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## Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen (Eds.). Rethinking Secularism. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

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**Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan van Antwerpen (Eds.). *Rethinking Secularism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.**

*Rethinking Secularism* is the outcome of a program on religion and the public sphere run by the US Social Science Research Council (SSRC). It seeks to take stock of the sea change that has taken place in the thinking about the relationship between religion and secularity in the last twenty-odd years. In the mid-1960s, sociologists of religion and theologians alike had little doubt about the validity of the secularization-modernization thesis – although they may have differed over its desirability. By the 1990s, empirical data had seriously eroded the confidence regarding the clarity and certainty of that thesis. The present collection of essays brings together not only reflections of a number of prominent and high-profile scholars who have made important contributions, and in some cases seminal interventions, to the reformulation of the secularity-modernity debate but also a new understanding and acknowledgement of the relevance of public religion in a world that is shifting from modernity to postmodernity.

Until his transfer to the London School of Economics (LSE), editor Calhoun was President of the SSRC, while co-editor van Antwerpen acted as the organization's program director. Followers of *The Immanent Frame*, the SSRC blog dedicated to the project will not be unfamiliar with many of the discussions in this book, and readers who have kept abreast of academic and intellectual labors in the field covered by the project will find that many of the contributors repeat what they have explained, at much greater length of course, elsewhere. While the current volume of essays may seem a bit self-congratulatory, bringing together the writings of leading scholars on the subject from the perspectives of different academic disciplines and fields, it nonetheless offers a very useful overview of what has been achieved in coming to more sophisticated and therefore (hopefully) more accurate understandings of religion and its continuing significance for the postmodern human condition.

One of the main achievements of this work is its reflection of an increased awareness of the slippery nature of what have been previously assumed to be self-evident, singular words: religion, secularity, modernity, leading to the realization that it is better to use such terms in the plural so as to reflect their diverse meanings and uses in different cultural settings. Despite this insightful proposal, the distinctly Eurocentric historical narrative of the volume's introduction seems strangely at odds with what seems to me the most important conclusion of the research conducted over the past quarter of a century: namely the conclusion here. Maintaining a Western perspective may work for setting the tone for the chapters by philosopher Charles Taylor (whose contribution is after all entitled "Western Secularity") or sociologists José Casanova and Craig Calhoun, but it seems a much less appropriate introduction for most of the other essays.

Taylor's contribution to this volume rides heavily on his *A Secular Age*, making it abundantly clear how much the term "secular" is twinned and intertwined with Latin Christendom, affirming from an entirely different angle what Gil Anidjar has argued: that the "secular" is a thoroughly Christian concept. Taylor makes much of the idea of the immanence of Deism—the notion that...it is—as crucially important to the development of secularity. It may also be relevant to point at antifoundationalist philosophers like Gianni Vattimo, who uses the concept of "weak thought" rather than Taylor's "super goods" to make a case for the continued relevance of religion.

As one of the most important articulators of the rethinking of secularism through his seminal book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, José Casanova's contribution to the work under review is a meditation on the shift from "the secular" to "secularizations" and "secularisms." Working from the premise of an inversed dyadic in which the religious becomes a residual category, he criticizes the ideological underpinnings of secularization as

explanatory conceptualizations and secularist worldviews as justifications for an allegedly desired situation (*i.e.*, that of ...) as being based on very shaky grounds. Craig Calhoun's even more political reflections on the relationship among religious convictions, public reason, democratic citizenship, and cosmopolitanism open the way for the political scientists Rajeev Bhargava and Alfred Stepan, who use, respectively, the notions of "principled distance" and "twin tolerations" for theorizing, while Stepan also uses empirical, comparative studies of the different ways in which the relationship between religion and politics can be plotted.

Bhargava, in his examination of the development of secularization in India, stresses the importance of a "comparativist value-based framework" (p. 95) to cope with religious diversity, not only in dealing with its normative component but also to make further distinctions between diversity *of* religion and *within* religion. Bhargava also differentiates between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of religious diversity so as to tease out how religious diversity is "enmeshed in power relations," manifested as domination, discrimination, marginalization, or exclusion. Thus, he prepares the ground for a taxonomy that includes religion-centered, amoral, and value-based secular states in order to work his way towards a rehabilitation of secularism based on "principled distance"—not informed by an "Enlightened" idea of religion but instead by India's postcolonial political experience. Stepan's "twin tolerations" are not dissimilar to this except that Stepan's approach is more empirical, using data from studying a variety of democratic state models to formulate no less than seven possible responses to the state-religion-society relations. The most important conclusion to be drawn from this research is that secularism is neither "a sufficient condition of democracy" nor a "necessary concept for the analysis of democracy" (p. 115).

Most interesting, perhaps, for readers of this journal are the contributions by international relations specialists Peter Katzenstein and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd. Compared to the social sciences, the field of international relations has only relatively recently begun to incorporate religion as a subject of interest. This is due to the fact that policymakers, diplomats, and analysts historically operated on the assumption that since religion is not relevant to the organizing unit of the current world order, (*i.e.*, the nation-state), secularity itself can be taken as a given.

Peter Katzenstein's chapter, "Civilizations, Secularisms, and Religions," puts more emphasis on religious plurality than Casanova, admitting that his essay "cuts against the grain of much writing on international relations" (p. 145), which tends to.... Critical of both liberalist and realist US scholarship on international relations, represented by Fukuyama and Huntington, respectively, Katzenstein takes his cues instead from Karl Deutsch, Randall Collins, and Shmuel Eisenstadt and talks about "civilizational states" (p. 150ff), ultimately ending up using the work of Michael Mann and Yasusuke Murakami to formulate a "polymorphic globalism" that is capable of bringing to the fore the "cultural commensurabilities" arising from the interplay between "convergences around some values of modernity" and the divergences arising from "cultural programs grounded in different religious traditions" (p. 156). This "sociological turn in international-relations theory" (p. 161) will make it possible to introduce and accommodate notions like culture, identity, norm, idea and ideology in the analysis of world politics.

With her emphasis on empirical research, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's research relates to Katzman's in a very similar way that Stepan's complements Bhargava's. Drawing on data from Turkey and from an investigation of the relationship between Iran and the US, she calls into question the secular-religious binary, which has been adopted so unthinkingly in the study of international relations. The unexamined reliance upon the secular-religious binary within international relations has had three consequences that now hinder the study of relations between individual states and of global politics: (1) The emphatic avoidance of engaging with religion because of its otherworldliness; (2) the normalization or

“naturalization of the secular/religious binary” itself (p. 170), which makes religion a discrete field of investigation for examining how predefined religious traditions deal with the political; and (3) the stabilization of that binary, which sets European religious history as the norm. Instead of a “polymorphic globalism” approach, Hurd proposes a kaleidoscopic model derived from a more historicized and politicized rethinking of the relationship between the secular and the religious, using the insights provided by Charles Taylor, Gil Anidjar, and Talal Asad. What does she say, specifically? Not surprisingly, Talal Asad was also invited to make a contribution to the volume, and he chose to contribute a vignette on blasphemy, ending his contribution with a number of questions that leave it to the reader to draw any firm conclusions.

Touching at the international relations dimensions of secularity are the contributions of Mark Juergensmeyer, Cecelia Lynch, and Scott Appleby. Too much in Juergensmeyer’s essay is taken up by yet another recapitulation of the Westphalian narrative at the expense of his own excellent work on violence in the name of religion against secular nationalisms. The chapters by Lynch and Appleby seem out of place, as both authors write more about their own research projects on religious humanitarianism and the massive American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) Fundamentalism Project, with which Appleby’s name will remain forever associated. The book closes with two more circumscribed case studies on Asia by Richard Madsen and Peter van der Veer. While I cannot judge the quality of Madsen’s work on China and Taiwan, his presentation of the complex situation in Indonesia is too rudimentary and, perhaps as a consequence, reductionist and essentialist – thus running counter to the spirit of the project. Van der Veer’s very brief summary of the workings of secularism in China and India contain some interesting conclusions in terms of the ways in which the influence of British imperialism bred, in both instances, anticlerical campaigns and an interest in the relationship among religion, reason, and science—though with very different consequences. In van der Veer’s analysis, the reason for the difference in outcomes is due to the role of caste in India and the millenarianism of Maoism (as opposed to the pragmatism underlying India’s secularism). Whereas secularism in China and India was employed for the purpose of achieving very different agendas, the findings from research into the workings of secularism (and, therefore, its converse—*i.e.*, religion) in both these countries – as elsewhere in the world – make very clear that despite the once presumed inevitability of the transition from religious to secular as a function of modernization, religion is here to stay.

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