Rethinking Secularism

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Introduction

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Until quite recently, it was commonly assumed that public life was basically secular. On one hand, scholars could write with authority about politics, economics, and social behavior as though religion did not exist at all. Secularism, on the other hand, appeared to have no ideological significance of its own, other than the taken-for-granted absence or obsolescence of religion. In recent years, however, a host of political activists—some with avowedly religious agendas and others with stridently antireligious programs—have appeared on the global scene, challenging established understandings of how the terms "secularism" and "religion" function in public life and calling into question a supposedly clear division between the religious and the secular.

At the same time, there has been rising academic interest both in an ostensible "religious resurgence" and in the very features of secularism itself. This has come with increasing recognition of the fact that the uncritical deployment of the categories of the religious and the secular severely limits the analysis of international politics and social change throughout the world. Reigning theories of secularization have seen mounting critical attention, even as scholars in various fields have sought to deal in more detailed and concrete ways with the processes of "secularization," the practices of "the secular," and the political ethic of "secularism." Sociologists of religion have revisited long-standing general theories of secularization, and contemporary political theorists and anthropologists have brought greater attention to the "conceits of secularism" and "formations of the secular."[1]

Long the product of a relatively unexamined set of assumptions within the social sciences, dominant "modes of secularism" have also recently come under intensified scrutiny, laying the basis for a reconsideration of the relationship between religious movements and secular politics, for more nuanced analyses of secularization and religious expansion, for more sophisticated treatments of the complex patterns of religion's growth and decline in the contemporary

world, and for a thoroughgoing rethinking of contemporary understandings of secularism.[2] Against this backdrop, the present volume seeks to take stock of the ongoing research on, and debates over, multiple forms of secularism. Our aim is to reframe discussions of religion in the social sciences by drawing attention to the central issue of how "the secular" is constituted and understood and to how new understandings of both religion and secularism shape analytic perspectives in the social sciences and various practical projects in politics and international affairs.

Issues of religion and secularism have, in fact, shaped the social sciences since their inception. Reference to the Peace of Westphalia gave the field of international relations not only a starting point for analyzing relations among sovereign nation-states but also a presumption of the adequacy of "secular" understanding. That this was rooted in a mythic understanding, rather than a clear historical appreciation of the relationship of states to religion in and after 1648, didn't reduce its power. But it did leave religion something to be "rediscovered" more recently. As Robert Keohane puts it, "the attacks of September 11 reveal that all mainstream theories of world politics are relentlessly secular with respect to motivation. They ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fueled by religious fervor."[3] The situation is not completely different in other social sciences. The basic notion of a differentiation of social institutions—or, in Weber's language, "value spheres"—informed the distinction among social-science disciplines such as political science, economics, and sociology, as well as ideas about the relative autonomy of state, economy, and civil society. But it also encouraged treating each of these—and especially state and economy—as separate from the proper domain of religion. This informs notions such as the idea that power and money organize state and economy as "non-linguistic steering media"—Talcott Parsons's formulation taken up by both Niklas Luhman and Jürgen Habermas. And it informed the late-nineteenth-century separation of social-science faculties from humanities faculties—and thus from religion and moral philosophy—in the universities of many countries, not least the United States.[4] This was in part a matter of insistence on the secular orientation reflected in the rhetoric of "value-freedom" and "objectivity." At the same time, social-science disciplines that were initially peopled in part by current former clergymen at first participated alongside religious organizations in social movements and then increasingly distanced themselves as secular and ostensibly neutral.

More generally, in their very pursuit of scientific objectivity (and status), the social sciences (some more than others) have tended to take account of religion less than one might expect based on its prominence in social life and often only in ostensibly value-free, external terms, leaving more hermeneutic inquiries to other fields. They also subscribed to the secularization narrative longer than dispassionate weighing of the evidence might have suggested.

When activists in new political movements around the world have challenged the supposed universality of Western secularism, their opposition has often been perceived in the West as the sign of a clash between secular and religious worldviews—that is, as an indication that they want to trump secular laws with religious ones, to employ religion to buttress political platforms, or to use religious values to provide the ideological basis and social identity for national or transnational political entities. But in bemoaning the reciprocal transgression of the realms of religion and secularism, the champions of each maintain and uphold what is now an increasingly challenged bifurcation. The common complaint heard in other parts of the world—that the Western distinction between "politics" and "religion" should not be uncritically exported to other regions—also raises the issue of how the two relate in the modern West. Indeed, social-scientific discussion of secularism centers largely on the role of religion in politics. What role should it play, if any? How autonomous should the state be with respect to religion? How autonomous should religion be with respect to the state?

At the same time, the discussion about morality in modern public life increasingly challenges accepted notions of "religion," and raises questions of whether religion can be thought of as a "thing" at all—that is, as an entity that can be reliably expected to command social responses and to provide a coherent alternative to secular ideologies and institutions.

These questions challenge our understanding of public life, even if we have no particular interest in religion—however it is defined—and think that public activities are largely a secular affair. The very use of the term "secular" signifies that we are buying into a secular/religious distinction that in some way defines not only the secular sphere itself but also the realm of the religious. However one defines secularity and secularism—a matter that we will get to below—it involves religion. It is either the absence of it, the control over it, the equal treatment of its various forms, or its replacement by the social values common to a secular way of life.

For although secularism is often defined negatively—as what is left after religion fades—it is not in itself neutral. Secularism should be seen as a presence. It is *something*, and it is therefore in need of elaboration and understanding. Whether it is seen as an ideology, a worldview, a stance toward religion, a constitutional framework, or simply an aspect of some other project—of science or a particular philosophical system—secularism is, rather than merely the absence of religion, something we need to think through.

Secularism, moreover, is only one of a cluster of related terms. Reference to the secular, secularity, secularism, and secularization can mean different things in confusing ways. There is no simple way to standardize usage now by trying to ensure an association of each term with only one clearly defined concept. But the fact that the different terms have a common linguistic root should not obscure the fact that they operate in different conceptual frameworks with

distinct histories. Although they sometimes inform one another, we should try to keep distinct such different usages as reference to temporal existence, to worldliness, to constitutions that separate religion from politics, or to a possible decline of religion writ large.

Since so much of contemporary social conflict is linked to religion—or, rather, to the notion that religion and secularism are in opposition—it is not only appropriate but also urgent that we rethink the categories that make such conflict possible. Through a multiyear project sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, scholars have collaborated in a reconsideration of secularism and secularity in the context of contemporary global politics and transnational social change. The scholars participating in this project represent a variety of fields that traverse the boundary between the humanities and the social sciences. They come from sociology, political science, anthropology, and international affairs, as well as from history, philosophy, literature, and religious studies. Moreover, they raise a number of fundamental and unavoidable questions about secularism: To what degree is the concept shaped by the European historical experience? Does it carry the baggage of Western, specifically Christian, notions of moral order? To what extent are religion and secularism twin concepts that speak to similar moral sensibilities? Is there currently a decline in secularism, or is there, rather, a reformulation of the secular/religious distinction? Can this distinction be transcended through new ways of thinking about civil society and the public sphere, political order and social transformation, global politics and international affairs?

Secularism and Religion

In all cases, secularism is defined in tandem with its twin concept, religion, and how we think about one of these paired concepts affects the way we think about the other. The rise of politically active religion not only encroaches on the supposed relationship between religion and secularism, thus challenging our thinking about the public role of religion, but it also queries our operative notions of secularism. The rise of politically active religious movements complicates our ideas about modern life—in particular, what many of us had regarded as its essentially secular character.

Many of us are unconsciously affected by what Charles Taylor has described as a grand narrative involving secularism in the spread of modernization and in the historical path of Euro-American progress. It was this model of secular modernization that many newly emerging non-Western nations attempted to emulate in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, put the matter succinctly when he described secularism as one of the "pillars of modernity." In his mind, it was unthinkable that India could progress into the modern world laden with what

he regarded as the prejudices and superstitions of its religious past. For someone like Nehru, secularism meant at least two different things: social attitudes that were free of intolerance and ideas undergirding the state's just laws and egalitarian political processes that were untainted with preferences for one group over another. Nehru had a clear image of the kind of religion he was against, and it was not a good thing.

Much the same can be said about the image of religion in the minds of the European reformers at the time of the Enlightenment. To some extent, the eighteenth-century antagonism against religion was, at bottom, a profound disdain for the power of the church and its clergy, which had held vast tracts of land and wielded enormous influence over the affairs of the state. With some justification, many Enlightenment thinkers saw the church as protecting an arrogant social hierarchy intent on keeping the masses enslaved to superstition and thus ignorant of justice and reason. But the concerns of many Enlightenment thinkers were about the preceding century's Wars of Religion and the need to find a new moral basis for social order in the absence of a specifically religious justification. In their minds, social progress could not be imagined without liberation from previous social and political institutions and the religious ties that had justified them. Although religion was integral to the thinking of many Enlightenment figures, they also extended the old idea of a differentiation of religion from the state to argue for a new and stronger separation. Many also preferred a "reasonable" religion, as John Locke put it, opposing excessive "enthusiasm".[5] They sensed a need to think of religion as a social construct that was potentially limited and controllable—something, in brief, that could be dominated by a different way of thinking. This new way of thinking was characterized by reason and secular ideals.

On the one hand, the Enlightenment image of the triumph of the secular over religion required a clear notion of the "religion" that was being contained; on the other hand, it required a definition of the secular order that was assumed to be succeeding it. The term "religion" was not one that was frequently used, even by Christians, until the Enlightenment's deployment of the secular/religious distinction. As historian of religions Wilfred Cantwell Smith has pointed out, before the Enlightenment, the terms "faith" and "tradition" were more commonly used.[6] The origins of the term "religion" are debated. Some claim that it comes from the Latin *relego*, "to read again" or "repeat," as one might do with scripture or creeds; others argue that it comes from another Latin term, *religare*, "to bind anew," as in a contract or covenant; still others aver that it comes from the Latin *res-legere*, "with regard to a gathering," as with a religious festival or group. In its modern usage as an ideological construct of beliefs joined with an institutionalized community unrelated to public life, "religion" makes sense only in juxtaposition to secularism. It is used to demarcate the ideas, practices, beliefs, and institutions that are related to particular faiths and traditions—such as Christianity, at once labeling these as religion and limiting religion's scope. This usage grew more prominent with the administrative need and academic desire to

make legal frameworks that applied equitably to multiple religions and to compare regions. But it relied implicitly on a word, "religion," that is not easily translated into non-European languages.

Moreover, the secular containment of religion excluded the traditional moral dimension of social order—that is, the universal basis of good behavior and the moral obligations of citizenship. To re-create this dimension of social order in a secular world required new ideas. The *idéologues*, a group of French revolutionaries under the leadership of Count Antoine Destutt de Tracy, coined the term "ideology" in an attempt to fashion a secular "science of ideas" that could replace religion as a foundation for public morality. At the same time, churches in France were reappropriated and transformed into "temples of reason." Behind the salience of reason in public life and the notion of ideology as a template of moral purpose was the concept of the secular as a kind of antireligion.

Although today we think of *secular* as something that is contrasted with *religion,* the root notion of the term is something juxtaposed not to religion but to eternity. It derives from the same Latin etymological root—*saeculum*—as the French word *siècle*, meaning "century" or "age." The word *saeculum* first appeared as a unit of time among the Etruscans and was adopted by the Romans after them. For example, the lives of children born in the first year of a city's existence were held to constitute its first *saeculum*. The succession of *saecula* was marked with ritual. While some ancient texts held that this should be celebrated every thirty years, making *saeculum* roughly equivalent to the notion of a generation, others said this was every 100 or 110 years, reflecting the longest normal duration of a human life. The latter usage became predominant as calendars were standardized, and the *saeculum* became roughly the equivalent of a century.

By extension, *secular* referred to the affairs of a worldly existence and was used in the Middle Ages specifically to distinguish members of the clergy, who were attached to religious orders, from those who served worldly, local parishes (and who were therefore secular). It is something of an irony that this distinction between two kinds of clerical roles would become the basis for thinking of two kinds of social order, religious and secular, in which the life of the church and its clergy would be confined strictly to the former.

In the two centuries in which the Enlightenment's secular/religious distinction has been prevalent in European and American thought, it has come to be accepted as a commonplace dichotomy. It is still not clear, however, exactly what the distinction demarcates. One way of thinking about it is in strictly legal and political terms, that public institutions should be unfettered by influences that privilege particular moral creeds and associations. This notion of the secular order is not particularly antireligious, but rather continues a tradition of differentiating church and state that has existed for centuries in Christianity and is replicated in different ways in other traditions. In another view, secularism implies a framework of nonreligious ideas that is explicitly contrasted with religion. To be a secularist, in this sense, is to adopt a stance toward life that clearly separates religious from nonreligious ways of being. It is this view

that is linked to expectations of a continued secularization within society and diminishing of the importance of religion in social affairs. Many have regarded such a pattern as a prerequisite of modernization, but Charles Taylor has described it as a misleading "subtraction story". His point is not just that religion has not declined as much as expected, but that it is impossible simply to remove such a central dimension of culture and leave the rest in tact.

Hence, it is commonly thought that secularism—the ideological underpinning of secular society and politics—goes hand-in-hand with modern progress. In the way that Nehru had imagined it, secularism provides the moral and theoretical basis for an equal, just, and tolerant social order. In the contemporary social milieu, the rise of new forms of religious politics has worried many who cherish the equality and freedom of secular society and its political institutions. Thus, at the same time that Muslims in Denmark and around the world protested what they regarded as a vilification of the Prophet Muhammad in a series of cartoons published in a Copenhagen newspaper, a clamor of voices of concerned citizens throughout Europe defended what they regarded as the rightful exercise of freedom of speech. In Turkey in 2007, when Islamic parties gained substantial legislative and executive power, hundreds of thousands of Turks in Istanbul and throughout the country took to the streets to rally in defense of secularism. In the minds of many secular Turks, it was a matter of not abandoning those elements of modern life that they regarded as essential to their secular—and implicitly European—Turkish identities.

Secularism and Secularization

Secularism is clearly a contemporary public issue in its own right. France proclaims secularism (*laïcité*) as a constitutive element of its national identity. This is, in part, a response to Islam and immigration, but it is also informed by a history of anticlericalism and a nationalist ideology forged during the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. French *laïcité* was incorporated into the blueprint of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's Turkey, although it was inevitably transformed by its implantation in a quite different context. Secularism is also a central part of the Indian constitution and the policy formations through which that country deals with religious diversity. It is attacked by parts of the American religious right in its polemics against "secular humanism." In each of these contexts, secularism takes on its own meanings, values, and associations; in no case is it simply a neutral antidote to religious conflicts.

Having an idea of the secular, however, does not presume a secularist stance toward politics and public life. The Catholic church, for example, still follows the medieval custom of distinguishing priests with "secular" vocations from those with "religious" ones—those in monasteries or other institutions devoted wholly to contemplation and worship of God. A secular vocation, it should be clear, does not entail promoting secularism. It involves, rather, a calling to

ministry in this world, helping people to cope with temporal existence and to maintain a religious orientation to their lives in this secular realm.

The idea of secularization, by contrast, suggests a trend, a general tendency toward a world in which religion matters less and various forms of secular reason and secular institutions matter more. It is a trend that has been expected at least since early modernity and has been given quasi-scientific status in sociological studies advancing a secularization thesis. But while there is a reality of secularization, the term is often deployed in a confused and confusing theorization.

On the one hand, there has been an enormous expansion in the construction of institutions for this-worldly, nonecclesial purposes. These are often distinguished from spiritual engagements, sometimes with restrictions on explicitly religious practices. They not only pursue goals other than the promotion of religion, but they also operate outside the control of specifically religious actors. Much of social life is organized by systems or "steering mechanisms" that are held to operate independently of religious belief, ritual practice, or divine guidance. Markets are a preeminent example. Participants may have religious motivations; they may pray for success or form alliances with coreligionists. Nonetheless, economists, financiers, investors, and traders understand markets mainly as products of buying and selling. It may take a certain amount of faith to believe in all of the new financial instruments they create, but this is not, in any strict sense, religious faith. For most, it is not faith in divine intervention but, rather, faith in the honesty and competence of human actors, the accuracy of information, the wisdom of one's own investment decisions, and the efficacy of the legal and technological systems underpinning market exchange. In short, it is a secular faith. Or, to put it another way, people understand what markets are by means of a social imaginary in which the relevant explanations of their operations are all this-worldly.

Not only markets but also a variety of other institutions have been created to organize and advance projects in this world. Schools, welfare agencies, armies, and water-purification systems all operate within the terms of what might be called a secular imaginary. Of course, some people's actions may be shaped by religious motives, and religious bodies may organize worldly institutions in ways that serve their own purposes. But even for those who orient their lives in large part toward religious or spiritual purposes, activities that take place within and in relation to such institutions are widely structured by this secular imaginary. Cause-and-effect relationships are understood in this-worldly terms as matters of nature, technology, human intention, or even mere accident. This is part of what Charles Taylor means when he describes modernity as a "secular age."[7] It is an age in which most people in modern societies, including religious people, make sense of things entirely or mainly in terms of this-worldly causality. In Taylor's phrase, they think entirely within "the immanent frame." They see nonmetaphysical, nontranscendent knowledge as sufficient to grasp a world that works entirely of itself. One of the aims of *A Secular Age* is to work out how people come to see this immanent frame as the normal, natural, tacit context for much or all of their action and how this transforms both religious belief and religious engagement with the world.

As the secular imaginary has become more prominent, various public institutions have been grounded in it, and in this sense, one might say that secularization is a reality. But discussions of secularization are generally not limited to secular ideas and institutions; they present modernity as necessarily involving a progressive disappearance of religion and its replacement by secularism. Particularly outside Europe, this simply hasn't happened, and there is almost no evidence of its imminence. Even within Europe, the story is more complex, as José Casanova, among others, has shown. There is more explicit unbelief, and there is also more compartmentalization of religion. But demarcation is not disappearance. Declaring oneself an unbeliever is different from accepting an order of society in which religion matters prominently in some affairs and does not in others or on some days of the week and not others.

Many accounts of secularization take the form of what Taylor calls "subtraction stories," accounts that suggest that religion used to fill a lot of space, space that has gradually contracted while leaving everything around it untouched. This is another sense of seeing the secular as the absence of religion, rather than a positive formation of its own, a presence that can be studied and analyzed. The importance of secular institutions, however, is not simply a result of the excision of their religious counterparts. It has facilitated some purposes and impeded others. Likewise, it has taken forms that have empowered some people over and against others.

Many secularization narratives presented religion as an illusory solution to problems that could be met in modernity by more realistic and efficacious methods. But without taking a position on the truth of any particular religion, one can recognize that religious practice takes many forms other than advancing propositions which may be true or false. From marriages to mourning, from solidifying local communities to welcoming newcomers into large and foreboding cities, from administering charities to sanctifying wars, religion involves a range of actions and institutions. Thus, changes in religion, including diminishments of religious belief or organized religious participation, cannot be mere subtractions. They are elements of more complex transformations.

Roots

It is worth noting that already in the ancient usage of *saeculum,* there is reference to both the natural conditions of life and the civil institutions of ritual and calendar. Each of these dimensions informed the contrast drawn by early Christian thinkers between earthly existence and eternal life with God. For many, it should be recalled, this was something that would come not simply after death but with the return of Christ after a thousand years (a millennium, or ten *saecula*). Here, too, an older idea was adapted. The Etruscans thought that ten *saecula* was the life span allotted to their city. Romans celebrated the thousandth anniversary of the founding of Rome with great ritual in 248 CE. This marked the beginning of a *saeculum novum*, although Rome's situation in

this new era quickly became troubled. Christians started a new calendar, of course, marking years as before or after the birth of Christ and investing metaphysical hopes (and fears) in the millennium expected in 1000 CE. Here the succession of *saecula* counted the time until Christ's return and the end of history. In a very important sense, this was not what later came to be called secular time. It was temporary, a period of waiting, not simply time stretching infinitely into the future.

Likewise, when Saint Augustine offered his famous and influential distinction of the City of God from the City of Man, he did not mean to banish religion from "secular" affairs. On the contrary, his image of the City of God is the church—the body of religious people living in secular reality—and it is contrasted with those who live in the same world but without the guidance of Christianity. Augustine wrote shortly after the sack of Rome in 410 CE, an event that (not unlike the attacks of September 11, 2001) underscored the vulnerability of even a strong state. Augustine not only insisted that Christian suppression of pagan religion was not to blame but also argued that Christian faith was all the more important amid worldly instability. He urged readers to look inward to find God, emphasizing the importance of this connection to the eternal for their ability to cope with the travails of the temporal world. Humans—even a Christian emperor—needed to resist the temptation to focus on material gains or worldly pleasures. That the pagans lacked the advantage of Christianity is one reason they were often corrupt. Thus, Augustine distinguished a spiritual orientation from an orientation to worldly things.

Augustine further criticized pagan religion for its expectation that gods can be mobilized to protect or advance the worldly projects of their mortal followers. Christians, by contrast, look to God for a connection to what lies beyond such "secular" affairs. God shapes human affairs according to a plan, but this includes human suffering, tests that challenge and deepen faith, and demands for sacrifice. Knowing this helps Christians escape from the tendency to desire worldly rather than spiritual gains. We need, Augustine said, to put this world in the perspective of a higher good.

Augustine's discussion, along with others of the early Christian era, was informed by fear of an entanglement in worldly, sensual affairs. This is a theme dating back at least to Plato, a reflection of the prominence of ascetic and hermetic traditions in early Christianity, and an anticipation of the prominence of monastic life in the Middle Ages. Caught up in the material world, we lose sight of the ideal and run the risk of corruption. This is an anxiety that comes to inform ideas of the secular. It is not merely the world of human temporality in which we all must live until the Second Coming; it is also the world of temptation and illusion.

The contrast of sensuous and corrupt with ideal and pure is mapped onto the distinction between secular and eternal. Throughout one thread of the ensuing conceptual history, the secular is associated more with the fallen than

simply with the created. Asceticism, retreat from worldly engagements, and monastic disciplines are all attempts to minimize the pull of worldly ends and maximize the focus on ultimate ends. In this context, Christianity has long had a special concern for sexual and bodily pleasures. These run from early Christian debates about marriage and celibacy, reflected in Paul's instructions to the Christians of Corinth, through the tradition of priestly celibacy, to nineteenth-century utopian communities such as the Shakers. The issue remains powerful in the current context, where the fault lines of politically contested debates over religion and the secular turn impressively often on issues of sexuality and of bodies in general: abortion, homosexuality, sexual education, and promiscuity have all been presented as reflections of a corrupt secular society in need of religious improvement.

Yet the very idea of subjecting the secular world to religious intervention is different from simply keeping it at a distance. The two notions have subsisted side-by-side throughout church history. Both parish ministry and monastic discipline have been important. There are "religious" priests in orders that call for specific liturgical practices. There are "secular" priests who have not taken vows specific to any of these orders and who live "in the world." But religious priests may also serve parishes or go out into the world as missionaries. This isn't the place to try to untangle a complex and sometimes contested distinction. But we should note that its meaning has shifted with changing contexts and over time. For example, in some colonial settings, indigenous priests were more likely secular and resented what they saw as preferential treatment given to priests in religious orders (who were more likely to be European). More generally, secular priests were crucial to a growing sense of the positive value of engagement with the world. Overlapping with the era of the Protestant Reformation, this shift in emphasis included figures such as Bartholomew Holzhauser, whose communitarian—perhaps even communist—Apostolic Union of Secular Priests was formed in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War to lead a renewal of religious life among laypeople.

This development coincided with what Taylor has called a new value placed on "ordinary happiness." A variety of this-worldly virtue received new levels of praise; new moral value was attached, for example, to family life.[8] Priests were increasingly called on to minister to the affairs of this world and its moral conditions, that is, not only to the connections between the human and the transcendent. In no sense uniquely Catholic, this trend runs from the seventeenth century to the present, as with issues such as the extent to which many Evangelical mega-churches today are organized as service providers of a sort. That is, they may espouse biblically literalist or fundamentalist or enthusiastically celebrationist theologies and religious practices, but they are also organized, in very large part, to deliver secular services in the world: marriage counseling, psychotherapy, job placement, education, help in relocating immigrants. They are, in that sense, secular-while-religious.

There is also a long and overlapping history around humanism and, indeed, humanitarianism. This appears in theological debates over the significance of the humanity of Christ, in late-medieval and early-modern humanism, and in questions about the spiritual status of New World peoples. The Valladolid controversy famously pitted Las Casas against Sepúlveda and made clear that answers to religious questions had secular consequences: "Do the natives have souls?" "Should we think about them as needing to be saved?" "Are they somehow like animals and thus to be treated as mere labor?" Versions of these debates were intertwined with missionary activity throughout the era of European colonialism. They influenced also the idea of humanitarianism as a kind of value and a virtue linked to progress in this world. Informed by the idea of imitating Christ, by the nineteenth century, to be a good humanitarian was to be somebody who helps humanity in general and advances progress in society. This was ultimately a secular project, although it might have distinctly religious motivations. And this remains important in humanitarian action today: emergency relief in situations of natural disaster, or war and refugee displacement, is an important project for religious people and organizations (as well as others), but it is organized very much in terms of ministering to the needs of people in the secular world.

Some of the same ideas can inform ethics—and spiritual engagements—that do not privilege the human. Seeing environmentalism as stewardship of God's creation is a religiously organized engagement with the world (quite literally construed). The deep ecology movement even introduces new metaphysical ideas, new notions of immanence. Others approach environmental issues with equal dedication but entirely within the immanent frame.

The Differentiation of Religion from Politics

Throughout the Christian era, a key question was how the church—and, after the splits of the Reformation, the various churches—would relate to states and politics. It's an issue that goes back to the first century CE. It forms the context for the Book of Revelation, written in the aftermath of the Jewish Wars. It shapes centuries of struggle over papal and monarchical power and ultimately issues with Marsilius of Padua in the doctrine of the Two Swords. Of course, this notion of distinct powers in different spheres was honored more in doctrine than in reality. This is to say that the pope and the monarchs of Europe, who represented a kind of secular counterpart to church power, didn't live up to the notion of separate-but-equal for very long.

The Protestant Reformation intensified the relationship of religion to politics, ultimately issuing in considerable violence within states as religious minorities were persecuted, sometimes on a large scale, as in France's St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. It also issued in 150 years of inter-

state war. The "religious wars" that wracked Europe through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were also wars of state building. In other words, they expanded secular power even when fought in the name of religion. Indeed, the conclusion of these wars with the 1648 Peace of Westphalia is often cited as the beginning of a secular state system in Europe and thus of modern international relations, understood as a matter of secular relations among sovereign states.

This is, in fact, profoundly misleading. The Peace of Westphalia did not make states secular. It established the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* ("who rules, his religion"). What followed was a mixture of migration, forced conversion, and legal sanctions against religious minorities. European states after the Peace of Westphalia were primarily confessional states with established churches. Members of some minorities moved to European colonies abroad, including English settlers who fled religious persecution only to set up state churches of their own in the American colonies they dominated.

There is much more to this story, of course, including different formations and transformations of nationalism. Sometimes closely related to religion, nationalism was an ostensibly secular narrative that established the nation as the always already identified and proper people corresponding to a state and thus a secular basis for legitimacy. It became harder for monarchs to claim divine right and more important for them to claim to serve the interests of the people. Where the power of absolutist states was closely tied up with religious claims to authority (and the daily domination of religious authorities)—as in France—revolution took up the mantle of secularism.

The European path to a relatively strong secularism was not charted directly from the Peace of Westphalia. It was, rather, shaped by struggles against the enforced religious conformity that followed the 1648 treaties. The strong French doctrine of *laïcité* was the product of unchurching struggles—struggles against priestly authority—that continued through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. These gave a more strident form to secularism and positioned it as a dimension of social struggle and liberation. More generally, such secularizing struggles did not confront ancient state churches but new church-state partnerships forged in the wake of 1648. This, as José Casanova has argued as clearly as anyone, is central to what has made Europe particularly secular.[9] It contrasts with the situation in places where there is more of an open marketplace for religion. This is one reason, perhaps ironically, that the American separation of church and state has been conducive to high levels of religious belief and participation.

The unchurching struggles produced a militant *laïcité*. We see echoes of this today in European panics over alleged "Islamicization." These often strike a chord among populists and intellectuals alike that is not well recognized. They are misleadingly discussed in terms of the contrast between Enlightenment reason and unenlightened modes of faith, but this obscures their specific history. This European historical trajectory and concept formation also informs

the *laïcité* of other countries where anxiety over religious-political rule is strong (not least Turkey), although transposing it into a new context changes at least some of its meaning.

Secularism can also designate a framework for religious pluralism, but this is by no means always the case. In fact, postcolonial societies around the world have given rise to most of the world's religiously plural and tolerant regimes. These are much less directly products of the European Enlightenment than is sometimes thought. While Europe's trajectory passed from state churches to militant *laïcité*, the United States, India, and a number of other postcolonial states have produced much stronger practices of religious pluralism. These, in turn, are supported by very different models of state secularism. For instance, separation is the rule in the United States, whereas the Indian state subsidizes religion but seeks to do so without bias for or against any.[10]

Nondominant religions may actually be disadvantaged by apparently neutral regimes that in some ways mask tacit assumptions about what constitutes legitimate religious identity. In other words, the secular realm is sometimes constructed in a manner that implicitly privileges one type of religion, while more or less expressly delegitimizing other sorts of religious engagement. And this disequilibrium is important, because ideas of citizenship have been constructed in secular terms in most of the societies of the world. The assertion of secularism may often seem to be no more than an assertion of neutrality vis-à-vis religion or religions. But when it is written into a constitution, it typically reflects events that are not in any way neutral: the ascendency of a new political party, a revolution, or an interstate conflict. So there is always a kind of political context, and it needs to be asked of particular secular regimes what they express in that political context and how they shape distributions of power and recognition.

What the Peace of Westphalia most directly produced was the founding myth of modern international relations. This includes the notion that each state is sovereign, without reference to any encompassing doctrine such as divine right. Carl Schmitt sees this as the transfer of the idea of the absolute from theology proper to political theology, rendering each state in a sense exceptional and thus beyond the reach of any discourse of comparative legitimacy. In any case, diplomatic practice and eventually the academic discipline of international relations would come to treat states as externally secular. That is, they attempted to banish religion from relations between states. The Peace of Westphalia produced a division of the international from the domestic modeled on that between the public and the private, and it urged treating religion as a domestic matter. Accounts of secularization have sometimes implied that the domestic and international spheres followed parallel paths, but this isn't so. The field of international relations so thoroughly absorbed the idea of its essential secularity that it became all but blind to religious influences on international affairs. After all, it is not as though religion were not a force in international

politics between 1648 and 2001 and somehow erupted out of the domestic sphere to shape international politics only in this era of al-Qaeda and other nonstate actors. And it is not only Muslims, of course, who bring religion into international politics, as though they were simply confused about their proper, modern separation. Consider, to the contrary, recent U.S. legislation mandating an international defense of religious freedom. As Saba Mahmood has indicated, the ostensible secularism, or at least neutrality, of the legislation obscures the fact that it is strongly informed by specific religious understandings.[11] Much the same goes for the demonization of Islam in the name of a "secular" national security regime.

In this context, structured by an overriding concern to allot to religion its proper place in—or outside of—politics, that secularism is commonly treated as an absence rather than a presence. But there is growing recognition that constructs of the secular and governmental arrangements that promote secularism both vary a good deal. Constitutional regimes approach the secular in very different ways, as a look at the United States, India, France, and Turkey quickly suggests. Questions of the freedom of religion, of the neutrality of the state toward religion, and of the extent to which religious laws should be acknowledged by a secular state all put the various structures of secularism on the research agenda. Likewise, it is increasingly accepted that secularism is not simply a universal constant in comparative research. On the contrary, secularism takes different shapes in relation to different religions and different political and cultural milieus. We have discussed mainly the development of European secularism in a history dominated by Christianity, but distinct issues arise around secularism among Jews (in Israel and in the Diaspora), among Muslims in different regions, among Buddhists, among Hindus, and in countries where more than one of these and other religions are important.

Ideas of the secular concern not only the separation of religion from politics but also the separation—or relation—between religion and other dimensions of culture and ethnicity. Reform and purification movements in Europe in the late-medieval and early-modern periods sought to separate proper Christian practice from pre-Christian inheritance—that is, from magic, from superstition. This new policing of the proper content of religion entrenched its boundary with the secular, as with other religions and spiritual practices. It may also have made explicit professions of unbelief more likely. Furthermore, attempts to enforce doctrinal orthodoxy raise issues about the extent to which "a" religion is unitary and the extent to which different national or other cultures shape divergent versions of such an ostensibly unified religion. Do all Catholics in the world believe the same things? North American Catholics are a little bit shaky about this. Or are there strong national differences but a limited capacity to recognize them? The Islamic *ummah*—the global community of Muslims—is thought to be united by its common beliefs, but it is divided not just between Shi'a and Sunni and various theological schools but also along

national lines. What is distinctive in Indonesia or in Pakistan or in Yemen? Again, intellectual resources for thinking through the relationships among "secular" culture, varied religious practices, and proclamations of religious unity are important but often underdeveloped. Catholicism and Islam offer just two examples. We could add the upheavals of the Anglican Communion to this picture or tensions over who is recognized as a Jew in different contexts. In general, it is unclear how far can we differentiate religion from culture, ethnicity, national identity, or a variety of other concepts constructed in secular terms.

Conversely, for some people, religion functions as a quasi-ethnic secular identity. That is, being Muslim, being Christian, being Hindu, being Jewish are mobilized, like ethnic categories, as secular identities. Religious identities are claimed as secular markers by people who don't practice the religion in any active sense and sometimes by people who explicitly declare themselves to be unbelievers.

But even people who are serious about their religious commitments and practices can be unclear about the relationship between the use of a religious label to denote religion as such, on the one hand, and to denote a population, on the other. Muslim attitudes toward the relation of religion to politics, for example, are shaped not just by religious ideologies but also by resentment of foreign political domination. Such resentment is common among Muslims, but it is misleading to see it as an attribute of Islam per se.[12] Indeed, it is striking how much of what goes on among—or is ascribed to—Muslims is understood by ostensibly secular Westerners as integral to Islam. More room needs to be made for attention to the secular institutions of the "Islamic" world.

Questions are recurrently raised about whether Islam can be separated from politics. Debates about this, however, are shaped by previous debates over the question of the division of religion and politics in Christendom. Aspects of European history are now projected onto and reworked in Islam. This isn't only a question about alleged theocracy or about clerical rule of one kind or another. It is also a question that shapes the whole idea of modernity or what counts as modern. The separation of religion from politics has become all but definitive of the modern for some.

Ironically, there are also concerns that this very separation has gone too far. These are producing discussions of "postsecularism." The term is confusing because it often isn't clear whether those who use it intend to describe a change in the attitudes of a large population or only a shift away from their own, previously more doctrinaire secularism. At stake in such discussions is whether the democratic public sphere (a) loses its capacity to integrate public opinion into its decision-making structure if it can't include religious voices and (b) is deprived of possible creative resources, insights, and ethical orientations if it isn't informed by ideas with roots in religion.

Both John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas have reconsidered their previous arguments that the public sphere has to be completely secular in order to be

neutrally accessible to all. Both have been advocates for a mainly processual, nonsubstantive treatment of public discourse. They argue that constitutional arrangements and normative presuppositions for democracy should focus on achieving just procedures, rather than pursuing a particular substantive definition of the good.[13] Rawls initially excluded religious reasons from public debates; late in his life, he reconsidered his prior position and argued that they should be included as long as they could be translated into secular terms.[14] Habermas has gone further, worrying that the demand for "translation" imposes an asymmetrical burden; he is also concerned not to lose religious insights that may still have liberatory potential.[15] Habermas seeks to defend a less narrow liberalism, one that admits religion more fully into public discourse but seeks to maintain a secular conception of the state. He understands this as requiring impartiality in state relations to religion, including to unbelief, but not as requiring the stronger *laïc* prohibition on state action affecting religion, even if impartially. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that the liberal state and its advocates are not merely enjoined to religious tolerance but also—at least potentially—cognizant of a functional interest in public expressions of religion. These may be key resources for the creation of meaning and identity; secular citizens can learn from religious contributions to public discourse (not least when these help clarify intuitions that the secular register has not made explicit). But, Habermas insists, it remains the case that a direct appeal to the absolute, a transcendent notion of ultimate truth, is a step outside the bounds of reasoned public discourse.

Habermas's argument presumes that such absolutes, or higher-order values, are absent from ordinary rational discourse and introduced only by religious beliefs (or close analogues such as the nationalist politics informed by Schmitt). But it is in this context that Taylor makes a helpful suggestion: that all normative orientations, even those that claim to be entirely rational, in fact depend on higher-order values.[16] Being completely rational can be one such value. Some higher values are very this-worldly, as, for example, in economic discourses in which either some indicator of utility or some hedonic principle of human happiness is clearly the utmost good by which the entire analytic framework is organized and which has a standing apart from any merely incremental values. So it is not clear that reference to higher values clearly demarcates religious from secular reason. The question of how "secular" the public sphere can and should be remains contested.

Distinctions between the religious and the secular are embedded in a range of other differentiations that are imposed by the sociopolitical configurations of the modern era. Many of these are closely linked to states and their administrative practices—indeed, in both colonial and domestic administration, states helped to create the very category "religion" as one that would subsume a whole class of supposedly analogous phenomena. But the differentiation of states from market economies, sometimes understood to be self-moving, is also

powerful. Indeed, Max Weber famously argued that the differentiation of values spheres—religious, economic, political, social, aesthetic—was basic to modernity.

The notion of value spheres is informative, but it should also be clear that there are tensions among projects, not just values. Secular and religious projects of world-making contend over the nature of institutions. The advance of the secular stems in part from creating new domains of efficacy and action. Science is important in this way, not just as a value system or ideology that clashes with religion. Medicine is not just another domain of knowledge but now meddles with the very nature of life through genetic engineering. The economy, the state, and social movements all involve world-making projects. The demarcation between religion and the secular is made, not simply found.

But, finally, we should recognize the prominence of a secularist ideology that goes beyond affirming the virtues of the ostensibly neutral. The secular is claimed by many, not just as one way of organizing life, not just as useful in order to ensure peace and harmony among different religions, but as a kind of maturation. It is held to be a developmental achievement. Some people feel they are "better" because they have overcome illusion and attained the maturity identified with secularism. That ideological self-understanding is itself powerful in a variety of contexts. It even shapes the way in which many think of global cosmopolitanism, that is, as a kind of escape from culture, national and religious, into a realm of apparently pure reason, universal rights, and global interconnections. We might, by contrast, think of cosmopolitanism as something to be achieved through the connections among all of the people who come from, are rooted in, and belong to different traditions, different social structures, different countries, and different faiths. There is a profound difference between an ideology of escape and an ideology of *ecumenae*.

The Current State of Play

Secularism is not simply the project of some smart people reflecting on problems of religion. It is a phenomenon in its own right that demands reflexive scholarship and sometimes critique. The chapters in this book are intended to respond to that demand, taking stock of the current state of play in an ongoing and interdisciplinary discussion regarding the politics of religion and secularism in a global context. Because the chapters presented here are the products of a multiyear working group, they represent not just the thinking of individual authors but also the intellectual ferment of this group's sustained interaction and engagement. At the same time, there remain both significant differences of approach and substantial disagreements among the contributors to this book.

The book opens with a chapter by philosopher and political theorist Charles Taylor, whose massive and complex *A Secular Age* has singularly shaped current

discussions of secularism and secularity. Reprising what he suggests are key historical transformations in "the Western march toward secularity," Taylor revisits central themes from *A Secular Age* as he charts the distinctive path that led from the axial religions through Latin Christendom to the contemporary conditions of modern secularity. While noting that the term "secular" is both complex and ambiguous and subject to alterations and distortions as it travels from one context to another, Taylor nonetheless argues that Western secularity should be understood as the result of a fundamental change in sensibility marked by "disenchantment," or the systematic repression of the "magical" elements of religion, as well as by a concomitant historical movement toward the association of personal commitment with "true" religion. The broader historical context for these shifts was a "great disembedding" of social and collective life and a movement toward reform within Christianity, which, along with other historical developments, led not only to the rise of modern individualism but also to the possibility of conceiving of the world in purely immanent terms, shorn of all reference to the transcendent. The separation of the immanent from the transcendent, worked from within Latin Christendom itself, thus laid the groundwork for the assertion of a self-sufficient secular order. And it was the development of this possibility that led, in Taylor's account, to the existential condition he most closely associates with modern secularity, namely, the contemporary reality that belief in God, or in any transcendent reality, is considered just one option among many and therefore represents a fragile—and in some cases even difficult and embattled—form of commitment. By Taylor's lights, it is this shared condition of belief and commitment—defined in terms of what he elsewhere refers to as "the immanent frame"—that makes the current age a "secular" one.

A critical rethinking of secularism in our secular age, argues sociologist José Casanova, requires keeping in mind basic analytical distinctions between "the secular" and its cognate terms. The secular, Casanova suggests, has become a central modern epistemic category, used to construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from "the religious." There are multiple ways of experiencing the secular—and, indeed, of being secular—and the challenge of social science is to investigate and understand these different forms of secularity. While "the religious" and "the secular" are mutually constitutive, however, and while a good deal of social-scientific effort has been dedicated to the study of religion, the development of a reflexive anthropology and sociology of the secular remains in its relative infancy.

"Secularization," on the other hand, has long been a staple of the social sciences, particularly sociology, where it has been associated with a general theory of institutional differentiation, religious privatization, and religious decline. Building on the analysis proposed in his landmark book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova recommends that patterns of decline, privatization, and differentiation be analytically distinguished, in order to capture diverse

historical patterns and ongoing global processes of secularization, sacralization, and religious denominationalism. Any discussion of secularization as a global process, he suggests, should start by reflexively observing that the globalization of the category of "religion"—along with the "religious/secular" binary it assumes and entails—is itself an important global trend. Yet the proper boundaries between the religious and the secular remain hotly disputed throughout the world, and such disputes are closely related to the existence of multiple and competing "secularisms"—modern worldviews and ideologies either unflexively held or elaborated into doctrines of statecraft, political theories, philosophies of history, and diverse cultural programs. Although "the secular" first emerged as a particular Western Christian theological category, understanding multiple secularisms today requires examining the extent to which secularist assumptions of various sorts permeate the experience of ordinary people and the workings of institutions throughout the world.

A chapter by Craig Calhoun shifts the discussion away from Taylor's vast historical canvas and Casanova's wide analytical overview and toward contemporary questions of political secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere. For reasons ranging from academic soundness to practical fairness, Calhoun argues, it is necessary to rethink the secularism implicit in established conceptions of citizenship. Drawing on a critical engagement with the recent work of Jürgen Habermas, Calhoun considers the various ways in which an unreflective secularism distorts much of the liberal understanding of the world. His chapter seeks in particular to specify the challenges and complexities associated with recent attempts to reconfigure the place of religion and religious reason-giving in theories of ethical citizenship, political discourse, and the public sphere. The classification of religion as an essentially private matter, he suggests, is misguided—and, indeed, religion has never been essentially private. But approaches to religion within liberal theory are also hampered by an overly "epistemic" or cognitive approach to religion, by the presumption that the religious and the secular can be clearly and easily distinguished from each other, and by the view—consonant with older and now discredited theories of secularization—that contemporary religion is a holdover from an earlier historical period, rather than a fundamentally modern phenomenon. Such tacit presuppositions have increasingly been reconsidered in recent years, including important shifts in the thinking of Habermas himself. Yet Habermas's own rethinking of his earlier secularism remains limited, Calhoun suggests—both by a mistaken assumption that secular orientations do not depend on what Taylor has called "hypergoods" and by an overly simplified understanding of the pursuit of mutual understanding between religious and secular citizens. Seeking to move beyond Habermas's conception of "translation," Calhoun intimates a theoretical approach that would thematize both more transformative processes of mutual engagement and the wider generation of social solidarities integrative of political communities.

Political theorist Rajeev Bhargava opens his chapter with an acknowledgment of some of the compelling contemporary criticisms of the doctrine of political secularism. Despite such criticisms, he argues that political secularism must be rehabilitated rather than abandoned. An authority on secularism in India and the editor of *Secularism and Its Critics*—an earlier collection of essays that helped to set the terms of the expanding debates over the politics of secularism in India and beyond—Bhargava argues that while political secularism is doubtless problematic, there is currently no reasonable moral and ethical alternative. Secularism, he says, "remains our best bet to help us deal with ever-deepening religious diversity and the problems endemic to it." In response to the political and intellectual challenges posed to the secularity of states, Bhargava argues, we must look beyond mainstream and liberal conceptions of secularism and examine instead the best practices of actually existing secular states, deriving from these a refashioned conception of secularism. Drawing on the Indian example, he puts forth a contextual understanding of secularism in which religions are treated according to a notion of "principled distance," which requires a flexible approach both to questions of the public inclusion or exclusion of religion and to the extent to which the state engages with it or disengages from it. This context-sensitive approach, Bhargava suggests, promises an alternative conception of secularism in which critique of religion is consistent with respect, and the choice between hostility to and respectful distance from religion is seen to be a false dichotomy. Indeed, it is a situational approach that opens the possibility of multiple secularisms and suggests that secularism cannot simply be written off as an exclusively Christian and Western doctrine.

In the next chapter, political scientist and scholar of comparative politics Alfred Stepan calls attention to the great variations in state-religion-society relations that exist in modern democracies, discussing the distinct patterns of relation that constitute these "multiple secularisms." Secularism, Stepan suggests, is neither a sufficient condition for democracy nor a concept necessary for its analysis, and it is generally more productive to refer to the "twin tolerations"—the minimal degree of toleration that democratic institutions need to receive from religion and the minimal degree of toleration that religion needs to receive from the state for a polity to be democratic. Yet the notion of multiple secularisms—which is for Stepan not just a normative assertion but also an empirical claim—allows for the analysis of four distinct patterns, or models, of secularism: "separatist," "established religion," "positive accommodation," and "respect all, positive cooperation, and principled distance." This chapter focuses in particular detail on the fourth pattern, building on Bhargava's conception of "principled distance," while also attending to the respect given by the state in private and public spheres to all major religions in the polity and to the extent of positive cooperation between religions and the state. Attention to patterns of secularism in Indonesia, Senegal, and India, Stepan argues, both challenges the idea that Muslims are generically resistant to secularism and

motivates a rethinking of the assumption that religion must always be taken off the agenda in public, political arguments. In Senegal, for example, mutual "rituals of respect" between the state and all religions have facilitated policy cooperation even in some sensitive areas concerning human-rights violations. Given that patterns of secularism are socially and politically constructed, rather than simply fixed normative models, he concludes that theorizing about secularism needs to be attentive to the emergence of new patterns of relation among state, society, and religion and to reconstruct models of secularism in light of them.

Like Bhargava and Stepan, international-relations theorist Peter Katzenstein seeks to move beyond the assumption that secularism should be conceived of in the singular. If states, capitalisms, and democracies—three of the core components of secular politics—are now duly recognized as variegated and complex formations, he asks, why should secularism be conceptualized any differently? Katzenstein accordingly criticizes both liberal and realist approaches to the study of international relations. While liberalism, he says, is "sweet common sense" for many scholars of international relations and remains an "article of faith," it envisions history as a teleological process and sees secularization as the dominant trend characteristic of modernization, overlooking the continued relevance of religion to world politics. Cultural realism is more open to acknowledging the importance of religion, yet its "truncated analysis" is insufficient to the complexity, diversity, and difference at the core of civilizations and the collective identities they foster. As an alternative to these two dominant approaches and as a means of adequately conceptualizing the intermingling of multiple secularisms and religions in contemporary world politics, Katzenstein proposes instead the concept of "civilizational states." Conceiving of civilizations as "zones of prestige," Katzenstein distinguishes between axial-age civilizations and the civilization of modernity, with its multiplicity of different cultural programs and institutions, drawn from and grounded in different religious traditions. In the midst of a civilization of globalization, he argues, lies the possibility for "cultural commensurabilities" in relations between civilizational states. As the forces of globalization and the enactment of different religiously grounded cultural programs give rise to both homogenization and differentiation, they generate the partial yet consequential overlaps of multiple secular and religious traditions that mark all civilizational states. Such overlaps, Katzenstein suggests, create space for a "polymorphic globalism," in which intersections of secularisms and religions are created through constant processes of cooperation and adaptation, coordination and conflict.

Bridging work within political science and recent scholarship on secularism in a range of other disciplines, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's chapter critically interrogates and seeks to destabilize the rigid and pervasive "secular/religious binary" within her own field of international relations. Prevailing distinctions between the religious and the secular, Hurd suggests, have embedded an assumption that religion has been effectively privatized and thus is no longer

relevant in modern politics, leading scholars of international relations to miss or misunderstand some of the most important political developments of the contemporary period. While most scholars of this ilk remain committed to an unreflective secularism that blinds them to the importance of religious questions, actors, institutions, and processes, it is nonetheless not sufficient simply to augment attention to religion, since this "add and stir" approach leaves the basic categories of analysis untouched. A more robust rethinking of conventional approaches to international relations that suppose a rigid opposition between the secular and the religious, on the other hand, might loosen the hold of this binary on political and intellectual life, opening up new possibilities for thinking about and engaging in international politics. Such rethinking, Hurd suggests, requires a "suspension of disbelief" in the particularity of the secular—that is, it requires that an often taken-for-granted belief in the universalizing potential of secularization be reflexively reconsidered, so that the opposition between the secular and the religious is seen not as fixed and stable but, rather, as shifting, evolving, and elusive—a distinction that is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated via a range of different ontological presuppositions and epistemic commitments. Hurd illustrates her own approach through a discussion of relations between the United States and Iran and a consideration of the rise of the AK Parti (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey, two cases she discusses in greater depth in her own book, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*.

Sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer joins Hurd in critiquing the bifurcation of polities and politics into their secular and their religious aspects in a chapter on secular and religious treatments of violence. Why, Juergensmeyer asks, have religious language and identities become bound up in contemporary challenges to the prevailing social order? The answer, he suggests, derives from the way in which both secularism and religion have come to be conceived. Strident religious movements have erupted in response to what they perceive to be an aggressive secularism. Tracing out the origins of "secular nationalism" and the rise of the secular state, Juergensmeyer examines how secular politics sought to excise religion from public life and considers the manner in which secularism has recently been challenged and sometimes rejected outright by actors mobilizing religious language and ideologies as a form of political critique. Following Tocqueville, Juergensmeyer finds that secular nationalism is often perceived as a "strange religion" in its own right, spread throughout the world with "almost missionary zeal." The ideology of secular nationalism, he suggests, can be productively compared with religion, since both are "ideologies of order," or what Geertz referred to as "cultural systems." Both religion—understood in the broad sense—and secularism point to a moral sensibility toward social order, and in this way, they can be seen as "two ways of talking about the same thing." Yet in the modern period, religion has also come to take on a narrower definition, limited to particular doctrines and confessional communities and thereby

contrasted with secular social values and political commitments. Thus have religion and secularism in their contemporary forms been not only inventions of modernity but also rival "expressions of faith." In this light, the mobilization of religious language in opposition to the power of the state can be seen as a comprehensible response to the new global reach of secular nationalism. The modern idea of religion, Juergensmeyer concludes, has become a potentially revolutionary construct, tied to movements that are frequently strident and violent.

Tracing out how the categories of the secular and the religious in international affairs work to produce assumptions about the nature of religious and secular beliefs and actions, political scientist Cecelia Lynch examines the activities of religious humanitarian workers in the context of the global politics of secularism. Drawing on in-depth interviews with NGO activists in Cameroon, Kenya, Jordan, the West Bank, New York, Geneva, and elsewhere, Lynch seeks to challenge the simplistic dichotomy between the religious and the secular that is prevalent in international relations and to focus instead on the multiple ways that the "constitutive constructs" of the religious and the secular shape the ethical imperatives articulated by humanitarian actors. She attends in particular to the construction of religious and secular identities and their concomitant modes of action in the context of results-oriented market discourses that prioritize efficiency while also valorizing liberal progress, demonstrable achievement, accountability, and "success"; to the effects on humanitarian actors of "war on terror" discourses that tie a contemporary fascination with religious actors to a recurrent concern with the root causes of political violence; and to the varied relations of traditional practices to the globalizing discourses of science and "world religions." In each of these cases, Lynch emphasizes the dynamic nature of the relationship between the secular and the religious and argues that the experiences of religious humanitarians suggest new places to look for the continued destabilization of the religious/secular binary. Whether focusing on the shift of humanitarian attention from HIV/AIDS to malaria, discussing the self-identifications of "secular" Muslims engaged in the promotion of networks of nonviolence, or exploring the fluid boundaries between "traditional" and "world" religions in postcolonial societies, Lynch shares with both Hurd and Juergensmeyer the concern to destabilize a rigid secular/religious binary and in the process to demonstrate some of the numerous ways in which that binary is disturbed by the contemporary political engagements of religious humanitarians.

The next two chapters engage with Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* in order to map the contours of contemporary political and religious transformations within the context of the sweeping and large-scale historical shifts toward secularity that Taylor's work charts. Historian Scott Appleby revisits and reflects critically on the work of the Fundamentalism Project, the large-scale research initiative he codirected with Martin Marty. Is "fundamentalism," Appleby asks, merely a shibboleth, a construct of anxious or predatory opponents of

politically engaged religious groups, or does the category have a more productive analytic utility? Acknowledging the widespread and persistent misuse to which the term has been put, Appleby nonetheless defends a revised conception of fundamentalism as a religious mode defined by both an intentional appropriation of constitutive elements of the secular and an antipathy to dominant forms of secularism. Thus, he argues, fundamentalists are best understood as trapped between increasing integration into the institutions, practices, and processes of secular modernity, on the one hand, and a militant, reactive, and absolutist reaction to "Westoxicated" secularism, on the other. Centrally "millennialist" in aspiration and outlook, fundamentalism denotes a specific religious logic that critically engages regnant secularisms, rejecting some forms and attempting to transform others. It is therefore an oversimplification to conceive of fundamentalist religion as simply "antisecular." Rather, it is a form of strong religion that admits of internal pluralism and complexity, an orientation toward both transcendence and practical politics that constantly negotiates and renegotiates the relationship between the secular and the religious. While fundamentalists share with other denizens of secular modernity the "immanent frame" that defines and shapes contemporary secularity, they spin that frame in the direction of openness to something beyond, simultaneously insisting on the radical otherness of the transcendent and seeking to bend the world to the will of the divine within the confines of secular time. As such, Appleby concludes, they represent an "extreme case" of what is and is not possible in contemporary religious encounters with secularity in our secular age.

Along with Appleby, sociologist Richard Madsen draws on a reading of *A Secular Age*, suggesting that Taylor's analytic framework for the understanding of modern secularity—explicitly limited to an analysis of the North Atlantic world—might nonetheless be productively mobilized in an examination of contemporary religious and secular developments in East and Southeast Asia. Focusing on political and religious transformations taking place in China, Indonesia, and Taiwan in the aftermath of the Cold War, Madsen seeks to show how the ostensibly secular façade of Asian political institutions has frequently masked an "interior spirit" of religiosity. Such religiosity, he argues, is often a matter not of personal belief but, rather, of collective ritual and socially "embedded" religion—a form of local practice increasingly tied to, and transformed by, global forms and forces. In the face of governmental attempts to suppress religious practices, co-opt religious leaders, or segregate religious communities, a plethora of new Asian religious practices have emerged, including a variety of hybrid cultural forms and religious identities. These practices have taken different shape in each of the three different contexts Madsen considers. In China, where the state sought to suppress religion, the reforms of Deng Xiaoping laid the basis for both modernized versions of an older polytheism and new openness to religious movements guided by visions that transcend the local, including, for instance, the proliferation of practices such as

qigong, forms of which had been marked as "false" religion by the state. In Indonesia, where the state sought to co-opt religion and where religious commitments have been deeply intertwined with ethnic and regional attachments, new forms of religiosity have nonetheless emerged as the result of the influence of wider global movements, including both competitive, universalizing, and mission-oriented forms of Christianity and Islam, as well as more ecumenical and hybrid approaches seeking to produce religious "citizens of the world." And in Taiwan, where the state pursued a mix of suppression and co-optation and later moved toward a liberal model of toleration, new and modernizing religious movements have also emerged, including "socially engaged" strands of Buddhism.

Anthropologist Peter van der Veer also takes up the case of China, comparing the history of Chinese secularism with its Indian counterpart. He suggests that attention to secularization as a historical process must be supplemented by attention to secularisms as historical projects. Seeking to delineate the problems such projects have attempted to address in both China and India, van der Veer highlights the ideological and even religious elements of the secular projects in each location, emphasizing the violence entailed by their interventions. Chinese and Indian secularisms, he argues, have been emancipatory projects and by their very nature violent. While a millenarian and magical Chinese secular utopianism sought to violently eradicate certain forms of religion, in India, secularism sought to stem violence between religious communities, promoting the peaceful coexistence of equal religions by forwarding the idea of a neutral state. At the same time, van der Veer stresses the centrality of imperialism in shaping secularisms in both China and India. The imperial encounter, he suggests, was crucial in both contexts, yet the shape of its influence was fundamentally different in each. In India, where religion became the basis of resistance to the colonial state, the state sought to take a secular neutrality toward religion, and discussion centered around the reform of Indian traditions, rather than their attempted destruction. In China, on the other hand, reformers adopted a more aggressive antireligious stance, calling, for example, for the destruction of temples. Yet in neither location is secularism simply an antireligious project, although there are antireligious elements in each case. Secular projects in both China and India seek rather to transform religions into moral sources of citizenship and national belonging and thus demand not the eradication of religion but its attempted modernization.

In the final chapter of the book, renowned scholar of the secular Talal Asad takes up questions of blasphemy and freedom of speech. Approaching blasphemy claims through a range of moral, political, and aesthetic problems that have crystallized in the form of the idea of free speech, Asad reflects on what contemporary debates over Islamic blasphemy claims suggest about the shape of liberal secularity and its ideal of the free human. Secular liberal freedom, he suggests, is conceived as a form of self-ownership, an inalienable and

individualized form of corporeal property, rooted in the living body. In theory, the self-owning secular subject has the ability to choose freely what to do and to publicly claim such freedom. Yet modern secular societies do place legal constraints on public speech. The strong secular resistance to charges of blasphemy, Asad argues, must therefore derive not simply from constraint but from the theological language in which such constraint is articulated, since theology invokes dependence on transcendental power, while secularism has rejected such power in the name of its own particular—and ideological—conception of human freedom. Central to this secular conception of freedom is not only the notion that speech is the personal property of the liberal subject but also a crucial distinction between coercion and seduction—with the former being positively valued as another sign of individual freedom. Yet seduction may also be counted as a form of coercion in its own right, interpreted, Asad writes, as "the dynamic between internal compulsion and external capture, between desire and power." After a consideration of the seductive aesthetics of modern violence, Asad concludes with a series of questions. "Why is it," he asks, "that aggression in the name of God shocks secular liberal sensibilities, whereas the art of killing in the name of the secular nation, of democracy, does not?"

Notes

1. Christian Smith, ed., *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); William Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

2. For "modes of secularism," see Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 31–53.

3. Robert Keohane, "The Globalization of Informal Violence, Theories of World Politics, and 'The Liberalism of Fear,'" in C. Calhoun, P. Price, and A. Timmer, eds., *Understanding September 11* (New York: New Press, 2002), 72. See also Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

4. See Julie Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

5. Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (October 2003): 1061–1080; and David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

6. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962).

7. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007). See also Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).

8. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

9. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See also Asad, *Formations of the Secular*.

10. See Alfred Stepan's review, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October 2000): 37–57; and various chapters in Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford, New Delhi, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

11. Saba Mahmood, "The Politics of Religious Freedom and the Minority Question: A Middle Eastern Genealogy," unpublished paper.

12. See Tariq Ramadan, "Manifesto for a New 'We,'" http://www.tariqramadan.com/spip.php?article743 (accessed March 12, 2010).

13. See Alastair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), and *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

14. John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 765–807.

15. See Jürgen Habermas, *Rationality and Religion: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), and "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25.

16. See the discussion of "hypergoods" in Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 63–73 *et passim*.