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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

In many ways, we publish this journal in mourning. We mourn for those we have lost to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the death count of which ranges somewhere between 3 million and 7 million people worldwide. We lament the time lost—our cumulative time lost with loved ones and time lost by those whose gendered roles forced them to provide childcare throughout the pandemic. We mourn for the budding ethnographers whose trips to field sites were canceled; we mourn for the letters of everyday people that lay in the archives untouched. So much scholarship—particularly by low-income students who felt the brunt of the economic crash—remains unwritten.

Yet, in these pages, we find much to be thankful for. These graduate student writers deliver complex and nuanced interventions in the study of religion, often with sharp wit and deep vulnerability. The articles showcased in this volume have inspired, amused, and enthralled us in the bleakest days of the pandemic. We hope that these pieces will invigorate and rejuvenate you as well.

In "Good Polygamist, Bad Polygamist," Nicole Carroll analyzes a Utah State House bill designed to target only "criminal" polygamists, a tactic that exposes the limits of discourse on religious freedom.

Next, Rebecca Mendoza Nunziato's visionary and innovative article "The Sacred Essence of Copal Incense" follows the smoke of copal through time to understand the survival and transculturation of ritual in Mesoamerica.

With a sharp pen and a penchant for puns, David Sievers engages Black critical theory to unpack the biopolitical significance of the National Thanksgiving Turkey pardon in "Gallina Sacra."

Shin Young Park's "The Postmodern Quest for Ethics at a Distance" engages Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Luc Marion to investigate the ethical significance of social distancing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jon R. Mehlhaus illustrates the ways that mind cure ministry perpetuates ableist conceptions of the human psyche in his article "Norman Vincent Peale, New Thought, and Disability."

In a prescient historiography, Aseel Azab-Osman's "The 'Secular' in Anglophone Scholarship on Premodern Islam" examines the use of the term "secular" to trouble the category's reputation as anachronistic in Islamic studies.

Finally, this volume culminates with a captivating conversation between managing editors Margaret Hamm and Laura Mucha and historian Kristin Kobes Du Mez on her timely and celebrated new book *Jesus and John Wayne.*

Without the guidance of many, we could not have published this incredible research. We thank the professors on our anonymous Faculty Review Board who evaluated and enriched these articles during a heavy semester of online teaching. As always, we extend our gratitude to Katie Caponera for her unending support of students' creative and academic work. To the entire Student Editorial Board, thank you for your wisdom and diligence even in this pandemic year. Finally, we thank the Harvard Divinity School Student Association for their tireless and unpaid anti-racist, liberation-based work to dismantle the violent systems in place here at Harvard.

We hope that the articles in this volume will inspire even more powerful and vital work in religious studies, the need for which the COVID-19 pandemic continues to underscore.

With gratitude,

Kate Hoeting, *Editor-in-Chief*
Margaret Hamm, *Managing Editor*
Mary Moon, *Managing Editor*
Laura Mucha, *Managing Editor*
William Scruggs, *Managing Editor*

THE "SECULAR" IN ANGLOPHONE SCHOLARSHIP ON PREMODERN ISLAM:
A CRITICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Aseel Azab-Osman

Brown University

Religious Studies: Islam Society and Culture Track

The "secular" as analytic concept is often contentious, and current wisdom in the anglophone study of Islam is particularly averse to its use when investigating premodern Muslim societies. Recently however, several articles have appeared, arguing for the fecundity of the "secular" to the study of premodern Islam. This critical historiography reviews the ways that the secular has been defined, conceived, employed, or discarded with respect to the field, from the mid-twentieth century to the current moment. I argue that rather than the secular being a defunct or anachronistic category, investigating scholars' use of the term reveals how it is embedded within their intellectual and political commitments, is dependent on their source material, and helps revisit questions that are central to the field: what is religion? What is the secular? Is religion synonymous with revelation? What place is there for the mundane in the study of religion?

O ver the past three years, several scholars published articles arguing for the relevance of the "secular" as a conceptual and analytic category for the study of premodern Islam. None of these articles has been paid particular attention. It is, however, curious that although they are separate projects, they have appeared in such a definite time frame and in conversation with interconnected debates. Whether or not they represent an actual new wave in Islamic Studies of thinking about the secular, these articles are challenging what had seemed in recent years to have become a settled debate: that any notion of the secular employed in the study of premodern Islam was anachronistic, insensitive to contextual specificity, and thus dubious, if not altogether poor scholarship.

I use the occasion of (what I tentatively call) this new wave to revisit the question of the secular, situating this recent scholarship within a larger historiography on premodern Islam. I ask how the secular has been conceived in studies of premodern Islamic societies, texts, and institutions. Aware of the lack of any real "schools of Islamic studies" to speak of, I instead examine how each of the scholars under

consideration still wrote within larger, discernible intellectual trends—such as Orientalism, post-colonialism and critical theory, or the emic-etic distinction—and in interaction with predecessors and interlocutors. I argue that there is nothing inherently inadequate, essentially "Western," or ontologically invalid about the secular in premodern Islam. The caveat is that the secular in premodernity was never a simple translation or imposition of modern understandings of secularity. I therefore aim to show how any conception of the secular in premodern Islam, or lack thereof, is deeply embroiled in the scholar's intellectual and political commitments, and, perhaps as significantly, in their selection of sources.

This historiography is divided into three parts. In part one, I briefly lay down the stakes for why the secular matters. In part two, I briefly discuss the scholars' arguments and specific conceptions of the secular. This overview is necessary to accurately reflect how the category has developed and been contested over time and to highlight how subsequent scholars were strongly conscious of, and critically responding to, previous conceptions. This section lays the groundwork for part three, where I thematically consider how this new wave relates to previous conceptions, and draw out where they employ conventional conceptions, where they slightly adjust them, and where they markedly depart from them. I therefore use this breakdown to both nuance my engagement with how the secular is being conceived, as well as to ask whether any of these new formulations offer fresh answers to some of the more enduring questions that any scholar of Islam is expected to address in their scholarship, namely: what is religion? How much of it is defined by *revelation*? What defines the "secular," how does it function, and how is it related to its "other"? I close with concluding remarks where I reiterate the stakes as I see them: as important as it is to be critical of the political context and intellectual genealogy of modern secularities, to make the concept the monopoly of a Western/modern trajectory forecloses research possibilities and potentials.

Why Bother with the Secular?

I was first drawn to conceptions of the secular when I tried to make sense of a statement made by several Muslim acquaintances: Muslims today suffer from a cognitive dissonance. They know how to be Muslims who happen to be doctors (or insert another vocation), but not *Muslim* doctors. I myself try to make sense of the personal anxiety of being Muslim in worship, but feeling religiously neutral, that I behave as if God is not there, when engaging non-ritual or non-religiously inspired activities, vocational or other. This problematization of the self, intricately connected to the question of defining what it means to be a good Muslim, is one area that can demonstrate in practice how conceptions of the secular can be used, and what potentials they open or close.

If we employ the arguments of scholars who believe that the secular is anachronistic to Islam, then perhaps the answer is straightforward. Since the secular is

a modern European construct that creates a differentiation between sacred and secular along public and private divides, then what these modern Muslims are experiencing is secularism's mediation of their Islamic identity. The secular, as a modality of power, is instead enforcing its own sensibilities and visions of subjectivity, particularly in the public sphere, which competes with Islam, with its own distinct modality of subject formation. We may add, as Christopher Craig Brittain does, that as modern subjects, these Muslims should reckon with the fact that political representation in the public sphere will always be incomplete and will diverge from their ideals.[1] This is because they are partaking in a space that brings together people of different religious identities. Accordingly, this "distance"[2] that they feel, expressed in terms of cognitive dissonance or the absence of God, refers to those modern "moments in which [all] individuals and communities wrestle with the 'distances' encountered in social experience."[3]

Yet, if it becomes apparent that a kind of differentiation did indeed exist in premodern Islam, and therefore must have been part of Muslims' subjectivity and experiences of being Islamic, this aspect opens avenues for comparative analysis. We may ask, for instance, whether and why this differentiation was not problematic for premodern Muslims as it is now? Alternatively, we may wonder if the work of pre-moderns like Al-Ghazali points to an analogous construction of piety where the more Muslims cultivated ethics and conducted themselves in a specific way the more they enhanced their capacity to be *in the presence of God* and *mindful of God*? Are the notions of modern *distance* and premodern *presence in and of God* analogous problematizations of the Muslim self? Do they differ in degree or in kind, and why?

These seem to be questions of religious experience *of* and *in* space. And what is capitalist modernity but a reconfiguration of a subject's experience of space, time, and labor? If we concede from the start that there was no religious/secular differentiation in premodern Islam, then we attribute all explanatory power to modernity without understanding how modernity functions to create, *ab nihilo*, these novel questions of religious selfhood. If, however, we dare to propose that modernity did not itself create these problematizations of the self but simply mediates them in the current epoch, we may be able to understand both modernity and Muslim subjectivity better.

Orientalist Beginnings and Twentieth Century Trajectories

The academic study of Islam and comparative religion is historically implicated in Orientalist epistemology, and for much of that early work, the colonial encounter was concerned with apprehending the other in ways that can be both categorised in some

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1   Christopher Craig Brittain, "The 'Secular' as a Tragic Category: On Talal Asad, Religion and Representation," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 17, no. 2 (2005): 149–65.
2   Brittain, "Tragic Category," 162.
3   Brittain, "Tragic Category," 162.

universal sense and contrasted to the modern Christian standard.[4] Within this framework, there could be no place for secularity, since that was among the hallmarks of Enlightenment Man's emancipation from the tutelage of religion and tradition. Islam as the other was understood within a "narrative of unity of all spheres," assuming the "supposed absence of secularity in Muslim doctrine, consciousness, politics, or lived practice."[5] Bernard Lewis, for instance, notes that the pairs religious and secular "have no equivalents in the classical languages of the Muslim people," and one wonders what he makes of *dīn* and *dunya*, an incredibly commonplace pairing in revelatory texts as well as subsequent scholarly textual production.[6] Lewis also argues that the reason why no secularist movement has ever autonomously emerged in Muslim societies, as well as why they were not particularly keen on any external attempts to impose one, was because, unlike Christians, Muslims were never taught to distinguish between God and Caesar. Hence, Muslims never learned to differentiate between the duties required towards each—a differentiation, which would have resulted in the institutional differentiation that Christianity underwent.[7]

Perhaps one of the early voices to trouble the unequivocal denial of the secular in Islam is Marshall Hodgson. In *The Venture of Islam*, he introduces a new term to analyze processes and phenomena in Islam as a civilization.[8] Against the commonplace "Islamic," which should be used, he argues, to refer to those things pertaining to Islam in the "proper, the religious, sense," the word "Islamicate" is to define those things, secular in nature, and therefore to refer not directly to "religion, Islam, itself, but instead to the socio-cultural complex historically associated with Islam and Muslims."[9] As a telling example, Hodgson explains that when he uses the term *Islamic literature*, he is referring to religious literature rather than "secular wine song."[10] The assumption here of course, is that since wine is prohibited in *Shari'a*, no such act can be undertaken religiously, and must be secular in the sense of being antagonistic, or at least indifferent to, religious scripture.

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4   Mustapha Kamal Pasha writes that "buttressed by Orientalist frames of apprehending 'religious' others, secularity rapidly evolves into a 'standard of civilisation', both for separating 'insiders' from 'outsiders' in international society, as well as for producing the hierarchicalisation of political community." See "Islam and the Postsecular," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 5 (December 2012): 1046.

5   According to Pasha, "From Weber to Gellner to Lewis . . . Islamic Exceptionalism ensured the supposed absence of secularity in Muslim doctrine, consciousness, politics, or lived practice." See "Islam and the Postsecular," 1051.

6   Bernard Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople: Volume 1: War and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), xvi.

7   Nader Hashemi, "The Multiple Histories of Secularism Muslim Societies in Comparison*," Philosophy & Social Criticism* 36, no. 3-4 (2010): 329.

8   Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

9   Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 58–9.

10   Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 59.

Clear in this nomenclature is Hodgson's distinction between religion and culture, as well as his understanding of Islam as doubly the equivalent, firstly, of Christianity in the religious sense, and secondly, of Byzantium or Rome, in the civilizational sense. This distinction should be expected of a thinker whose overarching framework is that of understanding civilizations and their afterlives, partly for the purpose of comparative work. The term Islamicate is a rather obvious translation of concepts from modern Christianity since it denotes for him the realm of things non-religious and therefore secular. Still, it retains a relationality between the secular and the religious: while secular wine songs are not religious, they are still connected to Islam. This connection could be due to the songs being practiced within the greater civilizational configuration of Islam or because they draw aesthetically and linguistically from his strictly demarcated religious sphere.

Hodgson's ambiguity about the place of the secular in premodern Islam, while troubling early Orientalist tropes, still retains an element of Islamic exceptionalism: the religion of Islam offered a total social pattern, exerting demands on the believer that could pertain to any aspect of their life. Yet this demand was configured into patterns that were distinguishable from other non-religious patterns of practice. While those former never prevailed over the latter, they demarcated the limits beyond which the more independent patterns, in trade or in poetry for example, could not go. Within these limits however, these latter could be performed autonomously, such that, in any given sphere, what was religious was distinguishable from what was part of the greater culture and civilization of Islam. With yet another telling example, Hodgson states that "in even the most pious man's life, there was much that he could not call religious"— not ritual, but cultural, perhaps such as secular wine songs.[11]

Another scholar for whom the religion/culture distinction carries over to the study of Islam is Louis Gardet. He writes that Islamic history is a unique example of a culture with an explicit religious foundation, which sometimes existed alongside the secular aspects of said culture, but often absorbed them so that the two became very closely interlinked.[12] Unlike Hodgson's emphasis on civilization, Gardet locates culture as the primary site of delineation. Although secular trends had a sure place in Islamic culture, it was predominantly religious. Despite this conceptual difference, Gardet shares Hodgson's ambiguity about the relationship of the secular to the religious: neither science nor secular literature nor art, he says, "were separated from religion in the way that certain branches of modern humanism have been in Europe. They were affected by Muslim values."[13] The way to understand this differentiation is spatial: the secular belonged to Islam as a community, but not the religious sphere.

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11 Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 89.
12 Louis Gardet, "Religion and Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 2B: Islamic Society and Civilization*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 569.
13 Gardet, "Religion and Culture," 601.

Writing about two decades later, Ira Lapidus offers a more confident differentiation, arguing against the familiar trope, "the Muslim ideal," that "the institutions of state and religion [were] unified, and that Islam is a total way of life."[14] Throughout his work on history of Islamic societies, Lapidus argues that, while there was no singular political model, Muslim societies were organized and governed through a differentiation of religion and politics. This differentiation was itself the function of Islamic expansion, and the resultant differentiation of the "Arabian Islamic complex." While early Islam introduced an "undifferentiated concept of the relations of secular and religious authority" unprecedented to the Middle East, later the caliphate developed into a monarchical identity along with professionalization and bureaucratization.[15] With the weakening of the caliphate under the Abbasids and the proliferation of various sultanates who ruled independently whilst owing allegiance to the Caliph, the caliphate retained the symbolic function of unifying state and religious community. Meanwhile, the sultanates, which Lapidus describes as "secular states," were distinct from the religious community, who were *the true bearers of Muslim religious life*.

Once again, we see a distinction carrying over from the separation of Church and state: the religious community represented Islam because they were concerned with "individual learning, pious practices, prayer and ritual, social welfare, and the mediation of local disputes" in juxtaposition to the state's concern with taxation, public order, and military conquests.[16] An additional, perhaps Arab, bias can also be discerned, where Lapidus argues that the religious elites drew from the original "communal, personal, religious, and doctrinal aspects of Islam," whereas the political institutions became heavily legitimated in neo-Byzantine and neo-Sassanian terms.[17] Nowhere in this narrative is the clear distinction between the "religious" and "stately" functions troubled, even when one considers how social welfare, learning and discernment, and pious practices were often employed in discourses on kingship and good Islamic governance. The only exception is when Lapidus concedes that this distinction was not total on several grounds. Firstly, Muslims themselves refused to profess the distinction, and secondly, since much of the realm of the mundane, like economic and social transactions that for the Christian West would be considered secular, was regulated by religious law, there could not be a clear-cut distinction between the jurisdiction of the state *vis a vis* the religious community.[18] Lapidus does not further explore the implication of the idea that the mundane was religious in identity and why this would trouble his proposed differentiation.

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14   Ira M. Lapidus, "State and Religion in Islamic Societies," *Past and Present* 151 (May 1996): 24.

15   Lapidus, "State and Religion," 9 and 10.

16   Lapidus, "State and Religion," 18.

17   Lapidus, "State and Religion," 12.

18   Lapidus, "State and Religion," 20.

Etic Investigation, Emic Conclusions

I now turn to a figure who, while not a scholar of premodern Islam, has shaped recent academic conceptions of the secular, arguably with regards to premodern Islam as well. Talal Asad, an anthropologist by training, has written on religion, secularism, statehood, and has called for an anthropology of modern secularity. While both his *Genealogies of Religion* and *Formations of the Secular* address the question of how the universal category of religion was constructed and extrapolated from modern Christianity and the European encounter, I focus my discussion on the latter, where he analyses "the secular" head on.[19] In *Formations*, Asad presents several ground-breaking arguments. First is drawing out the secular from secularism, the political doctrine, so that the secular is conceptually prior to secularism. The secular, forever an elusive concept, cannot be defined and must be understood through its traces, but it can be used to denote a constellation of "concepts, practices, and sensibilities" that came to be defined as "the secular."[20] Asad opposes the idea that secularism removes societal mediation, allows the space for all citizens to participate in the public space, and affords tolerance. Secularism, instead, is the state's distinctive political medium that, while still mediating differences across groups and individuals, claims to tolerate and transcend them all. Secularism is thus an enactment of the project of modernity and is conceptually drawn from the secular, but also is the site where the secular, as a modern modality of power, is articulated.[21]

Asad notes that this phenomenon is relatively recent, because in premodern societies, while other processes of mediating between social and other differences were adopted, states sought to mediate local identities without ever aiming toward this transcendence. More importantly however, the secular is modern, because Asad locates it within the nexus of colonial encounter, biblical hermeneutics, and the construction of a universal category of "religion" through which Christianity, and by extension other socialities and belief systems were understood. Using exclusively European sources such as anthropological studies and intellectual writings on modernity, Asad offers a European, modern genealogy of the secular, in which the concept is intimately tied with the project of modernity. It was the colonial encounter with the non-European world that brought about a shift in how European intellectuals and hermeneutists redefined the "sacred" against myth and "the profane," which, implicated in the civilising mission and biblical philology, resulted in the novel construction of religion and nature as universal categories.[22] Furthermore, a conceptual split occurred between what came to be "religious" (inward beliefs, mood,

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19   Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

20   Asad, *Formations*, 16.

21   Asad, *Formations*, 5.

22   Asad, *Formations*, 35.

and motivation against premodern subject formation through embodied rituals and practices) on one hand, and "secular" on the other.[23] The reigning scholarly notion that the secular is anachronistic to the premodern can be traced to the genealogy that Asad offers, and has grown in salience since. Fitzgerald for instance takes up the notion that the construction of the categories of sacred and secular grew out of European colonial discourses and would be suspicious if used to understand non-European socialities.[24]

Despite his quibbles with Asad on the question of orthodoxy, Shahab Ahmed reinforces this critique of the secular. In *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic,* Ahmed is only tangentially concerned with the question of the secular as it is simply one of the many categories that he critiques for its inadequacy to capture Muslims' experiences.[25] Instead, Ahmed offers a conception of Islam that is inclusive of and recognises coherence in the multitude of contradictions in thoughts and practices held by premodern Muslims. A work of emic concern, he critiques the religion/secular divide for inaptly conveying what Muslims themselves were thinking when engaging in certain practices. The secular/religious divide reinforces the Islamic legal tradition's supremacy (against Islamic philosophy, art, or Sufism) by making anything drawn from revealed law, restrictively defined, the realm of the religious, while all else is thought to be secular. Moreover, if contemporary scholars define many premodern Muslim acts of self-expression and communication *qua* Muslims, as secular, then the category is useless for understanding what it meant to be Muslim.[26] Ahmed contests the assumption underlying the use of the secular by some modern scholars that when Muslims practices a set of sensibilities attributed by modern thought to be secular, they are essentially "leaving the domain of Islam [and] entering a universal "secular" terrain," a notion Premodern Muslims would have found alien.[27]

The Secular New Wave

Against such weighty condemnation, it is curious to think along the scholars I identify in this new wave, who use the concept of the secular far more directly and confidently while being cognizant of the established wisdom they unsettle. In this section I offer a review of the authors' main arguments as to why the secular is so integral. These six articles can be divided into two groups. The first three articles are all part of the same project, *Multiple Secularities,* and were published together in a special

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23 Brittain "Tragic Category," 151.

24 Timothy Fitzgerald, *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations* (London: Equinox, 2007).

25 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

26 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* 201.

27 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* 200.

issue of Historical Social Research Journal by Dressler et al., Salvatore, and Yavari.[28] In a nod to Hodgson, they draw on the notion of Islamicate Secularity. The second three articles, written by Jackson, Fadel, and Abbasi, are mostly concerned with the Islamic legal tradition and are in conversation with scholars of secular(ism) and all see their contribution, not as creating a space for the secular in premodern Islam, but as simply excavating what is already there.[29]

In the introduction to their special issue, Dressler et al. lay down the theoretical and analytic frameworks around which the various articles contributed coalesce. They draw distinctions between secularism, secularisation, and secularity, where the latter is used to indicate a number of "fundamental cultural and symbolic distinctions, as well as institutionally anchored forms and arrangements of differentiation between religion and other social spheres and practices."[30] Cognisant of secular(ity)'s Western modern baggage, they argue that analogous, though not identical, distinctions and differentiations between the religious and non-religious existed in non-Western premodern settings even if the term secularity was never employed.[31] Furthering their claim that there is no singular secularity pertaining to the Muslim world, each article in this first group argues as to what and how different kinds "of social and institutional differentiation emerged within Islamicate contexts in relation to Islam, and how were those differentiations related to conceptual distinctions."[32] They mark their debt to Hodgson throughout by employing, rather uncritically, the religion/non-religion distinction. They maintain a similar ambiguity as Hodgson, arguing that religion and the secular, though differentiated, were mutually constitutive, and they introduce the notion of a "relational double face, where differentiation does not exclude convergence."[33]

In his own article, Armando Salvatore (one of the contributors to the volume's introduction), takes the ethical concern of regulating human conduct as a site where a soft distinction developed throughout Islamicate history.[34] Salvatore is referring

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28 "Homepage," *Multiple Secularities - Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities*, accessed December 2020, www.multiple—secularities.de/.; Markus Dressler, Armando Salvatore, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities: New Perspectives on a Contested Concept," *Historical Social Research* 44, no. 3 (2019): 7–34.

29 Sherman Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 34, no. 2 (2017): 1–31; Mohammed Fadel, "Islamic Law, Secularization, and Modernity: Two Islamic Conceptions of the Human," *Contending Modernities,* July 30, 2020, www.contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing—modernities/islamiclaw-secularization-modernity/; Rushain Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims Distinguish the Religious and Secular? The Dīn–Dunyā Binary in Medieval Islamic Thought," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 2 (2020): 185–225.

30 Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 1.

31 Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 10 and 20.

32 Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 18.

33 Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 14.

34 Armando Salvatore, "Secularity through a 'Soft Distinction' in the Islamic Ecumene? Adab as a Counterpoint to Shari'a," *Historical Social Research* 44, no. 3 (2019): 35.

specifically to *Adab*, a genre of Arabic, pre-Islamic literary productions that continued to develop after the rise of Islam and that has Persian homologues as well. What makes *Adab* distinguishable from another primary realm of regulating human conduct in premodern Islam, namely the prophetic *Sunnah* (*Hadith*), is that while the latter was the product of revelation, the former undeniably had no specific prophetic origin. Instead, it offered "the quintessence of practical wisdom accumulated over the generations: the opposite, in principle, of a type of knowledge and practice originating in revelation."[35] This distinction is designated as "soft," because secular *Adab* operated as a harmonious counterpoint to *Hadith* rather than an antagonistic or even indifferent alternative.[36] This dynamic occurred because Islamic revelation was similarly concerned with the cultivation of good conduct. This mutual objective notwithstanding, Salvatore argues that *Hadith* and *Adab* were maintained through a "fundamental, mutual demarcation" even in the scholarly production of premodern Muslims who were trained in and wrote on both.[37]

Similarly, Yavari takes another site in premodern Islam, politics, and governance to argue that when Muslim texts are read comparatively against their Christian counterparts, the same debates surrounding the "quasi-secularity . . . [of] the perennial tug of war between religious and lay authority" can be delineated.[38] Since secularity, including "secular politics when disambiguated into concern for the common good" was discursively engaged in both premodern settings, she contends that the secular must be understood not as one native principle or ideology, but through multiple contexts.[39] She argues that her comparative framework reveals the "inescapable truth" that the language of secular politics acted, though distinctly in diverse contexts, on the political sphere.[40] What makes that language "secular" is not clearly defined, except to describe it as a process of separating religion from politics and religion from philosophy.[41] However, given the Hodgsonian framework of the overall project, Yavari uses the separation of religion from secular politics to denotes the employment of values and practices prior to or outside the texts of revelation in political settings.

Moving to the tradition of Islamic law in the second group of articles, Sherman Jackson writes against contemporary scholars, as well as modern Muslims who maintain the nonexistence of a sacred/secular boundary in favor of a holistic view of religion/Islam in premodernity. Seeking a way to relate the secular to Islam other than the irrelevant sacred/profane dichotomy, Jackson proposes a realm that he calls the Islamic secular. This framework shifts the relationality from religion/secular to

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35   Salvatore, "Adab," 37.
36   Salvatore, "Adab," 35.
37   Salvatore, "Adab," 37.
38   Neguin Yavari, "The Political Regard in Medieval Islamic Thought," *Historical Social Research* 44, no. 3 (2019): 54.
39   Yavari, "The Political Regard," 58.
40   Yavari, "The Political Regard."
41   Yavari, "The Political Regard," 67.

Shari'a/secular. The Islamic secular is that site where modes of assessing human acts are neither grounded in nor derived from the revelational sources, i.e. S*hari'a*. By being non-revelational in relying on alternative epistemologies and assessments (such as asking what the legal driving age should be, or what exact socio-economic policy will yield better welfare to the community), the Islamic secular is secular. However, since the Islamic secular still operates within "God's adjudicative gaze," it is still Islamic and "thus religious."[42]

Debating similar voices, Mohammed Fadel argues that Islamic law in premodernity did not present an obstacle to secularisation in Muslim societies but rather served as a historical catalyst for secularisation.[43] This dynamic occurred because from the very beginning, Islamic law differentiated social life based on the metaphysical conceptions of the human having a dual nature. On the one hand, human beings were servants of God with commitments to the next life, and on the other, they were objects of "material reality," which meant that a particular set of social institutional supports were necessary to protect their vulnerability.[44] The requirement for the provision and protection of certain material goods, in addition to development of law both pedagogically and institutionally as separate from theology and exegesis, contributed to this differentiation. These laws that were concerned with the human's materiality were secular, for Fadel, in all the senses of the term, except for their "asserted origin in revelation."[45] Rules of trade were secular because their logic was that of material provision, ensuring shelter and survival for the human. That meant, for Fadel, that their logic is not the "logic of religion," because this latter is "carefully limited to worship," where worship is understood as "the cultivation of subjective dispositions toward God as reflected in ritual law."[46] This distinction has no place for revelatory laws of social and economic conduct that were both devotional and responding to material needs (such as food, intercourse, and social welfare), and thus marks a problematic limitation in his conception of the secular.

Finally, Abbasi argues against the denial of the secular in premodern Islam, which he locates across Orientalist, critical, Muslim, and non-Muslim scholars alike.[47] Abbasi is especially critical of scholars who recreate the Eurocentrism that they try to challenge by "basing their conclusions about the Islamic past on theoretical critiques of European modernity instead of the indigenous sources themselves."[48] He argues that the *dīn*/*dunya* binary he finds profusely in premodern texts indicate that Muslims separated their world conceptually into "distinct religious and non-religious spheres analogous to the modern religious-secular, with things like worship, prayer, and divine

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42   Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," 2, 3, and 16.
43   Fadel, "Islamic Law."
44   Fadel, "Islamic Law."
45   Fadel, "Islamic Law."
46   Fadel, "Islamic Law."
47   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?"
48   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 187.

law on one side and all worldly matters on the other."[49] Ultimately however, he suggests that the *dīn/dunya* analogue is more useful and should be popularised, since if it is simply translated in scholarly work on the religion/secular dichotomy, the modern assumptions attached to this binary would distort the different premodern interactions of *dīn* and *dunya*.[50]

Having reviewed the authors' main arguments, the place of the secular in them, and situated their work in conversation with specific voices, I now turn to thematically consider what this new wave offers to enduring questions of definitions and conceptions in the study of Islam.

Religion and Revelation

In part two, I indicated that the works of Hodgson, Gardet, and Lapidus betrayed a modern Christian bias, where the categories of religion and the secular were universalized and applied to premodern Islam. However, Dressler et al.'s Hodgsonian framework argues that there is value in his intervention on account of its introduction of a distinction between religious and non-religious aspects of Islam, as well as alluding to "practices of distinction within societies and cultures where Islam was the dominant religion."[51] This two-part heritage perhaps explains why they are not content with simply adopting Islamicate, but also adding secularity (hence the framework of Islamicate Secularities), which otherwise would sound redundant. If Islamicate denotes a distinction between religious and non-religious, why add secularity? It seems that, going beyond Hodgson's creation of a distinction, their focus is on the processes of distinction themselves, what generates them, and what causes their embrace or rejection in diverse Islamic contexts.[52] But the problem remains: What does "religion" mean in premodern Islamic contexts?

These limitations are partly what inspires Ahmed's rejection of both categories, especially when neither category helps us understand how premodern Muslims themselves came to "divide up, arrange and . . . know their world." [53] Instead, these categories lead us to assume that any contradictions or ambiguities in Muslims' self-expression were only "symptomatic of a problematic encounter with the secular."[54] We see this for instance in Lapidus, where any ambiguity between religion and secular politics in his discussion was due to the fusing of pre-Islamic ideals of divine kingship or sacred Greek/Sassanian value systems.[55]

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49   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 191.
50   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 224.
51   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 12.
52   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 13.
53   Ahmed, *What is Islam?* 197.
54   Ahmed, *What is Islam?* 201.
55   Lapidus, "State and Religion," 19.

But this understanding of the pre-Islamic points to an even more important assumption about what is Islamic (what is religion), and what is not. I argue that how scholars relate revelation to Islam and how revelation is itself conceived accounts for the differences across conceptions of religion. All the scholars I have analyzed understand Islam intimately in terms of revelation, and they are keen, excepting Ahmed, to distinguish between Islamic revelation as a truth, value, and epistemic system against prior, external, and/or competing systems. Thus, we can understand what is un-Islamic, and therefore irreligious about Lapidus' Greek and Sassanian values, Hodgson's Islamicate, and Salvatore and Yavari's interest in the spheres of *Adab* and politics. How much of religion/Islam as a conceptual space is taken up by revelation? How loosely or restrictively is the latter defined? The answers to these questions create an interesting spectrum along which I locate Ahmed, Jackson, and Salvatore/Yavari. On one end of the spectrum, we have Salvatore/Yavari, for whom revelation is limited to the textual (*Qur'an* and *Sunnah*) and revelation fills up the whole space of religion, *à la* Hodgson. In the middle of the spectrum is Jackson, who is committed to an equally limited textual definition of revelation, given his legal training, but who argues that revelation and the law derived from it do not constitute the totality of Islam/religion and that S*hari'a* and Islam are not coterminous.[56] This is precisely why the secular in his conception is non-*shar'i* (non-revelatory), yet not un-Islamic or irreligious. At the other end of the spectrum is Ahmed, who conceives of Islam as a hermeneutic engagement undertaken by Muslims through Revelation. Yet "Revelation" is so expansively defined that almost anything can be revelation: it is divided into a Pre-Text, Text, and Con-text. The Text quite simply is the Qur'an; the Con-text is the total body of all historical Islamic practices and interpretations; and the Pre-text refers to the cosmologies that Muslims adopt, through which they understand the world and seek to know God, which the Qur'an constitutes only a part of. Therefore, a Muslim philosopher can know God through the Qur'an as well as Reason writ large, which is the cosmological site of Revelation, where as a Sufi understands experiential gnosis to be the main site of Revelation and knowing God, only a part of which is the actual text of the Qur'an. In Ahmed's formulation, anything can be Islamic, and thus there is no need for the secular, as long as the Muslim is acting or practicing in a way where he/she is intending to be Muslim and to derive meaning *qua* Muslim.

One wonders if Ahmed would have found it useful to speak of the secular to refer to acts that a Muslim undertakes whilst not intending to be a Muslim. In any case, the inversion of that is precisely how Fadel, Abbasi, Jackson, and Dressler et al. (and by extension Hodgson) primarily understand religion. There is something fundamentally devotional, ritualistic, mindful of God, and gravitating towards the afterlife (even when dealing with worldly matters) about religion in their respective conceptions. This concept is what Hodgson seems to allude to when he speaks of Islamic as being Islam

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56   Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," 7 and 10.

in the proper, religious sense. It is also the basis of Fadel's distinction between the logic of religion and the logic of the secular. Abbasi articulates the same understanding when he argues his premodern Muslim interlocutors associated *dīn*, the analogue of religion, with "divine law, worship, reward, virtue, and was seen in relation to the next life and God."[57] He therefore argues that Muslims did indeed have a concept of religion writ large, which was important to distinguish from the non-religious or worldly matters precisely because the belief in the afterlife required a clarification of what religion entails for a believer.[58]

Despite their convergences and divergences, these authors thus redeploy common and familiar conceptions of what religion is. How then are they overcoming the enduring critique of religion and the secular as European or Christian categories? The answer seems to be in arguing that it is the premodern texts or thinkers they are engaging that are themselves making the distinction and using the categories. Dressler et al. are particularly concerned with qualifying their reliance on Hodgson on this front. They emphasise that the "etic distinction, which we use as observers, between either religion and non-religion or religion and secularity is matched by a variety of emic distinctions used by Muslim social actors."[59] They demonstrate further prudence in choosing not to define religion at the outset, but to let each author, in their respective article, employ "a social constructivist approach that conceives of the religion of Islam and the degree of its distinguishability as an empirical phenomenon understood as the result of social world construction."[60] The reliance on emic analogues to legitimize the concept of religion, as much as the secular, is similarly clear in the work of Abbasi, as well as both Jackson and Fadel who present their work as an excavation of what legal theorists and jurists have explicitly expressed in their scholarship.

Secular(ity)

I begin this discussion with Asad whose secular is both modern and conceptually very different from the secular of the new wave, but whose divorce of the secular from secularism, I contend, constitutes a major opening for these authors to revisit and reuse the secular. While he recognises that Christianity—in introducing a transcendent God against the gods of the Greek directly involved in nature and society—created the potential for a differential space exterior to the supernatural realm of God, this potential was only actualised in modernity through the construction of a secular space.[61] The secular for Asad is thus modern, and specifically a modality of power. It

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57   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 198.
58   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 223.
59   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 12.
60   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 24.
61   Asad, *Formations*, 27.

regulates and reconfigures subjectivity along multiple cultivated values and sensibilities, and it is intricately tied with the project of modernity.

The secular does not take on this meaning for our later authors. Drawing more directly from the work of Jose Casanova, the secular for them designates sites and practices of differentiation, ontological or epistemic in the first order, and consequently institutional. [62] Unlike their conceptions of religion, which coalesced around similar principles, ontological and epistemic differentiations of the secular are mutually exclusive. Thus, for Jackson there is nothing in the Islamic secular that is not religious because it is still a site in which Muslims act with a kind of God-consciousness. Therefore, the secular is only differentiated from *Shari'a* as different epistemic modalities. Dressler et al. similarly understand the institutional differentiations of secularity in premodern Islam as owing to epistemic difference implicated in "among other reference problems . . . securing political power or dealing with competing truth claims."[63]

This framework is fundamentally different from Fadel for whom the secular derives epistemically from the same sources as the religious, but while the latter is ontologically devotional, the former is concerned with material preservation. Any attempts to bridge the two distinctions is an extra-legal act of piety and thus in itself a devotional, not a secular act. The difficulty with this distinction of *ʿibādāt* (rituals) and *muʿāmalāt* (transactions) along the dividing line of devotion/worship are those instances in which the transactional takes on characteristics of the ritual and vice versa. If, as he states, transactional matters are indifferent to the actor's inward disposition, then how do we understand the legal distinction between valid prayer (a prayer that checks all the required acts) and an accepted prayer (where one's intention is clear and focused) where it seems the inward disposition is irrelevant to the legal validation of the ritual act? Similarly, if only a transaction can be initiated and then abandoned without any consequences, then how do we understand supererogatory fasting, an entirely devotional act, that one can initiate and abandon mid-day without any consequences either?

I argue that to define the secular as an ontological differentiation is a more difficult task, and that Fadel's inflexibility is what weakens his argument by contrast to Jackson, or even Abbasi. Abbasi, like Fadel, argues that the secular is conceived by premodern Muslims as ontologically differentiated from acts of devotion, ritual, and those derived from Divine law, but only in the first order. This means that, by a simple reorienting

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62   For example, Jackson writes that "the secular is simply differentiated from religion in Casanova's depiction, whereas it is differentiated from the shar'i in my working definition of the Islamic secular." See Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," 11. According to Fadel, "Casanova has identified three forms of secularization that are characteristic of modernity: institutional differentiation, privatization of religious belief, and the decline of religious belief. He argues that while all three of these modes of secularization are present in modernity, only the first—the institutional differentiation of various social spheres from religious institutions, such as the market, the state, and the economy—is a universal prerequisite for modernity." See Fadel, "Islamic Law."

63   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 11.

of one's intention, a secular act of *dunya*, like "the perceptual, the bodily, the mental, the outward, and all the things of human life (like food and sex)" can become similarly devotional and thus an act of *dīn*.[64] This flexible relationality allows for a more robust conception of the secular. It also helps us revisit what the ontic distinction between a secular and a religious act can be. The secular is not the mundane in the quotidian sense, for many rituals and social functions are quotidian, a formulation Lapidus had difficulty conceiving, but rather the secular is that act undertaken by a Muslim not for the purposes of *dīn*.[65]

In my analysis, the weakest conceptions of the secular are precisely those that raise epistemic differentiation to the ontological level. In their respective articles, Salvatore and Yavari slide in and out of claims about how un-Islamic a practice is, precisely because it is epistemically drawn from non-revelatory sources. It is difficult to see how Salvatore can argue that Qur'anic verses can be woven into secular *Adab* stories without "altering the inherently mundane [read: non-religious] teachings of the genre."[66] Similarly, it remains unclear how Salvatore can sustain a distinction between *Adab*'s focus on its subjects' cultivating a capacity to discern between good and bad, or harmful and useful, and the same focus of *Hadith* and other revelatory texts.[67] Similarly, Yavari's claim that governance and politics are secular because Muslims kings were considered successful not when they were pious but when they were able to rule with wisdom and discernment is yet another baffling remark that seems to dismiss how often regal piety was precisely defined in terms of wisdom, good discernment, and the bringing about of social welfare and the common good.[68]

Function and Relationality

Two questions that any discussion of the secular triggers are of its relationality and function, if only because modern secularity takes on an explicit positionality, ranging from indifference to and antagonism towards, religion, and has a primary regulatory function over the latter. In this section I look at how these two points figure in conceptions of the secular that I have considered. Most striking is Jackson's, where the determinant relationality is not secular/religion, but secular/revelation. He is also keen

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64   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 198.

65   Lapidus writes that "finally, there was an ambiguity in the concept of secular and sacred. The ordinary functions of Muslim community life and the daily activities of scholars and holy men involve activities which come under the purview of Islamic law and Islamic morality, but constitute from our point of view the realm of secular affairs. Business, administration of trusts, property issues and inheritances are only a few examples. The domain of the Muslim religious community which embodies the Islamic ideal is, by virtue of Islam itself, the realm of the mundane." See "State and Religion," 20.

66   Salvatore, "Adab," 38.

67   Salvatore, "Adab," 39.

68   Yavari, "The Political Regard," 60.

to argue against the claim that religion regulates the realm of the secular since the Islamic secular is already religious; yet one wonders whether his concept of the secular does not really draw from revelation, at least since in this standard definition of revelation, surely it is knowledge of God, and the desire to remain within God's adjudicative gaze (derived from revelation), that allows the secular to "remain" Islamic.[69]

This desire to be Islamic, and to cultivate virtue, is perhaps what leads Salvatore to qualify his distinction of *Adab* from *Hadith* as only soft, whilst still understanding it as an epistemically secular counterpoint, contrapuntal and harmonious, not alternative.[70] This concept of the soft distinction, in turn, is shared by Dressler et al. to further their argument that "secularity" is helpful in countering the "exaggeration and homogenization of the religious dimension of the lives and societies of Muslims."[71] Again, here the point is to highlight epistemic and institutional differentiations of Islamic and non-Islamic acts in the lives of premodern Muslims.

In fact, it is precisely devotional sensibilities and an orientation towards the divine that, Abbasi argues, allows for the transformation of a secular act of *dunya* into an act of *dīn*.[72] In his analysis, some premodern Muslims posited that *dīn* and *dunya* was a framework of differentiating aspects of reality that were not mutually opposing, and other often saw *dīn* as above *dunya*, and thus could regulate it or bring it into its fold in an inverse of modern secularity's regulatory functions.[73] It is only Yavari who argues that, much like its modern counterpart, premodern political secularity meant that religion was employed in the service of government, where it was necessary for a secular power to regulate diverse clerical opinions and to effectively rise above the chaos "which ensues when decision making is left on the basis of hearsay to an indeterminate and changing group of people keen to settle scores."[74] I find this regulatory reading dubious, in as much as it uncritically adopts the secular vs. lay authority struggle of Medieval Europe and fails to recognise the intricate way governance was often constructed as Islamic piety. Apart from Yavari, then, it is clear that none of the authors offer a conception that is a simple translation of modern secularity. The consensus is that the secular in premodern Islam neither regulates religion nor is necessarily related to it (as in Jackson) as is the case with modern secularism that mediates religion as one among many different identities.

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69   Jackson, "The Islamic Secular," 2.
70   Salvatore, "Adab," 41.
71   Dressler, Salvatore, and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Islamicate Secularities," 14.
72   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 192.
73   Abbasi, "Did Premodern Muslims?" 193.
74   Yavari, "The Political Regard," 61 and 66.

Frameworks: Political and Intellectual Commitments

In part two we have seen how locating the scholar's respective intellectual and political commitments illuminated how they came to conceive of the secular. Lewis wrote as an Orientalist; Hodgson was concerned with the overarching comparative framework of civilization; Asad continues to carry the lantern of postcolonial and anthropological critique of Orientalism, modernity, and Eurocentrism; and Ahmed was concerned with including diverse Muslim voices as equally valid for any conception of Islam. The scholars of the new wave can be equally understood through their own commitments, and it is striking that they share many of these commitments with the likes of Asad and Ahmed, and yet they offer divergent conceptions of the secular. *Multiple Secularities*, for instance, is a project that aims to divorce "Western Modernity" from "secularity" to show how Muslim secularities today are the products both of internal socio-historical processes as well as the colonial encounter. The project is committed to analysis through emic taxonomies, as well as a comparative framework. It therefore situates itself somewhere between Asad and Hodgson, and it seems that whenever the comparative framework is more dominant, it comes at the expense of critically assessing how relevant the conceptual secular is to its identified Islamic emic analogue.

The desire to let Muslims speak for themselves is a point on which both Ahmed and Abbasi converge but reach starkly divergent conclusion. It is indeed curious why, if the emic commitments are identical, and the texts studied Islamic, they do not arrive at the same argument. I suggest that, beyond the differences between Abbasi's analogous framework and Ahmed's overarching commitment to finding cohesion among Islamic contradictions, the answer might lie in their sources; specifically, the different Islamic traditions on which they center their work.[75] Whereas Ahmed primarily deals with philosophical and Sufi texts, a small selection of Persian political theory, and creative artistic expressions while deliberately paying little attention to legal work, Abbasi looks at Islamic law, exegesis, and non-Persian political theory and pietistic literature. Similarly, Jackson and Fadel's definitions of revelation, far more limited in comparison with Ahmed, may be attributed to their training as scholars of Islamic law and their exclusive reliance on legal and jurisprudential work.

More telling, however, is their explicit interest in the social and political conditions of Muslims living in the West, in secular or secularizing nation states. Jackson ends his article with a suggestion that while Islamic law is the domain of the specially trained jurist, the realm of the secular, in as much as it relies on non-revelatory modes of

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75   According to Abbasi, "analogies on the other hand look for categories or terms that do the same kind of work within similar contexts … [and] it does not necessarily follow that they [Muslims] did not articulate and develop an analogous categorization of their own." See "Did Premodern Muslims?" 188 and 190.

human assessment, can be the realm of "the people."[76] This statement helps us understand why the secular is only epistemically and not ontologically differentiated in his conception, as it will allow Muslims to engage in the public sphere of government and administration without acting as if God does not exist. This dynamic perhaps is what makes it difficult for Muslims, in his reading, to take part in public discourse in the first place.

Fadel is equally concerned with the place of Muslims in non-Muslim countries, and in a separate article considers how Muslims can participate in Rawls' "emerging consensus."[77] In my analysis, he ultimately offers a less robust conception of the secular because of the more polemic nature of his work. Fadel is not content to argue, as Jackson does, that the secular can be Islamic in intent while epistemically non-*shar'i*, but that revelation (and Islamic law) itself must bring about an institutional differentiation between the devotional religion and the material secular, so that his central argument that Islamic law was a catalyst and not an obstacle to secularization, still holds. This argument he bases on Casanova's definition of secularization as denoting a) institutional differentiation, b) the privatization of religion, and c) its waning, and his designation of only the differentiation being necessary for modernity. If Fadel can prove that Islamic law itself catalyzed that differentiation which is necessary for modernity, then perhaps he can definitively settle the debate on Islam's relationship to modernity. However, this argument feels like an exercise in the counterfactual. Even if one accepts Casanova's claim that differentiation alone is modernity's necessary condition—which I find reductive—it has become apparent from our discussion in the previous section that modern secularity as a mode of power is not in any way identical with secular differentiations in premodern Islam.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have reviewed and analysed a rich historiography of the secular in premodern Islam. I argued that conceptions of the secular are implicated in the knowledge-power nexus of modern scholarship, particularly orientalism, its afterlives, and critical responses to it, as well as the scholars' intellectual and political commitments. I first offered a chronological review of the scholars under analysis to draw out the ways in which they were in vibrant conversation with one another. I then considered how a new wave of thinking about the secular in premodern Islam has redeployed and/or significantly innovated thinking about enduring definitions in the study of Islam, namely: religion, revelation, secular relationality, and functionality. I argued that these conceptions of the secular are neither all mutually exclusive, nor

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76 As Jackson writes, "cultural producers, and not jurists, will play a critical role in priming social realisation of the law's broader aims and objectives and, in so doing, engendering broader voluntary compliance." See "Islamic Secular," 17.

77 Fadel, "Islamic Law."

conclusively settle the debate one way or the other, nor, in fact, are they free from limitations and varying degrees of analytic deficiencies. I therefore hope to have shown that the secular is neither inherently inadequate, nor defunct, for the purposes of studying premodern Islam. I am guided here by Robert Bartlett's assessment that what determines our use of any category should be its intellectual, and I would add political, value.[78] In situating this historiography in relation to my own interest in questions of Muslim subjectivity, I hope to have shown the value in challenging our tendency to cede to modernity total explanatory power. Resisting this tendency opens previously foreclosed venues of inquiry, yielding much analytic value, the least of which is to nuance our understanding of exactly how and why modernity constitutes such a rupture from the premodern and significantly redefines and reconfigures Islamic being and experience.

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[78]   Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, no. 1 (2001): 39–56.

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