprisingly, it meant the separation of church and state. Abbot’s usage in the nineteenth century only circulated among freethinkers and secularists, and its reappearance in the 1950s deserves more historical research. The early 1950s marked the start of the Cold War, a time when Presidents Truman and Eisenhower made a concerted effort to encourage religion as a way to combat the enemy of “godless communism” (see Aiello 2005 and Gunn 2009). The era also marked the beginning of a decades-long stretch that established most of America’s jurisprudence on the separation of church and state (see Sullivan 2014).

Though humanism’s history describes some of the people and institutions who carried the legacy of Holyoake’s Secularism into the twentieth century, the current state of research leaves many questions unanswered. How did “secularism” transition from the positive descriptor of a worldview and social movement to the name for a bugaboo of both conservative and ecumenical Protestants? How did “political secularism,” a term used among a relatively small, fringe group of American activists, become a mainstream term for the separation of church and state? And, in turn, how did “secularism” become the name for a set of colonial and neocolonial projects that have remade religion the world over? This chapter accounts for only some of secularism’s many traces.

# Secularism and Humanism Interwoven

In 1961, the Supreme Court ruled in *Torcaso v. Watkins* that language in state constitutions that requires a religious test for office violates the First Amendment. The suit’s most immediate effect was to allow Roy Torcaso to become a notary public in the state of Maryland, despite being a nontheist and despite that state’s constitution forbidding anyone from holding office who would not declare belief in the existence of God. In its *Torcaso*

decision, the Court relied on a previous case, *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), which had extended the notion of separation of church and state from the federal level to the states. Eight states still have language requiring all officeholders to believe in God, though where lawsuits have (p. 700) challenged that language, religious tests have been overturned. As is the case in Maryland, even when overturned, the original language is allowed to remain.

In a footnote in *Torcaso*, the histories of secularism and humanism interweave: "Among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others" (*Torcaso v. Watkins* 1961: 495 n.11). The term's appearance in this footnote was strange, because even though it existed in 1961, no one had used "secular humanism" in print as a positive appellation. For example, Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen mentioned it in 1940; Reinhold Niebuhr used it in a lecture in 1952 and Adlai Stevenson in a lecture in 1954. In all these cases, "secular humanism" is a disparaging term that contrasts with Christianity or "Christian humanism."

Humanist philosopher and theologian William R. Jones (1973) makes a similar observation in the first edition of *Is God a White Racist?*, a critique of black theology and an early attempt to use "secular humanism" as a positive term. He adopted it for his position, which he considers one step beyond a "humanocentric theism" because it relinquishes belief in God altogether (Jones 1973). In a footnote, he explains his choice of words:

> Though I do not regard the term "secular" to be an appropriate modifier, I employ it here because of its common usage. Secular humanism is often defined as the opposite of Christian humanism, and it is this essential difference I wish to emphasize. (1973: 227)

As Jones makes clear, as of 1973, he does not consider himself to be part of a larger movement called "secular humanism," and he understands his use of the term "secular" as reclaiming a bugaboo of Christianity and an explicitly Christian humanism.

Jones clarified this point even further in a new edition of *Is God a White Racist?* that was published in 1998. Again writing in a footnote, he asks the reader "to accept a fundamental semantic correction": the "secular" he appended to his humanism was drawn from a musical genre, "slave seculars," as opposed to the Christian spirituals that were "the musical embodiment of the black church's theism" (Jones 1998: 215). Wishing to distinguish himself from the "secular humanism" of Paul Kurtz, discussed at greater length later, Jones had come to describe his position as "black religious humanism" or "black radical humanism" (see also Floyd-Thomas 2008). Though some humanists had begun referring to "secular humanism" in print by 1973 (Kurtz 1973), the term had yet to label a distinct movement that was legible to those outside the small world of secular activism and organized nonbelief.

# Secular Humanism Reclaimed

In the wake of *Torcaso*, in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, minor lawsuits and proposed state legislation began arguing that "Secular Humanism" is an official or established religion in the United States (Toumey 1993). In 1978, John W. Whitehead and John Conlan synthesized these disparate attempts in an article published in the *Texas Tech Law Review* that built on *Torcaso* in order to make "the religion of Secular Humanism" a full-blown bugaboo for the nascent religious right. According to Whitehead and Conlan, "The Supreme (p. 701) Court has adopted a concept of religion which is tantamount to Secular Humanism's position of the centrality of man, because the basis of both is the deification of man's reason" (1978: 12). They argued that secular humanism had superseded Protestantism as the de facto established religion in the United States, and it was time for America to return to its Christian roots. In the eyes of Whitehead and Conlan, as well as conservative evangelicals like Francis Schaeffer and Tim LaHaye, secular humanism had become the central ideology of the American state. But where were the actual people who called themselves secular humanists?

SUNY Buffalo philosophy professor Paul Kurtz founded the first organization representing avowedly *secular* humanists in 1980 when he established the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism. After spending more than a decade working for the AHA as editor of its magazine, *The Humanist*, Kurtz parted ways with the group in 1978. One AHA leader I interviewed estimated that around half of its membership and many of its prominent donors left with Kurtz, providing him with the means to found a new organization. Kurtz realized that "secular humanism," in its various senses, was both beleaguered and infamous. By institutionalizing it, he could simultaneously justify his break with the AHA, draw away its avowedly "secular" members, and elicit donations from political liberals. According to another secular activist I interviewed who worked with Kurtz for decades, "Secular humanism was being widely criticized by people on the religious right, and nobody was speaking up for it."[1]

Not only did Kurtz position his organization as a break from the religious tradition of the AHA, but he also set it up as an institutional and ideological bulwark against the religious right. If Kurtz could establish that his *secular* humanism was not a religion and his beliefs and groups were not religious, then he and his fellow secular humanists could thwart conservative Christian attempts to argue that secular humanism is an established religion in the United States. Kurtz's organizations benefited from lawsuits filed by religious conservatives because they brought publicity and donations to the Council for Secular Humanism, and they provided a clear opponent. His network of groups, collected under the umbrella of the Center for Inquiry, is now the largest nonbeliever organization in the United States, and it continues to define itself against groups like the American Ethical Union and the AHA, which welcome avowedly religious, nontheistic humanists. Given how and why they were founded, it becomes clear why Kurtz's groups objected to legal efforts by the AHA and others to define secular humanism as a religion. Credibility, money, and members are all at stake.

The divide between religious and secular humanists grew out of an older tradition of expressly religious humanism, which in turn sprang from nineteenth-century movements like Holyoake's Secularism, the Freethought movement, Comte's Religion of Humanity, and the Unitarian Church. Generations of nuanced debate over terms and ideologies has bequeathed us much of the language we reach for when discussing secularism and what it means to be secular, regardless of whether we are nonexperts, activists, or scholars. It is only from within a fraught inheritance that American lawyers and judges can adjudicate the thorny legal questions raised by lawsuits like those that ask whether secular humanism is a religion. Gaining a better understanding of the origins of our terms and the histories of the organizations that file and support such lawsuits is crucial for grasping the stakes of secularism's persistent conflicts.

## (p. 702) Secularism Lately: The Challenge of Polysemy

As many of the chapters in this volume attest, "secularism" has come to mean far more than Holyoake ever intended, and even Abbot's distinction between philosophical and political secularism can hardly capture the variety of meanings the term conveys. Some of these versions of secularism are so disparate in scope and scale that they are practically concealed from one another, like a gem and its mine or a single tree and the forest in which it resides. Recent postcolonial critiques of secularism use the term to name an assemblage so large that it obscures the fringe nineteenth- and twentieth-century freethought groups that are the central focus of this chapter (see also Weir 2015). And yet those who critique this kind of secularism—or religio-secularism, as Yolande Jansen calls it in this volume—have succeeded in describing a diffuse global project, concomitant with colonial and neocolonial domination, which has realigned indigenous modes of self-organization and self-understanding. We have come to see how this big secularism has remade the world in its own image, though in the process, the little secularism of atheists and activists has become obscure.

Like the gem in its mine and the tree in its forest, the two secularisms are not unrelated, nor are they merely symptom and etiology. Understanding how they connect to one another is key to recognizing that a polysemous secularism does not describe an arbitrary set of things that bear the name but an interrelated complex that hangs together and has coevolved, adopted by groups and causes, redefined by judges and scholars, and reappropriated by everyday people who remain far outside academic debates (Blankholm 2014). Secularism, as we inherit it, is not arbitrary at all, and in its vicissitudes lies a story about the powers that have laid claim to it and the agendas they have pursued. This chapter has told only one brief version of that story with the aim of demonstrating its close relationship with humanism and secular humanism and, in turn, to observe its proximity to religion.

Recovering the tradition of “religious” secularism allows us to recognize its particularity and the ways in which it continues to vie competitively among other practices and ideologies. In Holyoake’s careful distinction between “Secularism” and “secular instruction” we can recognize a parallel to contemporary concerns about the secular and its proper relationship with religion. Recent lawsuits asking whether secular humanism is a religion are manifestations of this tradition, and they call our attention to how secular is at once both biased and neutral—one position among many but also a name for the position that decides among them or refuses to favor one over another. That this tensely loaded concept forms the basis in the United States of such crucial distinctions as the teaching of religion and the teaching about it should give us pause (*Abington v. Schempp* 1963). An acknowledgement of secularism’s complicated history and its persistent polysemy makes available a more honest approach to debates over secularism. It enables us to concern ourselves less with adjudicating what is secular and what is religious and focus instead on the more important question of how we came to care.

## Bibliography

Abbot, F. E. 1872. “The Demands of Liberalism.” In *The Index: A Weekly Paper Devoted to Free Religion,* edited by Francis Ellingwood Abbot, William James Potter, and Benjamin Franklin Underwood, vol. 3, 108–109. Toledo, Ohio: Index Association.

Abbot, F. E. 1876. “The Unfinished Window.” In *The Index: A Weekly Paper Devoted to Free Religion,* edited by Francis Ellingwood Abbot, William James Potter, and Benjamin Franklin Underwood, vol. 7, 6–7. Boston: Index Association.

Abington School District v. Schempp. 1963. 374 U.S. 203.

Adler, F. 1946. *Our Part in This World*. Edited by Horace L. Friess. New York: King’s Crown Press.

Ahlstrom, S. E. 1951. “Francis Ellingwood Abbot: His Education and Active Career.” Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Aiello, T. 2005. “Constructing Godless Communism: Religion, Politics, and Popular Culture, 1954–1960.” *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture, 1900 to Present* 4(1). **http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2005/aiello.htm**.

Altizer, T. J. J. 1966. *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*. Philadelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press.

Amarasingam, A. (ed.). 2010. *Religion and the New Atheism: A Critical Appraisal*. Leiden: Brill.

Baker, J., and B. Smith. 2015. *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. New York: New York University Press.

Blankholm, J. 2014. “The Political Advantages of a Polysemous Secular.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53(4), 775–790.

Blankholm, J. 2015. “Making the American Secular: Organized Nonbelievers and Secular Activists in the United States.” Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, New York.

Budd, S. 1977. *Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850–1960*. New York: Holmes & Meier.

Coles, R. 2001. *The Secular Mind*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Comte, A. 1858. *The Catechism of Positive Religion*. Translated by Richard Congreve. London: John Chapman.

Dietrich, J. H. 1928a. *Is Atheism a Menace*? Humanist Pulpit series 11, no. 2. Minneapolis: First Unitarian Society.

Dietrich, J. H. 1928b. *What Is an Atheist?* Humanist Pulpit series 11, no. 1. Minneapolis: First Unitarian Society.

Dietrich, J. H. 1934. *Do Humanists Worship?* Humanist Pulpit series 16, no. 1. Minneapolis: First Unitarian Society, 1934.

Ericson, E. L. 1988. *The Humanist Way: An Introduction to Ethical Humanist Religion*. London: Continuum.

Everson v. Board of Education of the Township of Ewing, et al. 1947. 330 U.S. 1.

“Failure in Religion Charged to Schools.” 1952. *The New York Times* (8 January).

Feuerbach, L. 1896. *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Manfred H. Vogel. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett.

Feuerbach, L. 1957. *The Essence of Christianity*. Translated by George Eliot. New York: Harper.

Floyd-Thomas, J. 2008. *The Origins of Black Humanism in America: Reverend Ethelred Brown and the Unitarian Church*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Flynn, Tom (ed.). 2002. “Having It Both Ways.” *Free Inquiry* 22(4), 40.

Friess, Horace L. 1981. *Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Frothingham, O. B. 1873. *The Religion of Humanity*. New York: David G. Francis.

(p. 704) Gorham, C. T., and G. A. Smith. 1917. “The Religion of Humanism.” *The Humanist* 1(1), 1–2.

Gunn, T. J. 2009. *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

Holland, A. 2007. "Agnosticism." In *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, edited by Tom Flynn, 33–35. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Holyoake, G. J. 1870. *The Principles of Secularism, Illustrated*. London: Austin.

Holyoake, G. J. 1896. *The Origin and Nature of Secularism*. London: Watts. [Also published as *English Secularism: A Confession of Belief*. Chicago: Open Court, 1896.]

Hamburger, P. 2002. *The Separation of Church and State*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Huxley, A. 1945. *The Perennial Philosophy.* New York: Harper & Brothers.

Jacoby, S. 2004. *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Jerusalem Report. 1928. *The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems*. Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 24 March–8 April 1928, Vol. 1. London: Oxford University Press.

Jones, W. R. 1973. *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press.

Jones, W. R. 1998. *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology,* 2nd ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

Kallen, H. 1954. *Secularism Is the Will of God*. New York: Twayne.

Kitcher, P. 2014. *Life After Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Kristeller, P. O. 2007. "Humanism." In *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy,* edited by Charles B. Schmidt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye, 113–137. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kurtz, P. (ed.). 1973. *The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

MacKillop, I. D. 1986. *The British Ethical Societies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mann, N. 2004. "The Origins of Humanism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism,* edited by Jill Kraye, 1–19. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Mays, B. E. 1937. "The Church Surveys the World's Problems." *The Crisis* 44(10), 296, 316–317.

Modern, J. 2011. *Secularism in Antebellum America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Olds, M. 1996. *American Religious Humanism,* 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fellowship of Religious Humanists.

Pearson, T. 1854. *Infidelity: Its Aspect, Causes, and Agency*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers.

Potter, W. J. 1892. *The Free Religious Association: Its 25 Years and Their Meaning*. Boston: Free Religious Association of America.

Putnam, S. P. 1894. *400 Years* of *Freethought*. New York: Truth Seeker Company.

Radest, H. B. 1969. *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States*. New York: Frederick Ungar.

Radest, H. B. 1990. *The Devil and Secular Humanism: The Children of the Enlightenment*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

Robertson, J. 1929. *A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Watts.

Royle, E. 1974. *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement 1791–1866*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press.

“Sheen Calls War a Spur to Religion.” 1940. *The New York Times* (12 February).

(p. 705) Straton, J. R. 1925. *The Famous New York Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates, the Orthodox Side*. New York: George H. Doran.

Sullivan, W. F. 2014. *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care, and the Law*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

“Text of Adlai Stevenson’s Address at Columbia on Nation’s ‘Moral Crisis.’” 1954. *The New York Times* (6 June).

Toumey, C. P. 1993. “Evolution and Secular Humanism.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61(2), 275–301.

Torcaso v. Watkins. 1961. 367 U.S. 488.

Turner, James C. 1985. *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

US Congress, House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads. 1915. *Exclusion of Certain Publications from the Mails: Hearing before the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, House of Representatives, Sixty-Third Congress, Third Session, on H.R. 20644 and H.R. 21183, Bills to Exclude Certain Publications from the Mails, February 1, 1915*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Vaca, D. 2013. "'Great Religions' as Peacemaker: What Unitarian Infighting Did for Comparative Religion." *History of Religions* 53(2), 115–150.

Walter, N. 1994. *Humanism: Finding Meaning in the Word*. London: Rationalist Press Association.

Warren, S. 1943. *American Freethought: 1860–1914*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Weir, T. H. 2015. *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, T. 2010. "The God-in-the-Constitution Controversy: American Secularisms in Historical Perspective." In *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, edited by Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, 87–105. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitehead, J. W., and J. Conlan. 1978. "The Establishment of the Religion of Secular Humanism and Its First Amendment Implications." *Texas Tech Law Review* 10(1), 1–66.

Wright, T. R. 1986. *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

## Notes:

(1.) These interviews were part of a larger ethnographic project that comprised my dissertation (Blankholm 2015). I anonymized my sources and thus refrain from naming them here.

**Joseph Blankholm**

Joseph Blankholm is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on secularism and atheism, primarily in the United States. He has published chapters and articles on secularist lobbying, religious indifference, and nonbeliever communities, and he is currently at work on a monograph about American secular activism.

# Humanism as a Positive Outcome of Secularism

Joachim Duyndam

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.43

## Abstract and Keywords

Humanism is not the only answer to the conditions of secularism, nor would secularism inevitably equal nihilism without humanism.. This chapter articulates and defends positive humanism, a tradition not defined just by rejecting dogmatic religion but by seeking ethical ideals and human rights. Realizing those values requires hermeneutic interpretations of humanist exemplars from many cultures, past and present, in order to creatively apply those values within individual contexts. Humanism stands for liberty (autonomy and resilience), responsibility (the duty to care, for which one is answerable), justice (upholding institutions and arrangements that protect people from exploitation and humiliation), solidarity (spiritual and material care for one another), diversity (the right to individual and group identity), art of living (refined moral conduct toward oneself and others), and sustainability (long-term care for the inhabitability of the planet). Taken together, these values seek to promote humaneness.

Keywords: humanism, humanness, human rights, dignity, autonomy, hermeneutics

THIS chapter defends and articulates humanism as a positive response to the secular conditions of our present-day life in Western culture. According to Charles Taylor (2007), we now live in a “secular age,” by which he means that our religious identities have developed from being a given, obvious, and self-evident meaning-frame in earlier times to what he calls “an option.” Religion is no longer a supra-personal, “objective,” determining context but a private, subjective, personal choice. According to Jaap van Praag (1982), founding father of Dutch humanism in the twentieth century, these conditions could lead to nihilism. When everything valuable or significant has been reduced to a matter of subjective taste, nothing really matters anymore. Far from being a reactionary conservative, van Praag was genuinely concerned about the moral standards, inspirational sources, and shared goals of our culture in the future, against the background of a challenging nihilism. With the purpose of providing a worldview, a meaning frame, as well as a source of inspiration, especially for people not belonging to one of the traditional churches, he revived humanism from its Renaissance and Enlightenment sources.

Humanism is not the only answer to the conditions of secularism, nor is it the case that, without humanism, secularism would inevitably equal nihilism. The concepts of “the secular,” “secularization,” and “secularism” display a wide variety of meanings, which are comprehensively discussed in the other chapters of this volume. More or less the same is true for humanism. Both its connotations and its denotations vary over time and across different cultural contexts. Even today, and if only looking at the small country of the Netherlands, for instance, humanism displays a broad range of appearances. It diverges from (1) radical atheism at one edge of the spectrum (“religion is a dangerous delusion, and it should be conquered”) through (2) a more tolerant freethinking, a little further on the spectrum (“we can do without religion; we are better off without it”) to (3) agnosticism, somewhat more to the middle of the spectrum (“we don’t know and we cannot know if there exists anything beyond”) to (4), still further on the spectrum, the so-called inclusive humanism (“although I may be not a believer myself, the majority of the world population is religious in one way or another, so let’s keep the dialogue open to learn from one another”) to (5) forms of religious humanism at the other edge of the spectrum. In the Netherlands all these “humanisms” are represented in the Dutch Humanist Association.

(p. 707) Remarkably, all forms of humanism just mentioned define themselves in relation to religion, and the most prominent among them do this in a negative way (a-theism, a-gnosticism, the negative freedom in freethinking). This chapter takes a different direction by articulating and defending “positive” humanism: a humanism on its own, defined from within itself. Of course, humanism is always related to, and therefore influenced by, other views, convictions, life stances, philosophies of life, and religions, but humanism’s approach of these should, in my view, be offered from its own powers.

Those “negative” definitions do point at an important feature of humanism: its fundamentally critical character. In my view, humanism is to be understood primarily as a critical tradition in Western culture. I elaborate on this in the first section. In the second section I focus on the substantive qualities of humanism—its “content,” so to speak. In the third section I combine the insights of the first two sections in the idea of humanist exemplary figures. Humanist exemplars represent the way the humanist “content,” such as values, views, meanings, are mediated and communicated through humanist traditions. Finally, I focus in the fourth section on autonomy, something generally assumed to be a typical humanist value. Autonomy as presented here is built up as a creative hermeneutical response to the dogmatic heteronomy of dominant cultural factors that challenge or suppress humaneness, which is what humanism is all about.

# Humanism as a Critical Tradition

Initially claiming that humanism is a tradition does not exclude other, more general or abstract conceptions of humanism, such as humanism as a particular life stance, a philosophy of life, a worldview, an existential orientation, an educational practice (*Bildung*), a meaning frame, or a paradigm. On the contrary, humanism encompasses all these matters. I call these definitions abstract, though, because they tend to waive the temporal,

historical, developmental, dynamic, and interactive character of humanist *tradition* in favor of some steady essence or identity. That tendency is quite understandable from an apologetic perspective, in contexts or situations where humanism should be defended, for instance, from assaults from the orthodox religious fringes.

Let us first look at humanism from a historical point of view. It is generally accepted that humanism originates from the Renaissance, although it can justifiably be claimed that its roots go back to Antiquity. The so-called “Renaissance humanists” such as Desiderius Erasmus (1469–1536), Thomas More (1478–1535), and Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) took a critical position toward the cultural conditions of their time, particularly toward religion. Roughly stated, one might say that their contributions included a correction to the dominant theocentric worldview toward a more anthropocentric worldview. Instead of total dependence on God’s grace, humans came to be seen as having a free will (Erasmus); instead of being the only savior, Jesus came to be seen as a valuable teacher; instead of directed at life after death, human life in its earthly and bodily conditions came to be seen as worthwhile and beautiful in itself. Still, their critical stance toward church and religion did not allow these Renaissance humanists to be atheists in the modern sense. They continued to be Christian believers during their entire lives. Their humanism coexisted, so to speak, with their Christian faith.

(p. 708) The main resource of their criticism was classical Antiquity. By digging up and dusting off classical literary and philosophical texts, and reviving attention to Roman and Greek sculpture, painting, and architecture, they brought about enormous innovations in literature, the fine arts, and religion. The revitalizing of classical sources not only explains the name of the historical period—re-naissance, or re-birth—but it is typical for humanism as a tradition. Tradition (from the Latin *trans-dare*) means the passing on, giving back, or giving further. A humanist tradition in a culture passes on something from sources of that culture, which may have become lost, forgotten, or unserviceable. Humanism revitalizes cultural sources (such as texts and pieces of art), gains inspiration from them, and passes them on to the audiences of that humanism’s time period.

Humanism does so if and when such is thought necessary for the sake of humanity, in the sense of humaneness (*humanitas* in Latin). The Renaissance humanists propagated the meaning and beauty of human life—using long-forgotten sources from Antiquity—to counter the dominant thinking of abstract, rigid, and theocentric medieval scholasticism, because this kind of thinking and its ideas were thought to fall short to what human life is all about according to the humanists: humaneness. We return to this important notion of humanity or humaneness in the next section.

The lost, forgotten, or unserviceable sources that humanism revitalizes not only include ideas from texts and works of art that really historically existed at one time but also ideas that express meanings and values belonging to humanity as such, according to humanism, whether they have actually been realized or not. These also need to be passed on. In the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, another important period in the history of humanity and in the history of humanism, humanists championed the individual’s ability and

right to think for oneself—autonomy in the context of various heteronomies. The nineteenth-century (particularly German) *Bildung*-humanism advocated freedom and education (*paideia*) in an age of industrialization where many people were exploited or enslaved. Freedom, autonomy, and dignity are values that, from a humanist point of view, have to be passed on whether or not they have been fully accomplished and to what extent.

The Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) renewed and passed on autonomy from its Socratic source and applied it to morality. To answer the question, "What should I do to act morally well?" we do not have to rely on the external authorities of church or state or custom, he argued. We can find the answer ourselves by just thinking, by using reason. Reason gives us the unconditional moral imperative, "Act only according to that rule whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law," or in its second formulation, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end." Consequently, morality is not given and legitimized by an external authority but by the reason we all share, according to Kant. Therefore, we can (and should) be moral because we are reasonable beings. Reason-based autonomy is not something that was once there, historically, and then disappeared. Since the time of Socrates' *Apology* it has always been necessary to pass on and to defend reason and autonomy against stupidity and docility. From a moral perspective it has always existed—as a value, a goal, a virtue to be acquainted—whereas historically it has only existed to some precarious extent and always under pressure.

Resuming Kant's goal today, autonomy should be passed on in quite another context of heteronomy. Whereas church and state show an ever-declining authority, the heteronomous influence from the media and the markets is still increasing. I will come back to the theme (p. 709) of autonomy in a later section. It is an important part of the positive humanism presented in this chapter.

The examples discussed so far show how humanism can essentially be viewed as tradition, critically passing on meanings and values that should be passed on and brought forward in different times and contexts for the sake of humaneness. Therefore, humanist traditions are always connected to other traditions, ideas, and movements in the culture that humanism is also part of. At some times and places humanism is even present *within* religious traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other religions and worldviews—usually in a liberal appearance and as a critical counterforce to orthodoxy. I will report here the case of the Islam scholar Nasr Abu Zayd (1943–2010), a Muslim and a humanist, who persistently took a critical position toward orthodox Islam. The case of Abu Zayd is interesting because it shows the hermeneutical character of his humanistic criticism. I will come back to hermeneutics in the third section, but here it can provisionally be stated that hermeneutics is the kind of reading or interpretation where the critic and the criticized are intertwined in a struggle for meaning, directed by the so-called

hermeneutical circle (a term coined by the hermeneutical philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer).

As a devout though nonorthodox Muslim, Abu Zayd found that the source texts of his faith do not have a fixed and immovable meaning. Their meaning should consistently be acquired through a careful process of interpretation. A text only becomes meaningful within a context, and those contexts are historically and culturally variable. This applies not only to Islam but also to Christianity and other religions and philosophies of life. For example, where it is written “love thy neighbor”—in both the Bible and the Quran—the truth and the meaning of such a command depend on its application to a specific context, such as my own life. Therefore, I must first understand what it really means to love and what love requires from me, and moreover I should know who actually is my neighbor. So I have to translate and to apply this duty, in order that the general demand “love thy neighbor” can mean anything at all. Unlike orthodox readers, who tend to stick to one unchanging sense, hermeneutical reading wrestles with the text, knowing that meanings change over time while their contexts change over time. To catch or to reconstruct the constantly changing meaning, hermeneutics have to take the text extremely seriously. The texts are the firm hardware of the interpretation. Their meaning is to be negotiated and gained from them again and again.

His humanistic hermeneutical work made Abu Zayd collide with the orthodox, who wanted to hold on to a standard explanation. At long last they did not even regard him as a true Muslim anymore, and as a result a court dissolved his marriage (since his wife was not allowed to be married to a “non-Muslim”). Abu Zayd and his wife left their native Egypt and traveled to the Netherlands; at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht he held the Ibn Rushd Chair of Humanism and Islam until his untimely death in 2010.

As a humanist he certainly belonged to the so-called “inclusive” variant mentioned previously. He embodied interreligious or inter-worldview dialogue. On the one hand, he was faithful a Muslim, who undoubtedly assumed that the Quran is the word of God; on the other hand, he found that it is not only the right but the very duty of human beings to interpret and to apply the holy word. In this respect he was a humanist. He was both a Muslim and a humanist: as a Muslim he was humanist; as a humanist he was Muslim. He did not adopt a wavering or compromising attitude, as if they both had to be somewhat correct; he was a convinced Muslim, possessing knowledge of Islam’s sources and rooted there. And he was a (p. 710) genuine humanist, precisely because of his hermeneutical dealing with those sources, based on his knowledge of the Western humanistic tradition.

We have emphasized how humanism is a critical tradition that passes on something valuable (values, meanings, ideas) to culture from its own sources. The example of Nasr Abu Zayd demonstrates (1) that these sources can originate from *other* traditions and (2) that what comes from these sources must be interpreted, that is, translated or applied to the contexts to which they are passed on. Hence, the sources of the Bible and the Quran are not limited to a Jewish/Christian and an Islamic audience, respectively. A humanist reading and interpretation of the Bible and the Quran is fully possible. This does not mean

that humanists can agree with all that is written in these books. But laying hold and claiming the ownership of these sources by certain churches makes no sense.

# The Content of Humanism

Taking humanism to be a critical cultural tradition that uncovers and interprets sources from that culture does not yet specify the meanings and values to which humanism is committed. The concept of tradition does not imply the content or the substance that is passed on in a tradition. However, our primary definition of humanism indicates that it is for the sake of humaneness that the humanist tradition strives, including in its critical character. To discuss the content of humanism, let me start with the latter.

Inherent to the critical character of humanism is that it is also self-critical, for criticism can only be credible and plausible if it includes self-criticism. Criticizing from an immune position makes no sense. This applies even more strongly to humanism, which is always part of and rooted in the culture that it criticizes. That self-critical character is related to the essential object of humanist criticism, which is dogmatism. All varieties of humanism mentioned already—radical atheism, freethinking, agnosticism, the so-called inclusive humanism, and even religious humanism—criticize in one way or another, and with different degrees of passion, the dogmatic aspects of religion. Dogmatism is understood here as taking a principle, idea, conception, or belief for granted as incontrovertibly true and unquestionable, without consideration for evidence, arguments, or the opinions of others, and legitimized by the “authority” of power, prejudice, custom, peer pressure, and so on. Basically, in my own words, dogmatism takes an answer for granted without pondering the question that could have led to that answer or possibly to other answers. Humanism does persistently ask the questions behind the given answers of culture. Of course, this applies also to the answers of humanism itself. They should also be questioned.

Regarding its critical and self-critical character, humanism resembles philosophy. Philosophy is generally understood to mean the systematic study of concepts, premises, and principles underlying people’s primary relationships—that is to say people’s relationships to themselves, to others, and to the world around them. More specifically, philosophy includes the systematic study of the practices of science and has an integrative duty toward them. Like humanism, philosophy operates as a critical tradition that reassesses, reinterprets, and rejuvenates the thinking of earlier philosophers in response to cultural, social, and scientific developments. For example, today’s philosophy is reviving Descartes’ early-seventeenth-century dualism, which despite many twentieth-century refutations is very much alive (p. 711) thanks to current neuroscience. Brain research poses a fundamental challenge for both humanism and philosophy of the twenty-first century. Although humanism (as an intellectual and artistic tradition) and philosophy (as a systematic academic discipline) cannot be equated, there is a key parallel between humanism and philosophy in their performance as critical, self-renewing traditions. Both are interpretative. Both are forward-looking precisely because they are traditional, in the sense that they pass on something valuable to the culture in which they operate. Humanism transfers valuable

knowledge by critically reviving earlier humanisms with an eye to safeguarding humaneness in the twenty-first century. Depending on time and context, humanists consistently articulate, explore, and call attention to the values that constitute humaneness. But humanists also personify and demonstrate those values. The way that the humanist tradition can be articulated through exemplars who personify and demonstrate these values is discussed in the third section.

Humanism and philosophy resemble each other not only by operating as traditions but also by offering their antidogmatic incentives. Dogmatism is the natural enemy of both philosophy and humanism. Therefore, both are per se self-critical. Philosophy not only questions social and natural reality but itself as well. Indeed, a feature distinctive to philosophical questions is the way that the question is itself part of the question. A philosophical question, directed at any domain of reality, always also asks about whether this the best possible question to acquire what we want to know, what kind of answers come into view by this question, and which possible answers are thereby excluded. For instance, the seemingly obvious question, "what is …?," usually taken as the primary and most fundamental question to be asked, is actually directed at fixed essences. The world opened up by a "what is?" question consists of "things with properties," including humans as special things with special capacities, such as reason. This limited ontology can be circumvented by asking the meta-question: Is that "what is" question the best possible question to be asked about human life, values, history, tradition, as so forth? Not asking this meta-question would be dogmatic because, precisely as a consequence of not asking, it takes one (customary) answer to this meta-question for granted: the answer that "what is?" is the best question. Philosophy and humanism share their antidogmatic spirit and conduct. Related to their antidogmatism, they also share their hermeneutic character. We have seen already the hermeneutic character of humanism's critical stance toward culture. And among all philosophies, hermeneutical philosophy is particularly alert to dogmatism. I will come back to this in the third section.

Having discussed its critical character, we now come to the content of humanism. Our conception of humanism as a critical tradition gives a clue to what it substantively matters. It is for the sake of humaneness that humanism criticizes what falls short of this standard.

Although the concept of humaneness does not lend itself to an unambiguously positive description and its meaning presumably varies through time and across cultures, we still can operationalize it into a concrete understanding. At the University of Humanistic Studies, humaneness is defined in terms of meaning in life and humanization: a humane life is a meaningful life in just circumstances. A meaningful life can be conceptualized as a life in which basic needs for meaning are jointly fulfilled, such as purpose, moral worth, self-worth, competence, comprehensibility, connectedness, and excitement. The humanist way of making meaning is characterized by four core convictions (Derkx 2013):

**1.** The principle that all humans are entitled to human dignity and that, based on this, people should treat each other as equals;

(p. 712) **2.** The belief that all religious and worldview orientations in knowledge and deed are context-sensitive constructs—even if those orientations themselves do not acknowledge this—and are as such hermeneutically accessible products of culture;
**3.** The responsibility of people to use their freedom to develop themselves in relation to others (*Bildung*) and to seriously engage in caring for themselves and others, as well as for nature and the environment, and in so doing develop their personal abilities and talents; and
**4.** The belief that life is ultimately all about the fate of specific, unique, physically and mentally vulnerable, and irreplaceable people, who can love and be loved and are trying to find meaning in life.

From these basic principles we can better understand how humanist traditions are focused on humanity or humaneness. This focus is developed and motivated by certain values that make up the building blocks of humanist tradition. Humanism stands for values such as liberty (understood as autonomy and resilience), responsibility (understood as the duty to care, for which one is answerable), justice (understood as upholding institutions and arrangements that protect people from exploitation and humiliation), solidarity (understood as spiritual and material care for one another), pluralism (understood as the right to individual and group identity), art of living (understood as refined moral conduct toward oneself and others), and sustainability (understood as long-term care for the inhabitability of the planet). Taken together these values lay down the road map, so to speak, to humaneness.

Based on these (operationalized) values, humanism holds an open worldview, a stance of critical thinking, and the virtues of self-reflection and dialogue—acknowledging and promoting the autonomous and responsible role of humans in shaping their lives. While humanism has its own views on humaneness, it claims no monopoly on it. Humanism's critical stance implies that humaneness is continually rediscovered, reassessed, and defended in a dialogue with other domains of culture: literature, arts, philosophy, worldviews, and religions.

A beautiful example of a humanist tradition that demonstrates all the features and values just mentioned is the essay tradition in—and, in a way, between—literature and philosophy. Since the Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne, the essay has become a genre exercised and practiced by many authors from different countries. In the Netherlands, for example, Multatuli (1820–1887) and Rudy Kousbroek (1929–2010) sustained a humanistic essay tradition since Montaigne. While the humanist tradition has no holy books of its own, the essay can be considered a typical humanistic genre. Although there is not one essential quality to define the essay, the genre can be circumscribed by a "family resemblance" of qualities: critical, open argumentative, truth-seeking, examining, creative, morally interested, challenging boundaries, more narrative than systematically reasoning, concrete and detail-oriented, and, most of all, exemplifying a specific style such as ironic, humorous, self-mocking, polemic, or persuasive.

The example of this humanistic essay tradition shows how the idea of a “humanist tradition,” while indicating the humanist tradition since the Renaissance (or since Antiquity), basically refers to a variety of smaller-scale traditions, which in the end may cohere in a greater or in *the* great humanist tradition.

## (p. 713) The Humanist Tradition Embodied in Exemplary Figures

The hermeneutical character of the humanist tradition has been mentioned. Passing on ideas, meanings, and values from cultural sources to present-day contexts is hermeneutical work, as the hermeneutical philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) has shown. This section explains the concept of hermeneutics before moving on to the exemplary figures in humanist traditions.

The term “hermeneutics” refers to both the art and the theory of interpretation. Hermeneutics originated in Antiquity; in its classical sense it is particularly concerned with religious and legal texts (the name “hermeneutics” derives from Hermes, the messenger between the gods and humans). Interpretation in relation to tradition means that what is taken from the source should be translated from the source’s context to the present-day context of the interpreter. The source can be anything—a work of art, a book, a story, or a life narrative—but the model of hermeneutical interpretation is the interpretation of a text. Hermeneutical interpretation is directed at “the meaning of the text,” which is usually not obvious but partly clear and partly hidden. The interpretation proceeds by negotiating meanings between interpreter and text. Negotiating meanings can be imagined as being moving backwards and forwards between debating readers and texts in the process of reconstructing meaning, in what Gadamer (1989) labels the “hermeneutic circle,” involving a flux of hypothesis-forming, testing, adjusting, and testing once again. The meanings that then materialize are not purely objective, as if all we had to do was simply dig them out of the text, but they are not merely subjective either, as if the reader/interpreter can extrapolate the meaning from the text to suit oneself (this is not a process of simply seeing in a text only what is already in the reader’s mind). The meaning is the result of interaction and debate between readers and text. Not only is the interpretation itself a matter of moving between contexts, as we stated already, but obviously the interpretative process as such also always happens in given contexts: in historical-cultural, economic, and political contexts and in the context of ongoing debates. Moreover, a hermeneutic reader has a vested interest in the meaning he or she wants to negotiate. Equally, in the classical hermeneutics of authoritative religious scriptures and legal texts, great importance is attached to knowing what the gods meant or what the law prescribes. This important aim demands honesty and respect for the text. A hermeneutic interpreter cannot just change or ignore parts of the text without good reason.

This brief introduction to hermeneutics helps us to understand the way humanist tradition works, including our own relation to it, as we humanists are involved with it. Hermeneutical interpretation is not just the way that the humanist tradition works; it is

also the way we relate to it. To explain our relation to humanist tradition, I now focus on the role of exemplary figures in humanist traditions. One significant way in which ideas, values, and meanings are passed on in humanist traditions is through exemplary figures who embody, demonstrate, and "live" these values, meanings, and ideas.

Unlike most worldviews (such as Christianity, Judaism, or Buddhism), humanism seems to underestimate the importance of its exemplars, among whom we may list Socrates, Erasmus (and other Renaissance humanists), Voltaire, Mary Wollstonecraft, Immanuel (p. 714) Kant, George Eliot (pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans), Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Nelson Mandela. Speaking generally of exemplary figures we might perhaps first think of moral heroes such as Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela, who inspire us to be brave, courageous, generous, and the like. However, humanist models do not have to be such well-known figures. We have all experienced coping with a bewildering situation by following the example of a wise friend or have been moved by someone's authentic behavior. These are not at all unusual experiences. Everyone who has at some time in his or her life had to make a fundamental decision, and has had to bear a loss or has had to overcome opposition, knows the power of an inspiring model. In these everyday-life situations, we can get ahead, find strength, or even surpass ourselves by being inspired by exemplary friendship, exemplary conduct after a loss, or exemplary authenticity.

To grasp the hermeneutical character of being inspired by exemplars, both the "great" and "smaller" figures, it is best to distinguish this kind of inspiration from mere imitation. Imitation is part of human nature. As such, imitation is not good or bad per se. In our present-day culture that highly values authenticity, imitation is held in disrepute. On the other hand, without our capacity to imitate, we could not learn anything at all, from walking and speaking to playing the piano and conducting scientific research. However, according to the so-called mimetic theory of René Girard (1923–2015), imitation is principally dangerous. By imitation or "mimesis," Girard does not refer to the copying or mirroring of someone's gestures or behavior but to the imitation of someone's interested relation to the world, particularly someone's desire. Mimetic desire means desiring something *because* someone else desires it, albeit by being the proud owner of the same thing. Perhaps it is my neighbor's larger car or my colleague's facelift, a new smart-phone app, a fashionable holiday destination, a current opinion, or a refined taste. To me, as a man, a woman becomes attractive because someone else desires her. Our longings, wishes, and aims do not arise in us as individuals but are created, stimulated, and maintained by others aiming to satisfy the very same longings and wishes. The other person functions as a model for our own covetousness, in Girard's view.

This holds for more than desires. Thinking and forming opinions and emotions are equally mimetic. Some views and opinions are desirable, and if you think the same way too, you belong to *us*. Because the model also has a model and so on, the mimetic mechanism is contagious, and because it is contagious it catches on fast and takes on a popular character of its own accord. Thus mimetic theory can explain such phenomena as consumerism, media hypes, and peer pressure. Mimetic contagiousness is demonstrable in every stake-

holder relationship. Thinking, desiring, taking action, attributing meaning, feeling, observing—in short everything that in phenomenology is called intentionality—is mimetically transferred by way of models, according to mimetic theory. I interpret this mimetic contagiousness as a determining influence on one's will.

The dangerous aspect of mimetic desire, according to Girard, is that imitating models, who themselves of course imitate models in their turn, invariably leads to a crisis—and often to violence. For if everyone is after the same things, by definition these desirable things become scarce, and a struggle to own or to have control of them follows. Moreover, according to Girard, a mimetic crisis leads just as invariably to the singling out and banishment of scapegoats who, rightly or wrongly, are blamed for the crisis. The tragic conclusion of mimetic theory is that peace can only be restored through the expelling of a scapegoat. Humanism can offer an answer to this seeming inevitability of mimetic desire.

(p. 715) How can we distinguish between being hermeneutically inspired by an exemplar on the one hand and getting infected by imitation on the other? Although it is a subtle distinction between imitation and inspiration, it is of the greatest importance. The distinction is not between good and bad. Not every inspiring exemplar is as "good" as the moral heroes already mentioned, supposing that we can be sure they are good. Also "bad" figures—ranging from those who appeal to the imagination like top criminals right down to the notorious dictators of world history—are deeply inspiring to their followers and admirers. Inspiration is ambi-valent; it can spur us on to do either good or evil. Conversely, although it may be dangerous, imitation is not necessarily a bad thing in itself, nor necessarily wrong. As we said, without the ability to imitate we would not be able to learn anything at all, and we would not have evolved as far as we have.

In order to understand the difference between the imitation of a model (in the sense meant by Girard) and being inspired by an exemplary figure, we must first approach the model as well as the exemplary figure from the way we relate to them. It makes no sense to distinguish a class comprised of exceptional figures simply according to the fact that they are inspiring. Inspiration is a relational concept and must therefore be understood through the relations between the person doing the inspiring and the person who is inspired. Mimetic infection is also relational in this way.

The relationship with an exemplary figure should be hermeneutic, while the imitative relationship with a model remains hermeneutically deficient. If I become inspired by an exemplary figure, I am attracted by a specific meaning or value that this exemplary figure demonstrates in his or her life or actions. My attention may be drawn to courage, respect, patience, a forgiving disposition, or more specifically the "humanistic values" mentioned earlier, such as autonomy, responsibility, justice, solidarity, pluralism, art of living, and sustainability. The exemplary figures appeal to me because of the way they behave: "to be so courageous, honest, patient, responsible (and so on) is how you should be." However, an exemplary figure always demonstrates such qualities in a specific context. In the case of Nelson Mandela, who emerged as a black African leader during and after the rule of apartheid, his context was very different from that of a prosperous European free citizen

today. Nevertheless, Mandela can still be a very inspiring person for Europeans. Due to the difference in context, however, it is impossible for me as a European to imitate Mandela, so I must make a leap from his context to mine.

In hermeneutics, translating from one context to another is called “application.” Originally, Aristotle formulated a virtue of practical knowledge, *phronèsis*, for the application of what he called ethical virtues (in our terminology, values). This is the practical wisdom that knows whether, and how, to apply a value. Aristotle also emphasized the importance of an exemplary *phronimos*: a wise person who demonstrates virtue and lives virtuously (*Nicomachean Ethics*, book VI). For Gadamer, application is the core of hermeneutics. In his major work *Truth and Method* (1960) he uses the Latin term *applicatio*. I sometimes prefer the term “concretization,” in addition to “application,” as a better translation in order to avoid any misinterpretation. The misinterpretation to guard against is thinking that a preconceived objective value has been applied, whereas in my view a value is never “separately obtainable” but only emerges as a value when applied or concretized as a value, preferably by an exemplary figure. A value only really exists as application. Therefore, the “humanistic values” just mentioned are not exclusively humanistic; they could be Christian, Islamic, and so on as well. They are humanistic in their application—in the way they are operationalized and (p. 716) applied according to the four principles discussed in previous sections. As such, humanism is practical wisdom, *phronèsis*.

Interpreting an inspiring relationship with an exemplary figure as hermeneutic, as I am proposing here, entails in the first place realizing that the inspiring actions or behavior of the exemplary figure is in itself an application or concretization of the value that so appeals to me; even if the exemplary figure does not do this consciously or deliberately. In his actions, Mandela applied courage, and in his behavior he concretized the general value of a forgiving disposition. And this is equally true of the less famous inspirational figures from our own circle of acquaintances. The way they act is also, hermeneutically speaking, an application of a value. What it is now important to remember about the hermeneutic relation to an exemplary figure is that I, as the person being inspired, do not imitate the way the exemplary figure applies a value. Instead, I apply the value in question myself or concretize it in my own context. By performing my own application of the value that I have learned, I show how I am inspired by its application demonstrated by the exemplary figure.

Therein is to be found the difference between imitating a model and interpreting and being inspired by an exemplary figure. As far as the latter is concerned, I perform an application of my own, whereas in the former (the application of another person) I am imitating the model. For it can be said of a model that he or she applies or concretizes a value. It is precisely the interest a model takes in an object (an interest that he or she very probably is imitating from another model) that shows or demonstrates the importance the object holds for the model. Thus it is the model’s application that is contagious. But contagion becomes infection if I forget my own creative capabilities, which allow me to per-

form my own authentic application of the value held up before me. Merely imitating a model is a hermeneutic deficiency.

# Autonomy

The distinction just made shows the important difference between having a heteronomous contagious relation with a model and an autonomous relation to it through one's own authentic application. However, it should be noted that the distinction between a heteronomous and an autonomous relationship to an exemplar or model is not an absolute distinction but a gradual one. Heteronomy comes first. Initially, we are all exposed to what others say, think, express, and determine. What matters is that, in due course, we find our *own responses* to what others say, think, express, and determine, that we gradually grow from heteronomy to autonomy. Our responding means that, more and more, we make our own applications from the applications displayed by others. In doing so, we are supported by humanist traditions providing us with exemplars of autonomous responses to heteronomous circumstances. However, we will never be completely free from heteronomy, because autonomy is never definitively secured. The passage from heteronomy to autonomy is a balance for which we should always struggle. We all start as newborns, totally dependent on others. We all start as heteronomous imitators—that is how we begin to learn anything. With the help of good exemplars, however, we can gain a relative (balanced) and relational (responding) autonomy. Increasing autonomy is a development from heteronomous pressure to resilience against these pressures.

(p. 717) Most important, it is autonomy itself that is acquired through exemplars as it is resiliently displayed by them. Autonomy and authenticity can be truly achieved in actions inspired by model figures. The example of authenticity is interesting because someone's authenticity can be very inspiring, although authenticity by definition cannot be imitated (because it would not then be authentic). Authenticity *must* therefore be interpreted in the light of one's own life.

The hermeneutical approach to inspiration precludes a futile opposition between a "pure" ideal of morally high-principled inspiration (Mandela as a modern saint) and something like a bad, depraved mimetic desire. A hermeneutic approach begins with the recognition that we are also exposed to mimetic contagiousness, popular trends, and group pressure. Relating resiliently to these, we may achieve relative hermeneutic freedom: given the opportunity to make our own interpretation, we create our own application. Doing this is achieving autonomy. If anyone is qualified to endorse this kind of achievement despite the context in which he or she was oppressed and humiliated, it must be Nelson Mandela.

Autonomy in the sense of making one's own application implies a certain amount of freedom. I term this "hermeneutic freedom." Its positive and negative aspects show how we are dealing here with true freedom. If looked at positively, the exemplary figure demonstrates possibilities. By showing courage under the difficult and extremely degrading circumstances in which he was forced to live, Mandela *reminds* us of these possibilities and invites us to be brave in our own situations. The effect of an exemplary figure is liberat-

ing, in the positive sense of making something possible. The possibilities that an exemplary figure opens up are attractive, by showing me “that is how it should be done,” “that really is true friendship,” and “that you too should be so brave, or patient, faithful, honest.” This means that applying this inspiration effectuates a transformation. Due to the influence of an exemplary figure, something in my life changes.

The inspired subject remains negatively free, to a certain extent, by resisting and distancing him or herself from the mimetic pressure released by a model’s application. One is negatively free through occupying one’s own space to think and choose and from the will to obtain and to keep one’s values in the process of application. It is up to me as an acting subject to determine how I apply the courage inspired by an exemplary figure like Mandela. The value “courage” does not in itself prescribe how it should be applied. The link with mimetic theory shows that this room to decide how to act must be permanently negotiated against constant mimetic pressure. The freedom of the *applicatio* is therefore of a limited and relative kind; this is a freedom, in the literal sense of the word, inspired by a hermeneutic relation with an exemplary figure.

Autonomy gained through creatively and hermeneutically relating to the applications performed by models and exemplars is crucial for humanism. The balance between autonomy and heteronomy refers to a different volition. For Kant, the will is the ability to connect individual actions to general principles, be they heteronomous or autonomous. The hermeneutic concept of the will presented here connects values with concrete actions or performance. This connection we understand as *applicatio*. There is the option of either heteronomously applying the imitation of others or autonomously applying it by recognizing the application as such in an exemplar and subsequently searching for our own application. We thereby give it meaning by applying it ourselves, thinking for ourselves, autonomously from our own volition. Humanism is practical wisdom, as explained, a hermeneutics-by-doing.

**(p. 718)** Crucial to humanism is the notion of humanity or humaneness. It is not easy to describe humaneness positively and unanimously; its meaning varies across different periods of history and in different cultures. In a negative sense, however, it is usually obvious when humaneness comes into play. In my view, humiliation is the most devastating opposite of humaneness. Humiliation is a relational concept, and because humans are relational beings, we cannot withdraw from humiliation but have to respond to it—as Mandela did, and many other exemplars have done. Humanism is this positive response to humiliation, for the sake of humaneness. Humiliation is far more everyday business than the extreme examples such as Mandela’s suggest. The humiliation of slavery is evident due to the mimetic contagion of human will. By the term “slavery” we first think of forced labor or serfdom, but even respectable and prosperous citizens can be slaves in a broader sense without knowing it. Seen from the perspective of the will, the will of the slave is the will of the master: the slave wants what the master wants. In mimetic theory this master is the Girardian model: the slave imitates the will of his model. And because the model itself also imitates a model, and that model imitates another and so on, they form a herd;

and so we form a herd. A slave wants what “they” want, what we all want. In hermeneutical terms, slavery is the situation of imitating each other’s applications.

If there is one main characteristic of humanism, it is the fight against slavery—the physical slavery dealt with by human rights and any mental slavery of the will as well. To combat this, humanism has for a long time defended the individual autonomy of the self. This is understandable, but it is not enough. Not only has this autonomy been partly responsible for leading us toward a culture of self-directedness and self-overestimation, but also it has failed in particular to comprehend the susceptibility of the autonomous self to heteronomous mimesis. Today, humanism must defend relational autonomy. Autonomy must be relational, because heteronomy, slavery, and humiliation are also relational. We can achieve and defend relational autonomy by growing a hermeneutics-driven relational resilience to heteronomous pressure and violence.

# Conclusion

Humiliation can be understood as the underlying theme supporting human rights. It is no coincidence that humanism is strongly committed to the furthering and observance of human rights. Basic rights are often seen as a secular moral charter. In the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948, human dignity is brought forward as the crucial basis of all human rights, including so-called social-economic rights. (So far as all human rights are included, I would say that human dignity equals humaneness.) By inference, it could be defended that all human rights are about preventing humans from humiliation, despite the fact that only one of the articles explicitly mentions humiliation (Article 5, which concerns the treatment of prisoners).

In a way, that is also true for the oldest (nonsecular) moral charter of Western culture, the Ten Commandments of the Bible. Although none of the ten explicitly forbids humiliation, the commandments taken together can be taken as preventing humiliation. For example, if one steals from someone, seduces his or her spouse, or kills someone, one has disrespected that person’s dignity and humaneness. That illustrates how a nonsecular source, such as the (p. 719) Ten Commandments, can be interpreted hermeneutically and humanistically passed on to future generations. For the sake of humaneness, that is what humanism is all about.

## Bibliography

Abû-Zayd, N. 2011. “Rethinking the Qur’ân: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics.” *Journal of the Dutch-Flemish Levinas Society* 16, 110–156.

Aristotle. 1982. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Aronson, R. 2008. *Living Without God: New Directions for Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and the Undecided*. Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint.

Buitenweg, R. 2007. *Human Rights, Human Plights in a Global Village*. Atlanta, Ga: Clarity Press.

Cooke, B. 2013. “Can We Afford To Be ‘Post-Secular’?” *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 21(1), 93–103.

Copson, A., and A. C. Grayling (eds.). 2015. *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dawkins, R. 2006. *The God Delusion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Derkx, P. 2013. “Humanism as a Meaning Frame.” In *What Is Humanism and Why Does It Matter?*, edited by A. B. Pinn, 42–57. Durham, U.K: Acumen.

de Waal, F. 2009. *The Age of Empathy: Nature’s Lessons for a Kinder Society*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Duyndam, J. 2012. “Humanism, Resilience, and the Hermeneutics of Exemplary Figures.” *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* 20(2), 3–17.

Duyndam, J. 2013. “Hermeneutical Mimesis.” In *René Girard and Creative Mimesis,* edited by Vern Neufeld Redekop and Thomas Ryba, 249–258. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield,.

Duyndam, J. 2015. “Girard and Heidegger: Mimesis, Mitsein, Addiction.” *The European Legacy* 20(1), 56–64.

Erasmus, D. 2004. *Lof der zotheid* (*In Praise of Folly*). Amsterdam: Athenaeum-Polak & Van Gennep.

Fromm, E. 1947. *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. New York: Rinehart.

Gadamer, H.-G. 1989. *Truth and Method*. Translated by J Weinsheimer and D. Marshall. London: Sheed & Ward.

Girard, R. 1986. *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Girard, R. 2008. *Mimesis and Theory: Essays on Literature and Criticism, 1953–2005*. Edited by Robert Doran. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

IJsseling, S. 1997. *Mimesis: On Appearing and Being*. Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos.

Israel, J. 2001. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kant, I. 2002. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Translated by A. Zweig. Edited by T. Hill Jr. and A. Zweig. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levinas, E. 2003. *Humanism of the Other*. Translated by Nidra Poller. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Montaigne, M. 1991. *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*. Translated by M. Screech. New York: Penguin.

Nussbaum, M. 1997. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Pico della Mirandola, G. 2008. *Rede over de menselijke waardigheid (On Human Dignity).* Translated by Michiel op de Coul. Groningen, The Netherlands: Historische Uitgeverij.

(p. 720) Pinn, A. (ed.). 2013. *What Is Humanism and Why Does It Matter?* Durham, U.K.: Acumen.

Sen, A. 2009. *The Idea of Justice*. London: Penguin.

Stengel, R. 2010. *Mandela's Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love, and Courage*. New York: Crown.

Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Todorov, T. 2002. *Imperfect Garden. The Legacy of Humanism*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

van Praag, J. P. 1982. *Foundations of Humanism*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.

Zimbardo, P. 2008. *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House.

**Joachim Duyndam**

Joachim Duyndam is Professor of Humanism and Philosophy at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, The Netherlands. He chairs the university's research program on Humanist Traditions, Meaning in Life, and Aging Well. His publications are, from humanistic and philosophical perspectives, on themes such as mimesis, empathy, resilience, and humanistic values.

# Secularization, Biomedical Technology, and Life Extension

Brian S. Turner

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion, Religion and Society
Online Publication Date: Jan 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199988457.013.44

## Abstract and Keywords

This chapter is concerned with the contemporary impact of the biomedical sciences on life expectancy and how the so-called life-extension project. A promise of more or less indefinite human survival or the end of aging represents a critical challenge, not just to religious assumptions about life, aging and death but to traditional moral assumptions about the just distribution of resources in society. Medical consumption is simply a subset of general consumption, and the idea of living forever is central to modern secular lifestyles. The tensions between religion and medicine, and therefore the nature of "medical secularization," can be understood by recognizing that many critical problems for the Christian churches in modernity are raised by questions about the changing status of the human body. As modern societies are driven by technological and scientific advances, the choices that confront humans fall broadly into two camps, namely posthumanism and transhumanism.

Keywords: secularization, medicine, ethics, life-extension, Christianity, modernity, posthumanism, transhumanism

THE historical relationships between medicine and religion, specifically in the Western Christian tradition, have been close but also unstable and uneasy. Medical and religious practices are in a broad sense concerned with the health and well-being of persons, especially the sick and vulnerable. The secularization of medicine is obscuring ethical questions. Why should we enjoy longer lives? What could be the justification for living forever? The goal of merely surviving, meaningless in itself, has replaced living a life of virtue and significance. Science cannot answer these concerns since it can only deal with means, not ends.

## To Save the Soul and Salve the Body

In the New Testament, a prominent feature of the ministry of Jesus was to bring healing to the poor and needy and, above all, to give humanity life in all its abundance (Davies 1995). The jibe against Jesus that he could not heal himself can be taken as an indirect

reference to his healing ministry to the sick and disabled among his followers. Nevertheless, the relationship between the medical arts that were aimed to salve the body and religious practices to salve the soul point to an ambiguous and shifting border between the secular and the religious. For instance, insofar as the early followers of Jesus understood the Gospel as a message about the Coming Kingdom and saw Jesus in a messianic role, then the things of this world—health and wealth—were of little importance. Only after the Christian churches had acquired a more permanent fixture in the ancient world that the complex relationships between Christian groups and secular society required greater clarity and definition, as can be found in Pauline theology. It was St. Augustine of Hippo (254–430 CE) who eventually provided a theological solution in the doctrine of the two cities. Christians had to live as good citizens of Rome while being members of a far superior kingdom in a future life.

The secular aspects of classical philosophy and medicine continued into the Christian era. Yet the idea of the good life or "flourishing" (*eudaimonia*) in the ancient world was never (p. 722) entirely compatible with New Testament theology. Medieval medical doctrines and practices were largely the legacy of a secular Aristotelian tradition that went back to Galen, whose anatomical maps of the human body remained dominant. Because the Church favored the theoretical legacy of Galen and opposed empirical medicine and anatomical procedures on the human body, experimental medical science was slow to develop.

One ongoing difference between secular and religious notions of the natural world is illustrated by theories about miracles over past centuries. In the New Testament, narratives underpinning the authority of Jesus associated healing the sick with miraculous powers rather than with methodical and ordinary medical interventions. Evidence of miracles played an important role in the Catholic Church as a criterion for the recognition of a saint. Changing attitudes to miracles and the miraculous are a significant part of the history of Western secularization. I quote a lengthy passage from Paolo Parigi's *The Rationalization of Miracles*, which brilliantly captures the division between natural and supernatural explanations of phenomena:

> The legal category of a false miracle was the basis for the Devil's Advocate's authority. … By establishing the possibility of a false miracle, that is of something that medicine could not explain but was nevertheless not a miracle, the Church claimed for itself the control of the boundaries of the supernatural, leaving the explanation of the natural world to medicine and to science more broadly. False miracles … were a key aspect of the process of the rationalization of miracles. (2012: 110)

Miracles and sainthood have played an important function in popular religion. They only became an ecclesiastical and political issue with the modernization of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, in its contest with popular religion, Catholicism in southern Italy developed criteria and tests for miraculous events that were especially stringent. For example, the intense efforts to demonstrate that the miraculous stigmata of Padre Pio were

a sham involved extensive medical and psychiatric investigations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the positivist criminology of Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) promoted the idea of “degenerative stigmata” that was found in the criminal, the unbalanced, the genius, and the saint. In addition, following from the work of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893), the theory of suggestion was influential in arguing that nervous disorders led to hysteria and imitations of hysterical conditions produced mystical experiences. Catholic modernism required the use of science to question those aspects of faith that still required relics, saints, and miracles in healing the poor and downtrodden (Luzzatto 2010).

There were several significant turning points in this complicated history between religious knowledge and secular medical practices. Through much of Western history, divinity and medicine were housed within the universities, which were essentially ecclesiastical institutions. One turning point in the division between medicine and religion can be identified with the philosophy of René Descartes (1596–1650) who is often seen to be a founder of Western empirical science. The idea of the Cartesian division between mind and body provided one clear justification for experimental science and contributed to the overthrow of the Aristotelian legacy and the decline of speculative thought that had characterized medieval teaching.

The division between theology and medicine was intensified by eighteenth-century developments in medicine that followed in the wake of the scientific revolution of Isaac Newton (1642–1727). Newtonian philosophy depicted nature as a system created by God, but subsequently natural phenomena ran according to immutable laws. God was the divine (p. 723) mechanic of a unified cosmological system; once the system was in motion, God became its passive observer. In medicine one can see the influence of this mechanical worldview in the rise of iatro-medical theory in the work of George Cheyne (1671–1743) who conceptualized the body as a system of fluids that could be regulated by diet (Turner 2008: 145). The Enlightenment further divided religion from science and, as we shall see in the discussion of the project of human longevity, figures like the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) saw scientific medicine contributing to human health and happiness outside the framework of traditional Christianity and beyond the control of the Church. Similarly, Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was the great champion of Enlightenment thought and the general editor of the *Encyclopedia* (1747–1773). In developing a materialist epistemology and evolutionary theory of development, he recognized the centrality of the body and sexuality to human behavior, and in his interest in the role of pleasure in human life he attacked the tradition of Christian asceticism (Goodden 2001). In the novel *La Religieuse* Diderot (1760), on the basis of his medical theories of the body, criticized the unnatural life of nuns and their sensual deprivation to explain their mystical experiences and their lesbian tendencies as a result of their seclusion. Unsurprisingly, he favored the modernization of medicine as a practical art for healing the human body and criticized such traditional practices as bleeding and purgation. Bleeding had been an invariable component of medical practice even among medical reformers of the seventeenth century such as the court physician Theodore de Mayerne (1573–1655) who was famous for his “chemical

medicine" (the *pharmacopeia*), which also broke with the speculative legacy of Aristotle (Trevor-Roper 2006).

It is important, however, not to overstate the distance between Christianity and the Enlightenment. Diarmaid MacCulloch (2010: 795) argues that the assumptions of the Enlightenment were derived from the Judaeo-Christian tradition and that after the Reformation, Protestantism and Enlightenment "constantly interacted and tangled." He cites the ideas of John Wesley as an example. Wesley was influenced by Cheyne's *Essay of Health and Long Life* (1724), which he recommended to his mother as a practical guide to health (Turner 2009: 57). This entanglement between Wesleyan religiosity and Cheyne's practical advice for good health took place because of the affinity between Methodist piety and Cheyne's advice about diet. Diet, or *diatia*, signifies a "government of the body" or a "mode of living," and hence Christian asceticism was in many respects compatible with diet as a medical regime. However, my argument would be that this "tangle" was the beginning of a secularization of diet in which private lives came ever more under the scrutiny of health professionals in the service of the state to create a disciplined workforce through reformed standards of hygiene, clean water, vaccination, domestic science, and mother-craft. In short, what MacCulloch calls a tangle between the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the Reformation of European Christianity slowly unfolds into secular forms of what Michel Foucault (2000) called "governmentality" which in health terms meant a secular medical management of the body.

Dominant forms of knowledge often change with the rise and fall of particular institutions. One aspect of Western secularization has been the transformation of the university. The reform of the university system owed a great deal to the influence of Alexander von Humbolt (1769–1859) who promoted experimental science and to Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) who played a major part in the modernization of German universities as secular places of learning. Consequently, the modern medical curriculum was founded on experimental bench-sciences such as chemistry, biology, and physics. The professionalization of (p. 724) medicine and the monopoly over medical knowledge that was associated with the rise of the modern university created a strict division of labor within medical practice that left little or no room for ministers of religion (Brosnan and Turner 2009). By the late nineteenth century, the new challenge to the dominance of religious explanations of nature came in the form of Darwinian evolutionary theory (Evans and Evans 2010). I return to the modern issue of intelligent design and evolutionary thought later.

One can therefore imagine a linear and teleological development in which medicine and religion are progressively separated into functionally different spheres of society, whereby in the long run secular medicine became the dominant partner, eventually gaining a legal monopoly over the care of patients while also dominating universities through their teaching hospitals. History, of course, is never quite that simple. Against the legacy of the Hippocratic Oath as the moral foundation of medical practice, theologians have often struggled against the apparent overlap or compatibility between the Oath and natural theology. Karl Barth (1886–1968), the most influential conservative theologian of the twentieth century, sought to ground theological authority in what is revealed rather than

in what is natural. For Barth, the divine command to respect life also included the will to be healthy. Generally speaking, Barthian ethics ruled out any compromise over abortion, euthanasia, or fertilization outside of wedlock, but it also implied that there was no moral obligation arising out of Hippocrates. Similar positions were also taken by other ministers such as Oral Roberts (Veatch 2012). Indeed, there is some agreement between philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel that there are no convincing moral traditions available that can adequately cope with modern scientific and medical developments in providing unambiguous answers let alone secure codes of behavior. Sandel (2007) has led the charge with his critical questioning of the pursuit of perfection in which genetics may radically transform human beings but at the cost of essential human characteristics. The quest for perfection may open a Pandora's Box of ethical problems for which we are ill-prepared.

One additional problem with medical ethical codes, whether religious or secular, is the gap between ethical prescription and medical practice. This issue can be illustrated by the conflict between sanctity of life and quality of life arguments. As Peter Singer (1979) points out in his *Practical Ethics*, while President Ronald Reagan might vigorously defend sanctity of life arguments from a religious perspective, medical professionals are more likely to make (in fact have to make) practical decisions on the basis of quality of life arguments. It is not self-evident that religious codes of medical ethics are or can be readily practiced in hospitals at the ward level and at the operating table where more mundane and urgent issues are prominent in medical decision-making about immediate survival. Long-term judgements about competing needs, for example between children and elderly patients, will be taken in a context of scarcity and what I have elsewhere called "moral queues" of pressing need (Turner 2004).

While Christianity has been significantly confronted by developments in the natural sciences since the second half of the nineteenth century from Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* in 1859 (2009) and even more so with *The Descent of Man* in 1871 (2004), I argue that the real crisis for Christian belief occurred with more recent developments in the interface between biology, biomedical technology, computing, and information sciences in the late twentieth century and with the attendant promise of, in principle, living forever (the utopian version of the longevity project). There is of course an ongoing dispute about whether science is a challenge to religion, given that they operate in different terrains, with different (p. 725) logics and within different institutional settings. There is sociological research that suggests that applied science such as engineering rather than theoretical physics may be more compatible with religious belief, but even applied scientists may transform religious belief to their pragmatic orientation to life (Cimino 2014).

To understand the challenge, we need to take an historical view of medicine (in this case gerontology) and religion (the Christian churches in the West). By taking this historical perspective, we can better perceive why the debate with Darwinian evolutionary theory is still current and why arguments about intelligent design versus blind evolution are part of this more extensive debate about the survival of human beings into deep old age with the promise of being free from the characteristic diseases and problems that attend ag-

ing, namely cancer, strokes, and heart attacks (Fuller 2007). From a theological perspective, the life extension project is challenging because it raises the prospect of radical social change leading to either posthumanism or transhumanism, both of which ultimately bring into question the ontological status of human beings.

While Darwinism presented a major challenge to the underlying assumptions of the Old Testament view of creation, in many respects the issues thrown up by modern biomedical science present an even greater challenge to traditional views of humanity that are grounded in the legacy of Christian thought. One might plausibly argue that Christianity can shake off the intellectual threat of Darwinism precisely because Christianity is not a nature religion. Obviously, fundamentalist Christians are committed to biblical inerrancy and hence to the biblical account of the creation of the universe in seven days. However, while we might regard Daoism as a nature religion, Christianity is largely remote from any notion of the sacredness of natural objects such as mountains, rivers, estuaries, and so forth. Through the New Testament narrative, Christianity is committed to a notion of "holy history" (*heilsgeschichte*) rather than to holy places. In short, the Old Testament is possibly more challenged by natural science than the New Testament. To what extent does the biblical account of Adam and Eve provide an understanding of human ontology that is even vaguely plausible in modern science? One could also plausibly argue that modern Christianity could follow Marcion of Synope in rejecting the Old Testament as incompatible with the religion of Jesus, thereby jettisoning the arcane account of mankind's creation. Furthermore, modern theology could follow Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) in constructing a radically demythologized version of Christianity to cope more effectively with secular thought.

While Christianity can, via Bultmann and others, jettison mythology and cosmology, modern biomedical sciences pose deeper threats and problems that are more difficult to resolve. Can Christianity come to terms with posthumanism and still hang on to any shred of theological orthodoxy? How would cyborgs and other hybrids fit into the Christian worldview? Whatever the final answer to such questions, it is self-evident that contemporary developments in human demography and gerontology such as suboptimal total fertility rates and the greying of human populations, combined with new biomedical technologies associated with nanotechnology, are radically changing human societies and ultimately promising to change the human species. These developments in gerontology, which for convenience I refer to with the umbrella phrase "the longevity project," entail a radical development in secularization.

This chapter does not engage directly with the somewhat endless debate about the meaning of "secularization." I am not entirely persuaded by those sociologists who believe that the whole secularization thesis from Bryan Wilson onward has to be overthrown, and I am (p. 726) sympathetic to Steve Bruce's argument that a direct clash between religion and science is not the issue. More important is the fact that "Science and technology have not made us atheists but the underlying rationality and the subtle encouragement to self-aggrandizement make us less likely than our forebears to entertain the notion of a divine force external to ourselves" (Bruce 2010: 135). For the sake of argument here, I shall, fol-

lowing Max Weber, define medical secularization as the rationalization process whereby human health and healing are defined in secular terms (by reference to germs, viruses, and so forth) and where medical institutions (professional medical services and institutions) acquire a legal monopoly over the management of life and death. This monopoly can occasionally be challenged, for example, by alternative medicine, by homeopathy, or by Chinese healing techniques. There is some evidence that religious perspectives on human healing find alternative holistic medicine or homeopathic traditions more attractive than secular allopathic approaches (Brown 2013). However, professional medicine has been largely successful in retaining its dominance by discrediting alternative traditions, seeking legal protection from competition, or co-opting such alternatives as supplementary contributions primarily in the care of the chronically sick. In discussing these issues, we also need to take into account that contemporary developments in the intersection between biology, information sciences, and computing technologies is also revolutionizing science to such an extent that the idea of "medicine" may itself become archaic. The disciplinary divisions in the conventional medical curriculum make little sense in the new environment.

The modern development of what we might call "bioinformatics" is not just a threat to orthodox theology; these new developments in natural science are also beginning to have a profound impact on the social sciences. As Victoria Pitts-Taylor (2012) points out, while the concept of "embodiment," which has figured largely in the recent development of the sociology of the body, may resolve the mind–body dichotomy into post-Cartesian embodied practices, it fails ultimately to address questions about the status of the brain. Consequently, sociologists cannot afford to neglect "neurosociology," which comprehends the human brain in social terms and rethinks the idea of sociality from the perspective of brain sciences. New developments in genetics, neuroscience, informatics, and the biological sciences threaten to bypass sociology as the social is dissolved into or at least interpreted as a system of neurons. The growth of neuroscience promises to explain the concerns of classical sociology with "social pathology"—suicide, crime and deviance, violence and civil conflict—with precise scientific accuracy and objectivity. One possible outcome is that "the dyke between nature and culture has been breached, and all of what anthropologists call culture has drained through the hole and dissolved into the realm of neural networks" (Martin 2000: 56). In short, the social sciences need to engage with the biological sciences, and hence my argument here is that any sociological account of modern secularization also needs to consider how the new biomedical sciences will transform life and hence rewrite the script of religion.

This chapter takes a critical view of the future of religion as the outcome of the unintended consequences of biomedical sciences on society and hence on religious belief and practice. I regard them as "unintended" since these scientific developments were not designed to undermine religion; rather their effect is indirect. It is the slow reimagining of the human body and its future that raises the possibility of a new form of existence or, rather, in the plural of various forms of life. This development is also unstoppable. There is large-scale global investment in the full range of biomedical technologies and associated fields, and these developments now represent a significant proportion of economic ac-

tivity. Religious (p. 727) and ethical criticisms of the longevity project are unlikely to have any serious impact on the regulation of the corporations currently investing in nanotechnology, cryonics, neuroscience, and pharmacology. For this reason, it may be that modern philosophical debates on the enhancement of life and genetic engineering by Michael Sandel and others will have little impact on the actual practice of science with the backing of funding from global pharmaceutical corporations. One recent example might be the development of Gilead's drug for the treatment of hepatitis C. The drug Harvoni, which has replaced Solvadi, is made by Gilead Sciences and has a cure rate between 94 and 99 percent. Coming onto the market in October 2014, a twelve-week treatment cost $94,500. In short, the profits from the enhancement of life are a powerful incentive for research and investment for companies and fame and recognition for scientists. These material rewards may thus outweigh any ethical objections to the quest for human perfection.

The implicit understanding of ontology underpinning the Christian creed cannot survive these continuing medical and technological developments. The pastoral imagery of the New Testament—the Lamb of God and the Sheep that are his Church—does not resonate with an urban industrial society. The ontological assumptions surrounding the body in Christianity—its vulnerability, its weakness, its needs and uncontrollable desires, its reproductive processes, and its ultimate aging and demise—are challenged. As of writing this passage in late 2014, a woman in Sweden has given birth with the benefit of a transplanted womb. Is this a first step toward reproduction outside the body as the logical conclusion of reproductive medicine? The inconvenience and health risks of reproduction could be eventually bypassed.

At a more practical level in terms of the pastoral mission of the churches, I do not, for example, see much future for chaplains in modern medical institutions. This view is not necessarily shared in the sociology of religion. In a recent study of "religion in the halls of medicine," Wendy Cadge (2012) explored the many ways in which spirituality finds a place in the hospital as the citadel of modern medical science and technology. Although her research painted a generally positive picture of religion in hospitals, she asked a number of pertinent questions in her conclusion. The first questioned the authority by which chaplains work in hospitals with patients and staff from diverse religious traditions or from no religious tradition. Second, chaplains are increasingly asked to provide evidence to measure the effects of their activities in hospitals, and this raises another consideration about whether their work can be translated into the secular, evidence-based care of a modern hospital. What outcomes are central to their work? These questions about effectiveness and its measurement imply that there is a routinization of healing taking place in the practice of the modern chaplain. Healing, for example, by the laying on of hands was not traditionally measured by the norms of evidence-based medicine. These developments raise questions about the miraculous power of healing that was traditionally associated with the saints of the Catholic Church.

# The Law, the Body, and Religion

We can understand the tensions between religion and medicine, and therefore the nature of what we might call "medical secularization," by recognizing that many critical problems for the Christian churches in modernity are raised by questions about the changing status of (p. 728) the human body. One neglected aspect of the crisis of modern Christian thought has been the result of legal decisions with respect to the human body, especially the female body, that challenge traditional Christian understanding of sex and reproduction. Legal conflicts are in this respect a proxy for more direct confrontations between medicine and religion. Some of these conflicts are long-standing and much discussed. They include the debate about eugenics and stem-cell research, but the really troublesome issues have been to do with sexual identity and reproduction. Religion in the West has become increasingly a "public religion" because the churches have been forced into public debate where many of their cherished assumptions about heterosexual norms have been brought into question (Casanova 1994).

In these public contests over family values, same-sex marriage, and recognition of rights for gay and lesbian communities, the law appears to be provoking and shaping rather than following and supporting public opinion in defending the equal rights of citizens under the US Constitution—namely, defending the rights of a minority (albeit a sizeable, educated, and articulate minority) against majority white Christian opinion (or at least among Christians over the age of thirty-five). Whereas the churches have been historically defenders of the social order, one might, from common sense alone, assume that law and religion are, so to speak, natural partners. However, the legal debate about sexuality disrupts the possibility of any consensual and reasonable defense of divergent positions and does not lead to any general consensus. For many conservative evangelical Christians, the defense of a particular view of sexuality as the foundation of marriage and family in the contest with social movements supporting rights claims regarding homosexuality and abortion cannot be dismantled without fear of dismantling Christianity as such. Heterosexuality has, as it were, become the last line of defense against the secular invasion of society through the medium of the law.

In the United States, the conflicts between the evangelical Christian churches and the law has evolved throughout the twentieth century. The Scopes trial in 1925 established the rule that laws banning the teaching of evolutionary theory were unconstitutional, and the reaction to *Scopes* led to the invention of the term "fundamentalists" to describe Christians who supported creationism against Darwinian evolutionary theory. Racial desegregation following *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 was another blow to the southern evangelical tradition that claimed that racial segregation and white supremacy were supported by Old Testament teaching on master–slave relationships (Finkelman 2003). However, the principal challenge for fundamentalists came eventually with the legalization of abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. By the 1970s, the evangelical agenda had been challenged legally by the prohibition of prayer in public schools, the relaxation of laws on pornography, *Roe v. Wade*, Watergate, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* that desegregated schools, and the Carter administration with its embrace of human rights. The conver-

gence between right-wing secular politics and Christian conservatism can be dated from 1979 that was orchestrated by Jerry Falwell in a series of rallies under the banner “I Love America.” The contemporary crisis around same-sex marriage has in fact a relatively long history of conflict between evangelical Christians, the secular state, and the law (Horowitz 2013).

These legal developments, especially relating to abortion, involve medical opinion and medical intervention, and hence the law has provoked a confrontation with religion and functions as a secularizing force in conjunction with medicine. These legal challenges are rarely settled without protracted legal dispute and social opposition such as the moves to close abortion clinics in Texas on the grounds that they do not conform to the stringent conditions required in general surgical units. However, while these developments have been (p. 729) significant in changing the social and cultural landscape, they are not as significant as the challenge from the prospect of posthuman life. If social acceptance of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgender identities represents a challenge to traditional Christian assumptions about family and marriage, then scientific developments in bioinformatics brings into question the traditional understanding of human ontology.

# The Longevity Project: Transhumanism and Posthumanism

The human desire to live a long and healthy life appears to be universal and indeed may appear to be sufficiently obvious not to require any further iteration. For example, Daoism, a religio-philosophical tradition that had a general and long-term impact on Asian cultures, was a system of beliefs and practices that advocated prolongevity through the development of elixirs, which were widely adopted in the Chinese court (Needham 1970). The prospects for longevity were occasionally canvassed in Western Christian theology, where for example there was much interest in the relationship between the length of life enjoyed by individuals and their spiritual status. Ironically, many Catholic popes lived remarkably short lives, and this fact was often attributed to their deep spiritually, namely that they were too good for this world (Paravinci-Bagliani 2000). Several treaties on diet, health, and longevity such as Luigi Cornaro’s (1475–1566) *Tratto della vita sobria* (1558) and Lenard Lessius’s (1554–1623) in *Hygiasticon or the Right Course of Preserving Life and Health unto Extreme Old Age* can be cited as evidence of a widespread early modern interest in longevity. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) requires special attention as a significant figure in the development of philosophical interest in promoting longevity in terms of his *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *History of Life and Death* (1638). The demand for longevity has been widespread in human history, but modern technology is beginning to turn the demand into a medical reality.

These early contributions to the debate are frequently cited in the historical literature. However, in my view, the scientific understanding of aging and the emergence of the assumption, not only that human life can be extended indefinitely but that we possess the technological knowledge and skills that would make longevity a practical project are

striking developments in modern times. One obvious measure of this development is the actual recognition of gerontology as a science. Gerontology was a relatively late addition to the curriculum of the medical faculty. For example, in *Crossing Frontiers: Gerontology Emerges as a Science*, W. Andrew Achenbaum (1995) argues that, while recognizing these early contributions to the debate, gerontology did not emerge as a science of aging processes in the United States until the early twentieth century. Advances in the theory of aging were stimulated by researchers such as Elie Metchnikoff (1845–1916) who recognized the ways in which aging exposed the human organism to conditions that compromised the immune system; Recognizing that "phagocytes" (or leukocytes or white blood cells in humans) were a defense system against acute infection, his work was an early version of "wear and tear" theories of aging. However, it was not until 1945 that the Gerontology Society of America filed papers for a certificate of incorporation. While developments in the science of aging were important, one significant demographic fact behind the emergence of gerontology was that (p. 730) two-thirds of the improvement in human longevity have taken place since 1900. Senescence as a condition and as an economic problem is essentially a modern development, and hence my argument throughout this chapter is that the secularizing impact of medical and related biomedical sciences and technologies is a late development in the modernization process.

Sociology is itself deeply bound up with the emergence of modern biology and the long-term secularization of Western societies. The founding fathers of sociology, such as Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and Claude Saint-Simon (1760–1825), enjoyed a close engagement with and interest in research in biology. Comte, for example, proposed that it was by modeling itself on the holistic framework of biology that sociology could emerge as a scientific discipline and at the same time contribute to the revolutionary development of human society. However, by the second half of the twentieth century, sociologists had abandoned any serious interest in biology—indeed in the natural sciences as such. Edward Shils (1910–1995), the editor of *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning and Policy* from 1961, was one of the few sociologists to work comfortably on both social and natural science issues (Grosby 2006).

Steve Fuller's general aim is to compel sociologists to think seriously about modern debates in science over evolution, the biological "enhancement" of humanity, and the implications of the "converging technologies" (CT) in nanotechnology, informatics, and biological sciences. Fuller is somewhat unusual in recognizing that theological questions remain resilient despite secularization when it comes to medical interventions into human nature. His basic premise is that any scientific-assisted enhancement of humanity can be understood as fulfilling our collective salvation by bringing creation to its final destiny. The enhancement of life itself can, in his terms, be seen as the ultimate realization of intelligent design. In this stage of our development, "some animals and androids may become eligible for citizenship, while some humans may lose their citizenship, perhaps even the course of their own lifetime" (Fuller 2013: 2). His investigation of CT is relevant to political sociology, because biological enhancement raises urgent issues about environmental management, the future of sovereign states, the role of international law, and the own-

ership of fundamental resources such as water. CT is fundamental to the future of human welfare.

Fuller's publications can be situated in the wider literature on transhumanism. While modern societies are all driven by similar technological and scientific advances, the actual choices that confront us fall broadly into two camps, namely posthumanism and transhumanism. In the first perspective, human existence is only contingently situated in the human body, and thus "the human" is only one among many existing and possible species. Given rapid and dramatic climate change and environmental pollution, the human species, like the dinosaurs, might simply disappear from the face of the earth to be replaced by a species far better suited to polluted oceans such as the jelly fish. The posthuman position, which is famously represented by the influential philosophers Peter Singer, is defined by Fuller as antihumanist, partly because Singer accuses us of "speciesism," namely a prejudice in favor of human existence over other alternative forms of life. The cyborg is the icon of the posthuman imagination, which has no obvious connection with the human world, being both post- and antihuman. A technical definition is the following:

> the core assumption of trans-humanism is that contemporary technology, especially through its enhancing effects, is transforming us in a new form of life, which we cannot predict in details but which we can be sure will be "better than human": to enhance and improve our condition is a fundamental right and a real civic duty.
>
> (Farisco 2013: 1815)

(p. 731) Thus

> *Biological citizenship* concerns the new ways in which we are coming to relate to each other by virtue of possessing overlapping genomes that are subject to common regimes … we are now entering an age in which people will be expected to know, and hence held responsible for, their genetic condition.
>
> (Fuller 2011: 131)

In general, societies with generous welfare systems such as Sweden, Denmark, and Norway produce human beings with enhanced life expectancy who enjoy better health outcomes than societies that have weak welfare systems such as the United States. Radical forms of posthumanism make no assumptions about the long-term dominance or even survival of the human species and envisage a world populated by hybrid creatures whose "sociality" would be radically different from contemporary social forms. While many of these ideas are in the realms of science fiction, modern advances in nanotechnology suggest that radical changes to human life are imminent rather than distant in time.

# The Consequences for Religion

The assumptions behind Fuller's argument are theological. In fact, they are primarily Christian, in that human enhancement is the product of the application of science and technology to the human condition to establish a transformative solution to the Fall of Man from the Old Testament story of the Garden of Eden. Before the Fall of Man, there was no need for human enhancement or prolongevity programs. Consequently, human enhancement is not hubris on a grand scale but rather the actualization of our powers for rational thought and technological invention. These innovations in fact mimic the creative power of divinity. This religious dimension to Fuller's thought is explicit in his discussion of intelligent design versus blind evolution.

His objections to Darwinism hinge on the bleak pessimism of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Darwin did not believe that humans could ever control evolution, and they could not be improved on by using the same techniques that are applied to breeding animals. The evolutionary process remains contingent and uncertain. The only constant in nature is the unstable and disorganized form called "death" (Fuller 2011: 175). The life extension project is a transhumanist project. It claims that, through the application of medical technologies, human life can not only be extended more or less indefinitely, but it can be improved or enhanced. In principle, humans can age without the disease and disability typically associated with aging. In Fuller's theosociological vision, this prolongation of life is consistent with a traditional Christian ethic in which Christ came to Earth to give us life in abundance and in which we are commanded to go forth and multiply.

While Fuller's arguments about intelligent design are plausible, the implications of developments in medical science and technology are far more corrosive of religious belief and practice than he is willing to recognize. In a previous discussion of these issues, I have drawn a distinction between a theology of unhappiness as the underpinning of traditional Christianity and a theology of happiness as the immanent theology of modern times (Turner 2009b). In modern Christianity, even in its evangelical forms, there is relatively (p. 732) little emphasis on life after death and certainly little attention to hell and punishment. In the theology of happiness, Christianity has adjusted to modern consumerism and the connection between conspicuous consumption, status, and personal happiness. There is a well-established literature on the emphasis on the prosperity gospel in the evangelical megachurch (Chaves 2011). However, the association of happiness with consumption is also prevalent in the general population of young people. Christian Smith (2011) in a study of Americans in the age group eighteen to twenty-three found that individual happiness was basically associated with consuming. Medical consumption is simply a subset of general consumption, and the idea of living forever is central to modern secular lifestyles. In the modern world, we do not think of ourselves in terms of a small bird that briefly enters a room through one window only to disappear once more into eternal darkness.

# Conclusion: What Ever Happened to Eudaimonia?

The ethical theories of the ancient world were based on the concept of eudaimonia. In Greek, *eudaimonia* was the ultimate aim of all human actions and can be translated as "the good life" or "human flourishing" or "happiness." For Aristotle, the best way to achieve human happiness was by the exercise and development of virtue. In this ethical system of the good life, virtue is not based on egoism and it is not only the satisfaction of sensual pleasures—although Aristotle recognized the importance of sexual satisfaction for happiness. The goal of human action is living well without excess; Aristotle (2012) in *Nicomachean Ethics* proposed his famous "golden mean." How does this idea relate to aging?

The longevity project can be criticized on many accounts (Dumas and Turner 2007), but one ethical issue is to find an answer to the question: Why *should* we enjoy longer lives? Indeed, what could be the justification for living forever? Whereas Aristotle might say that long life is justified insofar as one acquires greater virtue in order to have a good life, modern medicine makes no claims about the good life, and modern societies have largely abandoned the idea of virtue. By contrast, the biomedical project of longevity either does not ask the question or assumes the answer is obvious, namely that longevity needs no justification because it is good in itself. Who doesn't want to live longer? However, in my *Can We Live Forever?* (Turner 2009a) I claim that the longevity project treats "survival" as equivalent to "living." From a religio-ethical standpoint, surely mere survival has no merit as such and cannot stand in for *eudaimonia*. In a modern society, longevity as survival is taken for granted, and it is enjoyable because medicine promises to keep us biological youthful while we are chronologically aging. One simple example is that for men there is no necessary limit to sexual performance (sexual satisfaction may be a different issue) thanks to the discovery of Viagra.

My argument in this chapter is that the historical outcome of biomedical secularization is that surviving (empty of any meaning) has replaced living (full of virtuous significance), and hence longevity is what Weber bitterly described as the garden of disenchantment, partly because science can only have relevance to means but not to ends. In "Science as a Vocation," Weber observed that whereas Abraham died "tired and satiated with life," modern people in (p. 733) the midst of technological and scientific progress "may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life'" (2009: 140). With biomedical science and CT, we now have endless life but without an end.

## Bibliography

Achenbaum, W. Andrew. 1995. *Crossing Frontiers: Gerontology Emerges as a Science*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Aristotle. 2012. *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated by R. Bartlett and S. Collins. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brosnan, Caragh, and Turner, Bryan S., eds. 2009. *Handbook of the Sociology of Medical Education*. London and New York: Routledge.

Brown, Candy. 2013. *The Healing Gods. Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Christian America.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bruce, Steve. 2010. "Secularization." In *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, edited by B. Turner, 125–140. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cadge, Wendy. 2012. *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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

Chavs, Mark. 2011. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Cimino, Richard. 2014. *Mystical Science and Practical Religion. Muslim, Hindu and Sikh Discourse on Science and Technology.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Darwin, Charles. 1859. *The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Repr. New York: Penguin, 2009.

Darwin, Charles. 1871. *The Descent of Man*. Repr. New York: Penguin, 2004.

Davies, Stevan L. 1995. *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance and the Origins of Christianity*. London: SCM Press.

Dumas, Alex, and Bryan S. Turner. 2007. "The Life-Extension Project: A Sociological Critique." *Health Sociological Review* 16(1), 5–17.

Evans, Michael S., and John H. Evans. 2010. "Arguing against Darwinism: Religion, Science and Public Morality." In *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Bryan S. Turner, 286–308. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Farisco, Michele 2013. "Posthuman Condition." In *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religion*, edited by A. Runehov and L. Oviedo, vol. 3, 1815–1817. Dordrecht: Springer.

Finkelman, Paul. 2003. *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South, A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Foucault, Michel. 2000. "Governmentality." In *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault,* edited by J. D. Faubion, vol. 3, 201–222. London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, Michel. 2004. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978–1979.* New York: Picador.

Fuller, Steve. 2007. *Science vs Religion? Intelligent Design and the Problem of Evolution.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Fuller, Steve. 2011. *Humanity 2.0: What It Means to be Human Past, Present and Future.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

(p. 734) Fuller, Steve. 2013. *Preparing for Life in Humanity 2.0.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goodden, Angelica. 2001. *Diderot and the Body.* Oxford: Legenda.

Horowitz, Robert B. 2013. *America's Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party.* Cambridge, U.K.: Polity.

Klarman, Michael J. 2013. *From the Closet to the Altar: Courts, Backlash and the Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luzzatto, Sergio. 2010. *Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age.* New York: Henry Holt.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. 2011. *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. New York; Penguin.

Martin, Emily. 2000. "Mind–Body Problems." *American Ethnologist* 27(3), 569–590.

Needham, Joseph. 1970. "Elixir Poisoning in Medieval China." In *Clerks and Craftsmen in China and West*, by Joseph Needham, 316–339. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Paravicini-Bagliani, Agostino. 2000. *The Pope's Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pitts-Taylor, Victoria. 2012. "Social Brains, Embodiment and Neuro-Interactionism." In *Routledge Handbook of Body Studies,* edited by Bryan S. Turner, 171–182. London and New York: Routledge.

Sandal, Michael J. 2007. *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Shils, Edward. 2006. *A Fragment of a Sociological Autobiography: A History of My Pursuit of a Few Ideas.* Edited by Steven Grosby. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publications.

Singer, Peter. 1979. *Practical Ethics.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Christian, Karl Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog. 2011. *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 2006. *Europe's Physician: The Various Life Sir Theodore de Mayerne.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Turner, Bryan S. 2004. *The New Medical Sociology*. New York: Norton.

Turner Bryan S. 2007. "Culture, Technologies and Bodies: The Technological Utopia of Living Forever." In *Embodying Sociology: Retrospect, Progress and Progress*, edited by Chris Shilling, 19–36. Oxford: Blackwell.

Turner, Bryan S. 2008. *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.

Turner, Bryan S. 2009a. *Can We Live Forever? A Sociological and Moral Inquiry.* London: Anthem Press.

Turner, Bryan S. 2009b. "Goods not Gods: New Spiritualities, Consumerism and Religious Markets." In *Consumption and Generational Changes: The Rise of Consumer Lifestyles*, edited by Ian Rees Jones, Paul Higgs, and David J. Ekerdt, 37–62. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

Turner, Bryan S. 2011. *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Veatch, Robert M. 2012. *Hippocratic, Religious and Secular Medical Ethics: The Points of Conflict.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Weber, Max. 2009. "Science as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 129–156. London and New York: Routledge.

**Brian S. Turner**

Bryan S. Turner is Presidential Professor of Sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he directs the Committee for the Study of Religion. He is the founding editor of the journals Body & Society, Citizenship Studies, and Journal of Classical Sociology. Recent books include The Religious and the Political: A Comparative Sociology of Religion and Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State.

# Index

The Oxford Handbook of Secularism
*Edited by Phil Zuckerman and John R. Shook*

Print Publication Date: Feb 2017 Subject: Religion Online Publication Date: Jan 2017



# Index

4 U.S.C § 4, 487
9/11. *See* September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
32 U.S. Code § 119, 487
*The 99* (comic book series), 499
Abbot, Francis Ellingwood, 692–95, 699, 702
‘Abd al-Qadir, 198
‘Abduh, Muhammad, 195–96, 508
Abdulhamid II (Ottoman emperor), 161, 168n1
abortion
Barthian ethics and, 724
*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby and,* 471
Christian Right’s opposition to, 62, 80, 493, 728
constitutional protections for, 474–75
contraception and, 475, 492
priority of public reasons and, 273, 278
Rawls on, 135
Republican Party opposition to, 439
secular Americans’ support for right to, 441
Abraham (patriarch of Genesis), 392–95, 397, 732
Abu Zayd, Nasr, 709–10
Accra (Ghana), 204
Acheampong, Ignatius Kutu, 207
Achenbaum, W. Andrew, 729
Act of Toleration (England,1689), 304
Adam and Eve (Book of Genesis), 197, 642, 725
Adams, John, 126
Addo, Nana Akuffo, 208
“Address to Turkish Youth” (Atatürk), 157
*adharma* (absence of moral order), 79
Adler, Felix, 694–95
Affordable Care Act, 475, 492. See also *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*
al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din, 508
Afghanistan, 295, 369, 371

Africa. *See* sub-Saharan Africa; *specific countries*
African Americans
African Americans for Humanism and, 457, 523–24
agency and, 452, 458
agnosticism and, 451, 457–58, 462
atheism and, 450–52, 456–59, 461–63
Black Church and, 439–41, 443, 445, 452–53, 459, 461, 463, 700
black nationalism and, 450
Christianity and, 450–54, 456–57, 459–64
civil rights movement and, 458–60
Democratic Party and, 439, 443–44
discrimination against, 451, 454–56, 482, 595
humanism and, 451–52, 454, 456–59
LGBT population and, 462
nonreligious population and, 440, 457–58, 461–62
prosperity gospel and, 456, 463, 510
Protestantism and, 444, 458
religiosity and, 443, 450–52, 456–61
religious fundamentalism and, 463
Republican Party and, 444
same-sex marriage and, 439
secularism and, 13, 435, 438
slavery and, 451, 463
agency
African Americans and, 452, 458
agent-causal libertarianism and, 631–35
cognitive science of religion and, 661
compatibilism and, 623–27, 630–32, 634
covert nonconstraining control and, 627
determinism and, 624–29, 632
downward causation and, 633
emergent properties and, 632–34
event-causal libertarianism and, 623, 631–32
feminism and, 420, 428
guidance control and, 626
incompatibilism and, 624
morality and, 623–27, 629–31, 635
naturalism and, 606–7
self-forming willings (SFWs) and, 628–31
(p. 736) the supernatural and, 546, 555, 607, 662
torn decisions and, 630–31
aggressive secularism, 307, 312, 359
agnosticism
African Americans and, 451, 457–58, 462
atheism and, 4, 35n4
definition of, 502
divorce and, 537
global expansion of, 8

Holyoake on, 4
humanism and, 706, 710
Huxley as originator of, 690
secularism and, 435, 572
in the United States, 494, 509
Ahab (king of ancient Israel), 394–97
Ahlstrom, Sydney, 580
AIDS, 64, 241
“Ain’t I a Woman?” (Truth), 455–56
Alawites, 165, 193
Albanese, Catherine, 578
Albania, 116
Albigensian Crusade, 300n2
Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 534, 542–43, 583, 611
Alexander, Richard D., 647
Alexander Nevskii Monastery (Saint Petersburg, Russia), 231
Algeria, 43, 144, 147, 375
Ali, Ayaan Hirsi, 7
Ali, Muhammad, 508
Al-Ali, Nadje, 428
Aligarh Muslim University (India), 222
Alito, Samuel, 487, 491, 494
Allen Jr., Norm, 456–57
Alliance Defending Freedom, 490
alloparenting, 639, 645
Al-Qaeda, 324
Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb, 210
Al-Qaeda in Yemen, 72
Alsace-Moselle, 144
Al Shabaab, 210
Altemeyer, Bob, 517, 521
alternative medical systems, 582–83
Altizer, Thomas, 575–76, 693
altruism
definition of, 546
evolutionary theory and, 643–45, 647
game theory and, 644
in-group dynamics and, 659
Mencius on, 683
prosociality and, 14, 541, 546
religiosity and, 541
Ambedkar, Bhimrao Ramji, 214, 218–19, 222, 224
American Atheists organization, 596–98
American Center for Law and Justice, 490
*American Grace* (Putnam and Campbell), 535–36
American Humanist Association (AHA), 7, 486, 559, 689, 698, 701
American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS), 435–37, 440, 442–44
American Revolution, 76, 126, 290, 298, 304

American Secular Union, 93
American Unitarian Association, 692–93
American Values Atlas (AVA), 435–37, 440, 442
the Amish, 63, 469
Ammerman, Nancy, 512
Anabaptists, 90
*Analects,* 674–81, 683–84
analytic atheism, 589, 593, 598
ancestor worship, 238, 499
Anderson, Benedict, 78, 82–83
Andorra, 108, 116
Anglican Church. *See* Church of England
Angola, 112
animal kingdom, 638–46, 652
Anti-Discrimination Support Network, 529
Anwar, Zainah, 429
apatheism, 589, 591–93, 598
apostasy doctrines, 613
Aquinas, Thomas, 292–93
Arab Spring uprisings (2011), 507
Archer, Robin, 189–91
Argentina, 43, 116
Arieli, Yehoshua, 412
Aristotle, 14, 505, 560, 674, 715, 723, 732
Armenia, 43
Arterburn, Stephen, 610–11
“Articles of Secular Belief” (London Secular Center), 4
Asad, Talal
genealogical accounts of the secular and, 22–23, 30–32, 500–501
on Kant and religion, 379–80
modernity and heterogeneity in work of, 33–34
(p. 737) on modern nation-state and religion, 57
on “religion as the twin of the secular,” 337
religio-secular paradigm and, 370
Asian Americans, 437–40, 445
Assemblies of God denomination, 209
Association of Muslim Clerics (Iraq), 81
Atatürk, Kemal, 74, 76, 79, 157–58, 167, 193. *See also* Kemal, Mustafa
atheism. *See also* nonreligious population
African Americans and, 450–52, 456–59, 461–63
age demographics and, 43–45
agnosticism and, 4, 35n4
analytic atheism and, 589, 593, 598
apatheism and, 589, 591–93, 598
in China, 41–43, 249, 252, 254, 258, 263
critiques of religious ethics and, 390
definitions of, 40–41
Dewey on, 685

divorce and, 537
education and, 44–46
The Enlightenment and, 34, 303
gender and, 43
global expansion of, 8
Hell and, 291
Holyoake on, 2–3, 25, 85
humanism and, 706, 710
inCREDulous atheism and, 589, 592–93, 598
levels of education and, 441
mind-blind atheism and, 589–90, 593
morality and, 451
negative perceptions regarding, 4, 472, 587–88, 595–97, 655
New Atheism and, 7, 523, 596–97
prosociality and, 536–38
public campaigns promoting, 521, 596–97
public education institutions and, 410–12
public officials and, 1
religious jurisprudence and, 472–73, 476
science and, 48–53
secular government and, 133–34
secular humanism and, 697
secularism and, 2–4, 25, 85, 231–33, 302, 313, 435, 502, 555, 572, 690
secularity and, 517, 520–29
secularization and, 67
in the Soviet Union, 94, 232–34, 236–39, 242, 354, 436, 472, 501
Sunday Assembly movement and, 7, 528
transcendence and, 565
United States and, 43–44, 202, 467, 486, 489–90, 494, 509, 572, 587, 596–97, 655
well-being and, 594
World Values Survey data on, 40–53
Atheist Alliance International, 529
Atheist Bus Campaign, 597
Atheist Shoes, 587–88
Atkinson, Henry George, 3
Atlanta Olympic bombing (1996), 72–73
al-Attas, Syed Muhammad al-Naqib, 506–7
Audinet, Jacques, 407
Augustine
on Abraham’s obedience, 393–94
on binary division between secularism and religion, 87
*City of God* and, 87, 126, 393–94
just war doctrine and, 288
political secularism and, 86, 87, 92
on secularism’s temporal dimension, 126
two cities doctrine and, 721
Aum Shinrikyo cult (Japan), 503
Aupers, Stef, 511

Austin, J.L., 624
Australia
atheism in, 1, 43
liberal democracy in, 108
nonreligious population in, 7, 43
political secularism and, 108, 112, 114, 116
religiosity's decline in, 573
religious pluralism and, 338
secular state and society in, 189
Austria, 110, 116, 338
authoritarianism (personality dimension), 537, 579
autonomy
consumer orientation and, 62
humanism and, 707–9, 712, 715, 716–18
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 338, 342
moral autonomy and, 391–92, 394, 397
mutual autonomy and, 355–56, 372
political secularism and, 93–95, 354–56
well-being and, 560
"An Awareness of What Is Missing" (Habermas), 317–18
Azerbaijan, 41, 43
(p. 738) Baal (God of the Canaanites), 395–96
Baartman, Saartije ("Venus Hottentot"), 455
Baath Party (Iraq), 81
Babri Masjid (India), 225
Babylonia, 396
Bachmann, Michele, 493
Bacon, Francis, 729
Badawi, Raif, 1
*Baehr v. Lewin*, 283–84n16
Bahrain, 43
Bailey, Nathan, 5
Baker, Joseph, 6
Balagangadhara, S. N., 379, 381
Balaguer, Mark, 630
Baldwin, James, 441, 450, 452–53
Bangladesh, 40, 93
Bano, Shah, 223
Barker, Dan, 604
Barth, Karl, 724
Ba'thism, 193–94
Batson, Daniel, 575
Battle of Vienna (1683), 82
*Battleridge* (novel), 3
Baubock, R., 361
Baumeister, Roy, 539, 556, 561
Bayly, Susan, 224
Becket Fund, 490

Beckford, James, 517–18
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 293
Belarus, 43, 240
Belgium, 116, 338, 356, 363, 571
Bellows, Henry Whitney, 692
Bender, Courtney, 423
Benedict XVI (pope), 67, 359. *See also* Ratzinger, Joseph
Ben-Gurion, David, 174, 506
Berdyaev, Nicholas, 232
Berger, Peter
on monotheism and rationality, 57
on religious pluralism and importance of religion, 35n7
on secularization theory's limits, 333, 576–77
signs of transcendence and, 584
sociological secularization thesis and, 27
on technological consciousness, 64
on Turkey's secularism, 166–68
Berlinerblau, Jacques, 6
betrayal trauma theory, 610
*bhakti* tradition (Hinduism), 34, 502
Bharatiya Janta Party (India), 225
Bhargava, Rajeev, 348n19, 356, 362–63, 425, 430
Bharucha, Rustom, 219
Biale, David, 504–5
The Bible. *See also specific books*
African Americans and, 458, 461–62
European culture and, 55, 61
Habermas on, 322
humanism and, 709–10, 718
as "infallible word of God," 697
Protestant Reformation's vernacular translations of, 60
public schools and, 596
religious ethics and, 392–95
Zionism and, 174, 505
Bible Society (United Kingdom), 512
Bielo, James, 511
"Big God" concepts, 538, 541
Bill 101 (Canada), 296
Bill for Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion (proposal by Patrick Henry), 133
Bin Habit, Ahmed, 507
bin Laden, Osama, 80–81
bioinformatics, 726, 729
biomedical technology, 724–25, 727, 730–31, 733
*Birth of a Nation* (Griffith), 454
Black Atheists of America, 457, 461
Black Church
American politics and, 439–41, 445

Baldwin and, 452–53
belief in Hell and, 452–53, 461–62
Christian spirituals and, 700
Hughes’s critique of, 461
Larsen’s fictional depiction of, 459
progressives in, 457
prosperity gospel and, 463
same-sex marriage and, 464
trust in, 443
Black Death, 64
*The Black Humanist Experience,* 457
Black Israelites (prophetic witness community), 450–52
Black Skeptics Group, 457
blasphemy laws, 297, 406, 587
(p. 739) *Blasphemy: Verbal Offense against the Sacred from Moses to Salman Rushdie* (Levy), 395
Blessing, Kimberly A., 527
Boko Haram, 210
Bolger, Ryan, 511
Bolivia, 116
Bolsheviks, 231–33
Borradori, Giovanna, 323
Borutta, Manuel, 26
Boston Marathon bombing (2013), 72–73
Botswana, 112, 114, 116
Botton, Alain de, 525, 559
Bourdieu, Pierre, 375
Bourguiba, Habib, 508
Bowen, John, 143–45
Boyle, Robert, 558
Bradlaugh, Charles, 4, 25–26, 32, 34, 85
Bradley, John D., 698
Brahmans, 502
Brazil, 1, 43, 112, 114, 116, 419
Breivik, Anders, 72–73, 82–83
Brennan, William, 484–85
Brenner, Joseph Hayim, 506
Breyer, Stephen, 486
Brezhnev, Leonid, 236
British Ethical Union, 695
Brooks, Arthur C., 535
Brosnan, Caragh, 724
Brosnan, Sarah F., 641
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), 456
*The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoyevsky), 655
Brown, Wendy, 21, 34, 380
*Brown v. Board of Education,* 489, 728
Bruce, Steve, 27, 419, 726

Budde, Michael, 413
Buddhism
in China, 249, 252–54, 261–62, 504
flourishing of, 334, 504
in India, 191, 218, 224, 381, 504
in Japan, 504
political power and, 79–80
in Russia, 240
science and, 51–52
secular Buddhism and, 504
in the Soviet Union, 235
in Taiwan, 255
Theravada Buddhism and, 79
Zen Buddhism and, 334, 580–81
Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, 255
Buisson, Ferdinand, 94
Bulgaria, 116, 191–92
Bultmann, Rudolf, 725
Burchall, David, 458
Burger, Warren, 484–85
Burkart, J.M., 646
Burma. *See* Myanmar
*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby,* 138–40, 471, 475, 491–92, 494
Bush, George W., 81–82, 95, 325, 487
Butler, Judith, 380, 420, 422, 424, 427
Byrne, Rhonda, 582
*By These Hands* (Pinn), 456
Cadge, Wendy, 727
Calhoun, Craig, 104, 336, 424–25
Calhoun-Brown, Allison, 439
Calo, Zachery, 413
Calvin, John, 90
Cambodia, 82, 342
Cambridge Platonists, 303
Cameron, David, 363, 389–90
Cameroon, 112
Campbell, David E., 436, 535–36
Camus, Albert, 558
Canada
Charter of Rights and Freedoms in, 125, 295
French language rights in, 296
lack of established religion in, 125
liberal democracy in, 108
multiculturalism and, 295
nonreligious population in, 7
political secularism and, 108, 116, 311
religiosity in, 572
secular government and, 125–26

Canales, Nemesio, 441
Cannell, Fenella, 502
*Canonization of the Gods* (*fengshenbang;* novel), 253
*Can We Live Forever?* (Turner), 732
Çarkoglu, Ali, 164–66
Caron, Nathalie, 503
Carter, Jimmy, 441, 728
(p. 740) Carus, Paul, 690–91
Casanova, Jose
on binary opposition between the religious and the secular, 23–24
on differentiation and privatization, 62
on persistence of religiosity in modern world, 419
on political secularism and democracy, 104–5
on secularization's polyvalence, 29
Castelli, Elizabeth, 420
Catholicism
in China, 249, 253, 259–62
contraception opposed in, 138–39, 427
The Enlightenment and, 75
feminism and, 427
in France, 59, 143–44, 251, 293, 302, 308, 407, 501
freedom of conscience and, 292
French Revolution and, 59, 143, 293
in Italy, 59, 112, 409–12, 722
Latinos and, 440, 444–45
Locke and, 133, 291
miracles and sainthood in, 722, 727
multiculturalism and, 356–57, 361
papal authority and, 58–59, 88–89
political secularism and, 87–90, 93–94
politics in secular contexts and, 328–29
private life and, 289
public educational institutions and, 402, 404, 406–7, 410–12
religio-secularism and, 371, 377
religious fundamentalism and, 335
in Russia, 240
science and, 51
secular government and, 133, 138–39
sex abuse scandal within, 656
in the United States, 436, 483
wars of religion and, 290
Center for Inquiry, 689, 701
Central African Republic, 112
Chalfant, Eric, 520
Chalmers, David, 635n1
Charcot, Jean-Martin, 722
Charles I (king of England), 291
*Charlie Hebdo* attacks (2015)

motivations for, 72–73, 665
Muhammad cartoon controversy and, 71–73, 296, 665
responses to, 34, 142–43
secular values and, 21
Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canada), 125, 295
*Chārvāka* (Hindu school of thought), 34
Chaves, Mark, 173
Chen Shuibian, 257
Cheyne, George, 723
Chiang Kaishek, 254
Children of God or the Family International (COG/FI; “emerging church” movement), 511
Chile, 1, 43, 116
chimpanzees, 638–41, 660
China
anticlericalism in, 501, 504
atheism in, 41–43, 249, 252, 254, 258, 263
Buddhism in, 249, 252–54, 261–62, 504
Catholicism in, 249, 253, 259–62
communist regime in, 249, 254, 259–62
Cultural Revolution in, 260–61
education in, 259–60, 262
Great Leap Forward in, 260
Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (1929) in, 253
Leninist religious state in, 258–63
nationalism in, 259, 261–62
nonreligious population in, 41–43, 53
one-child policy in, 238
religiosity in, 42, 249, 369
religious state during premodern era in, 251–53
secularization during Republican era in, 253–54
Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and, 254
State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) in, 249, 261–62
Tibet and, 249, 252
United Fronts Department in, 249
Xingjian independence movement in, 249
Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 249, 254, 259–62
Chinese Confucius Research Institute, 262
*Chinese Five Major Religions Discuss Harmony,* 262
Chinese Regional Bishops’ Conference, 255
Chirac, Jacques, 145–46
(p. 741) Chisholm, Roderick, 631
Christchurch (New Zealand) earthquake (2011), 591
Christianity. *See also specific sects*
African Americans and, 450–54, 456–57, 459–64
assumptions within, 605–6
binary concepts in, 86–87, 126
in China, 249, 253, 259, 261
Darwinism and, 724–25

decline of, 66–67
educational institutions and, 401–2, 406, 408, 411
egalitarianism and, 59
“emerging church” movement and, 511
The Enlightenment and, 723
European culture and, 6, 25, 55
European Union (EU) and, 309
feminism and, 428
freedom of conscience and, 292–93
free will and, 303
humanism and, 707, 709, 713
in India, 218, 224
inner conformity and, 294
marriage and, 55
medical science and, 722
Middle Ages and, 23–24, 60, 64–65, 673
monotheism and, 57, 288–90
multiculturalism and, 360, 362–63
ontological assumptions in, 727
original sin doctrine and, 611–12
political secularism and, 86–94
prolongevity and, 731–32
rationality and, 57
religio-secularism and, 379, 381
religious ethics and, 393–94
religious fundamentalism and, 73–74, 80, 324, 334–35, 418
religious jurisprudence and, 469–70, 472
Roman Empire and, 289–90
in Russia, 239–41
science and, 51–52
secular government and, 126, 130, 132, 139
secular humanism and, 700
state neutrality and, 195
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202–6, 208, 210
terrorism and, 82–83
totalitarianism and, 290
views of sex and reproduction in, 728
well-being and, 594–95
Christian Knight Comics, 499
Church of England
AIDS and, 64
education policy and, 401
as established church of colonial Virginia, 304, 310
as established church of England, 125, 291, 356
female bishop debate in, 357
religious minority rights and, 363
Ciji (Buddhist organization), 255
Çinar, Alev, 512

*City of God* (Augustine), 87, 126, 393–94
Clark, Margaret S., 541, 546
Clarke, Randolph, 630–31, 634
*The Clash of Civilizations* (Huntington), 81–82, 417–18, 429
cognitive science of religion (CSR), 592, 656, 660–62, 665
Coit, Stanton, 695–96
Colbert, Stephen, 463
Cold War
end of, 77, 369
religio-secularism and, 371, 377
religiosity in the United States and, 436, 483, 699
religious resurgence following, 369
U.S. patriotism and, 472
Collective Against Islamophobia (CCIF), 148–49
Colombia, 43
Combe, George, 401
Committee of Union and Progress (CUP; Turkey), 156, 160, 168n1
*A Common Faith* (Dewey), 684–85
communalism, 77, 217–18, 501
communicative action, 318–19, 325
communicative rationality, 318–22, 325, 327–28
communicative reason, 319–21, 323, 325, 327, 329, 422
communism
in Eastern European bloc, 192
hostility to religion and, 555, 699
Middle East and, 508
Polish resistance to Soviet-imposed, 66
Soviet Union’s regime and, 192, 231–35, 237, 354
(p. 742) Communist Party (China), 249, 254, 259–62
Communist Party (Soviet Union), 232, 235, 237, 354
Communist Youth League (Soviet Union), 234
communitarianism, 294–95, 422–24
compatibilism, 623–27, 630–32, 634
Comte, Auguste
Martineau and, 3
on the “positive” phase of mankind, 26
positive psychology and, 559
“religion of humanity” of, 558–59, 692–93, 696, 701
on science and superstition, 64
sociology and, 730
concilience, 562
Concordat of 1801, 144, 251
Condorcet, Marquis de, 723
Confucian Association of the Republic of China, 255
Confucianism
in Communist Era China, 262
Confucius Institutes and, 262
naturalism and, 682–84

religious ethics and, 679–80, 682
rituals and, 678–79, 681
science and, 682–84
secular ethics and, 14, 674–80, 686
the supernatural and, 678–81
transcendence and, 680–81, 683–85
Confucius. *See also* Confucianism
advice to political leaders from, 252
conversations with students by, 676–77
participation in religious rites by, 678
political failure of, 679
Congo, Republic of, 112
Congress of Vienna, 293
Congress Party (India), 216, 223
Conlan, John, 700
Connecticut, 475
Conrad, Joseph, 565
Conseil d'Etat (administrative court in France), 143
Constantine (emperor of Rome), 87, 289
Constitutional Convention (United States), 93
constitutional democracy, 271–74, 277, 343, 421
contraception
abortion and, 475, 492
*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* and, 471, 475, 491–92
Catholic objections to, 138–39, 427
Supreme Court on, 138–39
converging technologies, 730, 733
Cooper, Robert, 4
Copernicus, 605–6
Cornaro, Luigi, 729
Costa Rica, 1, 116
Council for Secular Humanism, 701
Council of Europe, 313
Council of Nicaea (325 CE), 289
covert nonconstraining control, 627
creationism, 48, 405, 458, 617, 728
*Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant), 320
Croatia, 116, 192
Cromwell, Oliver, 291
crucifix case. See *Lautsi v. Italy*
*cuius regio, eius religio*, 377
Cultural Revolution (China), 260–61
culture shock, 603, 615
culture wars *(kulturkampf)*
birth control and, 492–94
church-state relations and, 14, 24
nineteenth-century Europe and, 24
public prayer controversies and, 484–86

same-sex marriage and, 488–89
the secular and, 24, 26
Cuvier, Georges, 455
Cyprus, 43, 108, 110, 117
Czech Republic, 8, 117
Dalit class (India), 218, 224, 381
*dao* (“path”), 580, 674, 681
Daoism
in Communist Era China, 249, 261–62
nature and, 725
in premodern China, 252–53
prolongevity and, 729
in Republican Era China, 253–54
Westerners’ attraction to, 580–81
Daoist Association of the Republic of China, 255
Darrow, Clarence, 698
Darwin, Charles
animals’ altruistic behavior and, 643, 645
evolutionary theory of, 724–25
religious responses to, 288, 405–6, 728, 731
theological education of, 75
Davie, Grace, 28, 35n5, 176
(p. 743) Davison, Andrew, 155–56, 159
Dawkins, Richard
atheism and, 390, 394, 589, 597
popular reception of, 7, 597
secular approaches to morality and, 372
Dear, Keith, 557
Deci, Edward L., 560
Declaration of Independence (United States), 303, 390
deconstructionism, 573
Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA,1996), 283n12
*Defensor Pacis* (Marsilius of Padua), 89
deism, 76, 80, 502, 674
Delgardo, Thamani, 458
“Demands of Liberalism” (Abbot), 694
democracy
associative democracy and, 339
constitutional democracy and, 271–74, 277, 343, 421
electoral competition as prerequisite for, 343
feminism and, 420–22, 424–27, 429
Islam and, 506
liberal democracy and, 29, 56, 60, 62, 65, 94, 104, 108, 112, 115, 125, 134, 214, 271, 275, 340, 343–45, 355–56, 370, 372–74, 418–20, 476
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 339–41, 343–46
minority rights in, 306
multiculturalism and, 355–56
pluralism and, 305

pluralist *versus* deliberate forms of, 271–75
political secularism and, 13, 103–5, 107–9, 112–20
Ratzinger on, 329
religio-secularism and, 370, 372–74
religious freedom and, 304–9, 311–14
Democratic Management Committee (China), 260
Democratic Party (Turkey), 160
Democratic Party (United States)
African Americans and, 439, 443–44
Catholics and, 444
culture war issues and, 439
Latinos and, 444
nonreligious population and, 436–37, 440–43, 445–46
Democratic Progressive Party (Taiwan), 257
democratic secularism, 343
Democritus, 628
Deng Xiaoping, 259–60
Denmark
early modern era in, 251
Lutheran established church in, 356–57
Muhammad cartoon controversy in, 31, 71–73, 296
political secularism and, 117
religiosity's decline and, 571
weak constitutional establishment and, 338
welfare system in, 731
Dennen, Catherine Ann, 402
Dennett, Daniel, 597, 624–26, 629–31
depression, 560, 609–10, 612
De Roover, Jakob, 379
Derrida, Jacques, 371, 380, 573
Descartes, René, 710–11, 722
*The Descent of Man* (Darwin), 724
*The Desecularization of the World* (Berger), 27
Destutt de Tracy, Antoine, 76
determinism, 624–29, 632
Deutschen Gesellschaft für Ethische Kultur, 26
Deutscher Freidenkerverbund, 26
de Vitoria, Francisco, 327, 329
de Waal, Frans, 640–41, 646, 659–60
Dewey, John, 14, 134, 380, 674, 684–86
*dharma* (natural law), 79
Dharma Drum Mountain (Buddhist organization), 255
*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 566, 608
*The Dialectics of Secularization* (Habermas), 318, 327
Diderot, Denis, 723
Diener, Ed, 557
Dietrich, John H., 696–98
Dimitrov Constitution (Bulgaria), 192

Diversity Model (Taylor), 296–97
divorce
atheism and, 537
in India, 222–23
Judaism and, 172, 175, 183
leaving religion and, 612
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 345
Pentecostal attitudes toward, 63
*Doe v. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District,* 486, 488–90
(p. 744) domestic violence, 426, 460, 610–11
Dominican Republic, 117
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, 391, 655
Douglas, Stephen, 135
Douglass, Frederick, 441, 445, 455–57, 464
Doukobhors, 63
*Dover* case. See *Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District*
downward causation, 633
Dragadze, Tamara, 236
Dressler, Markus, 370–71
Driberg, J.H., 499
Driessen, Michael, 105, 115
Dubnow, Simon, 506
DuBois, W.E.B., 456, 462–63
Durgah committee case, 221
Durgah Khwaja Saheb Act of 1955, 221
Durkheim, Emile
on individualism and suicide, 557
Judaism of, 506
on modernity and religion, 201
religion in small communities and, 60
on the sacred and the profane, 518
tensions between scientific and religious knowledge and, 28
Eastern Europe, 232, 406–7. *See also specific countries*
Eastern Han dynasty, 252
Ebola crisis (2014), 203, 206
Eckersley, Richard, 557
economic secularism, 11–12
Ecuador, 43
Edict of Milan, 289
education
in China, 259–60, 262
Confucianism and, 675–76
culture wars and, 24, 26
evolution and, 48
expansions of, 60
in France, 143–46, 302–3, 407
in Germany, 409
humanism and, 707–8

in India, 216, 221–22
leaving religion and, 617
liberal democratic constitutionalism and, 339
meaning-making and, 563
multiculturalism and, 295, 356–57
in the Ottoman Empire, 508
political secularism and, 107
public school prayer controversies and, 402, 404–5
religion and, 13
religiosity and, 44–46, 50
secular government and, 126
secularism in the public provision of, 10–12, 192, 401–13, 689, 691
secularity and, 522–23
secularization and, 28
secular spirituality and, 577, 579
in the Soviet Union, 232, 238, 463
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202, 205, 208
in Turkey, 156–57, 159–60, 162–63, 193, 408, 411
in the United States, 336, 402–7, 412–13, 489, 493
views of science and, 50–52
educational secularism, 11–12
egalitarianism, 56, 58–60, 62, 65, 317, 659
Egypt
Arab Spring uprising (2011) in, 507
feminist scholarship and, 427–28
*mulid* festivals in, 509
nineteenth-century modernization efforts in, 508
political secularism in, 76
religious conflicts in, 377
Ehrenreich, Barbara, 565
Einstein, Albert, 605
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 699
Elijah (Old Testament prophet), 394–97
Eliot, George, 714
Elizabeth I (queen of England), 291
Elizabeth II (queen of England), 291
*Elk Grove v. Nedow*, 487, 489
Eller, David, 615
Ellis, Stephen, 208–10
Ellison, Christopher, 443–44
Ellison, Noel Thomas, 2
emergent properties, 632–34
“emerging church” movement, 511
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 581–82, 584, 692
empathy, 540–41, 641, 646, 649–50, 663
*Employment Division v. Smith,* 470
Enacting Heaven (Buddhist organization), 255
Engels, Friedrich, 233, 260

*Engel v. Vitale,* 468
(p. 745) Engineer, Ashgar Ali, 501
Englehart, Katie, 523
English Civil War, 127–28, 291
*English Secularism* (Holyoake), 690–91, 696
The Enlightenment
African Americans and, 450
atheism and, 34, 303
Catholicism and, 75
Christianity and, 723
feminism and, 417, 419–21, 426–27, 429–30
humanism and, 706, 708
Jewish Enlightenment movement and, 175–76, 505
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 345
logical positivism and, 307
nation-states and, 80, 83
naturalism and, 606
political secularism and, 86, 93
poststructural criticism of, 429
Protestantism and, 723
race and, 454–55
rationality and, 75, 420, 426, 429, 576
religio-secularism and, 372
science and, 723
secular ethics and, 673
secularism and, 74–76, 78, 80, 83, 86, 293, 297, 302, 304
Erasmus, Desiderius, 707, 713
Erastus, Thomas, 90
Esbeck, Carl, 106
*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke), 133
*Essay of Health and Long Life* (Cheyne), 723
*The Essence of Christianity* (Feuerbach), 692
Establishment Clause (U.S. Constitution)
*County of Allegheny v. ACLU, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter* and, 468–69
diminishing role of, 14
*Doe v. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District,* 486, 488–90
educational institutions and, 404–6
*Engel v. Vitale* and, 468
government subsidies to religious organizations and, 476
*Lemon* test and, 484
*Marsh v. Chambers* and, 469, 484–85
Pledge of Allegiance and, 487
religious exemptions and, 470, 474–75
religious freedom and, 190
secular humanism and, 689
separationism *versus* neutrality in interpreting, 467–70
taxpayer standing and, 487
text of, 468

*Town of Greece v. Galloway* and, 469–70, 472–73, 484–86
*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* and, 469
*Estate of Thornton v. Caldor, Inc.,* 475
Esther, Book of (Old Testament), 505
Estonia, 43, 112, 114, 117
Ethical Culture movement, 559, 694–95, 697, 700
ethical secularism, 11–12, 345
eudaimonia, 561–63, 721–22, 732
European Convention on Human Rights, 125, 313
European Court of Human Rights. *See also specific cases*
secular government principles and, 134, 139
on secularism and public education, 401, 403, 406–13
European Union (EU). *See also specific countries*
Christianity and, 309
constitution of, 111
expansion of, 417
faith-based educational institutions in, 336
liberal democracy in, 108
Lisbon Treaty and, 309
political secularism in, 111–13, 116–20, 309
postsecularism and, 323
postsecularity and, 323–25
secularism and, 369
*Europe: The Exceptional Case* (Davie), 28
eusociality, 638–39, 645, 658
evangelicalism
conservative social beliefs and, 728
Latinos and, 444
life after death beliefs and, 731–32
mass media and, 510
“public religion” and, 335
religious fundamentalism and, 335, 439
Republican Party and, 439
in Russia, 240
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202–5
in the United States, 439, 444, 458, 728
(p. 746) event-causal libertarianism, 623, 631–32
*Everson v. Board of Education,* 402, 699
evolution
altruism and, 643–45, 647
Christian Right’s opposition to teaching of, 62, 292, 606, 614, 698, 728
ethics and, 656, 658–63
Fuller on, 731
helping behavior and, 639–46
humans and, 638–39
intelligent design and, 405, 545, 724–25, 730–31
Islam and the teaching of, 508
kin selection and, 645–46

nonreligious population’s views of, 48
public education and teaching of, 405, 458
religious worldviews challenged by, 724–25
sexual selection and, 644–46
sociality and, 642–52
*Eweida v. British Airways,* 139
exclusivist secularism, 343–44
Executive Order No. 13672, 474
Facebook, 81, 457
Falungong, 249
Falwell, Jerry, 488, 493, 611, 728
*The Famous New York Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates* (Potter), 697
Farisco, Michele, 730
Fassin, Didier, 34
Fawda, Faraj, 508
Felicity Party (Turkey), 161
Felton, Jack, 610–11
feminism
African Americans and, 456, 462
agency and, 420, 428
democracy and, 420–22, 424–27, 429
The Enlightenment and, 417, 419–21, 426–27, 429–30
headscarf bans and, 427–28
Islam and, 420, 427–29, 508
modernization and, 419–20, 428
multiculturalism and, 427–28
public sphere and, 417–18, 421–26
religion and, 426–27
secularization and, 417, 419–20, 423, 429
spirituality and, 583
women’s rights and, 223, 418, 438, 455, 506
Feuerbach, Ludwig, 692–93
Finke, Roger, 107, 239
Finland, 94, 117, 338, 356, 571
Finley, Reginald, 457
*fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), 507
*The Fire Next Time* (Baldwin), 450, 452–53
First Amendment (U.S. Constitution)
educational institutions and, 402–4
Establishment Clause and, 467–70, 472–76, 484, 486–89, 689
Free Exercise Clause and, 13, 467–71, 474, 476
religious tests for public officeholders as a violation of, 699
separation of religion and state established in, 106, 190, 292, 304, 310–11 (*See also* Establishment Clause)
First Book of Kings (Old Testament), 395, 397
First Corinthians 3:18-19, 614
First Corinthians 5:5, 613
First Humanist Society of New York, 698

First Office of the Social Works Department (China), 255
*First Tract on Government* (Locke), 128–29
Fischer, Claude S., 436
Fischer, John, 626
Flack, Jessica C., 641, 644
Foguangshan (Buddhist organization), 255
*Folgerø v. Norway,* 408
Fordism, 64
Forman, James, 458–60
*Formations of the Secular* (Asad), 500–501
Foucault, Michel, 30, 33, 57, 377, 573, 723
Fradkin, Hillel, 104
France
Catholicism in, 59, 143–44, 251, 293, 302, 308, 407, 501
*Charlie Hebdo* attacks (2015) in, 21, 34, 71–73, 142, 296, 665
Communist Party in, 59
Concordat of 1801 in, 144, 251
constitution of, 110, 117
education in, 143–46, 302–3, 407
European Union and, 309
headscarf bans in, 71, 74, 106, 145–49, 193, 302, 308, 363–64, 369–70, 373–74, 379, 411, 419, 427–28
(p. 747) Jews in, 131, 144, 361
*laïcité* in, 34, 40, 79, 93–95, 106, 128, 142–50, 155, 189, 296, 299, 302–4, 307–8, 361, 373–74, 377, 407, 419–20, 423, 500–501
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 338, 342
multiculturalism and, 356, 358–59, 362–63
Muslims in, 1, 34, 71–73, 106, 131, 143–49, 308, 361, 375, 666
nationalism and, 76
nonreligious population in, 143, 571
political secularism and, 93–95, 106, 110, 117, 142, 149, 293–94, 311, 313, 335
Porte de Vincennes attack (2015) in, 21
religio-secularism and, 370, 373–75, 377, 379
republican values in, 34
revolution (1789) in, 59, 62, 93, 143, 190, 233, 290, 293, 298, 302–4, 308, 311, 313
Taylor on, 296
veil bans in, 1, 145, 148 (*see also* France, headscarf bans in)
Frank, Anne, 299
Frankfurt, Harry, 625–26
Frankl, Viktor, 582
Franklin, Benjamin, 76
Fraser, Nancy, 421–22, 424–25
Frederickson, Barbara, 561
Frederick the Great, 396–97
Freedom from Religion Foundation, 7, 596, 598
*Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Obama,* 487–88
freedom of conscience
Christianity and, 292–93

India’s constitution and, 219
Israel’s Law against Religious Coercion and, 176
*laïcité* and, 143–44
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 342
liberalism and, 232–33
Locke on, 291, 305
Luther and, 625, 629
Nehru Report on, 216
political secularism and, 90–92, 95, 104
religio-secularism and, 378
religious freedom and, 305–6, 307, 309, 311–13
religious jurisprudence regarding, 469, 471, 475–76
Russia’s law (1997) regarding, 240
secular government and, 129–30, 132, 135
secular state and, 294
freedoms of speech, 21, 31, 343
Free Exercise Clause (U.S. Constitution), 13, 467–71, 474, 476
Free Religious Association (FRA), 692–95
French Council of the Muslim Religion, 143
French Revolution
Catholic Church and, 59, 143, 293
liberal democracy and, 62
liberalism and, 290, 298
political secularism and, 93, 233, 293, 302–4, 308, 311, 313
separation of religion and state in, 190
Freud, Sigmund, 372, 505–6, 566, 655
Frisch, Max, 317
Froese, Paul, 239
“From Hitchens to Dawkins: Where Are the Women of the New Atheism?” (Engelhart), 523
Frothingham, Octavius Brooks, 692–93, 696
Fukuyama, Francis, 77
Fuller, Steve, 730–31
“Fundamental Perspectives and Policies of Religious Issues in the Period of Chinese Socialism” (Chinese Communist Party), 260
*The Future of Human Nature* (Habermas), 321
“The Future of Judaism” (Adler), 694
Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 709, 713, 715
Galanter, Marc, 220, 224
Galen, 722
Galileo Galilei, 288, 558
Galton, Francis, 455
Gandhi, Indira, 215
Gandhi, Mohandas, 214, 216–19, 714
Gandhi, Rajiv, 223
Gaylor, Anne Nicol, 596
Gaylor, Annie Laurie, 596
gay rights, 81, 484, 488, 493
Gazi, Faisal, 196

Gelasius (pope), 87–88
Gellner, David, 502
(p. 748) gender
African Americans and, 453, 456, 460, 462
equality and, 142, 145–49, 223, 280–81, 417–18, 425, 451, 455–56
feminism and, 421–22, 425, 427–29
Indian politics and culture regarding, 214, 222–24, 226
mentalizing and, 590
multiculturalism and, 358, 361, 364
prosociality and, 537
religio-secularism and, 373, 375
religiosity and, 42–44, 537
secularity and, 523–24
views of science and, 50–51
Generation X, 438
Genesis, Book of, 392–94, 641–42
genetics, 534, 724, 726
German Sociological Association, 26
Germany
atheism in, 587
headscarf bans ruled unconstitutional in, 281, 284n18
liberal democracy and, 62
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 338
multiculturalism and, 356–57, 359, 361
Nazi Era in, 72, 76, 82, 299, 342
nonreligious population in, 43, 587
political secularism in, 117
public education in, 409
secular government and, 129
World War I and, 157
World War II and, 235
gerontology, 725, 729
Gervais, Ricky, 595
Gervais, Will, 589, 592–93, 595–96
Ghana
atheism in, 43
Christianity in, 203–4, 209
elites’ exploitation of religion in, 201
Islam in, 208–9
National Democratic Congress Party in, 206, 208–9
New Patriotic Party in, 208–9
nonreligious population in, 43
Pentecostalism in, 202
political secularism in, 201
religiosity and politics in, 206–8
religiosity levels in, 203–6
Ghannouchi, Rashid, 196, 198
Gibbon, Edward, 289

Gibbs, Eddie, 511
Gilead Sciences, 727
Gillard, Julia, 1
Ginsburg, Ruth Bader, 486, 491–92, 494
Girard, René, 714–15, 718
globalization
Cold War’s end and, 77
loss of faith in nationalism and, 78
pace of change in, 428
popular culture and, 80–81
religious diversity and, 334
secularism and religion’s conflict and, 78
Global South, 28, 426–28
Glorious Revolution (England, 1688), 290–91, 298
Goa (India), 191
God
African Americans and belief in, 458
atheists who believe in, 40
“Big God” concepts and, 538, 541
Book of Genesis account of, 641–42
European culture and belief in, 55
monotheism and, 56–57, 287–88, 290, 394, 505
Nietzsche’s on the death of, 557–58, 575–76, 655
religious ethics and, 390–96
secularism and rejection of, 6, 30
sub-Saharan Africans’ prayers to, 205
World Values Survey data on belief levels regarding, 45
Yahweh (God of Judaism) and, 395
*God in the Tumult of the Global Square* (Juergensmeyer et al.), 81
*God’s Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office* (Ratzinger), 328
Golden Rule, 651
Goldwater, Barry, 492–93
*Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health,* 137–38, 488–89
Gordon and Gary Shepherd, 511
Gor’kii, Maksim, 232
Gould, Frederick J., 696–97
Gould, Stephen J., 502, 562
Graham, Lindsey, 72
(p. 749) Gramsci, Antonio, 91
Graves, Joseph, 454–55
Grayling, A.C., 394
Great Awakenings, 190
Great Britain. *See* United Kingdom
Great Leap Forward (China), 260
Greece, 117, 338
Gregory, Peter, 581
Gregory VII (pope), 88
Griffith, D.W., 454

Grün, Karl, 692
Guatemala, 117
guidance control, 626
Guinea-Bissau, 112
Gülen education movement, 512
Gunn, Jeremy, 144
Gush Emunim (movement to protect Jewish character of Israel), 180
Gwun (father of Emperor Yu), 251
Ha'am, Ahad, 506
Habermas, Jürgen
communicative action and, 318–19, 325
communicative rationality and, 318–22, 325, 327–28
on the "crisis of legitimation," 78
on the European Union, 330n3
Kant's theory of perpetual peace and, 326–27, 330–31n4
postsecularism and, 13, 317–19, 337, 344
Ratzinger and, 317–18, 327–29
Rawls and, 317, 330n1
religio-secularism and, 372–73, 379
on religious fundamentalism, 318, 321, 323–24
secular government and, 134
on secularism, 13, 317
on secularity, 316
on the secular state, 421–22
on tolerance, 323
on the United Nations, 327
on the "War on Terror," 324–26
the Hajj, 208, 236
Hall, Stuart, 372
Ham (Book of Genesis), 454
Hamilton, William D., 645
Hann, Chris, 241
Hansen, Chad, 684
*haredim* (Ultra-Orthodox Jews), 177, 180–81
Harlem Renaissance, 459
Harris, Sam, 7, 394, 528, 565, 597
Hartmann, Nicolai, 392
Harvey, Steve, 451
*Hasan and Eylem Zengin v. Turkey,* 408
Hatcher, Mark, 458, 463
Haydon, Albert E., 698
*hazarah be-teshuvah* (movement encouraging Jews to return to religious life), 179–80
headscarf bans
challenges to, 146–49, 281, 284n18
educational institutions and, 411
feminism and, 427–28
as form of state violence, 420
gender equality as goal of, 146–48, 280–81

*laïcité* as basis for, 106, 145, 148, 302, 308
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 336
multiculturalism and, 363–64
Muslim community's response to, 71, 74, 147–49
priority of public reasons and, 280–81
religio-secularism and, 369–70, 373–74, 379
*Heart of Darkness* (Conrad), 565
*The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox* (Gould), 562
Hedges, Chris, 665
hedonia, 561
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 26
Heidegger, Martin, 294, 380
Heine, Heinriche, 505
*Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation,* 487, 489
Hell
atheism and disbelief in, 291
Black Church beliefs regarding, 452–53, 461–62
Christianity and belief in, 55, 289, 452–53, 461–62, 606
modern Christianity's de-emphasis on, 732
religious trauma syndrome and, 610, 612
World Values Survey data regarding belief in, 45–46
Helms, Jesse, 490
helping behavior, 639–46
Henry, Patrick, 133
Henry IV (Holy Roman Emperor), 88
Henry VIII (king of England), 290–91
(p. 750) Herman, Judith, 609
hermeneutics
*applicatio* (concretization) and, 715, 717
China's religious Leninism and, 259–62
humanism and, 707, 709–11, 713–18
herms, 288
Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, 35n5
Herzl, Theodor, 173
Herzog, Jonathan, 371
Hess, Moses, 506
Hinduism
*bhakti* tradition in, 34, 502
Brahman caste and, 502
community structures and, 501
conflicts within, 220–21
Hindutva and, 223, 225, 381
in India, 76, 191, 218, 220–21, 224–25, 302, 381, 501–2
in Nepal, 1
polytheism of, 393
questions regarding doctrines of religious truth and, 379, 381
*rajdharma* (moral authority legitimizing rulers) and, 79
science and, 51–52

Universal Soul and, 581
Hirschkind, Charles, 507
Hitchens, Christopher, 7, 390, 394, 589, 597
Hitler, Adolf, 82, 137
Hizb ‘Almani, 508
Hobbes, Thomas, 128, 290
Hobby Lobby case. See *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*
Hoffer, Eric, 604
Holyoake, George Jacob
atheism and, 2–3, 25, 85
Bradlaugh and, 25–26, 32
humanism and, 692
*The Origin and Nature of Secularism* and, 2–4
Rationalist Press Association and, 696
*The Reasoner* magazine and, 2–4, 690
on secularism and education, 691
secularism concept introduced by, 2–4, 25–26, 30, 34, 75, 85, 690–92, 699, 701–2
on secular knowledge, 617
worldview secularism and, 24
Holy Roman Empire, 290
homosexuality. *See also* LGBT population; same-sex marriage
Black Church preachers on, 450
Christian Right’s opposition to, 62, 488, 728
legal restrictions regarding, 137, 294
U.S. laws prohibiting discrimination based on, 473–74
Hong Kong, 41, 43
Horning, Sheena M., 594
*Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC,* 477n6
Hout, Michael, 436
Hughes, Langston, 459, 461
Huizong (emperor of China), 252
Hu Jintao, 261–62
humanism
African Americans and, 451–52, 454, 456–59
autonomy and, 707–9, 712, 715
classical antiquity and, 693, 708
content of, 710–12
critical tradition of, 707–10
education and, 707–8
Ethical Culture movement and, 559, 694–95, 697, 700
exclusive humanism and, 233, 657–58
exemplary figures of, 713–17
hermeneutics and, 707, 709–11, 713–18
humaneness and, 708–12, 718–19
leaving religion and, 617
mimesis and, 714–15, 717–18
nihilism and, 706
objection to killing and, 306

*phronèsis* (practical knowledge) and, 715–16
posthumanism and, 725, 729–31
religious humanism and, 668, 693–94, 696–97, 700–701, 706, 710
Renaissance humanism and, 673, 691, 698, 706–8, 712–13
secular humanism and, 85, 176, 451, 457, 464, 559, 689–702
secularism and, 85
secularity and, 523–25
self-critical character of, 710–11
separation of religion and state and, 691, 694, 699
the supernatural and, 692, 695, 699
transhumanism and, 725, 730–31
Unitarianism and, 691–93, 695–98, 701
*The Humanist* (journal), 696, 698
Humanist Press Association, 698
(p. 751) Human Rights Act, 125
Humboldt, Alexander von, 723
Humboldt, Wilhelm von, 723
Hume, David, 626, 673
Hungary, 117
Hunsberger, Bruce, 521
Hunter, Ian, 24, 26
hunting, 639–40, 646–48
Huntington, Samuel, 81–82, 257
Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman, 142, 202, 207, 377
Hurston, Zora Neale, 459–61
Hussain, Taha, 508
Hussein, Saddam, 81, 193, 342, 508
Huta, Veronika, 561
Hutchinson, Sikivu, 524
Hutterites, 63
Huxley, Aldous, 693
Huxley, Thomas Henry, 4, 35n4, 690
Ibn Abi-l-Awja, 507
Ibn Khaldun, 507
Iceland, 117
*idéologues*, 76
Igwe, Leo, 1
*ilmaniya* (scientific thinking), 79
inclusive secularism, 344
incompatibilism, 624
inCREDulous atheism, 589, 592–93, 598
India
Buddhism in, 191, 218, 224, 381, 504
Christianity in, 217–18, 224
constitution in, 191, 215–16, 219–24, 226
divorce and, 222–23
education in, 216, 221–22
gender justice in, 214, 222–24, 226

Hinduism in, 76, 191, 218, 220–21, 224–25, 302, 381, 501–2
industrialization in, 217
Islam in, 76, 191, 217–18, 224–25, 501, 508
liberal democracy in, 214–15, 217
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 338–39, 341, 343–44, 346
marriage in, 222
modernization in, 217, 219, 225
multiculturalism and, 361–62, 364
National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions in, 219–20
nationalism in, 215–17, 223, 381
nonreligious population in, 43
political secularism in, 24, 33, 77, 93, 110, 117, 191, 215
religio-secularism and, 369, 371, 381
religious freedom in, 214, 216, 220–22, 226
secularism in, 40, 76–77, 214–26
secularity in, 524, 527
secularization in, 217, 219, 221
social justice in, 224–25
state neutrality and, 219, 226
Supreme Court in, 219, 222–23
tolerance in, 215–17
uniform civil code efforts in, 222–23, 226
Indian National Congress, 216
individualism
communitarian critiques of, 422–24
egalitarian forms of, 323
individualization and, 334–35
political secularism and, 90
Protestant Reformation and, 58–59
secularism and, 312
secularity and, 519
secularization and, 56, 58–59, 65, 557
suicide and, 557
United States' culture of, 510
well-being and, 557, 559, 567
Indonesia, 40, 117, 191, 338–39
industrialization
egalitarianism and, 59
individualism and, 510
privatization of religion and, 335
religious revival movements and, 66
secularization and, 28
structural differentiation and, 58
Inglehart, Ronald, 419, 436
Innocent IV (pope), 300n7
Inoue, Jermaine, 461
Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, 8
intelligent design, 405, 545, 724–25, 730–31

International Daoist Forum, 262
International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, 504, 506
The Internet, 494, 511, 521
Iran, 76, 338, 369, 371, 427, 502, 524
Iraq, 43, 81, 193–94, 342, 508
Ireland, Republic of, 117, 125, 419
Isaac (son of Abraham), 392–93
(p. 752) Isaiah (Old Testament prophet), 395, 641
*Is Critique Secular?* (edited volume), 21, 31, 34
*Is God a White Racist?* (Jones), 700
ISIS. *See* Islamic State
Islam. *See also* Muslims
Abraham story in, 393
anticolonialism and, 287
in China, 249, 253, 261
democracy and, 506
diversity within, 11
feminism and, 420, 427–29, 508
*fiqh* (jurisprudence) and, 507
French government's approach to, 142–48, 355
gender and, 147
the Hajj and, 208, 236
humanism and, 709–10
in India, 501
in-group dynamics and, 665–67
jihadism and, 376
marriage and, 507, 709
monotheism and, 288–90
multiculturalism and, 355, 357, 359, 363
postsecularism and, 344
public education institutions and, 407
religio-secularism and, 375–77, 379, 381
religious ethics and, 389–90, 393
religious fundamentalism and, 324, 334, 417–18
science and, 51–52
secularism and, 11, 21, 34, 71–73, 81, 193–99, 506–9
Sharia law and, 165, 193, 198, 210, 313
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202–3, 205, 208–10
Sufism and, 502, 509
takfirism and, 376
terrorism and, 72–73, 299, 417–18
in Turkey's culture and politics, 157–68, 193, 355
*Islam and Secularism* (al-Attas), 506
Islamic State ("IS" or "ISIS")
authoritarian nature of, 418–19
brutality of, 293, 299
religious fundamentalism and, 83, 389–90
support in Iraq for, 81

terrorist attacks and, 72
“Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” (Okin), 427
Israel
ancient history of, 79, 393–96, 642
countersecularization in, 179–81
economic modernization and development in, 177–78
Eretz Israel (historic Israel), 173–74
founding of, 174–75
immigration from former Soviet Union to, 177–78, 182, 184
Law of Return in, 178
League against Religious Coercion (Israel) in, 176
the military in, 1, 175, 182–83
nationalism in, 173–74
nonreligious population and, 175–77, 180, 183–84
Orthodox Jews and, 1, 172–84
Palestinian conflict and, 425
political secularism in, 118
religiosity in, 172–73, 177–78, 180–81, 185
religious freedom and, 175–76, 179
secularization in, 172–85
strong establishment of religion in, 338
Zionism and, 173–75, 180, 505–6
Italy
Catholicism in, 59, 112, 409–12, 722
Communist Party in, 59
constitution of, 110, 112, 118
crucifix case in, 409–12
fascist era in, 76
Napoleon’s invasion of, 293
political secularism and, 110, 112, 118
Jabotinsky, Vladimir, 505
Jackelén, Antje, 500, 510
Jagannath temple, 221
Jains, 224
Jakobsen, Janet, 424
Jamaica, 1, 112, 114, 118
James, William
on “experiences of the more,” 584
feelings of epiphany and, 564
on religion and solitude, 76–77, 577
on religions’ boundaries, 500
on “unseen order” of religion and spirituality, 574
Jam’iyyat al-Nida’ al-Jadid, 508
Jam’iyyat al-Tanwir, 508
Jansen, Yolande, 361, 702
(p. 753) Japan
atheism in, 43, 503
Buddhism in, 504

Christianity in, 503–4
Meiji Restoration in, 251
modernization in, 163, 504
nonreligious population in, 8, 43, 503
political secularism in, 112, 114, 118
religiosity's decline in, 573
religious activism in, 77
Russo-Japanese War and, 163
secularism in, 501, 503–4, 524
Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) and, 254
World War II and, 73
Jefferson, Thomas
deism and, 76
Locke and, 303
political secularism and, 94, 106
religious freedom and, 304
secular government and, 126, 132
Jehovah's Witnesses, 139, 613
Jesus
on the end of the world, 289
on God and Caesar, 74, 86, 195
on God's perfection, 611
healing of the poor by, 721
humanist views of, 707
on loving one's neighbor, 134
religious ethics and, 390–91, 395
Jews. *See also* Judaism
Ashkenazi Jews and, 177, 181
in early modern England, 126
in France, 131, 144, 361
*haredim* (Ultra-Orthodox Jews), 177, 180–81
Jewish Enlightenment movement and, 175–76
*masorti* (Conservative Jews) and, 176–79
Middle Ages persecution of, 293
Mizrahi Jews and, 177, 180–81
multiculturalism and, 358, 361
Nazi era and, 72, 299, 506
nonreligious population among, 175–77, 180, 183–84
Orthodox Jews and, 172–84
race and, 506
Reform Jews and, 178–79
religio-secularism and, 374–76, 379
religiosity of, 172–73, 177–78, 180–81, 185
Roman Empire's persecution of, 289
in Russia, 240
secular government and, 131
in the Soviet Union, 231, 233
Ten Commandments and, 642

Zionism and, 173–75, 180, 505–6
Jezebel, 395
Jiang Jieshi, 254
Jiang Jingguo, 254, 256
Jiang Zemin, 260–62
jihadism, 376
Jodl, Friedrich, 26
John 2:15, 612
John 17:14-19, 612
John of Paris, 88–89
Johnson, Samuel, 5
Jones, William R., 700
Jordan, 43
Jordon, W.K., 127
Joshua, T. B., 205
*Journey to the West (xiyuji;* novel*),* 253
Juárez, Benito, 441
Judaism. *See also* Jews
in China, 253
conservative tradition in, 178–79
divorce and, 172, 175, 183
The Enlightenment and, 175–76, 505
humanism and, 709, 713
Israeli nationalism and, 173
Israel's laws regarding conversion to, 176
Kabbala and, 505
marriage and, 172, 175–78, 182–83
modernization and, 173
monotheism and, 57, 288–89, 394
Orthodox Jews' interpretation of, 175–76, 178, 183–84
pork ban in, 184
rationality and, 57
religio-secularism and, 375–76, 379
religious ethics and, 393
religious fundamentalism and, 324
rituals of, 176–77, 179, 181, 183–85
The Sabbath and, 172, 174–75, 177, 181–82, 184
science and, 51–52
secular humanism and, 176, 694
secularism and, 504–6
Zionism and, 174
judicial review, 274–75, 278–82
Juergensmeyer, Mark, 657
Jules, Alix, 524
(p. 754) Jung, Carl, 566, 582
*junzi* (君子; ethical person), 674, 682
Justice Development Party (JDP; Turkey), 161–65
Justice Party (JP; Turkey), 161

just war doctrine, 288, 325–27
Juvenal, 128
*Jyllands-Posten* (Danish newspaper), 296
Kabbala, 505
Kagan, Elena, 486
Kahane, Meir, 506
Kahn, Herman, 576
Kahneman, Daniel, 660
*kami* (Japanese word for “god/spirit”), 503–4
Kane, Robert, 624, 627, 629–32, 634
Kant, Immanuel
on compatabilism, 627
the highest good and, 679
intellectual intuition and, 685
on limitations of reason, 317, 320
on morality and autonomy, 708
perpetual peace theory and, 326–27, 330–31n4
on Protestantism, 379
on transcendence, 683
on the will, 717
Kauffman, Jeffrey, 609–10
Kay, Aaron C., 591
Kazakhstan, 43, 240
Kemal, Mustafa, 156–59. *See also* Atatürk, Kemal
Kennedy, Anthony, 139–40, 484–85, 487
Kennedy, Emmet, 85
Kenya, 202–3
Kepel, Gilles, 375
Kersey, John, 5
*Kesavananda Bharati and Ors v. State of Kerala* (1973), 227n2
Khaddafi, Muammar, 341
Khadr, Omar, 295
Khalid, Khalid Muhammad, 508
Khan, Mohammad Ahmad, 223
Khrushchev, Nikita, 236
Kierkegaard, Søren, 321
King, Richard, 372
King Jr., Martin Luther, 391, 463, 668, 714
kin selection, 645–46
Kitcher, Philip, 6
*Kjeldsen et al.* case, 407–8
Klassen, Pamela, 423
Knights of Columbus, 483, 490
Knowledge Society (Soviet Union), 237
Kobe Festival (Japan), 503–4
Kohlberg, Lawrence, 614, 650
Kopytoff, Igor, 499
Korea. *See* South Korea

Kosmin, Barry, 6, 438, 500, 502, 509
Kouachi, Said and Chérif, 72–73
Kousbroek, Rudy, 712
Kuhn, Thomas, 605
Kuomintang (KMT; Taiwan), 249, 254–57
Kurtz, Paul, 394, 673, 700–701
Kuru, Ahmet, 143–44, 150, 151n16
Kuwait, 43
Kymlicka, Will, 295, 360–61
Kyrgyzstan, 43, 509
Laborde, Cecile, 362, 370
Labor Party (Israel), 174–75
La commission de réflexion sur l'application du principe de laïcité dans la République (France), 303
La droite forte (French political party), 93
Lagerwey, John, 253
LaHaye, Tim, 701
*laïcité* (model of secularism in France)
Charlie Hebdo attack (2015) response and, 34
definition of, 40
Drury's fictional letter to liberty by, 298–99
educational institutions and, 407
feminism and, 420, 423
freedom of conscience and, 143–44
gender equality and, 142, 146–48
headscarf bans and, 106, 145, 148, 302, 308
Islam and, 142–48
as model for other countries, 142
multiculturalism and, 356, 359
neutrality principle and, 145–49, 189, 304, 307–8
opposition to religion in, 79
political secularism of, 93–95, 106
religio-secularism and, 373–74, 377
religious freedom and, 143–46, 148–50
(p. 755) as a "rigid control model" (Taylor), 296
secular government and, 128
separation of religion and state in, 142–45, 148–49, 419, 501
tensions within, 148–49
*Laïcité et République* (report), 303–4, 308
*laiklik* (principle of secularism in Turkey), 93, 155, 165, 167, 500, 503
Laplace, Pierre-Simon, 547
*La Religieuse* (Diderot), 723
Larsen, Nella, 459–61
Latin America, 1, 77, 334, 440. *See also specific countries*
Latinos, 435, 438–41, 443–45
Latour, Bruno, 380
Latvia, 118, 240
Lautsi, Soile, 409

*Lautsi v. Italy* (“crucifix case”), 409–12
Law of Return (Israel), 178
Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations (Russia, 1997), 240
Law on the Unification of Education (Turkey, 1924), 157
Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (China, 1929), 253, 255, 258
Lazarus, Emma, 506
League against Religious Coercion (Israel), 176
League of Nations, 327
League of the Militant Godless (Soviet Union), 233, 237
leaving religion
addiction and, 610–11
apostasy doctrines and, 613
betrayal trauma theory and, 610
cross-cultural perspectives on, 615–17
culture shock and, 603, 615
depression and, 609–10, 612
developmental perspectives on, 614–15
domestic violence and, 610–11
education following, 617
healing and growth following, 617–18
lingering religious trauma and, 608–9, 615–16, 618
morality and, 613–14
paradigm shifts and, 605–8
parenting and, 616
phobia indoctrination and, 612–13
“reclaimers” and, 604, 608–9, 613, 615, 618
religious trauma syndrome and, 609–10
sexual relationships and, 616–18
shattered assumption framework and, 609–10
Lebanon, 43, 127
LeDrew, Stephen, 521–22
Legalism, 252
Leiter, Brian, 307
*Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 405, 484
Lenin, Vladimir, 259, 293
Lesotho, 112, 114, 118
Lessius, Lenard, 729
*A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Locke), 90, 129–30, 132, 291
*The Letters On the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development* (Martineau and Atkinson), 3
Leviticus 18:22, 137
Levy, Leonard, 394–95
Lewis, Bernard, 159, 393
Lewis, C.S., 612
*Leyla Sahin v. Turkey,* 408, 411
LGBT population (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender), 276, 437–38, 445, 462, 476, 597, 728–29. *See also* homosexuality; same-sex marriage
*li* (礼; ritual propriety), 674–77, 679, 682
liberal democracy. *See also* democracy

constitutional principles and, 275
feminism and, 420
individual rights and, 60
judicial review and, 274–75, 278–82
legitimacy and, 271–72
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 340, 343–45
multiculturalism and, 355–56
political secularism and, 94, 104, 108, 115
priority of public reasons and, 271–72, 275, 277–82
privatization of religion and, 29
religion's role in, 271
religio-secularism and, 370, 372–74
religiosity declines and, 65
secular government and, 134
secularization and, 56, 62
(p. 756) liberal-democratic constitutionalism (LDC)
constitutional secularism and, 340–41
India and, 338–39, 341, 343–44, 346
morality and, 334, 340–42, 346
nonconstitutional pluralism (NOCOP) and, 338–39
nonestablishment and private pluralism (NEPP) and, 338–39
pluralism and, 334, 338–39, 345
popular sovereignty and, 343
secularization and, 334, 340–41
liberalism. *See also* liberal democracy
Chinese criticism of, 259
communitarian critics of, 294–95
culture wars and, 24
educational institutions and, 403, 413
feminism and, 420–27
flaws in foundations of, 290–93
freedom of conscience and, 305–6
humanism and, 176, 709
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 333, 337–46
multiculturalism and, 287, 354–56, 359
pluralism and, 176, 178, 182
political secularism and, 13, 22, 33, 103–5, 108, 112, 115
religion and, 13, 31, 502
religio-secularism and, 369–75, 379–80
religious freedom and, 172, 198, 291–92, 298
secular government and, 125, 127, 131–32, 134, 136
secular humanism and, 694, 697
secularism and, 287–99
secularity and, 517, 522
secularization and, 182–83
secular spirituality and, 577, 579
separation of religion and state in, 93
state neutrality and, 310

*Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Kymlicka), 295
liberal secularism, 164, 356, 370
libertarianism, 623–24, 628, 631–34
Libya, 43, 342
Li Denghui, 256
Liechtenstein, 108, 118
life after death, 46–47, 451, 707, 732
*The Life-Story of a Humanist* (Gould), 696
*Liji* (Book of Rites), 251–52
Lindsay, Ron, 486
lingering religious trauma, 608–9, 615–16, 618
Lisbon Treaty, 309
Lithuania, 118
*Living With a Wild God* (Ehrenreich), 565
Locke, John
Cambridge Platonists and, 303
Catholicism and, 133, 291
on “divine” human rights, 251
*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and, 133
*First Tract on Government* and, 128–29
on freedom of conscience, 291, 305
*A Letter Concerning Toleration* and, 90, 129–30, 132, 291
political secularism and, 90–94, 189
on pretense of loyalty to God, 130, 136, 139–40
on pretense of loyalty to the common good, 130, 136
on religious freedom, 291–93
*Second Treatise of Government* and, 291
secular government and, 126–34, 136–40
on separation of religion and state, 189
on tolerance, 90, 128–30, 132–33, 140, 291
Lockett, Gabriel, 463
logical positivism, 306–7
Loi du 9 décembre 1905 relative à la séparation des Églises et de l’État (France), 94–95, 143–45, 148–49, 302
*Lokāyata* (Hindu school of thought), 34
Lombroso, Cesare, 722
Lord’s Resistance Army (Uganda), 207
Louw, Maria, 509
*Loving v. Virginia,* 490
Lübbe, Hermann, 21–23, 25–26
Luckmann, Thomas, 27, 62, 519, 576
Lucretius, 628, 632
Luke 14:26, 613
Luke 20:25, 195
Lunacharskii, Anatolii, 232
Luria, Isaac, 505
Luther, Martin
freedom of conscience and, 90–91, 625, 629

individualism and, 90
political secularism and, 90–92, 94
on vocation, 57
wars of religion and, 290
(p. 757) Lutheranism, 62, 144, 240, 251, 335, 357, 361
Luttrell, Lesleigh M., 640
Luxembourg, 118
al-Ma’arri, Abu ‘L-ala Ahmad bin Abdullah, 507
MacCulloch, Diarmaid, 723
Macedonia, 118
Machle, Edward, 682
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 724
Maclure, Jocelyn, 309–11, 370, 374
Madan, T.N., 87
Madeley, John, 107
Madison, James
Locke and, 126, 189
“Memorial and Remonstrance” and, 133
political secularism and, 90, 92, 94
religious freedom and, 304
secular government and, 126, 133
separation of religion and state and, 189, 310, 312
Madras Devadasi (Prevention of Dedication) Bill and Central Untouchability (Offenses) Act, 220
Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act, 220
Mahama, John Dramani, 206–7, 209
Mahmed II (Ottoman emperor), 508
Mahmood, Saba, 31, 420
Maimonides, 505
Malaysia, 43, 427, 429–30
Malta, 108, 118
Mamans toutes Égales (Mothers All-Equal organization), 147–49
Mandal Commission (India), 224
Mandela, Nelson, 714–18
Mao Zedong, 259–60
Marcion of Synope, 725
Marduk (Babylonian deity), 396
Mari Autonomous Republic (Soviet Union), 238
Mark 12:17, 86
Markus, Robert, 87
Markus Dressler, 370
Marquand, David, 105, 115
marriage
African Americans and, 459, 462
Christianity and, 55
civil forms of, 24
feminism and, 428
interracial marriage and, 482, 490
Islam and, 507, 709

Judaism and, 172, 175–78, 182–83
judicial review and, 280
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 345
same-sex marriage and, 126, 137–38, 276, 279–80, 439, 441, 474–75, 488, 728–29
secular government and, 126, 137–38
sex within, 616
Marshall, Margaret, 138
*Marsh v. Chambers,* 469, 484–85
Marsilius of Padua, 89, 91–92, 94
Martey, Emmanuel, 209
Martin, David, 28, 58, 64
Martineau, Harriet, 3
Marvel Comics, 499
Marx, Karl
on alientation, 364
atheism of, 260
Chinese Leninist religion and, 259
on the "Jewish Question," 374
Marxism and, 258, 260–61, 299
religion's decline predicted by, 77
on science and superstition, 64
secularization and, 26
Maryland, 700
Maslow, Abraham, 559, 577, 582
*masorti* (traditional, non-Orthodox Jews), 176–78
Massachusetts, 486, 488–90
Massachusetts Family Institute, 490
Matthew 5:48, 611
Matthew 22:21, 74, 86
Mauritius, 118
Maxwell, Nicholas, 626
Mayerne, Theodore de, 723
Ma Yingjeou, 257
Mays, Benjamin E., 699
Mazie, Steven, 105, 115
McFarland, H. Neill, 503
McVeigh, Timothy, 82–83
meaning gap, 554, 556
Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger), 561
meditation, 542–44, 565–66, 581
Meiji Restoration (Japan), 251
Mele, Alfred, 626, 630–31, 634–35
"Memorial and Remonstrance" (Madison), 133
(p. 758) Mencius, 674–77, 679–83, 685
Mencken, H.L., 698
mental health
atheism and, 545
expressive writing and, 564

lingering religious trauma and, 608
prosociality and, 536, 538, 542–43, 545
spirituality and, 541–42
mentalizing, 590–91, 593
*Mere Christianity* (Lewis), 612
Meşeci, F., 157
mesmerism, 583
*Messenger* (journal), 456–57
metaphysics, 316, 337, 344, 634, 683
Metchnikoff, Elie, 729
Methodism
African Americans and, 461, 463
in colonial America, 304
decline in United Kingdom of, 66–67
diet and, 723
Great Awakenings and, 190
mainstreaming of, 62
Mexico, 43, 93, 118, 441
Michels, Robert, 63
Middle Ages
authoritarian notions of truth in, 65
Black Death in, 64
Christianity and, 23–24, 60, 64–65, 673
clerical roles during, 78–79
Crusades and religious persecution during, 293
as “Dark Ages,” 290
political secularism in, 87–89, 93
village life in, 60
Middle East, 77, 79–81, 177. *See also specific countries*
Mill, John Stuart, 127, 136–37, 294, 298, 690
Millennial Generation, 436–38, 445
Miller, Alice, 608
Mills, John Atta, 205, 208–9
Milwaukee Sikh Gurdwara attack (2012), 72–73
mimesis, 714–15, 717–18
mind-blind atheism, 589–90, 593
Ming dynasty, 252–53
Minnesota, 474
Mitchell, Jeffrey “P-funk,” 452
moderate secularism, 164, 354, 356, 358–63, 370
Modern, John Lardas, 509–10
modernization
Catholicism and, 722
cultural diversity and, 61
feminism and, 419–20, 428
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 335, 343, 346
medicine and, 723, 730
postsecularism and, 318, 323–24

religions’ decline and, 23
religious revival movements and, 66
secularity and, 77
secularization and, 11–12, 22–23, 27–28, 33, 503, 510, 674
secularization theory and, 333
structural differentiation and, 58–59
Modood, Tariq, 370
Mogra, Ibrahim, 363
Mohammed (prophet of Islam), 195–96, 297, 391
Moldova, 118
Moll, Jorge, 641
Momayezi, Nasser, 156, 158
mondialatinisation (Derrida), 371–72, 379
Mongolia, 119
monotheism
Christianity and, 57, 288–90
competition among religions and, 334
Islam and, 288–90
Judaism and, 57, 288–89, 394
morality and, 288–89
pagan religion contrasted with, 287–89
rationality and, 57
secularism and, 287
secularization and, 56–57
Monsma, Stephen, 413
Montaigne, Michel de, 707, 712
Montenegro, 119
Moore, Russell D., 486
*The Moral Arc* (Schermer), 525
morality
agency and, 623–27, 629–31, 635
atheism and, 451
Book of Genesis and, 642
communitarianism and, 294–95
Confucianism and, 679, 683
culturally relative moral norms and, 651–52
ethics and, 655–56, 658, 660, 662–65
evolutionary theory and, 642–43, 645, 647, 649–51
(p. 759) globalization and, 80
in-group dynamics and, 659–60, 662–68
Kant on, 708
leaving religion and, 613–14
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 334, 340–42, 346
monotheism and, 288–89
moral autonomy and, 391–92, 394, 397
moral heteronomy and, 391–92
mutual recognition and, 323
naturalistic accounts of, 14

pagan religion and, 288
political secularism and, 106
prosociality and, 533–34, 538–42, 546
rationality and, 651
religio-secularism and, 372
religious ethics and, 391–92, 394, 576, 690
secular government and, 132, 136
secularism and, 4, 12, 24, 76, 85
secularity and, 526–27
secular morality and, 540–41
secular spirituality and, 578
species' variance in, 640–41
supernatural *versus* social monitoring and, 539–40
universal moral norms and, 651
well-being and, 557, 559
Moral Majority, 488, 493
More, Thomas, 405, 707
Mormonism, 75
Morocco, 43
Moses (Old Testament), 395, 642
*Moses and Monotheism* (Biale), 505
Motherland Party (MP, Turkey), 161
Mothers All-Equal (France), 147–49
Mou Zongsan, 683–84
Mo Zongshan, 252
*mulid* festivals (Egypt), 509
Multatuli, 712
multiculturalism
anxieties regarding, 73, 82, 418
Catholicism and, 356–57, 361
democracy and, 355–56
education and, 295, 356–57
feminism and, 427–28
in France, 356, 358–59, 362–63
gender and, 358, 361, 364
in Germany, 356–57, 359, 361
headscarf bans and, 363–64
in India, 361–62, 364
Islam and, 355, 357, 359, 363
Jews and, 358, 361
*laïcité* and, 356, 359
liberal democracy and, 355–56
liberalism and, 287, 354–56, 359
Muslims and, 358–64
nonreligious population and, 354–55, 363
political secularism and, 354–56, 362
public sphere and, 297, 358–59
race and, 358–59, 364

religio-secularism and, 374
religiosity and, 296–97
religious freedom and, 355
secularization and, 356, 361
separation of religion and state and, 360
state neutrality and, 360–61
Taylor on, 296–98, 355
terrorism and, 357, 359
tolerance and, 77
in the United States, 295, 356, 360, 362
in Western Europe, 355–56, 358–60, 362
multiple secularisms, 6, 340, 370, 374
Munro, Donald, 682–83
Muslims. *See also* Islam
Arab nationalism and, 193–94
Danish cartoon controversy and, 31, 71–73, 296
in France, 1, 34, 71–73, 106, 131, 143–49, 308, 361, 375, 666
in India, 217, 222–24
in-group identity and, 665–66
Marvel Comics and, 499
Middle Ages persecution of, 293
multiculturalism and, 358–64
in Myanmar, 80
in the Netherlands, 359
public educational institutions and, 407, 409
religio-secularism and, 374–76, 380
in Russia, 240, 407
secular government and, 131, 139
secularism and, 193–99, 506–9
in the Soviet Union, 233, 235–36
state neutrality and, 194–99
in Thailand, 79
in the United Kingdom, 67
al-Mutawa, Naif, 499
Mu’tazilite sect, 507
(p. 760) mutual autonomy, 355–56, 372
Myanmar, 77, 79–80
*The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus), 558
Nagel, Thomas, 634
An-Na’im, Abdullahi, 196, 430
Najle, Maxine, 592, 596
Nana Kwame Ampadu, 205
Napoleon, 144, 251, 293, 396, 508
Nasser, Gamal Adel, 76, 508
National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (India), 219–20
National Day of Prayer, 483, 487
National Democratic Congress Party (Ghana), 206, 208–9
nationalism

Arab nationalism and, 193–94
black nationalism and, 450
in China, 259, 261–62
decline in faith in, 78
in France, 76
globalization and, 78
in India, 215–17, 223, 381
in the Middle East, 79
race and, 505–6
religious challenges to, 80
secularism and, 76–78, 80, 82
in South Asia, 79
in Taiwan, 256
in Turkey, 156, 159, 163
in the United States, 76
Zionism and, 173–75, 180, 505–6
Nationalist Action Party (NAP; Turkey), 161
National Liberal League, 694
National Religious Party (Israel), 175
National Salvation Party (NSP; Turkey), 161
National Secular Society, 25
National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI), 435–37, 440, 442
naturalism
agency and, 606–7
Confucianism and, 682–84
The Enlightenment and, 606
leaving religion and, 617
Religion of Humanity and, 693
secularism and, 85, 555
Navarro-Rivera, Juhem, 438
Nazism, 299, 667
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 77, 95, 214, 217–18
Nehru Report, 215–16
Nelson, John, 503–4
Nepal, 1
The Netherlands
atheism in, 43
early modern era in, 251
humanism in, 706, 712
liberal democracy and, 62
Muslims in, 359
nonconstitutional pluralism in, 338
nonreligious population in, 43
political secularism in, 112, 114, 119
secular government and, 130
secularism in, 8
Nettler, Ronald, 105, 115
Neturei Karta, 506

neurosociology, 726
neurotheology, 250
Newberg, Andrew, 565
Newdow, Michael, 487–88
New Hampshire, 474
New Harmony colony, 75
New Patriotic Party (Ghana), 208–9
New Thought movement, 582
Newton, Isaac, 303, 722–23
New York Society for Ethical Culture, 695
New Zealand
atheism in, 592
constitution of, 110
earthquake (2011) in, 591
liberal democracy in, 108
nonreligious population in, 43
political secularism and, 108, 110, 112, 114, 119
Nicaragua, 119
*Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle), 715, 732
Niebuhr, H. Richard, 62
Niebuhr, Reinhold, 700
Nietzsche, Friedrich, 30, 232, 557–58, 575, 655
Nigeria, 1, 43, 202–4, 210
“Nine Planks of Liberalism” (American Secular Union), 93
Nkrumah, Kwame, 208
“No Football Colors Rule” (Perry), 128–29
nonbelief. *See also* atheism
Holyoake on, 85
origins of, 589–93
secularity and, 516–17, 521, 523–25
(p. 761) nonconstitutional pluralism (NOCOP), 338–39
nonestablishment and private pluralism (NEPP), 338–39
Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network, 8, 32
nonreligious population
African Americans and, 440, 457–58, 461–62
age demographics and, 43–45
definitional questions regarding, 41
diversity among, 32, 588–89, 598
education and, 45–46, 402, 409, 413
end-of-life concerns and, 545–46
ethics and, 655–56, 664
feminism and, 417, 421
global expansion of, 7–8, 55, 436–38, 571–72
in Israel, 175–77, 180, 183–84
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 334–35, 343
meaning-making and, 558–59
multiculturalism and, 354–55, 363
political secularism and, 104–5

postsecualrism and, 321–22, 329
prejudices against, 14
prosociality and, 536–39, 541–45
religio-secularism and, 377
religious freedom and, 306, 308
religious rituals and, 555
science and, 48–53
secularity and, 516, 518, 520–22, 524–25, 527–28
secular spirituality and, 573–76, 580, 583
spirituality and, 14
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202–3
in the United States, 7, 43, 436–38, 440–42, 494, 510, 587, 604
well-being and, 556, 566, 594
World Values Survey data on, 40–53
Norenzayan, Ara, 589, 593, 595–96
normative secularism, 333
Norris, Pippa, 419
North Carolina, 587
Northern Ireland, 66, 125, 127, 291
Norway
atheism in, 592
nonreligious population in, 538
political secularism in, 119
religious and ethics curriculum in, 408
weak religious establishment in, 338, 356
welfare system in, 731
youth camp attack (2011) in, 72–73, 82–83
Obama, Barack
Latinos' voting for, 444
nonreligious Americans' voting for, 441, 444
Office of Faith-Based Initiatives and, 95
racist backlash against, 454–55
obedience (personality dimension), 614, 616
Obeng, Kwadwo, 463–64
Oberg, Kalervo, 615
*Obergefell v. Hodges,* 283n13, 474
Ockham, William of, 89–92
O'Connor, Sandra Day, 468
O'Connor, Timothy, 631–34
Office of Faith-Based Initiatives (United States), 95, 487
O'Hair, Madalyn Murray, 596
Ohene, Elizbeth, 205–6
Oishi, Shigehiro, 557
Okin, Susan, 427
Oklahoma City terrorist bombing (1995), 82
Old Order Amish, 469
Omri (king of Old Testament Israel), 395
*On Liberty* (Mill), 137, 294

Open Court Publishing, 690
openness to experience (personality dimension), 579
Oregon, 689
*The Origin and Nature of Secularism* (Holyoake), 2–4
*The Origin of the Species* (Darwin), 724
Orthodox Christianity
in Bulgaria, 191
in Eastern Europe, 407
educational institutions and, 406–7
religious fundamentalism and, 334–35
in Russia, 239–41, 251, 406–7
science and, 51
in Serbia and, 191
Soviet Union's political culture and, 94, 231–35
Orthodox Jews
*haredim* (Ultra-Orthodox Jews) and, 177, 180–81
*hazarah be-teshuvah* (movement encouraging Jews to return to religious life) and, 179–80
(p. 762) Israeli state funding for, 175
Israel's military and, 1, 175, 182
Judaism's laws interpreted by, 175–76, 178, 183–84
secularization and, 172
SHAS Party and, 180
Zionism and, 173–74
Othman, Norani, 429–30
Otto, Rudolf, 511
Ottoman Empire
Battle of Vienna (1683) and, 82
elite-commoner distinction in, 166
millet system in, 342
secularization in, 156
Turkey as successor of, 155, 157–58, 164, 166
Westernization and modernization movement in, 158, 160, 167, 508
World War I and, 156
*Outlaws of the Marsh* (*shuihuzhuan;* novel), 253
Owusu, Stephen Atta, 205
Packer, George, 72–73
pagan religion, 287–89
Page, Wade Michael, 72–73
Paker, K.O., 166
Pakistan, 43, 93, 216, 297, 427
Palestine, 43
Palin, Sarah, 493
Paller, Jeffrey, 209
Palomino, Rafael, 188–89
Panama, 119
Pancasila (Indonesia's founding ideology), 191
paradigm shifts, 605–8
Paraguay, 119

Parigi, Paolo, 722
Parla, Taha, 155–56, 159
Parsis, 224
Parvez, Aqsa, 295
“Pascal’s Wager,” 534, 546
*Passing* (Larsen), 460
patriotism, 261–62, 360, 472, 489
Patterson, Ivori, 458
Paul (New Testament author), 613, 721
Pawelski, James O., 563
Peale, Norman Vincent, 582
Pearson, Thomas, 692
Peck, M. Scott, 582
Pelkmans, Mathijs, 241
Peloponnesian War, 288
Penn, William, 90
Pennebaker, James, 564
Pentecostalism
among African Americans, 461
asceticism and, 63
Global South and, 28
among Latinos in the United States, 444
science and, 51
soap operas and, 512
in the Soviet Union, 234
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202, 204–7
in the United Kingdom, 67
Perkins, Franklin, 680
PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment), 560–61
perpetual peace theory (Kant), 326–27, 330–31n4
Perry, Rick, 492
personal secularity, 10, 12, 14, 494
perspective-taking, 646, 648, 650, 652
Peru, 1, 43, 119
Peter the Great (tsar of Russia), 231
Pflaum, George, 510
*Phantoms in the Brain,* 250
Philippe Le Bel (king of France), 144
The Philippines, 43, 119, 371
Phillips, Anne, 425
Phillips, Bruce, 509
Philpott, Daniel, 104
phobia indoctrination, 612–13
*phronèsis* (practical knowledge), 715–16
Piaget, Jean, 614
Pierce, William, 82
Pinn, Anthony, 451, 456, 458, 463
Pitts-Taylor, Victoria, 726

Pius IX (pope), 93
Pius VII (pope), 251, 396
placebo effect, 543
Plantinga, Alvin, 635n1
Plato, 288, 573
Pledge of Allegiance (United States), 308, 473, 483, 486–88, 490, 494
*plenitudo potestatis* (principle of papal power), 88–89
pluralism
democracy and, 305
feminism and, 423, 429
(p. 763) humanism and, 712, 715
in Indian political and culture life, 218–19
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 334, 338–39, 345
liberalism and, 176, 178, 182
pagan religion and, 288
public education and, 408, 410, 412
religioethnic conflict and, 66
religio-secularism and, 371
secular government and, 134
secularity and, 517, 574
state neutrality and, 195, 197
United States and, 190
Poland
atheism in, 41, 43
Catholicism in, 66, 192, 419
European Union and, 309
nonreligious population in, 41, 43
political secularism and, 119
resistance to Soviet Communism in, 66
political heteronomy, 394
*Political Liberalism* (Rawls), 134–35, 281–82, 345–46, 421
political secularism. *See also* secular government; *specific countries*
Augustine and, 86, 87, 92
autonomy and, 93–95, 354–56
binary division of social bodies and, 86–88, 90
Catholicism and, 87–90, 93–94
Christianity and, 86–94
critics of, 103–5
definition of, 11, 103–4, 354–55
democracy and, 13, 103–5, 107–9, 112–20
democratic constitutions and, 110–13, 116–20
democratic government policy and, 112–14
in early modern period, 90–92
education and, 12
the Enlightenment and, 86, 93
French Revolution and, 93, 233, 293, 302–4, 308, 311, 313
genealogy of, 85–86
liberal democracy and, 94, 104, 108, 115

liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 343, 345
liberalism and, 13, 22, 33, 103–5, 108, 112, 115
Locke on, 90–94, 189
Luther and, 90–92, 94
measures of, 108–10
in the Middle Ages, 87–89, 93
modernity and, 93–96
multiculturalism and, 354–56, 362
origins of, 693–94
proto-political secularism and, 88–90
religio-secularism and, 370
religious ethics and, 390, 394
religious freedom and, 92, 105, 107, 115
as secularism’s core value, 12
state neutrality and, 195
types of, 95, 105–7
worldview secularism and, 12, 24, 32–33
Pollack, Detlef, 28, 35n2
Pol Pot, 82, 342
polysecularity, 11, 525
Porte de Vincennes attack (France, 2015), 21
Portugal, 119
positive psychology
empirical approach in, 559–60
eudaimonia and, 561–63
humanity’s inner potential and, 582
meaning-making and, 554
as response to pathology-oriented psychology, 559, 566
well-being and, 14, 554, 556, 559–61, 566
positive secularism, 555
posthumanism, 725, 729–31
postsecularism
Bader’s critique of the concept of, 336–37, 341
communicative rationality and, 318–22, 325, 327–28
Habermas on, 13
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 333–34, 344
modernization and, 318, 323–24
politcal secularism and, 95–96
religio-secularism and, 370, 378–81
religiosity and, 321–22
religious-based violence and, 318, 321, 324
religious fundamentalism and, 323–24
religious violence and, 324–27
secularity and, 517–18
shift from secularism to, 316–17
theological endorsement of, 327–30
Potter, Charles Francis, 696–98
Potter, William James, 692

*Practical Ethics* (Singer), 724
Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 209
Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT), 255–56
(p. 764) President's Order of 1950 (India), 224
pretense of loyalty to God (Locke), 130, 136, 139–40
pretense of loyalty to the common good (Locke), 130, 136
*Principles of Philosophy of the Future* (Holyoake), 692
*Principles of Secularism* (Holyoake), 4, 85, 408, 411, 692
priority of public reasons
abortion and, 273, 278
argumentative entanglement and, 277–80
citizens' agreements regarding, 274–75
headscarf bans and, 280–81
judicial review and, 274–75, 278–82
legitimacy of liberal democracy and, 271–72
mutual accountability proviso and, 277–79, 283n11
neutrality principle and, 275–76
as "properly political" reasons, 275
religious forms of life and, 271, 280–81
same-sex marriage and, 276, 279–80
Prisoner's Dilemma games, 650
privatization
of religion, 29, 180, 219, 233, 334–35, 419, 425
secularization and, 26, 56, 61–62
Programme for the Study of Religion and, 8
The Prophet. *See* Mohammed (prophet of Islam)
prosociality. *See also* sociality
altruism and, 14, 541, 546
empathy and, 540–41
morality and, 533–34, 538–42, 546
nonreligious population and, 536–39, 541–45
secularity and, 537–38, 541
social engagement and, 535–36, 543
prosperity gospel, 456, 463, 510, 732
protection of religious minorities, 342
*Protestant Errors and Roman Catholic Truths* (Ellison), 2
Protestantism. *See also* evangelicalism; *specific sects*
African Americans and, 444, 458
cultural defense and, 66
economic modernization and growth due to, 61, 63–64
educational institutions and, 402, 404
The Enlightenment and, 723
freedom of conscience and, 292
Great Awakenings and, 190
individualism and, 335, 510
Latinos and, 440
liberal democracy and, 62
liberal forms of, 577, 693, 700

"Protestant Ethic" and, 56–57, 63
Protestant Reformation and, 56–60, 127, 723
religio-secularism and, 379–80
religious fundamentalism within, 73
in Russia, 240
schism and sects in, 58–59, 190
science and, 51
secularism and, 510
wars of religion and, 290
Psalm 72, 136–37
psychedelic drugs, 564–66
public prayer controversies
educational institutions and, 402, 404–5, 483
evangelical community's responses to, 728
*Marsh v. Chambers* and, 469, 484–85
National Day of Prayer and, 487
public meetings and, 1, 469–70, 472–73, 484–86
*Town of Greece v. Galloway* and, 469–70, 472–73, 484–86
public secularism, 483
public sphere
African American atheists and, 462
feminism and, 417–18, 421–26
Habermas on, 421–23, 425, 430
*laïcité* approach in, 40
multiculturalism and, 297, 358–59
political secularism's approach to, 104–6, 109
priority of public reasons and, 271–72, 274–75, 277–81
religion and, 13, 297, 321, 339, 369, 656
religio-secularism and, 371–72, 374, 376, 380–81
secularism in, 7, 74
separation of religion and state in, 311, 313
Pussy Riot protests (Russia, 2012), 241
Putnam, Robert, 436, 535–36, 561
al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 195
Qatar, 43
Qing dynasty, 252–53
Quakers, 58, 62–63
(p. 765) Quebec, 294, 296, 311
quest orientation, 575
*Quicksand* (Larsen), 459–61
Quidort, Jean. *See* John of Paris
The Qur'an
Abraham story in, 393
Elijah in, 394
Habermas on, 322
humanism and, 709–10
on humankind as one nation, 197
Hussain's critiques of, 508

Soviet prohibitions against, 234
state neutrality's compatibility with, 195
Rabin, Itzhak, 179
race
discrimination and, 72–73, 450–51, 454–56, 474, 476, 489–90
inequality and, 422, 424, 450–51
multiculturalism and, 358–59, 364
nationalism and, 505–6
religio-secularism and, 375
science and, 454–55
secularism and, 440–44
secularism in the United States and, 435, 437–38, 445
secularity and, 523–24
segregation and, 454, 476, 482, 728
*The Race Myth* (Graves), 455
*rajdharma* (moral authority legitimizing rulers), 79
Randolph, A. Philip, 445, 456–57, 464n2
Ransel, David, 238
Raphael Susewind, 508
Rashid, Kamau, 464
rational choice theory, 578–79
Rationalist Press Association (RPA), 696–97
rationality
communicative rationality and, 318–22, 325, 327–28
disenchantment and, 28
The Enlightenment and, 75, 420, 426, 429, 576
The Jewish Enlightenment and, 176
Middle Ages and, 290
monotheism and, 57
morality and, 651
postsecularism and, 329
rational choice theory and, 578–79
religio-secularism and, 380
religious superstition combated by, 25
science and, 307, 556, 726
secularization and, 56–57, 65–66
social sciences' emphasis on, 583
*The Rationalization of Miracles* (Parigi), 722
Ratzinger, Joseph, 317–18, 327–29. *See also* Benedict XVI
Ravizza, Mark, 626
Rawlings, Jerry, 208
Rawls, John
deep value pluralism and, 371
Habermas and, 317, 330n1
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 345–46
*Political Liberalism* and, 134–35, 281–82, 345–46
on political secularism's goals, 104
on priority of public reasons, 275–77, 281

on the “public use of reason,” 421
secular government and, 126, 134–36, 138
state neutrality and, 310, 359
“veil of ignorance” and, 134–35
al-Raziq, Ali Abd, 507
Reader, Ian, 503
Reagan, Ronald, 441, 487, 493, 724
*The Reasoner* (magazine published by Holyoake), 2–4, 690
*A Reason Open to God* (Ratzinger), 329
Reason Rally (2012), 521
reciprocity, 639–40, 643–44, 647–49, 651, 659, 678
reclaimers. *See* leaving religion
Redfield, James, 582
Reese, Curtis W., 696–98
*Refah Partisi v. Turkey,* 408
Reid, Thomas, 631
relativism, 56, 65–66, 408, 573
RELIGARE research project, 347
Religion and Its Others (book series), 8
Religion and State (RAS) dataset, 103
Religion for Atheists, 559
*Religion for Atheists* (de Botton), 525
Religion of Humanity (Comte), 558–59, 692–93, 696, 701
*The Religion of Humanity* (Frothingham), 692–93
(p. 766) religio-secularism
Catholicism and, 371, 377
Christianity and, 379, 381
critiques of, 376–80, 702
definition of, 370
democracy and, 370, 372–74
the Enlightenment and, 372
France and, 370, 373–75, 377, 379
gender and, 373, 375
Habermas and, 372–73, 379
headscarf bans and, 369–70, 373–74, 379
India and, 369, 371, 381
Islam and, 375–77, 379, 381
Judaism and, 375–76, 379
liberal democracy and, 370, 372–74
postsecularism and, 370, 378–81
Protestantism and, 379–80
the public sphere and, 371–72, 374, 376, 380–81
secularity and, 370, 372–77, 380–81
separation of religion and state and, 372–73, 377
Turkey and, 370, 373
wars of religion and, 371, 373, 377
religiosity
African Americans and, 443, 450–52, 456–61

age demographics and, 44–45, 51
alleged effects of, 533–35
belief-centered forms of, 335
Cold War era and, 436, 483, 699
declines in, 55, 65, 67–68, 337, 419, 571–73
definitions of, 40
education and, 44–46, 50
end-of-life concerns and, 545–46
ethics and, 664
gender and, 42–44, 537
multiculturalism and, 296–97
natural disasters and, 591
in nineteenth-century Europe, 28
postsecularism and, 321–22
prosociality and, 533–40, 543
science and, 40–41, 47–53, 51
secular humanism and, 689–91
secularity and, 519, 525
secular spirituality and, 574, 577, 579
in sub-Saharan Africa, 202–9
torture and, 534
well-being and, 533–35, 538, 594
World Values Survey data on, 40–53
religious, spiritual, and mystical experiences (RSMEs), 564
religious-based violence, 318, 321, 324–27
religious ethics
the Bible and, 392–95
Christianity and, 393–94
Confucianism and, 679–80, 682
critiques of, 389–97
Islam and, 389–90, 393
morality and, 391–92, 394, 576, 690
secular basis of, 663–67
religious freedom
China’s promises regarding, 260–62
democracy and, 304–9, 311–14
educational institutions and, 409, 412
freedom of conscience and, 305–6, 307, 309, 311–13
headscarf bans judged to be a violation of, 281
in India, 214, 216, 220–22, 226
*laïcité* and, 143–46, 148–50
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 342
liberalism and, 172, 198, 291–92, 298
Locke on, 291–93
multiculturalism and, 355
nonreligious population and, 306, 308
political secularism and, 92, 105, 107, 115
religio-secularism and, 373–74

Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and, 470–71, 475, 490–91
religious privilege and, 490–92
secular government and, 125, 127–32, 136, 139
secularism and, 1, 142
state neutrality and, 197–98, 307–10, 312, 425
in Taiwan, 249–50, 255, 257–58, 263
in the United States, 144, 189–91, 197, 291–92, 304, 484–85
in Yugoslavia, 192
religious fundamentalism
African Americans and, 463
feminism and, 426–28
global increases in, 28
Habermas on, 318, 321, 323–24
religious-based violence and, 324–27
religious law and, 313
religious humanism. *See under* humanism
Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, 491
religious trauma syndrome, 609–10
(p. 767) Religious Zionism, 180
*ren* (仁; humaneness), 674–77, 676, 679
Renaissance humanism, 673, 691, 698, 706–8, 712–13
Republican Party (United States)
African Americans and, 444
culture war issues and, 438–39
Latinos and, 444
nonreligious population and, 13, 436–37, 442–43, 445–46
religious supporters of, 440, 492–93
women and, 445
Republican People's Party (RPP; Turkey), 156, 160–61, 163, 165
"return of religion," 27–28, 67, 77, 333–35
*Rex pacificus* (medieval work on political secularism), 89
Rigid Control Model (Taylor), 296
Ritter, Ryan S., 594
rituals
in ancient China, 251–52
Christianity and, 55, 57
in Communist regimes, 192
Comte's "religion of humanity" and, 558–59
Confucianism and, 678–79, 681
in-group dynamics and, 662
Judaism and, 176–77, 179, 181, 183–85
meaning-making and, 558–59, 565–66
pagan religion and, 287–88
prosociality and, 542–44, 546, 583
technology and, 571
well-being and, 555
World Values Survey data on beliefs regarding, 46–47
Roberts, John, 487

Roberts, Oral, 724
*Roe v. Wade,* 728
Roger Finke, 107, 239
Rogers, Carl, 582
Roman Empire, 87, 289–90
Romania, 43, 119, 409
Romney, Mitt, 444
Rorty, Richard, 135–37, 139–40
Rose, Ernestine L., 461
Round Table Conference (India), 216
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 78
Roy, Olivier, 95
Rudolph, Eric Robert, 72–73
Rushdie, Salman, 359, 369, 395, 398n2
*The Rush Hour of the Gods* (McFarland), 503
Russell, Bertrand, 394
Russia
atheism in, 43, 239, 241
blasphemy law (2013) in, 406
education in, 240–41
gay rights in, 81
Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations (1997) in, 240
Muslims in, 407
nonreligious population in, 43, 241
Orthodox Church in, 239–41, 251, 406–7
Pentecostalism in, 234
political secularism and, 241
Pussy Riot protests (2012) in, 241
religiosity in, 239–40
Russo-Japanese War and, 163
Rwanda, 43
Ryan, Richard M., 560–61
Sabarimala temples, 221
The Sabbath
Establishment Clause (U.S. Constitution) and, 475
Judaism and, 172, 174–75, 177, 181–82, 184
*The Sacred Canopy* (Berger), 27
Saddleback Church (California), 511
Saeed, Abdullah, 507
Sagan, Carl, 558
Saint-Simon, Claude, 730
“Salvation” (Hughes), 461
same-sex marriage
African Americans and, 439
*Baehr v. Lewin* and, 283–84n16
Black Church and, 464
culture wars and, 439, 728
Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA, 1996) and, 283n12

Democratic Party support for, 441
*Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* and, 137–38, 488–89
*Obergefell v. Hodges* and, 283n13, 474
priority of public reasons and, 276, 279–80
religious objections to, 474–76, 488
secular government and, 126, 137–38
U.S. public opinion regarding, 283nn14–15, 438–39, 729
(p. 768) Sandel, Michael, 422–23, 724, 727
*Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe,* 404–5
Santorum, Rick, 492
Sapru Committee, 216
Saraswath Brahmins, 220–21
Saroglou, Vassillis, 537
Sartre, Jean-Paul, 391, 558, 573
*sarva dharma sambhava* (“all religions are valid” principle in Indian constitution), 191, 217
Saudi Arabia, 1, 81, 395, 587
Scalia, Antonin, 487, 587
Schaeffer, Francis, 701
scheduled castes (SC; India), 222, 224
scheduled tribes (ST; India), 222, 224
Schenck, Rob, 486
Schielke, Samuli, 33, 509
Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 576–77, 584
*School District of Abington Township, Pennsylvania v. Schempp*, 403, 702
science
African Americans in the field of, 458
biomedical technology and, 724–25, 727, 730–31, 733
Confucianism and, 682–84
humanism and, 710
Islam and, 508
logical positivism and, 306–7
Middle Ages and, 290
pagan religion and, 288
paradigm shifts in, 605–7
public educational institutions and the teaching of, 405, 407
race and, 454–55
rationality and, 307, 556, 726
Ratzinger on the incomplete nature of, 328
religion and, 12, 25, 40–41, 47–53, 64, 73–74, 505, 558–59, 614, 724–25
religious fundamentalism and hostility toward, 493
secular ethics and, 673–74
secularism and, 4, 11–12, 690–91, 726
secularity and, 515, 526–28
secularization and, 56, 62, 64–65
secular spirituality and, 573–74, 577–79, 582–83
social sciences’ communication with, 562–63
superstition combated by, 25, 64
transcendence and, 542

on well-being, 554–55, 565
scientific secularism, 11–12
Scopes trial (1925), 698, 728
Scotland, 125, 128–29, 338, 356
Scott, Joan, 420, 422, 427, 430
Search, Edward, 3
*Second Treatise of Government* (Locke), 291
the secular
conceptual history of, 23–24
definitions of, 4–7, 9, 40
diversity within, 31–34
etymology of, 4, 23, 78–79, 663
genealogical approaches to, 21–23, 30–31, 33–34
identification of, 21–22
temporal world as emphasis in, 9, 23
*A Secular Age* (Taylor), 29–30, 74, 296, 516, 657
Secular Coalition, 7
secular ethics
Confucianism and, 674–80
defining elements of, 673
Renaissance humanism and, 673
science and, 673–74
secular government. *See also* political secularism
freedom of religion and, 95
Luther on, 91
“No Football Colors Rule” and, 128–29
religious freedom and, 125, 127–32, 136, 139
sub-Saharan Africa and, 201, 203, 205, 207, 209
United States and, 494
secular humanism. *See under* humanism
secularism
aggressive secularism and, 307, 312, 359
agnosticism and, 435, 572
atheism and, 2–4, 25, 85, 231–33, 302, 313, 435, 502, 555, 572, 690
Bader’s typology of, 342–46
constitutional secularism and, 340–41
decline of religious beliefs and, 29, 219, 334
definitions of, 4, 6, 9–10, 40, 85, 188–89, 516–18, 555, 572, 656
(p. 769) democratic secularism and, 343
diversity within, 499–512
economic secularism and, 11–12
educational secularism and, 11–12
The Enlightenment and, 74–76, 78, 80, 83, 86, 293, 297, 302, 304
ethical secularism and, 11–12, 345
etymology of, 2–3, 126
exclusivist secularism and, 343–44
foreign translations of the word, 79
freethought and, 3, 694, 701–2

global expansion of, 1–2, 7–9, 11, 55, 77, 554, 604
Habermas on, 316–17
“hard” *versus* “soft” forms of, 502
Holyoake’s introduction of the concept of, 2–4, 25–26, 30, 34, 75, 85, 690–92, 699, 701–2
impartiality and, 317
inclusive secularism and, 344
justificatory secularism and, 345
laicist secularism and, 164
liberalism and, 287–99
liberal secularism and, 164, 356, 370
materialism and, 3–4, 12, 85
meaning-making and, 554–64, 567, 608
moderate secularism and, 164, 354, 356, 358–63, 370
morality and, 4, 12, 24, 76, 85
nonreligious worldview and, 6–9, 11–12, 22, 29–30
normative secularism and, 333
political secularism and, 11–13, 22, 24–27, 30, 32–33, 85–95, 103–15, 195, 343, 345, 354–56, 362, 370, 390, 394, 693, 699, 702
positive secularism and, 555
postcolonial critiques of, 702
public secularism and, 483
religion and, 12–13, 74–83, 142, 290, 302, 509–12, 518–20, 574
religio-secularism and, 369–71, 373–81, 702
religious individuals’ hostility toward, 71–73
science and, 4, 11–12, 690–91, 726
scientific secularism and, 11–12
secularization and, 11, 85
secular studies (academic discipline) and, 2, 8–9
shift to postsecularism and, 316–17
utilitarianism and, 4
well-being and, 556
Western global power and, 80–82
World Values Survey data on, 40
worldview secularism and, 12, 22, 24–25, 32–33
*Secularism and Nonreligion* (academic journal), 8
secularity
communicative rationality and, 319
definitions of, 9–10, 516–18
diversity within, 14, 519–20, 522, 525–26, 528–29
feminism and, 420
Habermas on, 316
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 341–43
modernization and, 77
personal secularity and, 10, 12, 14, 494
polysecularity and, 11, 525
polyvalence of, 29–30
postsecularism and, 317
prosociality and, 537–38, 541

religio-secularism and, 370, 372–77, 380–81
religious fundamentalism and, 323
religious jurisprudence and, 472
religious traditions and, 321
role of the philosopher and, 320
secularism and, 85
secularization and, 66–68
secular spirituality and, 574–75
social paths to, 520–24
social secularity and, 10
sociocultural construction of, 515, 517
spirituality and, 14, 528
the state and, 337, 342–43
subjectification of traditional worldviews and, 316
temporal world emphasized in, 10
secularization
compartmentalization and, 56, 61–62, 65
cultural defense and, 65–66
cultural diversity and, 58, 61–62, 65
cultural transition and, 65–66
definitions of, 5–6, 10, 24–26, 201–2, 219
economic growth and, 56, 58–60, 63
educational institutions and, 403, 408, 412
(p. 770) egalitarianism and, 56, 58–60, 62, 65
ethics and, 673–74
European colonization and, 75
expropriation of church properties and, 26
feminism and, 417, 419–20, 423, 429
Habermas on, 318, 327, 329
individualism and, 56, 58–59, 65, 557
industrialization and, 28
Islam and, 506, 508
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 334–35, 337, 340–41
medicine and, 721–23, 725–32
modernization and, 11–12, 22–23, 27–28, 33, 503, 510, 674
multiculturalism and, 356, 361
nationalism and, 506
paradigm of, 55–56, 64–66, 68
postsecularism and, 318, 327, 329
Protestant Ethic and, 56–57
rationality and, 56–57, 65–66
relativism and, 56, 65–66
religio-secularism and, 373
“return of religion” and, 27–28, 67, 77, 333–35
schism and, 56, 58–61
science and, 56, 62, 64–65
secularism and, 11, 85
secularity and, 66–68

secularization theory and, 21–22, 28, 333, 420, 576–77
secularization thesis and, 21–22, 24, 26–30, 32, 217, 250, 334, 337, 417, 419–20, 423, 429, 725
social differentiation and, 26, 58–59, 62
societalization in, 59–60, 65–66
structural differentiation and, 58–59, 62, 65
technology and, 56, 64–65
*Secularization, R.I.P.* (Stark), 27
*Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Bruce), 27
secular liberty, 293–94
secular morality, 540–41
secular spirituality
defining attributes of, 575–78
future of, 583–84
liberalism and, 577, 579
nonreligious population and, 573–76, 580, 583
positive psychology and, 566, 582
science and, 573–74, 577–79, 582–83
the supernatural and, 579–80, 582
technology and, 574
transcendence and, 577
varieties of, 578–83
well-being and, 565
secular state
cultural diversity and, 61
education and, 412
failures of, 78
freedom of conscience and, 294
French Revolution and, 308
Habermas on, 421–22
India and, 502
Iraq’s concerns regarding, 81
Islam and, 196, 363
liberal democracy and, 62
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 337, 340, 344
models of, 189–92
Nehru on, 95
Nepal’s concerns regarding, 1
religious freedom and, 92, 95
secular humanism and, 689
Secular Students, 458, 463
Secular Zionism, 174, 180
Segal, Israel, 172
segregation, 454, 476, 482, 728
self-forming willings (SFWs), 628–31
self-transcendent experiences, 554, 564–66
Seligman, Martin, 556, 559–61, 566
Sen, Amartya, 95
Senegal, 338–39

separation of religion and state
absolute forms of, 105–9, 113–14
cultural diversity and, 61
educational institutions and, 412
feminism and, 417, 419
First Amendment (U.S. Constitution) and, 106, 190, 292, 304, 310–11 (*See also* Establishment Clause)
French Revolution and, 190
humanism and, 691, 694, 699
laicism-separatism and, 108–9
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 340, 345
liberalism and, 93
(p. 771) multiculturalism and, 360
neutral forms of, 105–10, 113–14
organizations promoting, 596
pluralist forms of, 106
political secularism and, 94, 105–20, 142, 149, 335
religio-secularism and, 372–73, 377
Scalia on, 587
secularism and, 40, 74
secularism-laicism and, 105–6, 109, 113–14
strict forms of, 106, 189, 209, 335, 337, 342, 345, 354–55, 357, 377, 406, 412, 419, 425
Taylor on, 296
United States and, 40, 106, 197–98, 312, 335, 354, 482–94, 509
in Yugoslavia, 192
September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks
cultural changes following, 417–18, 420, 422, 613
religious fundamentalism and, 324, 326
Serbia, 119, 191, 338
sex
Christian views of, 728
evolutionarily adaptive behavior and, 644
leaving religion and, 616–18
Pentecostal attitudes toward, 63
sexual selection, 644–46
Shabbat. *See* Sabbath
Shah Bano case, 223
Shaheed, Farida, 428
Shahzad, Faisal, 72–73
Shang dynasty, 251
Sharia law, 165, 193, 198, 210, 313
SHAS (Israeli political party), 180
shattered assumption framework, 609–10
Sheen, Fulton, 700
Shepherd, Gordon and Gary, 511
Sheridan, Thomas, 5
Sherine, Ariane, 597
Shermer, Michael, 525

*Shijing* (Book of Songs), 251
Shils, Edward, 730
el-Shinqiti, Mohamed el-Moctar, 198
Shinto, 251, 504
Shirur Mutt case, 221
Shook, John, 389
*A Short History of Secularism* (Graeme Smith), 515
*shūkyō* (Japanese word for religion), 503
Shun (ancient Chinese emperor), 251
Sikhism, 79, 218
Sikhs, 72–73, 76, 139, 217, 224
Singapore, 43
Singer, Peter, 651, 724, 730
Sisters in Islam (Malaysian nongovernmental organization), 429
Sisyphus, 558
Slife, Brent D., 541
Slovakia, 120, 409
Slovenia, 41, 43, 120
Smith, Adam, 75
Smith, Adel, 409
Smith, Buster, 6
Smith, Christian, 732
Smith, Donald, 80
Smith, Graeme, 515
Smith, Jesse M., 521–22
Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, 75
Smith case. See *Employment Division v. Smith*
Snow, C.P., 562
Sober, Elliott, 647
sociality. *See also* prosociality
alloparenting and, 639, 645
animal kingdom and, 638–46, 652
cheating as obstacle to, 647–48, 659, 662
chimpanzees and, 638–41
empathy and, 641, 646, 649–50
eusociality and, 638–39, 645, 658
evolutionary theory and, 642–52
helping behavior and, 639–43, 646
humans and, 638–47, 652
hunting and, 639–40, 646–48
neurosociology and, 726
perspective-taking and, 646, 648, 650, 652
reciprocity and, 639–40, 643–44, 647–49, 651
socially or educationally backward classes (OBC; India), 222, 224
social sciences
bioinformatics and, 726
description and prescription in, 27
feminism and, 420

genealogical approach in, 30–31
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 340
(p. 772) natural sciences and, 319–20
objectivity and, 319
origins of, 25–26
rationality emphasized in, 583
religious notions in, 572
science’s communication with, 562–63
secularism and, 21–22, 24–26, 33, 510, 571, 574, 576
secularization theory and, 333
social secularity, 10
Society for Ethical Culture, 694–95
sociological secularization thesis, 27, 334
sociology
feminism and, 426
neurosociology and, 726
of religion, 26
secularization theory and, 333, 730
Socrates, 288, 708, 713
Solomon, Robert, 579
Solov’ev, Viktor, 238
Somalia, 210
Somers, Emily Aoife, 503
Song dynasty, 262
Soper, J. Christopher, 413
Soroush, Abdolkarim, 195
*The Souls of Black Folk* (DuBois), 462–63
South Africa
atheism in, 43
nonreligious population in, 43
Pentecostalism in, 202
political secularism and, 109, 112, 114–15, 120
religiosity levels in, 203
religious groups’ political engagement in, 207
South Korea, 41, 43, 112, 114, 120
Soviet Union
atheism as official doctrine in, 94, 232–34, 236–39, 242, 354, 436, 472, 501
Christianity in, 232, 234–36
collapse of, 77, 239
Communist-oriented rituals in, 234–36
Communist regime in, 192, 231–35, 237, 354
Council of Religious Affairs in, 235
Council of Religious Cult Affairs in, 235
Council of Russian Orthodox Church Affairs in, 235
DuBois on, 463
Eastern European hegemony and, 66
education in, 232, 238, 463
“elimationist secularism” in, 233–36

famine (1921–22) in, 233–34
law on religious organizations (1929) in, 234
marriage in, 233
Orthodox Christianity and the political culture of, 94, 231–35
political secularism and, 93–94, 354–55
religiosity in, 233, 235–36, 238–39
religious seminaries in, 235–36
secularization in, 233, 237–39
as a “secular state,” 342
state socialism and, 76
Tatar ethnic minority in, 238
urbanization in, 238
village studies in, 237–38
World War II and, 235–37
Spain
atheism in, 43
Catholicism in, 59, 419, 440
Communist Party in, 59
decline of religiosity in, 419
nonconstitutional pluralism in, 338
nonreligious population in, 8, 43
political secularism in, 120
public education institutions in, 409
terrorist attacks in, 418
Spinoza, Baruch, 345, 396, 505
spirituality
Confucianism and, 674, 680, 683
end-of-life concerns and, 546
feminism and, 583
hospitals and, 727
mental health and, 541–42
New Age forms of, 68, 334
prosociality and, 533, 541–44
rational choice theory and, 578–80
secularity and, 14, 528
secular spirituality and, 573–83
technology and, 510–11
well-being and, 541–44, 565
Sri Lanka, 77, 79
Stalin, Joseph, 76, 192, 234–36
Stark, Rodney, 27, 239
Stasi Commission (France), 146, 374
(p. 773) State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA; China), 249, 261–62
state neutrality
educational institutions and, 408, 412
multiculturalism and, 360–61
Muslims’ response to, 194–99
pluralism and, 195, 197

religious freedom and, 197–98, 307–10, 312, 425
Taylor on, 309–11
Steger, Michael F., 561
stem-cell research, 728
Stepan, Alfred, 104–5, 342, 355–56, 419
Stevenson, Adlai, 700
Steward, Helen, 628, 631–34
Stewart, Jon, 463
*Stone v. Graham,* 468
Straton, John Roach, 697
Strauss, Leo, 81
strong establishment (SE), 338
Student Secular Alliance, 7
Suarez, Francisco, 327
sub-Saharan Africa
Christianity in, 202–6, 208, 210
Ebola crisis (2014) and, 203, 206
economic conditions in, 204–5
education in, 202, 205, 208
elites' exploitation of religion in, 201
evangelicalism in, 202–5
gay rights in, 81
Islam in, 202–3, 205, 208–10
nonreligious population in, 202–3
Pentecostalism in, 202, 204–7
political secularism in, 112
religiosity and politics in, 206–8
religiosity in, 201–10
secularization and, 201–2
Sufism (tradition in Islam), 502, 509
Suku (group in southwestern Congo), 499
Sunday Assembly movement, 7, 528
Sun Language Theory, 157
Sun Yatsen, 253–54
the supernatural
agency and, 546, 555, 607, 662
Confucianism and, 678–81
ethical life and, 685
humanism and, 692, 695, 699
human suffering and, 591
Japanese notions of, 503
mental representations of, 590
nonreligious populations and, 592–93
paradigm shifts regarding, 605–7
secular ethics' rejection of, 673
secularism's rejection of, 6, 571–74
secularity and, 515, 517–18, 520, 528
secular spirituality and, 579–80, 582

social differentiation and, 58
sub-Saharan African beliefs regarding, 205–6
supernatural monitoring and, 539–40
transcendent experiences of, 564
Supreme Court of the United States. *See also specific cases*
on education and religion, 13
political influence regarding selections on, 292
priority of public reasons and, 281–82
religious exemptions and, 467, 469–76, 490–92, 494
on religious objections to contraception in health care, 138–40
on religious tests for public officeholders, 699
on sectarian prayers at public meetings, 1
on secularism and public education, 401–3, 405, 411–13
separationism *versus* neutrality in, 467–69
on separation of religion and state, 482–94
*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg,* 728
Sweden
atheism in, 43
early modern era in, 251
multiculturalism and, 356
nonconstitutional pluralism in, 338
nonreligious population in, 43, 592
political secularism in, 120
science in, 52
welfare system in, 731
Switzerland, 120
*Syllabus of Errors* (Pius IX), 93
syncretism, 334, 395
Syria, 94, 193, 377
System 1 thinking, 660, 664
System 2 thinking, 660
(p. 774) Taiwan
atheism in, 41, 43
Bureau of Civic Affairs in, 257
China’s relations with, 249
Christianity in, 255
constitution of, 110, 120
Democratic Progressive Party in, 257
democratic religious state in, 254–58, 262–63
democratic transition in, 255–57
education in, 257–58
Kuomintang Party (KMT) in, 249, 254–57
Law of Religious Groups in, 256, 258
Law on Assembly and Parade in, 256
Law on the Organization of Civic Groups in, 256
Law Regulating Temples and Shrines and, 255, 258
nationalism in, 256
nonreligious population in, 41, 43

political secularism and, 110, 112, 114, 120
Regulation on Development in Offshore Islands in, 258
religiosity in, 249
religious freedom in, 249–50, 255, 257–58, 263
secular state and, 255–57
Social Order Maintenance Ordinance in, 258
state-sponsored religious organizations in, 255
Taizu (emperor in China), 253
takfirism, 376
Takyi, Baffour K., 203
Tambiah, Stanley, 79
*Tammy Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District,* 404–5
Tanzimat Charter, 160
Taoism. *See* Daoism
Tarico, Valerie, 608
Tatar Autonomous Republic (Soviet Union), 236
Taylor, Charles
communitarian critiques of individualism and, 422–24
on the "diversity model" *versus* the "rigid control model," 296–97
on "exclusive humanism," 233, 657–58
on historical processes behind secularism, 674
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 334, 340
multiculturalism and, 296–98, 355
on optional nature of religious identities, 706
postsecularism and, 344
religio-secularism and, 372, 374, 380
*A Secular Age* and, 29–30, 74, 296, 516, 657
on secularism and immanence, 667–68
on secularity's polyvalence, 29–30, 74, 336, 370, 516–17
on state neutrality, 309–11
subtraction theories and, 22
Taylor, Cynthia, 456–57
Tea Party, 454
technology
atheism and, 48–50
biomedical technology and, 721, 723–27, 729–31
human control and, 571
nonreligious population and, 48–50
religiosity and, 48–50
secularization and, 56, 64–65
secular spirituality and, 574
spirituality and, 510–11
technological consciousness and, 64
Tennessee, 587, 698
ter Haar, Gerrie, 208–10
terrorism
Christianity and, 82–83
Islam and, 72–73, 299, 417–18

multiculturalism and, 357, 359
religious fundamentalism and, 324–26
September 11, 2001 attacks and, 324, 326, 417–18, 420, 422
“War on Terror” and, 318, 324–26, 417, 427
Teshkeel Comics, 499
*Texas Monthly, Inc. v. Bullock,* 475
Thailand, 41, 43, 79
Theodosian Code, 289
*A Theologico-Political Treatise* (Spinoza), 396
*Theory of Justice* (Rawls), 134
Theory of Mind system, 661
Theravada Buddhism, 79
*Thief in the Night* (film), 613
Third Opium War campaign (China), 260
Thirty Years War, 127
Thomas, Clarence, 487
Thomas, Mandisa, 462
(p. 775) Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, 76
Thoreau, Henry David, 581
Thucydides, 288
*tian* (天; heaven), 677, 679–85
Tiananmen Square massacre (1989), 261
Tibet, 249, 252
Tikhon (patriarch of Russian Orthodox Church), 234
Tillich, Paul, 577, 579
Times Square bombing plot (2010), 72–73
TMA Pai foundation case, 222
Tocqueville, Alexis de, 76–77, 104, 251, 436
Toldot Aharon, 506
tolerance
Act of Tolerance (England, 1689) and, 304
Habermas on, 323
hostility toward, 73
in Indonesia, 191
Locke on, 90, 128–30, 132–33, 140, 291
multiculturalism and, 77
pagan religion and, 288
political secularism and, 104
public educational institutions and, 408
relativism and, 65
religions’ roles in promoting, 77
religious freedom contrasted with, 310
secular government and, 127
secularism and, 1, 40
Tönnies, Ferdinand, 26, 59
Toprak, B., 164–66
*Torcaso v. Watkins,* 699–700
torn decisions, 630–31

Touraine, Alain, 375
*Town of Greece v. Galloway,* 469–70, 472–73, 484–86
transcendence
Berger's signs of, 584
Confucianism and, 680–81, 683–85
neurochemistry and, 565, 584
psychedelic drugs and, 564–66
religions and, 378
secularism and, 329
secular spirituality and, 577
self-transcendent experiences and, 554, 564–66
spirituality and, 542
transhumanism, 725, 730–31
*Treasure Chest of Fun & Fact* (Pflaum), 510
Trinidad And Tobago, 43, 120
Trivers, Robert, 647, 650
Tröltsch, Ernst, 25, 62
Truman, Harry S., 699
Truth, Sojourner, 455–56
*Truth and Method* (Gadamer), 715
Tsarnaev, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar, 72–73
Tumarkin, Nina, 232
Tunisia, 43, 508
Turkey
atheism in, 43
coups in, 159–60, 163
democracy and, 160, 165–66
Directorate of Religious Affairs in, 159
education in, 156–57, 159–60, 162–63, 193, 408, 411
European Union (EU) and, 155, 161
Gülen education movement and, 512
headscarves in, 165, 193
Islam in the politics and culture of, 157–68, 193, 355
Islamism and, 160–64, 166
Kemalism in, 156–57, 159–64, 166–67
Kurds in, 156, 161
*laiklik* (secularist principle) in, 93, 155, 165, 167, 500, 503
Law on the Unification of Education (1924) in, 157
legal code in, 157, 193
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 341–43, 346
military in, 159–60, 168
modernization in, 155, 160, 163
Muslim majority population in, 155, 158–59, 165, 193
nationalism in, 156, 159, 163
nonreligious population in, 43
opposition to religious culture under Ataturk in, 79
Ottoman legacy in, 155, 157–58, 164, 166
political parties in, 156, 160–65

political secularism and, 24, 33, 76, 93, 150, 193, 233, 296, 302, 335, 501
public religious expression in, 74
religio-secularism and, 370, 373
“rigid control model” (Taylor) in, 296
secularism in, 155–68
(p. 776) secularization in, 155–58, 166–67
single-party period in, 156–58
six arrows principles in, 156
state control of religion in, 159
Westernization in, 158
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 108, 110, 117
Turner, Brian S., 732
*The Turner Diaries* (Pierce), 82
twin tolerations, 336, 342, 355
“Two Cultures” lecture (Snow), 562
Tzur, Eli, 176
Uganda, 202–3, 207
Uganda Plan, 173
Ukraine
atheism in, 43
Christian denomination diversity in, 240–41
nonreligious population in, 43
Orthodox Church and, 407
Pentecostalism in, 234
Soviet era in, 234–36, 239
World War II in, 235
Umayyad dynasty, 507
“The Unfinished Window” (Abbot), 694
uniform civil code, 191, 222
Unitarianism, 691–93, 695–98, 701
United Kingdom
atheism in, 126
Christianity’s decline in, 67
established religion in, 61, 188
homosexuality laws in, 294
liberal democracy and, 62
Methodism’s decline in, 66–67
Muslims in, 67
nonreligious population in, 8, 67
Pentecostalism in, 67
political secularism and, 94, 120
public education in, 401–3
religious character of state ceremonies in, 303
secular government and, 125, 129–30, 134, 139
secularism in, 25–26, 189–90
secularity in, 527–28
separation of religion and state in, 188
terrorist attacks in, 418

United Nations, 78, 174, 297, 327, 329, 718
United States
agnosticism in, 572
American Revolution and, 76, 126, 290, 298
atheism in, 43–44, 202, 467, 486, 489–90, 494, 509, 572, 587, 596–97, 655
Catholicism in, 436, 483
Christian Right in, 62, 73, 80, 369, 483, 606
Declaration of Independence in, 303, 390
Democratic Party in, 436–37, 439–46
education in, 336, 402–7, 412–13, 489, 493
evangelical communities' conflicts with the law in, 728–29
evangelicalism in, 203
faith-based education in, 336
feminism and, 419, 423
globalization and, 78
global leadership by, 327
global military presence of, 80–81, 299
individualism and, 510
Jews in, 179
lack of established religion in, 61, 125
liberal democracy in, 108, 364
liberal-democratic constitutionalism and, 338
Mormonism in, 75
multiculturalism and, 295, 356, 360, 362
nationalism and, 76
nonreligious population in, 7, 43, 436–38, 440–42, 494, 510, 587, 604
Office of Faith-Based Initiatives in, 95
Pledge of Allegiance in, 308, 473, 483, 486–88, 490, 494
political secularism and, 93–94, 106, 108, 112, 114, 120, 189–91, 197, 354
public education in, 402–7, 412–13
racial demographics in, 437–38
religion jurisprudence in, 467–76
religiosity levels in, 203, 436, 482–83, 571–73
religious freedom in, 144, 189–91, 197, 291–92, 304, 484–85
religious fundamentalism, 323
Republican Party in, 13, 436–40, 442–46, 492–93
same-sex marriage and, 279
sectarian prayers for public meetings in, 1
secular government and, 125–26, 129
secular humanism and, 694–702
secularism in, 7, 13, 40, 82, 93, 144, 150, 164, 302, 435–36, 467, 500–501, 503, 509–10
secularity in, 517, 521–25, 527–28
(p. 777) separation of religion and state in, 40, 106, 197–98, 312, 335, 354, 482–94, 509 (*See also* First Amendment)
terrorist attacks and plots in, 72, 82, 324, 326, 613
welfare system in, 731
World War II and, 73
xenophobia in, 80

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 197, 256, 397, 718
Universal Soul (Hinduism), 581
University of Marseille, 143
Uruguay, 1, 43, 112, 114, 120
Uzbekistan, 43
Valls, Manuel, 143
van der Veer, Peter, 502
Van Ness, Peter, 574, 579
Van Norden, Bryan, 674
van Praag, Jaap, 706
Vargas, Manuel, 627
*The Varieties of Religious Experience* (James), 500, 529n1
Ven. Taixu, 254
Venus Hottentot, 455
Ven. Yinshuen, 254
Vienna Circle, 306–7
Vietnam War, 391
Virginia, 490
Viriatino (Russia), 237
Virtue Party (VP; Turkey), 161
Voegelin, Eric, 232
Voltaire, 713
von Pufendorf, Samuel, 90, 92
Wade Michael Page, 72–73
*Waking Up* (Harris), 528, 565
Wales, 67, 125
Walker, Alice, 464
Walter, Henrik, 625–26
Walton, Jeremy, 164
“War on Terror,” 318, 324–26, 417, 427
Warren, Earl, 94
Warren, Rick, 464, 511
wars of religion
religio-secularism and, 371, 373, 377
religious fanaticism and, 75
secular government following, 127
Washington, George, 133, 304
Watson, Gary, 626
Watts, Charles, 696
weak constitutional establishment (WE), 338
*We Are All Africans* (Obeng), 463
Weber, Max
on Christians and politics, 86
medical secularization and, 726
on modernity and religion, 201, 510
on prescription and description, 27
on the Protestant ethic and modern capitalism, 56–57, 63
on secularism and disenchantment, 556, 732

secularization studied by, 25–26
tensions between scientific and religious knowledge and, 28
*wei* (“conscious exertion”), 677
Weiler, Joseph, 412
Weir, Todd, 24
Welfare Party (WP; Turkey), 161
well-being
leaving religion and, 615
medicine and, 721
meditation and, 542–44, 565–66, 581
nonreligious population and, 556, 566, 594
physical health and, 535–36, 538, 580
prosociality and, 533–37, 539, 541–46
religiosity and, 533–35, 538, 594
science of, 554–55, 565
secularism and, 554–55, 557, 559–67
secularly spirituality and, 573, 578, 580–81
spirituality and, 541–44, 565
Wells, Ida B., 455
Wesley, John, 723
Western Europe. *See also* European Union; *specific countries*
atheism and, 655
modernization in, 201
multiculturalism and, 355–56, 358–60, 362
Muslim communities in secular countries of, 664
nonreligious population in, 8, 571–73
secularity in, 524, 571
suicide rates in, 557
Western Han dynasty, 252
Westphalia, Treaty of (1648), 24, 90, 377
*West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 489
Whitehead, John W., 700–701
White Lotus, 253
Whoolery, Matthew, 541
(p. 778) Wielenberg, Erik, 526
Wiener, Anthony, 576
Wilberforce, William, 390
Wilford, Justin, 511
Wilkinson, Gerald S., 639
Williams, Roger, 91–92, 94
Williamson, David, 523, 526
Willow Creek Church (Illinois), 511
Wilson, Bryan, 59–60, 725
Wilson, David S., 647
Wilson, Edward O., 562
Winell, Marlene, 608
*Wisconsin v. Yoder,* 469
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 380

Wolfenden Report (United Kingdom, 1957), 294
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 713
Wolterstorff, Nicholas, 136, 274, 282n3, 379
women’s rights. *See under* feminism
Wood, Benny, 207
World Buddhist Forum, 262
World Council of Churches, 699
World Values Survey (WVS) data, 40–53
worldview secularism, 12, 22, 24–25, 32–33
Wriggins, Howard, 82
Wright, John, 413
Wright, Richard, 459
Wuthnow, Robert, 575
Xingjian (China), 249
Xiong Shili, 252
Xunzi, 674, 677–82
Yahweh (God of Judaism), 395
Yancey, George, 523
Yavuz, M. Hakan, 164, 507
Yelensky, Viktor, 239
Yemen, 43, 72
Ye Xiaowen, 261–62
*yi* (appropriateness), 674–77, 679
Yiguandao (syncretistic religion in Taiwan), 257
Yirenkyi, Kwasi, 203
Yovel, Yirmiyahu, 375
Yu (ancient Chinese emperor), 251
Yugoslavia, 191–92
Zakariya, Fu’ad, 508
Zambia, 120
Zapf, Michael, 615
*Zelman v. Simmons-Harris,* 336, 469
Zen Buddhism, 334, 580–81
*zhi* (wisdom), 674–75, 677
Zhitlowsky, Chaim, 506
Zhou, Duke of, 683
Zhou dynasty, 251–53
Zhou Enlai, 259
Zhuk, Sergei, 238
Zilu (student of Confucius), 678
Zimbabwe, 43, 207
Zionism, 173–75, 180, 505–6
Zionist Congress, 173
Zubaida, Sami, 196
Zuckerman, Phil, 202, 526–27
Zwingli, Ulrich, 36n10