

Islam and Secular Citizenship
in the Netherlands, United
Kingdom, and France

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CHAPTER 2

Secularization, Secularity, and the Secular: Religion and Its Place in Social Life

2.1 Religion and Its Place in Social Life

Secularization, secularity, and the secular are concepts that determine the place and role of religion in contemporary social life, especially in the Western world, and even more so in Europe. In a nutshell, secularization assumes that the secular and the religious are two categories that pertain to different spheres of life and are opposed to each other. It maintains that religion has lost its importance, while the secular has taken its place. It envisages religion to be of no more use, socially or individually. It is a collective imaginary, and although the details vary from one continent to the other, and from one country to the other, it is a familiar theme and we all engage with it in one way or the other. Secularity represents the way secularization and the secular are dealt with, in that the secular is the domain where secularity and secularization have meaning. While the secular is mostly understood in opposition to the sacred and the transcendental, secularity both structures and orders the social imaginary and social experiences according to the principle of secularization. This conceptual triangle cannot be taken apart in practice: secularization, the secular, and secularity are codependent, while they all define the role and meaning of religion.

The way that we imagine the role of religion and belief has a direct effect on how we imagine the world in ontological terms, how we account for the meaning of experiences, situations, and the people we encounter, the social relations that we have, as well as the expectations and the moral ideas that

give us a sense of right or wrong (Taylor 2007). The secular has the immense power of ordering and assigning meaning to the way in which human life is lived, and as such, is one of the most potent imaginaries on which modern society is based.

I propose, following Charles Taylor's ideas about our secular age, that the modern social imaginary is based on ideas of the secular and implicitly of secularity, which not only deal with "the removal of God or religion from public space" (2004:93), but also feed the most general ideas and normative inclinations about human collective action on which society is based, without any need for something transcendent. The concepts of the public sphere as the "metatopical space" and that of the "metatopical agency" of people are the blueprint features of the imaginary that determine the contours of the social world as we know it (Burawoy 2005). This is the "natural way" that is at the basis of most of the moral, social, and political structures of our social life.

The social imaginary has been shaped by the collective understanding and evaluation of historical changes considered as important steps on the road to modernity. These ideas can be tracked back to the philosophy of Enlightenment, which is considered to form the basis of secularity and the way in which we think of rationality as opposed to fanaticism, emotionality, and the irrational (see Colas 1997; Tambiah 1990).

The distinction between the immanent and the transcendent (Taylor 2007) is very useful, as it makes us sensitive not only to the way that secularization and secularity divide social existence in different and independent spheres of human activity, but also to the way that the social is understood only in immanent terms, while any reference to a possibility of transcendence is relegated to the realm of belief and religion. Thinking in terms of dimensions, we can analytically separate a vertical dimension of human life, that links or separates social reality and the (possibility of) the transcendent from the horizontal dimension, where the experiences of social life unfold in their amazing complexity. This map of the universe makes sense only if we step out of the secular paradigm for a moment—the possibility of a vertical, transcendental dimension is one that can only be articulated in an unsecular tradition. This tradition mostly would be considered from a secular point of view as presecular, as secularity is understood as a necessary part of the social and moral evolution that gave shape to modernity, as we experience it now.

The secular lumps together all the traditions of thought that exclude transcendence, like realism, positivism, naturalism, and humanism under its own umbrella. It is a wide array of internally diverse views that have only their worldly and immanent focus in common (see McLennan 2007: 858). If

we wish to step out of the secularist paradigm, we need to insist on the distinction between the immanent and the transcendental that helps us refocus on the way that different traditions of thought have engaged with the questions of meaning, the goal, and the possible dimensions of human life.

This multidimensional model can be further enriched with the various dimensions in which secularity intersects the frames of our social imaginary: the personal, the collective, and the moral. Taylor distinguishes between three features of secularity that impose on our social imaginary: a narrowing of the concept of self; a focus on the individual; and a limited idea about goodness. The focus on the individual neglects the collective social bodies the individual is part of, isolating the individual and assigning him only individual and not collective responsibility. The flattening of the notion of goodness takes place through the restriction of the world to an immanence filled with a mesmerizing amount of goods and possibilities of goodness, all of which can and should be attained (Taylor 2007; Warner, VanAntwerpen, and Calhoun 2010). Finally, the self is understood as an independent entity, filled with determination and agency, but working only for its own benefit.

In order to understand the power and depth of secularity as a social imaginary, we need to understand the building blocks that made possible the transformation of an analytical model into naturalized wisdom. In the following paragraphs, I will look at the way ideas about secularization, secularity, and the secular have been constructed in relation to objective truth in scientific discourse, pointing out the differences in the way the dimensions of secularization have been related to desacralization, diversification, pluralism, urbanization, and most importantly, to modernity. I will point out how scientific discourse delimited the various dimensions and possible causal powers of secular ideas, framing the limits of the secular discourse articulated at several social levels. Besides, I distinguish between the secular and the postsecular as epistemic categories, secularization as an analytical process of understanding changes in social history, and secularity as a worldview. I also introduce the concept of regimes of secularity, paying attention to the role of secularity as a governance tool and as an ideology (see also Casanova 2009a), arguing that both religion and secularities need to be understood in relation to each other. Furthermore, as I show, this relation takes place in a field of power.

2.2 The Conditions of Secularity and the Role of the “Unthought”

Secularity was made possible by a series of changes in the tapestry of the world. Taylor argues that we live in a secular age as a consequence of changes

in the conditions of beliefs, which he calls secularity 3. Secularity is not only a condition caused by the pragmatic shift in the cultural centrality of religion, manifested in the emptying of public spaces of reference to God or ultimate reality—secularity 1, or the diminution of religious beliefs and practices—secularity 2. The change in the conditions of belief, cause a shift a society where belief in God is unchallenged and unproblematic to one in which belief is only one option among others, and frequently not the easiest one to embrace. Taylor builds up his argument from secularity 1 and 2, both considered only as partial explanations of the reason why the period in which we live now is considered as “a secular age.” Considered merely as “subtraction theories,” secularity 1 and 2 point out that what we now experience is based on the lack of ingredients such as religion and belief, that had been considered vital in the past (Taylor 2007).

Taking up the issues of “secularization,” he contests secularization theory on the basis of his threefold distinction. Secularization theory does not adequately account for the phenomena that it describes, Taylor (2007) believes, and in order to substantiate his assumption he introduces the concept of “unthought”. Each theory and position is based on an “unthought,” a pre-theoretical perspective that influences the way that we think about things, and the way that we pay attention to details. Working with “tempers” and “outlooks” the “unthought” described by Taylor, seems to work in the field of visceral understandings, emotions, and gut feelings, which then influence the complete field of human action. This dimension is comparable to the category of the real proposed by Lacan, mentioned in the introduction of this work.

Taylor further points out that secularization theory has the “unthought” that religion must necessarily decline because it is a false field of knowledge (as science has already pointed out). It does not solve the problems that we are dealing with every day, and its structure of authority contradicts the modern focus on individuals (Taylor 2007:306). This “unthought” maintains that religion remains a belief about transcendence that is not compatible with the conditions of modernity—being unable to truly motivate human action. This “unthought” is to be found operating behind secularization theory in our common understanding of the secular and the religious as opposite categories, and the emotional substrata which are mobilized by the political and the religious.

Taking this argument further, I propose that the way in which secularity is presently understood is built on the “unthought” of the findings of secularization theory, namely: (1) modernity causes the disenchantment of religion and the triumph of rationality; (2) religion and other spheres of life are functionally and structurally separated from each other; and (3) religion

has but a weak influence on individual and collective life. Against all the critiques received, secularization theory was and remains influential. Although secularization theory is hardly standing unchallenged in the academic world, this is not the case in European society, where it is still used to describe (and normatively formulate) the way things are (and should be).

As such the “unthought” has an impact on how we see religion in social life. The influence of what we perceive as “facts” makes us see and identify causal relationships in a certain way. This modern reductionist account of religion builds on secularization theory, fails to see religion as a genuine, independent, and irreducible motivator for human action and human life, while the “transformation perspective” that religion offers is completely neglected.

Taylor compares the role of the untought in the construction of a social imaginary to a three-storied building (Taylor 2007:431–433), where the “facts” occupy the ground floor, as a diagnosis of the causes of secularization that are placed in the basement. This construction determines the dimensions of the upper floor, where the evaluations and the implications of the “facts” are placed. Seen in this way, “the explanation one gives for the declines registered by ‘secularization’ relate closely to one’s picture of the place of religion today” (Taylor 2007:433), as the “unthought” stabilizes the divisions between the different stories of the building. Thus secularization necessarily feeds our present understanding of the role and power of religion, providing the pillars on which the construction of what we believe as real and true may rest.

The influence of secularization theory is easy to see, if we follow Taylor’s argument. Thinking about religion as something useless and incompatible with the modern reality influences the way in which we rationalize the causal chains that have brought us to this situation, but also influences the role religion may have now and in the future. In other words, our thoughts and “unthoughts” form the conditions for the existence of belief and the dimensions of its authority—in Taylor’s words, secularity 3. To this day, the premises accepted and developed by secularization theory have been transcribed in our understanding of the secular as a separate domain, to be separated from any transcendental claim. This separation and the need for differentiation affect the institutions that claim a link with the transcendental and the collective agency of groups motivated by belief. This distinction is descriptive, but also normative: it functions as a closed world system that is difficult, if not impossible to contest.

However, it is important to keep in mind the starting point of the argument: secularity as understood through the lenses of secularization theory is but one way of looking at the place of religion in social life. Secularization

theory remains influential in informing this particular view. This calls for a detailed analysis of the arguments it presents, a task to which I will proceed in the following section. However, these “findings” must also be historically related to both as foundations of secular ideology and as stepping-stones of secular governance.

2.3 The “Myth” of Secularization

An account of the role of religion in public life cannot start without mentioning the theory of secularization. Secularization theory has been the main lens through which (social) science(s) have been looking at religion. We can certainly say that it has been and remains a highly influential theory, engaging a vast array of scholars. Secularization theory predicted the disappearance of religion from the public sphere as an effect of modernization, individualization, urbanization, and industrialization, forecasting its lack of importance for individuals and communities alike, its relegation to the private sphere, and its transformation into being a consumer’s choice.

It is not in my purpose to offer an overview of the way that secularization has been described and interpreted so far, as this has been done in detail before (see Glasner 1977; Dobbelaere 1981; Warner 2010). My intention is, without being oblivious of the vast diversity of interpretations and adjustments to secularization theory, to try to condense and rearrange its complexity according to the different logics that prove to remain embedded in our collective normative understanding about the role of religion in social life in a conceptual map.

Secularization theory has never been a unitary field of analysis and has always had more than one direction of inquiry (Hadden 1987:598–9). As Karel Dobbelaere (1981) rightly observed, “secularization” has been a term used in scientific studies having multiple meanings. Empirically based on the study of the changes that Christianity went through after the process of Reformation in Europe, it soon became a theory with universal claims. Together with its claims for universal validity came a link with a series of other concepts, often considered as necessarily and causally related. Modernity, industrialization, urbanization, and progress often travel conceptually together, joined by secularity.

In the following section, I will detail the four main ideas that form classical secularization theory, on the basis of the works of Berger, Wilson, Martin, and Bruce. Although many more authors have contributed to this field of knowledge, this selection is based on the study of those whose work form the pillars of secularization theory.

2.3.1 Dimensions of Secularization Theory

In order to understand the contribution of secularization theory to how the secular is presently understood, I will identify the main tenets of this theory on the basis of the most influential works in this domain. First, I will present the dimensions of the disappearance, differentiation, coexistence, and deintensification thesis in detail, in order to synthesize and compare their main findings at a later stage.

Berger's *disappearance thesis* claims that individuals, as a consequence of the secularization of consciousness, make less and less use of religion to make sense of their lives and the world (1967:108). Calling this phenomenon "desacralization," Berger believes that religion is on the point of completely disappearing from the social scene, leaving space for processes that accompany the progressive rationalization of the world. For him, secularization is a social-structural process affecting all areas of life, from public life to the inner beliefs of individuals.

According to Berger, the roots of the process of secularization are to be found in the economic sphere, in the changes brought about by the process of industrialization and the development of capitalism. Rationalization, the force operating behind both capitalism and industrialization, seeps into society at a structural level and also at the level of consciousness. As the ordering logic of the political sphere is taken over by an economy based logic, the triumph of rationality is to be met at all public levels of society, without exception, providing a good foundation for arguments and forming a frame of reference that will overpower and replace any alternative.

Industrialization and the gradual rationalization of public life were also helped by changes in the religious sphere, namely, the process of Reformation. Protestantism contested the overarching idea of truth, or in Berger's words, the "sacred canopy," creating a situation of diversity and pluralism within the religious field. Competition ensued between churches and between religions, a rivalry that further fragmented a religion that had little impact in the public domain. The pluralization and fragmentation of the religious realm forced religions to market their traditions, submitting it to the rationale of capitalism. As the value of religion was not obvious anymore, it had to compete on the market with other possible options aiming at capturing the minds and hearts of believers. This competition takes place at the individual as well as the collective levels. Both the fight for the attention of the individual and the recovering of the lost territory of claims to holding universal and eternal truth need attention and effort from institutions. The competition further weakens the force of religion, exposing it more to the swords of rationality and capitalism that chop it down, making its claims relative, contextual, and insignificant.

As a consequence, the differentiation of the religious from the political sphere, or the religious sphere and “all the rest”, can be considered “functional” and instrumental for the maintenance of a “highly rationalized” sphere of political and economic order. The private sphere is separated from the secularized and modern sectors of the society, for the reason of the common good. This distinction between the private and the public encapsulates religion and family in the private sphere, while the economy and politics remain public areas and collective affairs. The sphere of education, considered both private and public, remains an issue of contention.

Luckmann has a similar view on secularization that he defines as “a process in which internal institutional ideologies replace, within their own domain, an overarching and transcendent universe of norms” (1967:107). In both accounts, Berger and Luckmann (1966) see rationality, capitalism, and industrialization naturally replacing the functional role of religion, which in its turn leads to a shrinkage of the structural need for religion in social life.

Criticized for the way in which he uses the concept of secularization in his earlier work, using it to mean both the field of life in which decisions are made without reference to religion, and the way that the church adapts to changes in social world (see Dobbelaere 1981), Berger, one of the most fervent defenders of the secularization thesis, changed his position with time. Berger (1999) contended that, while modernization has indeed had some effects on secularization, these effects are contextual. While causing secularization, modernity can also be seen as the cause of producing antiseccular movements, such as fundamentalism. Berger believes that secularization is something that has taken place, with variations in modality, speed, and consequences of implementation and that now encounter opposition. Similar to the way in which the secular has stepped upon and opposed a religious age in the past, religion returns in order to oppose the order brought about by secularization.

Furthermore, Berger admitted that secularization at the collective social level does not need to be necessarily linked to that at the individual level. Individual religiosity may give rise to forms of institutional religion that are new and innovative, having a positive effect on collective religiosity. He admits further, that the institutional roles played by religion in social or political realms can also be seen as separate from the actual beliefs of individuals.

However, the link between religion and modernity remains uncontested in Berger’s work. He also regards “experiments” with secularized religion as having failed, and explains the flourishing of religious communities as a lack of adaptation to the conditions that modernity entails.

While Wilson's (1966, 1982) *differentiation thesis* does not see religion as disappearing, it nevertheless foreshadows the decline of its significance in social life and social consciousness, together with having a reduced command over resources. We can distinguish three main arguments in his take on the secularization thesis: first, a structural argument that describes secularization as the process of transition of goods, propriety, authority, and power from institutions working with a transcendental frame to those operating by using an "empiric, rational and pragmatic frame" (Wilson 1982:12). In a narrow sense, he talks of secularization as the process of the transition of authority from elites claiming empowerment from transcendental sources to elites that have acquired political power. Second, he sees it as an argument targeting the shift in human consciousness that makes religion superfluous in the modern age. Finally, Wilson talks about sociology as opposed to theology; a new objective way of describing religion and its place in the social world.

Structurally, changes in social stratification and organization are determined by changes in the way that justice and moral norms have been conceptualized, and the way in which they have influenced social cohesion, the epistemological impact of the natural sciences, and the Freudian explanation of the irrational as a part of the human psyche. All these factors are causing secularization to different degrees. While secularization is not understood as the corollary of these processes of social change, Wilson sees it as developing and influencing social life in tandem with them. Certain parts of social life are expected to change at a slower rate, while the pace of change is expectedly higher for areas like religion.

In his early writing, Wilson (1966) develops the idea that communities are essentially religious, while society is secular in nature. Since in the modern world, the community ceases to be the main principle of social organization, the role of religion in sanctifying and reassuring the community does not have the same impact as it did earlier. The community becomes one among other "social institutions," while religion becomes a force of collective life that loses its value and power.

He insists that secularization does not mean the disappearance of religion, but rather, the decline in its importance within the social system. In the process of structural differentiation of society, religion has lost its overarching role, diminishing its functions. Secularization is thought to have general validity, being more than a process in the specific development of Christianity. Secularity is, in Wilson's opinion, an irreversible process. However, in the case of other religions, a certain dependency on the context has been recognized. Secularization in other geographical areas depends on the way that influence from the West translates and affects the historical and psychological features of each society (Wilson 1982:19).

Moreover, Wilson believes that religion, a form of thinking that emphasizes love, affection, modesty, and duty—virtues that Wilson considers “non-rational, substantive concerns” and that form the spirit of religion—opposes rationality, that is the rationale of the secular sphere. As a consequence, “Religion in secular society will remain peripheral, relatively weak, providing comfort for men in the interstices of a soulless social system of that men are the half-willing, half-restless prisoners” (Wilson 1966:276). New forms of social organization, which are required due to the changed nature of social ties and the values that are transported through these ties, make religion an alternative for those who do not find their place in society. Concluding that religion will mainly be of use to marginal social groups and individuals, Wilson clearly predicts the fading away of a consciousness based on values like altruism and emphasizes the reign of calculating rationality.

Wilson also discusses the importance of secularity (understood in the sense of objectivity and neutrality) for the social sciences. Drawing on Comte’s distinction between religious and scientific ways of knowledge, Wilson talks about the “inherited model” of secularization and aligns sociology in the frontline of the battle to oust the old ways of thinking (Wilson 1982). Constructed against theology, “sociology documented a secularization process” (Wilson 1982:9, see also Milbank 2006, McLennan 2007). Sociology is considered as an objective method of looking at society, different from “secularization,” or the process occurring within the social structure and also immune to “secularism,” “the ideology of those who want to promote the decline of religion and to hasten the process of secularization” (Wilson 1982:11).

Coexistence theory assumes that the balance between secularity and religion depends on particular circumstances (Martin 1990). Martin unravels secularization by looking at how the assumptions about the religious past make it hard, if not impossible, to think of the following historical periods in terms other than secularization. He highlights that the religious past is represented through selected images such as, “the temporal power of the church, extreme ascetism, realism in philosophy, and ecclesiastical dominance in the sphere of artistic patronage and learning” (Martin 1969 in Dobbelaere 1981:32), painting an extreme and inherently negative picture of religion.

Martin sees secularization as a process that fluctuates in intensity. Individualism, along with pluralism and cultural identity are considered to explain the variation between different ways of relating to religion at different historical periods. Being concerned with the cultural and political context in which secularization unfolds, Martin is able to point out that secularities are plural. Describing the religious scene, he refers to social actors (elites,

religious groups and individuals, secular persons and clerics, etc.) and also to religious means (associations and organizations, political parties and alliances, education, media, legal and administrative measures), making a clear distinction between religion as a set of beliefs and its institutional apparatus (Dobbelaere 1981:65). Looking at various variables like education, mass communication, discrimination against religion, legal and administrative boundaries, material opportunities and their use by elites in order to privatize religion, he paints a nuanced picture suggesting that both institutions and individuals have an important role in the process of secularization.

Martin talks about secularization as the process of change from a control of society through morality and belief, toward a control through technical and bureaucratic means. Communities, holding people together through a collective morality and through collective religious symbols and activities, do not need other forms of social control. Social control becomes relevant only at the point when collective belief and collective imageries of right and wrong disappear, and another order that is based on self-interest arises.

This need for a new order he connects to ideas about the nation-state. The historical links between religion and nationalism—the way that religion (and the specific denomination in that context) is reacting (in his words, resisting) to secularization, the relationship of control with forms of religion that are not necessarily public, and the importance of religious elites and lay organizations—make the state dependent on the power of religion. Thus, he points out that the secular and the religious also need each other for the sustenance of power, as both provide entry points to social groups into the collective and neutral space of the state.

Taking one step further Berger's argument about religion giving way to capitalist and rational influences, Bruce asserts that as a consequence of modernity, religion becomes merely a consumer product. In this process, it loses most of its specific functions, becoming weak and unsubstantial at the individual and also at the collective levels (Bruce 1995, 1996, 2002). Along with Wilson, Bruce believes that modernization has produced an irreversible process that negatively determines the faith in religion. The increasing marginalization of the function of the church, combined with low church attendance, both point to the irreversible decline of institutionalized religion. This decline he calls *deintensification*. For Berger, these are reasons to believe that secularity has durably gained the upper hand over religion. Faith and beliefs are lacking in social relevance and importance, remaining a matter of indifference for the majority of people, especially so for the youth.

Although new religious movements and New Age spirituality evolve, this does not reverse the precarious balance. Even though religious phenomena and religion in general remain marginal, religion follows the patterns

of privatization and individualization. Its role and function are further diluted by commodification, the laws of the market that make religion one option among others. According to Bruce, nothing can stop the secularization trend. Sooner or later nothing will come in the way of a completely secular society.

Berger, Wilson, Martin, and Bruce can be considered the theorists that form the core of secularization theory (Dobbelaere 1981) or of the secularization paradigm (Tschannen 1991). All further works dealing with secularity have to be centered around their work. It is this fundamental cognitive core that also became the core of the social imaginary about secularity in general, features of which are still maintained as valid by society. Moreover, the core ideas of secularization theory translate into secularity, both as an ideology and as a statecraft method. There are similarities to be found in all the different definitions concerning secularization. Secularity is always understood in relationship to religion, to be more precise, in an indirect relation with religion. Religion, its role and importance are understood to decline, in order to give way to secularity. However, it is interesting to note that what is considered as religion in all these readings differs (see also Casanova 2011a).

Second, all accounts build on the idea of differentiation between the spheres. A dichotomy between religion and the secular, the political, public, rational, economic, urban is present in all authors' works. This separation can roughly be seen as being between religion and everything else, or between religion and the secular. These ideas make religion a separate dimension of social life, independent in itself but also to be kept apart, as something impure and contagious, from all the other areas of social life. This process of separation of the spheres is intensified by a demonization of the religious that, as pointed out before, is a category that allows irrationality, superstition, and excessive emotionality to be lumped together.

Third, all accounts are linked directly or indirectly, through the use of intermediary causal mechanisms such as the processes of urbanization, and individualization and the logic of capitalism, secularity with modernity. According to Wilson, Berger, Bruce, and Martin, as secularity gains momentum, the world is becoming less religious, but more modern. Instead of viewing secularism as being on par with modernity, a more fruitful approach is to see it as valid in a specific context of time and space (Berger, Woodhead, Heelas, and Martin 2001). However, the causal relationship between modernity and secularity is far from clear. Moreover, the argument of the indisputable link between secularity and modernity is a circular one.

Furthermore, all accounts place religion in the domain of the irrational, claiming that rationality and its effects on modern social life impact

negatively on the function and structure of religion, as a system of beliefs and an institutional formation. Rationality thus remains the only tool in dealing with all the areas of immanent reality.

At this point, it is important to note that in the four notions of secularization theory presented earlier, we can observe a tendency to conflate secularization with modernity, both seen as irreversible and unidirectional processes. Going back to the earlier distinction about transcendence versus immanence, this simplistic oppositional view relegates religion to dealing exclusively with the transcendental, while the secular remains in charge of the territory of the immanent. As I will point out in the following section, further claims of secularization theory, such as universality, irreversibility, and privatization, also central in the four theoretical approaches just summed up, are contested one by one by further theoretical insights.

2.3.2 Secularization Theory Revisited

The *universality* claims of classical secularization theory have been the first to be dismissed. Scholars have pointed out the importance of the geographical factor, claiming that in different geographical areas secularization is taking place at different rates and in different ways (Berger 1999; Norris and Inglehart 2004). The most extreme cases are considered to be the United States and Europe, where the role of religion in social life and the development of the importance of religion over time vary greatly. These empirical findings contradict the universality claims of secularization theory. The marginalization, the disappearance, or the increasing loss of importance of religion is far from being a universal process, rather, it can be seen as a specific case, relevant mainly for European Christianity.

However, even in the case of Western Christianity, the process of secularization does not seem to be as *irreversible* as was initially thought. Some scholars talk of “survival” (Berger et al. 2001), while others prefer the term “revival” to describe this phenomenon. Behind both concepts lies the assumption that religion was either inexistent or remained hidden for some time (Van de Donk, Jonkers, and Kronjee 2006). While the concept of revival assumes that religion had disappeared for some time, the concept of survival essentializes religion, transforming it into a category that is influenced neither by culture nor by history (Asad 1993:28; Vries and Sullivan 2006:1–3). Although religion has powerfully reappeared in the collective social tapestry, secularization is far from retreating or diminishing (Berger et al. 2001: 445).

Scholars, who believe that religion has never disappeared, think that it has transformed and changed (Casanova 1994). Heelas and his colleagues talk

about spirituality (Heelas and Woodhead 2005), while studies of American religion point out inner transformations of religious beliefs, and forms of civil religion (Bellah 1976, 1992, see also Lüchau 2009), believing without belonging (Davie 1994), and highlight the importance of new religious movements (Beckford 1986).

Dobbelare (1981) insisted that the use of the term “secularization” is imprecise because of the lack of attention paid toward the difference between the processes taking place on the macro, meso, and the micro levels. He suggested that a *differentiated perspective* would make scientific inquiry more precise. Although a very important observation, his insight was taken into consideration only recently (Berger et al. 2001:443).

The debate provoked by classical secularization theory has uncovered new directions of inquiry into the role of religion. Berger refined his ideas by pointing out that the dynamics of religion as it exists in Europe are an exception rather than the norm, when looking at the place of religion in public life. Thus, secularization theory gave birth to concepts such as “deseccularization,” “neoseccularization,” and “postsecularization.” “Neoseccularization” was used by Chaves and his colleagues, who talked about the general decline in religious authority (Chaves, Demerath, Neitz, Wuthnow, and Zald 2003). “Postsecularization” was used by Habermas (2006), who considered religion as a possible actor in the public sphere. However, once again we see these “new” theories engaging with and opposing the concept of secularization, while they do not try to build up a completely new theory.

In line with Tschannen (1991), I agree that differentiation remains the core of the secularization thesis and I also think, following Taylor, that it informs our “natural” understanding of the role of religion in the modern world. In the first meaning of the term, “differentiation” makes a distinction between the different spheres of life—the religious and the secular (also the political and the public)—separating religion from all the other sym-bolical subsystems. As a consequence, religion loses its impact on other areas of social life, thus its influence diminishes, as different spheres develop their own logic and ideology of functioning (Casanova 1994: 19).

The *duality* that we see in all these accounts of the secular versus the religious, has been very influential in the way we think about religion to this day. All accounts mentioned here suggest that religion and secularity are in an inverse relationship with each other, where the increase of one means the decrease of the other. Most discussions start from the assumption that religion and the secular are two unchanging entities that are predetermined, rather than seeing their process of interaction as one of mutual formation and continual redefinition.

2.4 The Secular

The secular can hardly be articulated without mentioning the religious. Both the religious and the secular thus mutually define each other, both of them inevitably constituting and structuring each other (Van de Veer 1995). The secular is also part and parcel of the dualist system of classification that structured premodern Western Europe, that distinguished between the realm of “this” and the “other” world, further splitting “this” world into a religious and a secular sphere. The secular was understood to be equivalent to the mundane, as the realm that lacks transcendence (Casanova 1994). This distinction is relevant to this day, indeed, it has become one of the main features of modernity (Taylor 2007).

This understanding of a dual space and time divided into sacred and secular has been present throughout history. In Europe it is informed by the way that institutionalized religion delimited its own spheres of action and time, and distinguished its power and authority from the mundane. But the secular also existed beyond the binary in which it was enclosed, as together and opposed to religion. Nineteenth-century freethinkers used the secular in order to distinguish themselves from “infidels” and “atheists” (Asad 2003). However, the way that the secular is understood today is mainly in relation to religion and the sacred.

Taylor traces back the secular to the “earthly” politics, “mundane” pursuits and “the temporal” as opposed to the *illo tempore* of the sacred (Taylor 2007). The divide between the sacred and secular is something that is considered to be present in different forms in all societies and cultures. All religions share an understanding of what is sacred and what is profane, also as a way of creating an opening and closing mechanism between the two. In its turn, the difference made between these two realms is translated in different understandings into the role and experience of time and space, and in different forms of social action, by both the religious person and the nonbeliever (Eliade 1992, 2001). The boundary between the ordinary and transcendental, the sacred and profane, is marked by symbols and rituals, formulae that reinforce the boundaries between the two territories (Turner 1977).

Talal Asad, in his quest for a genealogy of secularism, discusses the importance of the Renaissance doctrine of humanism, the Enlightenment concept of nature, and Hegel’s philosophy of history. He observes that secularity consists of a series of ideological inversions, from the meaning given to the transition from monastic life to being a priest within a community, to signifying the transfer of propriety from the church to individuals. In modernity however, the secular is presented as the grounds from which theological discourse generates itself, in order to properly function as a universal basis of

existence. The paradox inherent in this historical inversion is that while the secular produces the religious, the two are also seen as necessarily separate from each other (Asad 1993). Thus, the way in which the secular and the religious are defined through reference to each other, reinforces their dependence on each other in terms of an indirect relationship: as they function as a pair of opposites, the affirmation of one becomes necessarily the negation of the other.

However, we must not take this correlation as self-evident. As Asad argues, the secular cannot be reduced to being the opposite of religion.

The secular, I argue, is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of a sacred origin) nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred). I take the secular to be a concept that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life... It is a matter of showing how contingencies relate to changes in the grammar of concepts—that is, how the changes in concepts articulate changes in practices. (Asad 2003:25)

Asad's argument takes us a step further: besides proposing to cross over the dichotomy of the sacred and secular in a historical and an ontological dimension, he takes up the semantic dimension of this opposition and its position within the modern social imaginary. Asad hints that the tension between the sacred and the secular, as formulated in a specific context articulates, when articulating power, what I will call a regime of secularity, a specific balance of the social imaginary around concepts of truth (and belief), morality (and law), and equality (and difference) (Asad 2003).

Both the religious and the secular are dynamic, contested, interrelated, and interdependent, but they are not necessarily each other's opposites. By pointing out the multiple inversions in the meaning of the secular and its changing relationship to the religious, Asad reminds us of the importance of practices which give shape and meaning to the secular and the religious (Asad 2003).

As the secular and the religious have a culturally specific function (Van de Donk et al. 2006), a universal definition of religion is impossible (Asad 1993:200; Drees and Koningsveld 2008). The same can be argued about the secular: because it is contingent on a particular definition of religion, it cannot be considered a term with universal value. Even if the religious and the secular do not necessarily function as opposites of each other, in many places and situations religion becomes the counterpublic (see Warner

2002) of the discourses and mechanisms of secularity. This places the religious in a position that enables a critical stance, as I will point out in the following section.

The metanarrative of modernity, which places the secular and the religious in exclusive opposition, continues to inform in practice a view of separated spheres within the nation-state. This position is prescriptive and also normative in nature, and does not capture the intricacies in which reality actually unfolds. There is a big gap between the way that secularity, as a statecraft principle and an ideology imagines social reality and the way that the balance between religion and the secular is played out in different lifeworlds (see Bowen 2010; Meer 2010; Sunier 2009; Meyer and Moors 2006).

This gap has also a normative historical dimension: as a disparity between primitive and civilized religions and the relation of power in colonial times, as a dynamic relationship at the formation of the nation-states, and as a principle legitimizing universal liberal categories of thought.

Colonial domination and the subjugation of new territories often happened in the name of progress, both as a civilizing mission with a strong religious undertone and as a quest for material gain. Indeed, the initial frictions between religion and what was later defined as the secular can be traced back to the colonial time, when authority was constructed upon a joint force of religion and political power, while the colonial “other” was educated in the modern dimensions of “proper” belief and action. The conflicts and conundrums that were formulated in these early encounters survive to the present moment, through the dynamics of the boundaries between religion and the secular and their reformulation at the dissolution of colonialism in the idea of modern nation-state. Reinforced by secularization, in the sense of diminishment of the salience of belief, the institutional changes that followed Reformation and their translation through colonial and postcolonial situations of dominance, the relation between secularity as a statecraft and secularity as an ideology is complex and intertwined.

Religion and the secular are sustained and sustain each other through a complex range of power relations both within the state and beyond it. Moreover, “discourses of democratization, gender relations, nationalist projects and politics, religious and theological imperatives, and colonial and postcolonial interactions” (Cady and Hurd 2010:7) all implode on specific articulations and ranges of secularity. Lately, the reformulation of the concept of citizenship, agendas influenced by security concerns, identity politics, and the fear caused by possible transnational networks of loyalty also further complicate the picture.

Once present in social life, the active part religion visibly plays out in public, and threatens exactly the secularization that presumably replaced it.

The anguish caused by the possibility of secularity losing ground to religion is magnified by the belief that secularity is one of the defining features of the nation-state and as such, a foremost expression of emancipated Western modernity.

Casanova's contribution to this discussion is that he points out that, although the spheres exist separately and independently from each other, it does not necessarily mean that religion remains restricted to the private sphere, with little influence except at the individual level. Instead, Casanova proposes that religion is a powerful social force that actively engages with the secular, transforming and being transformed in this interaction.

In order to criticize secularization theory from a sociological, historical angle he distinguishes among three strands of the secularization theory: (1) the differentiation between the secular and the religious spheres and norms; (2) the decline of religious beliefs and practices; and (3) the marginalization of religion to the private sphere (Casanova 1994). The first two positions of secularization theory he considers as tenable. However, he contests the third by pointing out that the deprivatization of religion is a dual, interrelated process. Deprivatization is taking place as a consequence of articulating politically both the private religious and moral spheres, while the public economic and political spheres are going through a process of renormativization. In other words, by affirming that the differentiation between the religious and secular spheres can be considered correct, while denying that privatization is an unavoidable effect of this differentiation, he asserts that the process of deprivatization does not contradict the differentiation implied by modernity.

Through this distinction he successfully creates a distance between the concept of secularity and the theory of secularization. The secular-religious dichotomy works in different spheres of society. However, in considering the role of religion in social life we should be able to maintain a distance from the relationships presumed by secularization theory. As pointed out earlier, secularization theory is a complex set of analytical distinctions that have been in most part invalidated by subsequent research. However, secularity is a process that is normative and also ideological, thus politically and ideologically charged, serving as a normative point of view for the delimitation of the spheres of power. As he stays at a distance from secularization theory while building on its analytical heritage, Casanova goes further to explain the way in which secularity develops.

Casanova makes three observations regarding the process of transformation of the public and private spheres, and the window of opportunity that this transformation provides for the rethinking of the role of religion in social life. First, he observes, religious traditions in different parts of

the world refuse to accept the place that is relegated to them according to secularist principles. Both theories of secularization and of modernity have reserved little if any place for religion.

Secondly, social movements that are either religious in nature, or use the collective understanding of religion as a shared banner for collective mobilization and action, are active across the world. These movements, through their goals, the collective identities they represent, and the way that these collective identities get translated in collective action, contest the legitimacy and the autonomy of the secular. They offer a critique of the (secular) public sphere, but also an evaluation of the state in general.

Finally, he observes that religious institutions are not only taking action at the individual level but continue to be active at the macro and meso levels of society. Through their involvement in collective actions, they question issues of public morality and normativity. Religious institutions and groups of religious individuals, representing collective claims, through their presence in the public domain thus negotiate the border between private and public morality, and question the naturalized status of secular norms and values. In other words, if we look at religious organizations as particular subsystems, we can understand their struggle as a contestation of secularist frames and a reinforcement of the possibility of normative plurality.

Thus, Casanova points out that religions are not only busy fighting for their own rights in order to defend their “traditional turf,” but also “participate in the very struggle to define and set the modern boundaries between the private and the public spheres, between system and life-world, between legality and modernity” (Casanova 1994:39). Implicit in this claim is also the idea that religion does not only make claims for the public and collective as part of an expansionist strategy to overthrow secularity, but also aims at linking transcendental aims while addressing the immanent realm.

Opposing the view that the process of deprivatization of religion is a fundamentalist reaction to processes of modern differentiation, Casanova argues that “public religion” may be seen as having a dynamic similar to other normative critiques to dominant historical positions, such as the classical, Republican and feminist critiques. In the same way as these, religion raises questions about the legitimacy of the dominant discourses and frames of reference and their way of operating, separated from some collective norms and considerations. Certainly, religion can serve as a basis for collective mobilization, it may contribute to existing public debates and thus may help to redraw the boundaries between what is considered public and private.

Thus, the impact of religion should not be measured only by its ability to push its own agenda upon social life, or to normatively influence any of

the social spheres. Religion can also be seen as a powerful social collective critique and a possibility of contestation.

Although the privatization of religion is caused by: (1) ideological pressure given by liberal categories of thought; (2) structural trends of differentiation that create a separate sphere for religion; and (3) internal religious preferences caused by religious individuation and a reflexive turn of modern religion, religion steps out of its ascribed role and becomes an active actor in the public arena (Casanova 1994). The past years have shown more and more examples of such activity, especially in Western countries, with issues concerning Muslims figuring high on the agenda.

Thus Casanova, working with the insights provided by secularization theory, points out that as a consequence of globalization, pluralization, and increasing heterogeneity of national populations both religious actors and institutions contest, and redefine, the boundaries of what can be considered as the secular and what as the religious. More than that, this contestation can be seen as a form of normative critique, that comes in time to join the changing social outlook on religion in general, and about Muslims in particular.

2.4.1 Regimes of Secularity

Research on secularization has pointed out that secularization theory describes a historically and geographically specific cluster of changes. Thus, we can speak of spatially and temporarily contingent understandings of the secular that inform different articulations of secularity. Secularity is temporarily simultaneous with the formation of nation-states as an ideological and physical entity provides ideological support for the nation-state. However, understandings about what secularity means, and what its role is, are diverse. Thus we can speak about secularities in the plural.

Moreover, as different expressions of the relationship between the sacred and the religious are articulated at different points in time, due to the loss of meaning of a complex network of routines and institutions imbued with power, I plead for the concept of regimes of secularity (see also the discussion of Aglietta and Brenner 1984 in Jessop 1990:44). Regimes of secularity I see as articulated across two dimensions: an ideology of secularity that feeds on secularization theory; and secularity as a method of statecraft and a way of governance (see also Casanova 1994).

Regimes of secularity articulate the management of the religious through secular power, something that Dobbelaere calls “laicization” (1981:15). Moreover, regimes of secularity draw the discursive, administrative, and institutional distinction between religion and politics. Thus we can talk of regimes of secularity in the plural.

If we talk about regimes of secularity, it is useful at this point to go back to Casanova's view of the factors that push toward the privatization of religion. As mentioned before, he distinguishes between the ideological pressure produced by liberal categories of thought, structural trends of differentiation, and internal religious preferences (Casanova 1994). As a response to these pressures, religion may choose roughly between three different modes of relationship with the state: (1) theocracy (where religion necessarily becomes entangled and transformed by the mundane); (2) the control and use of religion by the mundane; and (3) complete separation, detachment, and distance between the two (Casanova 1994:49). However, in none of these cases are the tensions between religion and what Casanova calls the "world" completely resolved, as secularity has a normative and also a prescriptive dimension when functioning as an ideology.

As statecraft and as a governing principle, secularity is connected to the idea of the nation as a homogenous unit. Seen through the lenses of secularization, the struggle for power is the struggle of religion with the secular state over the scrip of social life. This struggle is implicit in the reduction of the sacred canopy and the separation between the spheres of the secular and religious, but also in the marginalization of religion from the public to the private and the questioning of the transcendental and moral functions of religion.

The constitutional separation between church and state is also at the heart of the distinction between the public and the private.

In accordance with the liberal tendency to limit the public sphere to the governmental public sector with all the rest lumped into a great "private" sector, established state churches are designated as "public" religions whereas all other religions are considered to be 'private'. Since the liberal conception tends to conflate and confuse state, public and political, the disestablishment of religion is understood and prescribed as a simultaneous process of privatization and depolitization. (Casanova 1994:55)

As religion is believed and desired to be a private affair,

the liberal fear of the politicization of religion is simultaneously the fear of an establishment that could endanger the individual freedom of conscience and the fear of a deprivatized ethical religion that could bring extraneous conceptions of justice, of the public interest, of the common good, and of solidarity into the 'neutral' deliberations of the liberal public sphere. (Casanova 1994:55)

While religion is one of the actors in this struggle, the other is the modern state. Constructing its identity with reference to the philosophy of Enlightenment (invoked also in the case of secularization) and claiming modernity as its forming power in order to authorize its supremacy, the state also draws on the understating of the secular as a separate sphere. Establishing an alternative system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals, the state creates its authority through the legal system, which promises equality to all who subscribe or are subscribed in its order.

As a method of governance, regimes of secularity help create and maintain a hierarchical relationship between the state and religion. Religion is restricted, or separated from the public sphere, through the dialectics of modernity and Enlightenment. Seen through the eyes of the state, the hierarchical relationship between the secular and the religious may equate religious citizens with a minority, while preserving the distinction between them through different institutions and regulatory mechanisms.

Thus, any framing of religion and secularity is necessarily born in a power field, which necessarily leaves its imprint on it. More than that,

A secular state is not one characterized by religious indifference, or rational politics, or political toleration. It is a complex arrangement of legal reasoning, moral practice, and political authority. This arrangement is not the simple outcome of the struggle of secular reason against the despotism of religious authority. We do not understand the arrangements I have tried to describe if we begin with the common assumption that the essence of secularism is the protection of civil freedoms from the tyranny of religious discourse, that the religious discourse seeks always to end discussion and secularism to create the conditions for its flourishing.” (Asad 2003:256)

The struggle between religion and the state is complex, and as I will explain in the following section, it changes from state to state.

2.5 Conclusion

The collective belief in secularity is one of the most important features of the modern age. Modernity and secularity are, in the general understanding, walking hand in hand. Religion is considered a relic surviving from the past, found behind the closed door of our private spaces, tamed into recognizable rituals in specially assigned places and at special times, lost in the strenuous evolutionary journey to modernity.

Although highly influential, secularization theory proves insufficient, when we try to understand the present role of religion in public life. On the basis of the assumptions of classical secularization theory, religion should by now have either completely disappeared from social life, or it should have modestly retreated into the private and individual sphere, remaining one of the many options available on the market of entertainment and consumption. However, religion returns most visibly through the discussions around the presence of Muslims in Western European states, and not only returns as religion but also contests the main internal claims on which the nation-state is built: the universal values, the equality between citizens, the value of tolerance, and its indisputable modernity.

The imprints left by secularization theory have been taken over in the Western European social imaginary and continue to inform different regimes of secularity, articulated both as a mobilization of the collective imaginary and as a way of governing religion. The increasing attention toward Muslims minorities in the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom points out that secularity is used as a discursive strategy articulating the negotiations and conflicts present in the formation of the respective nation-states and the challenges they face in managing diversity and pluralism, from their historical legacy and in present situations.

The three main directions of criticism toward the domain of the secular as the extension of ideas about secularity distinguish between a simplifying and homogenizing structural and epistemological dimension of the social imaginary that the secular keeps in place. Combined with the particular way in which secularization has been molded by postcolonial and national history in different nation-states, these challenges give rise to various forms of the secular, when imbued with power, that I have called regimes of secularity.

Religion, once again is central to the discussion about the identity of nations. Articulated through the debates and controversies about Muslims is the fear about a possible decline in the secularity of the state. Implied in this fear are all the other values that are connected with Western nations: democracy; equality between citizens; the existence of a neutral public sphere; and the use of rationality in reaching a consensus over differences. In the following chapter I will look at how religious minorities and migrants are contextualized within the nation-state through the multiple roles performed by the concept of citizenship.