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Introduction

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With his monumental study *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor created a new highpoint in contemporary thought about historical processes of secularization and the relationship between the religious and the non-religious in Western modernity. As a comprehensive treatment of the nature and the philosophy of "the secular" in Latin Christendom, the book has since become a major reference point for students of religion in the public sphere. Sociologist of religion José Casanova goes so far as to describe it as "the best analytical, phenomenological and genealogical account that we have of our modern, secular condition" (Casanova 2010: 265).

In his magnum opus, Taylor offers a historically grounded account of the emergence of secularity as a contingent process in societies characterized by Western Latin (but explicitly not Eastern Orthodox) Christianity. This process is presented as "the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices, and can't be explained in terms of perennial features of human life" (Taylor 2007: 22). Taylor identifies instead a series of departures from earlier religious life that have allowed older forms to be dissolved or destabilized in favor of new, diverse religious, spiritual, non- and anti-religious options around large questions of meaning of society, the cosmos, and the self.

A SECULAR AGE

Taylor's explicit focus on what he calls the "North Atlantic world" invites an exploration of secularity in other parts of the world. This is where our volume takes its starting point. Based on an international

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research cluster of country specialists interested in the nexus between politics and religion in countries of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, this volume comparatively investigates the place of religion and non-religion in countries outside the heartland of Latin Christendom. The case studies focus on the patterns of religion–state relations in the modern era, wherein each has created particular conditions of belief. Taylor identifies three notions of Secularity, of which he is most interested in the third. The first notion, Secularity I, is that of the classic differentiation theory (Casanova 1994): it emerges as political authority, law, science, education, and the economy are emancipated from the influence of religious norms and authority. Secularity II is the notion describing the decline of religious belief and practice, something some sociologists argued was the case in the Europe of the 1960s and which they predicted would be a universal trend. Today, European Secularity II, if religion really has been on the decline there at all, is regarded as the global exception rather than the rule (Berger 1999, Davie 2002).[1] But it is a third notion that particularly interests Taylor. Under Secularity III he understands a condition in which it is possible to not believe, and still aspire to live a fulfilled life; Secularity III emerges through "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace" (Taylor 2007: 3). The shift to these new conditions of belief is reached by "a series of new departures," in which earlier forms of religious life are dissolved and new ones created. The way meaning is perceived has changed: What was once a human's "porous self" (going against God was not an option because life was lived in a social world peopled by spirits and fellow human beings) has been replaced by a "buffered self": a self aware of the possibility of disengagement. For non-believers, "the power to reach fullness is within [the human self]" (Taylor 2007: 8). This condition of Secularity III, according to Taylor, developed uniquely in the North Atlantic world, where it prevails today, and he leaves open the question of whether it could be, or has in the meantime been, realized in other parts of the world.[2]

[1] Berger points out that there really are two exceptions, one is geographical: Western Europe; but there is also a sociological exception: an international non-religious intelligentsia (2012: 2).

[2] Taylor in general acknowledges that there may be multiple secularities in the world today, but it is not clear which dimension of secularity (Secularity I, II, or III) he has in mind when he writes "secularity, like other features of 'modernity' ... find rather different expression,

Secular*ity* (in all three conceptions) in turn must be differentiated from secular*ization* and secular*ism*. Secularization denotes the historical process of the emancipation (of the state, law, science,…) from religious authority and norms. Secularism usually denotes the ideology that legitimizes the separation of religious and political authority, the expulsion of religious law from the legal system, and sometimes even the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. The concept "secularism" rarely makes an appearance in *A Secular Age*, although Taylor has written about it extensively elsewhere.[3] For social scientists, the relationship between Secularity I (a predominantly political and legal condition) and Secularity III (a predominantly cultural condition) is of greatest interest, as it calls for an exploration of the institutional dynamics behind the changes in the conditions of belief.[4] A discussion of Secularity I, in turn, cannot in most cases be isolated from a discussion of a particular state's policy of secularism, though as our chapters illustrate, the relationship between secularism and Secularity I is complex, and the two phenomena often intertwine in counterintuitive ways.

The intellectual stakes of exploring the meaning of religion and the secular outside the West are very high. Few scholars will dispute today the idea of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000), and upon further probing many will also embrace the idea that secularity is not a condition unique to the West, but this is where the deep disagreements begin: can one talk of secularity in environments where the notion of religion may be largely incomparable to that born out of Latin Christendom (a monotheistic, exclusivist notion)? Can one talk of secularity in environments where religious identity is something not voluntarily acquired but imposed by state policies or social pressures? Can one talk of comparative secularity at all, when no state today can be characterized as entirely secular, in the

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and develop under the pressure of different demands and aspirations in different civilizations" (2007: 21).

[3] In "The Meaning of Secularism" (2010), and "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism" (2011), Taylor postulates a reconceptualization of the project of secularism: it should be thought of, he suggests, as the normatively desirable response of the democratic state to diversity; a response that aims at maximizing the republican values of liberty (here of religious belief and unbelief), equality (of religious and other worldviews), and fraternity (inclusion/participation of all voices, religious and non-religious, in determining public policy).

[4] Drawing on José Casanova (1994), Berger relates these two phenomena to one another by observing that "all institutions have correlates in consciousness." He views the emergence of a secular discourse, captured by Taylor's notion of the "immanent frame," as the correlate in consciousness to institutional differentiation (Secularity I). See Berger 2012: 315.

sense of enforcing a watertight wall of separation between religion and politics? And how well do conceptions of the secular and secularity travel if even when only applied to the West they are already so fiercely contested at their core?

The interplay between religious and political transformation has been a central theme in the social sciences and humanities, to a point where the sociology of religion was long regarded as the heart of the enterprise of sociological inquiry. As Philip Gorski points out in Chapter 2 of this volume, though the pedigree of secularization theory can be traced back for at least two centuries, its identifier is of more recent origin. Even Durkheim and Weber used the terms sécularisation/laïcisation and Säkularisierung, respectively, only in passing. It is only since the 1940s and 1950s that one can really speak of "secularization theory" as a dedicated research program in the social sciences. While the major premise – that "modernization" goes together with "secularization" – was widely accepted until the late 1970s, scholars disagreed over how to conceptualize secularization and what to regard as its proper indicators. For Bryan Wilson (1966), secularization denoted the institutional decline of religion, while David Martin saw it manifested in declining levels of membership in religious communities (Martin 1978), and Steve Bruce in declining levels and intensities of belief (Bruce 1992). Peter Berger argued in *The Sacred Canopy* (Berger 1967) that a defining feature of secularization was that the plausibility structures behind religious belief were seriously compromised, while Niklas Luhmann (1977) spoke of the "privatisation of religious decision-making." Scholars moreover disagreed over where these trends manifested themselves and whether one should regard them as universal or specific to particular geographies. Thomas Luckmann (1967) criticized that the diagnoses of declining levels and intensities of belief were premised on an impoverished notion of religion, and ignorant of the ways in which "invisible religion" continued to play an important role in modern society. David Martin (1978) cast doubt on the assumption of the universal character of religious decline and instead argued in favor of understanding differentiation as the one universal characteristic of secularization in the world. Despite these intense disagreements over what secularization meant precisely and how it manifested itself, secularization theory became the only theory, in the words of a major sociologist of religion "that was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences" (Casanova 1994: 17).

A cesura in the debate was José Casanova's 1994 book, in which the author took stock of how present empirical realities related to various aspects of secularization theory and in which he did the debate an enormous service by disentangling its various sub-theories. Casanova argued that the theory was only one-third defensible (1994: 17–20): while it was right about the functional and institutional differentiation of the religious from the political, legal, economic, scientific, and other spheres, it had, in his view, been proven wrong in its claims concerning the decline of religious belief and practice, and remained deeply questionable with respect to the inevitable privatization of religion. More recently, in particular in response to an intervention by Talal Asad, Casanova has distanced himself from the one sub-theory he earlier on sought to salvage and conceded that it is almost impossible to heuristically distinguish the privatization from the differentiation thesis.[5]

In the face of the continuing difficulties to analytically capture macro-social dynamics in the relationship between religion and its outside (whether social, political, legal, or economic) in comparative and theoretically meaningful ways, newer research has turned to concentrate on examining boundary formation around the religious and the non-religious[6] and to revisit the question of path dependencies and critical junctures in Secularity I which were once David Martin's primary field of interest. In this volume, we take up these two re-directions: issues of boundary-formation and -activation receive particular attention in the individual chapters, while the conclusion aims to identify broader parallels and divergences in the path dependencies that emerge in subsets of the cases, although no claims are made to propose generalizable theories on paths of secularization (not least because the number of cases does not

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[5] In addition, Casanova has become less certain regarding the normative justification of separation. "One could advance the proposition that of the two clauses of the First Amendment, 'free exercise' is the one that stands out as a normative democratic principle in itself, while the no-establishment principle is defensible only insofar as it might be a necessary means to free exercise and to equal rights. In other words, secularist principles per se may be defensible on some other ground, but not as intrinsically liberal democratic ones" (2006: 21). In that vein some scholars have called for a concentration on issues of religious freedom/free exercise rather than the expulsion of religion from public life when debating requirements for democratic religion–state relations. Taylor's plea for a re-conception of the concept of secularism can be seen in this light.

[6] Along these lines, a research group convened at the University of Leipzig under the banner of the Humanities Centre for Advanced Studies "Multiple Secularities - Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities" since 2016 investigates boundary-making between the religious and non-religious both in modern and pre-modern societies on a global scale.

permit such an endeavor, but also because as country specialists we are hesitant to engage in too crude abstractions).

In the following, we briefly introduce some of Taylor's main insights about the etiology and ontology of Secularity III, and how our contributors have responded to these. We then outline the case selection and theoretical angle taken in this volume and the special emphases emanating from this choice as compared to the narratives proposed in *A Secular Age*. We close by drawing attention to four issue areas around religion that have emerged as common themes across the eleven case studies of this volume, often in contrast or in variance with Taylor's account. We should note that these themes are necessarily synoptic, as we lay out a terrain of topics emerging from the comparative reflection that in our view would merit closer future examination.

THE "WHAT," "WHY," AND "HOW" OF SECULARITY III

The contributors to this volume take Taylor's work as their point of departure. *A Secular Age* has been praised for its achievement in fanning out the multiple fora, dilemmas, and processes of secularity, as opposed to positing a simple process of the retreat of religion in Western politics and society in the face of modern science twinned with economic and other changes (Taylor identifies the latter as "subtraction stories"). He argues that any satisfactory theory of secularization must be able to account for both religious belief and unbelief. In orthodox secularization theory, unbelief is tacitly assumed to be the most "natural" or "reasonable" default stance, because science and reason are assumed to stand on the side of secularity. Accordingly, the real task is to account for belief. In *A Secular Age*, however, Taylor turns the tables on the orthodox approach by arguing that it is unbelief, rather than belief, that is in need of explanation, since historically and across much of the contemporary world religious belief represents something close to a universal norm. What Taylor terms Secularity III is characterized by three phenomena: exclusive humanism (a humanism that does not appeal to transcendence), the availability of meaningful options between belief and unbelief (a belief in the self-sufficiency of human agency and a widening of the range of possible options [2007: 19]), and the availability of these meaningful options to a large majority of people (not just elites).

Taylor interprets the emergence of Secularity III by addressing three general questions:

   i)   What does secularity mean today in the North Atlantic world?
   ii) Why did secularity arise and come to take the forms it did, and what consequences flow from that?
  iii) How did secularity come to command the space it did?

The contributors to this volume address how much, if any, of Taylor's grand narrative can be found mirrored in the societies they study. They investigate whether the three dimensions of secularity that Taylor distinguishes enable interpretive accounts of the emergence of unbelief as a choice (Secularity III). They do so by tackling Taylor's "what," "why," and "how" questions in the context of a range of cases in countries that have been historically located beyond the ambit of Latin Christendom. In doing so, they find the importance of political factors in almost all cases to be key to understanding the distinctive patterns of secularization and the types of religion–state relations emerging from it. The resultant focus on the political and legal histories of the cases studied leads to a number of contrasts with Taylor's more phenomenological and genealogical treatment.

Taylor's answer to the "what" question in the context of Latin Christendom is the emergence of "exclusive humanism," a humanism that – unlike some earlier humanisms, such as the Christian humanism of Europe's renaissance – no longer felt the urgency, or even relevance, of appeals to transcendence. Anthropocentric shifts in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century create a "buffered self" which in turn opens the gate toward the possibility of an exclusive humanism: "the buffered identity, capable of disciplined control and benevolence, generated its own sense of dignity and power, its own inner satisfactions, and these could tilt in favor of exclusive humanism" (2007: 262). Though exclusive humanism heralds the birth of a secular age, religion does not wither away.[7] In his earlier work on the philosopher and psychologist William James, Taylor (2002) elaborates on his conception of what has happened to religion in the modern world. Drawing inspiration from Durkheim, he distinguishes between different Durkheimian forms of religion-society relations. "Paleo-Durkheimian" relations can be found in societies where religion is not yet differentiated; fundamentalist movements often champion this type of undifferentiated relations. Second, there are relations

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[7] Talal Asad (2011) suggests that it is because Taylor is here working with an intuitive definition of religion in terms of *transcendent* – Christian – *beliefs* that he ignores the enchantments imposed on individual life by secular consumer culture as well as by modern science and technology.

where religiosity is transferred to a greater entity, such as ethnic entities (Mark Juergensmeyer's "ethnic religions"), or class or state entities (Robert Bellah's "civil religion"), which both are manifestations of "neo-Durkheimism." But it is the development of the post-Durkheimian age – one based on "expressive individualism" (Taylor 2002: 80) – that Taylor wants to draw attention to. Unlike James, and later Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Taylor does not regard the post-Durkheimian experience of faith as a process of necessary individualization. Even though "the spiritual as such is no longer intrinsically related to society" (Taylor 2002: 102), and though "the new framework has a strongly individualist component, this will not necessarily mean that the content will be individuating. Many people will find themselves joining extremely powerful religious communities, because that's where many people's sense of the spiritual will lead them" (Taylor 2002: 112). Although no longer intrinsically related to society, the spiritual can, and often does, then unfold in the framework of a community.

The "what" question is central to our comparative endeavor because the very concepts of religion and its cognates on which the term secularity is parasitic "do not denote anything fixed or essential beyond the meanings that they carry in particular social and cultural contexts" (Beckford 2003: 5). How much in comparative secularization processes should be seen as sui generis – that is, rooted in particular religious and cultural contexts? Several of the contributors highlight the emergence of a neo-Durkheimian age, one where religion is tied to ethnic or national identity, rather than the emergence of an "unbelieving ethos" in the societies they portray. Nearly all contributors point to a core set of twentieth-century state policies and watershed political experiences, including the emergence of nationalism and struggles for independence and democracy, that played a key role in bringing this condition about.

Taylor answers the "why" question for the case of the North Atlantic world with reference to processes of differentiation, which ultimately lead to a plurality of outlooks, religious and non-religious, creating a modern citizen imaginary that "sees us all as coming together to form [a] political entity, to which we all relate in the same way, as equal members" (Taylor 2007: 457). For Taylor, the essence of Secularity III is plurality, characterized by multiple and competing types of belief and unbelief, and the availability of these as meaningful options to a majority, and not just the elite. The emergence of exclusive humanism as a widely available option in the eighteenth century created a new situation of pluralism, a culture fractured between religion and areligion (2007: 21). The reactions not only to this humanism, but also to the matrix out of which it grew,

multiplied the options in all directions. The consequence, for Taylor, of this pluralism and mutual fragilization "will often be a retreat of religion from the public square" (2007: 532).

Political secularism, he proposes, is best seen as a means of accommodating this pluralism (Taylor 2010). In Taylor's view, democratic societies should be organized not around a civil religion, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought necessary, but instead around a strong philosophy of civility, enshrining the norms of human rights, equality/nondiscrimination, and democracy (Taylor 2010: 32). For Taylor, when it comes to contemporary democracies, the qualifier "secularist" ought to refer primarily not to bulwarks against religion but to good faith attempts to secure liberty, equality and fraternity of all positions, religious and non-religious (Taylor 2010). But is such a trajectory the only one imaginable? What if, as Talal Asad (2011) asks, liberal democracy not only impairs the development of virtues necessary for dealing effectively with global crises, but also continually disrupts the conditions on which Taylor's Secularity III depends, namely legal and political protection of religious plurality and religious freedom? And what if, paradoxically, it is precisely the continual feeling of disruption, *of uncertainty*, that feeds both the power of liberal democracy and the promise of liberal reform?

In Taylor's account, century-long processes of gradual differentiation facilitate the emergence of a widening range of possible options of belief and unbelief, and, as such, Secularity III. These in turn nourish calls for the retreat of religion from public space: Secularity I. The cultural rise of Secularity III's "conditions of belief" precede and create the original historic possibility for Secularity I's institutional separation of religion and state in the West. The picture is rather different in most contributions to this volume. While differentiation played a large role in facilitating the emergence of a pluralism of outlooks, both religious and non-religious, it did so often as a consequence of sudden historical breaks, often disruptive and violent, such as the establishment of colonial administrations with all their consequent breaches in notions of authority, meaning, property rights, social organization, cosmology, etc. (Mamdani 1996). With independence, political elites often created polities in which positions of exclusive humanism or the option to not believe were hardly publicly available. The corollary to Taylor's narrative as regards the "why" question therefore lies in the central role of the state in shaping conditions of belief. Constitution-crafters and state makers usually tackled the challenge of plurality through institutional arrangements: some privileged one belief system (e.g. Shi'a Islam in Khomeini's Iran, Sunni Islam in Zia's

Pakistan, Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in Israel), others excluded religion from several aspects of public life (e.g. India's Representation of the People Act 1951 excluded religious rhetoric from election campaigns), or any aspect of public life altogether (e.g. *laiklik* in early republican Turkey and atheism in communist China and the USSR). As can be seen from this classification, exclusivist arrangements occurred in both democratic and authoritarian contexts. In the cases discussed in this volume, they were more the norm than the exception. The emergence of Secularity III or its survival after the inauguration of post-colonial polities was often put in jeopardy by such exclusivist institutional arrangements.

Taylor's answer to the "how" question (i.e. how Secularity III emerged) spans several histories, philosophies, and methodologies, and eschews the linear path often assumed in some cruder theories of secularization. Taylor's account is a multi-faceted, historically complex narrative that moves in a series of zig-zag trajectories, where the role of contingency in producing the outcome of Western Christianity's "Drive to Reform" is very important. The contributors share Taylor's eschewal of a crude linear explanation and instead draw on Taylor to recognize and explain the contingencies in their specific country-contexts. As de-colonization, war or revolution created fundamental breaks in nearly all cases presented here regarding how religion and the state relate, Taylor's grand narrative, stretching over several centuries, shrinks to a matter of decades in many of the cases, where the transitions of a porous to a buffered self, of meaning that is exogenous to one that is endogenous to the world, often took place within parts of just one, the twentieth, century. The contributors share Taylor's strong emphasis on historical contingency, but their cases underline more forcefully than Taylor does for his case of Latin Christendom the political construction of religion which is partly shaped by the encounter with the West and Western notions of religion, and its subsequent political institutionalization in the second half of the 20th century.

Three variations to Taylor's understanding of the trajectory of secularization in Latin Christendom stand out compared to the countries studied in this volume. First, in most case studies presented here, religion or patterns of practice and belief held in reference to more-than-human powers more often than not pervade the fabric of social life today, a fact also noted by Taylor as the contrast between the present-day North Atlantic and many other parts of the world. In the recent histories of these countries, the intensity of battles between belief systems led to partition in some (India and Pakistan in 1947), revolution in others (an ostensibly anti-religious revolution in Russia in 1917, and an ostensibly