Aziz Al-Azmeh

Secularism and its Enemies

This Working Paper has been published online and can be downloaded from
www.multiple-secularities.de/publications/working-papers or ordered in print via
email to multiple-secularities@uni-leipzig.de

The CASHSS's Working Paper Series serves to disseminate the results of work in
progress prior to publication to encourage the exchange of ideas and academic
debate. Inclusion of a paper in the Working Paper Series should not limit
publication in any other venue. Copyright remains with the authors.

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Content

Secularism and its Enemies[1]

The following is intended to suggest a fairly simple contention concerning a number of interconnected propositions made in connection with the debates on modernity and secularism. None of these propositions is particularly novel, nor is this the first time that they have been put forward. Yet the issues raised have remained with us and become all the more pressing; I can see that points that were made, against the flow, more than two decades ago, now stand out more cogently than ever, and are being revisited, rediscovered or simply discovered by many.[2]

The simple contention I wish to start with concerns Islamism, often brought out emblematically when secularism and modernity are discussed. Like other self-consciously retrogressive identitarian motifs, ideas, sensibilities, moods and inflections of politics that sustain differentialist culturalism and are sustained by it conceptually, Islamism has come to gain very considerable political and social traction over the past quarter of a century. This had until recently reached the extent that it, as a perceptual grid of social and cultural purchase relating to societies and countries that many associate with Islam, has become hegemonic in public discussions about society and politics and, until recently, hegemonic without serious challenge. It has also been crucial for triggering the latest round of anti-secular discussions and polemics.[3]

The following discussion will proceed in three stages. First, an overall characterisation of anti-secular polemics and motifs in their broader discursive and other contexts and motifs will be offered, with special

---

1   This is the revised, longer version of a paper delivered to the conference "Critique of Modernity", Leipzig University, 14–15 June 2018. Parts of this text overlap with the author's 'Preface to the English Translation' to: Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Secularism in the Arab World: Contexts, Ideas and Consequences* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), a translation of the Arabic book first published in 1992.

2   See Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (London: Verso, 1992); Aijaz Ahmad, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Post'-Condition," *Socialist Register* 33 (1997); Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 2009). In a similar vein but appearing somewhat later: the historical lucidity and cogency of Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005) and the politico-conceptual clarity Vasant Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014).

3   Andrew March, "Political Islam: Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (2015): 110.

attention to writings characterised as post-colonialist. Next will be offered a discussion of some keywords that come up in this context and which indicate the conceptual profile in question. The essay will then move on to discuss two specific methods of using history in arguments against secularism. Finally, the essay will concentrate on post-colonialist discussions of Islam and secularism, exemplified in a particular case.

1 Sentiment, Pathos, Rhetoric

Islamism's public stance was made possible rhetorically and conceptually by a standard global repertoire of anti-modernist motifs and concepts of late 18th- and 19th-century vintage, motifs and concepts vigorously recovered in recent decades. I am concerned here specifically with the Euro-American academy, but the phenomenon is ubiquitous, with both the specialist and the demotic feeding into each other continually across a political interface. In a movement broadly comparable across the globe, anti-modernist tropes, motifs and metaphors in the Arab world migrated, under Cold War impulse, from social, ideological and political margins toward the centre, at first incrementally from around 1967, later epidemically from 1979, before establishing themselves pandemically as an irresistible siren song since 1989. These tropes have seeped into the interstices of nationalist, liberal and left-wing discourses and political positions, and have, with their culturalist and populist templates, effectively blunted political and analytical capacity, and come to serve as apologetic auxiliaries to an expanding Islamist ideological template.[4]

In the Euro-American context, academic as well as more broadly public apologetics for religious neo-conservatism and, not infrequently, for obscurantism, have not been the work of conservatives alone, including Islamists. It has also involved representatives of post-modernist and post-colonialist currents, who generally take themselves, with no evident sense of incongruity or irony, to be *avant-garde*. What seems to go unnoticed is that these apologetic *revendications* of Islamism present mirror-images of current right-wing conceptions, and afterlives of more classic ones,

---

4   See Al-Azmeh, "The Nationalist Era and the Future Besieged," chap. 5, and "Conclusion: Secularism Today in the Context of its Adversaries," chap. 6 in *Secularism in the Arab World*; ʿAzīz Al-Aẓma, "Bayn at-tārīkh waʾl-istikāna liʾl-qadar," *Bidāyāt* 14 (2016).

both conservative and revolutionary, now reconditioned in primary colours, often with the strident and hectoring tonalities that have marked anti-modern polemics historically.[5] That flirtation with the tropes of the hard political Right that led to untold calamities in the interwar years is replayed today with cavalier abandon, seems to generate little curiosity or to occasion any measure of self-reflection. It is this vindication of religious obscurantism, and specifically of identitarian obscurantism, in times often labelled as post-modern, that I wish to address in the following pages. Particular reference will be made to one variety of this apologetic discourse, to recent anti-secularism, with complementary but more narrowly focused reference to related post-colonialist claims. For illustration of post-colonialist claims, work by and associated with one widely-cited author will be called upon conveniently.[6] Let it be said at the outset that criticism here is not intended to abandon thematic perspectives opened by earlier post-colonialist critiques, but to question whether they have been adequate to the task, given their terms of reference. Nor is it intended to deliver a polemic, but rather to adopt a sense of the critical enterprise whose task is the elucidation of the general – ideological, conceptual, social and political – conditions of possibility of certain types of statements, much in the sense pioneered by Karl Marx.[7] Foucauldian concern with genealogies is a distinct but not unrelated enterprise.

Identity politics brought in its wake the promotion and cultivation of a sentimentalist nativism. In the universities, this was generally correlated with a cognitive relativism, the latter ultimately drifting into cognitive nihilism associated with the consistently post-modernist and post-colonialist currents. The resultant temper is now firmly established in universities and indeed in international organisations and foundations as well. There it has come to constitute a regnant orthodoxy, associated with what has rapidly become an institutionalised establishment. Like

---

5   For the rhetoric of vituperation, see especially Antoine Compagnon, "Vitupération," chap. 6 in *Les Antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2006).

6   The reference is to Talal Asad, whose views on Islam and secularism have recently been clearly and comprehensively sketched and respectfully put down: Hadi Enayat, *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought*: *A Cartography of Asadian Genealogies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

7   See above all Jacques Rancière, "The Concept of Critique and the Critique of Political Economy," *Economy and Society* 5, no. 3 (1976).

all establishments, this fosters a conservative, rigid and often formulaic output, ironically in this case an output with claims to a dragon-slaying type of critique.

This is a type of critique that rests on an adversarial relationship to the best part of its objects of study. It has been especially appealing to latecomer niches of the academy, such as gender studies, cultural studies and various denominations under which identity is officiated. It petrified with extraordinary rapidity as it acquired institutional moorings and their webs of patronage and vested interest, and as it developed into an institutional paradigm, with the usual political economy of a regnant academic orthodoxy.[8] This mode of output is all the more constricting as younger academics are trained to reiterate formulaically vocabularies of novelty. The shared vocabulary and poetics of post-colonialism and post-modernism have, in effect, become an academic sociolect which, like sociolects in general, has a communicative purpose defined primarily by the use of argotic locutions that signal mutual recognition among those who use this register of language. In this way, the critical stance, salutary in its initial purpose, was frozen in the moment of polemical inception, and continues to subordinate cognitive purpose to apostolic ends.

The lofty appeal often made in this context to the rhetoric of suspicion, with references to Ricœur and to Ricœur's references to Descartes, would after consideration appear to have been contrived, and seems in the final analysis to be superfluous and flashy. The inquisitorial style of the rhetoric of suspicion is related rather to 19th-century phrenological criminology and the detective novel, all based on reading signs, favouring terms such as 'interrogation' and 'interpellation', rather than Descartes. This forensic reading is generally performed in an attitude of hermeneutical hubris, powered by negative energy, employing a number of standard rhetorical devices so well brought out recently by Rita Felski.[9] The reference to Ricœur – or Heidegger, or any of the other patristic figures used in this type of discourse – seems not to be one of substance primarily, but rather the solicitation of august authority, what classical rhetoric calls 'ethos'.

Of especial pertinence to the present purpose, to issues of post-colonialism's attitude towards secularism, will be reference to the way in which subaltern studies veered towards neo-nativism and sentimentalism,

---

8   See Michael Billig, "Towards a Critique of the Critical," *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 3 (2000).
9   Rita Felski, "Suspicious Minds," *Poetics Today* 32, no. 2 (2011).

and more broadly, reference to the relationship between the political left and the critique of secularism. This shift in subaltern studies came with a decidedly anti-modern mood, once Ranajit Guha departed from the helm and a crop of younger, talented Indian academics at US universities came to decide its direction, paralleling mutations in other fields,[10] and moving from anti-colonialism[11] to post-colonialism. Post-coloniality and anti-colonialism are very distinct politically, socially and intellectually. Post-colonialist discourse is parasitical on anti-colonialism, to which it is related only rhetorically. It should be remembered that nationalist and socialist anti-colonialism was associated with secularism implicitly or explicitly. Post-colonialism is associated with anti-secularism and with apologies for and vindications, in the name of history, of tradition understood conservatively or at best apologetically, including the atavistic appeal to tradition.

Two consequences attend the overdetermination of this mode of academic practice by the adversarial mood. One is that, with few exceptions, the cognitive harvest has been slight, despite the persistent claim that vitalism, historism and nativism are closer to the ground, and that adversaries, especially those who might speak for modernity and secularism, are out of touch, and that they are too much given to abstraction. This position has often been associated with right-wing anti-intellectualism,[12] here paraded generally by select intellectuals as left-leaning anti-elitism. Works written in this spirit that have rested on empirical research tend to oscillate between elementary empirical description, and meta-theoretical imperatives: the imperatives of transposing the normative into the cognitive, such as advocacy for representing 'voices' on parity with each other rather than establishing facts and analytical itineraries by taking these voices for objects of research and distinguishing research material from the analysis of such material.[13] Overall, the crucial mid-level, sociological or historical

---

10 Perry Anderson, *The H-Word: The Peripeteia of Hegemony* (London: Verso, 2017), 100–02; Sumit Sarkar, "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies," in *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. Vinayak Chaturvedi (London: Verso, 2000).

11 Exemplarily: Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

12 Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 28–29; Judith Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1957]), 241–44.

13 This feature is palpable in Talal Asad for instance, who will be discussed below, with general pronouncements based on sparse empirical material and on slight reading

element, is sacrificed. The perspective of subject-positions, of voice and meaning, intrudes in such a way as to blunt the basic distinction between observer and observed, scientific practitioner and her material and object of study.

Anti-modernism is of course a complex object of study, and has for over two centuries spoken in a variety of tonalities, genres, conceptual vocabularies and languages. It is often forgotten today, even by sociologists, that anti-modernism has not been primarily a matter of discourses, moods and motifs, of "interpretative frames" Nor has it been just a phenomenon that belongs fundamentally to the realm of "meaning", whatever "meaning" may mean beyond the evocation of something elemental, profound and rather occult, in default of conveying a more concrete indication.[14] 'Meaning' seems generally deployed to advertise a posture of knowingness and of privileged access to sense that defies further specification, intimating the inward, perhaps the ineffable. It seems best understood as a means of conveying pathos rhetorically. The most subtle and accomplished scholar using this term has needed to admit that the parsing of 'meaning,' or what might stand for it, cannot involve transforming symbols into propositions, for this is to risk 'the crimes of exegesis,' as meaning is a message deeply sunk in its medium, like poetry – in other words, inaccessible to propositional language, and lodged in images and movements which,[15] in their turn, cannot yield anything even vaguely approximating what "meaning" may mean beyond pointing at symbols said to betoken it, whatever it may be and wherever it may reside.

Recourse to 'meaning' betokens anti-modernist polemic, but beyond the discursive and the symbolic. Anti-modernism has always been a social, political, and cultural dynamic, reflecting far more than an inertial

---

overall, the two commensurate with what is evidently an extraordinary economy of effort and curiosity.

14 See the most incisive comment on the vacuity of 'meaning' in Heidegger in the 1928 review of *Sein und Zeit* by Gilbert Ryle, reproduced in *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*: Gilbert Ryle, "Martin Heidegger: 'Sein und Zeit,'" *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1, no. 3 (1970).

15 Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 103. For more ample indications of the elusiveness of 'meaning' as a concept, for all Geertz's cerebral energy and capacity for precision and discrimination, see Geertz, *Negara*, 102–05, 114 and Clifford Geertz, *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 115–16, 150.

energy from the past, and has been asserted with a variety of instruments, including profuse bloodshed – the Iranian Revolution is a most pertinent case in point here: it is not only an archaising harking back, but a social engineering project. For post-colonialists and post-modernists, anti-modernism – an historical social, cultural and ideological dynamic – has supplied nevertheless a number of patristic figures[16] regarded as abstract instances of inspiration unsullied by the contexts of anti-modernism, and utilised by means of quotations which do not often have determinate meanings but rather convey a presumption of knowingness. These include Heidegger, whose tenebrous solemnities, analogies and word-play with the German language seem to absolve him from needing to construct arguments. This also seems to enchant and conduct the willing beholder, more often than not without an adequate philosophical culture and vocabulary, to a political and conceptual drift, to the extent, so well expressed by his erstwhile pupil Karl Löwith, who said that, once one had heard his famous rector's speech, one was unsure whether one should rush to read the pre-Socratics or join the SA.[17]

With Heidegger as with many patristic figures of both the historical Right and of the post-modern and post-colonial, pathos is proof and the mode of persuasion, all part of the enunciative armature of succeeding waves of conservative revolutions, one of which coincided with the interwar period of which Heidegger was a product.[18] The classical rhetorical devices of pathos and ethos are better conducive to understanding anti-modernism and its associated styles than propositional content.[19] Anti-modernism's rhetorical medium delivery (pathos and ethos) is inseparable from the

---

16 For the right-wing, irrationalist inflections in European thought in what might arguably be represented as mainstream, see for instance Henry Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1958); Stepan Odouev, *Par les sentiers de Zarathoustra: Influence de la pensée de Nietzsche sur la philosophie bourgeoise allemande*, translated by Catherine Emery (Moscow: Éditions du Progrès, 1980); Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

17 Karl Löwith, "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 176.

18 See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hanna Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

19 See Richard Shorten, "Reactionary rhetoric reconsidered," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 2 (2015): 184–85.

message, as in poetry. The emphasis in this rhetoric is on the resonance of terms such as authenticity and meaning, on the stress on some ontological order over history, on irrationalist engagement with sentiment over reason

The prefix "post" to the phenomena under discussion is itself one which carries over the pathos of anti-modern sensibilities into what presents itself as beyond the time of the past as well as of the present. Impenetrability and intimations of the subterranean and of occult wisdom are consequently not incidental but rather crucial to evocations of Heidegger.

Access to the occult is equally relevant to other patristic figures of this tendency, whose roster includes the laconic Wittgenstein, whose aphoristic terseness and provincial sageliness, conjoined with personal idiosyncracy, are taken for evidence of signs, wonders and oracles – but who also speaks in sinister biologising metaphors of life-worlds, so common among right-wing ideologues: a concept arising, like its ethno-geographical companion *Lebensraum* and the associated *Weltanschauung*, from deterministic 19th-century German social geography and ethnology. Others include Gadamer's appendices to Heidegger. In France Emmanuel Levinas, something of a latecomer to this supra-national status,[20] whose recourse to the language of resonant but indeterminant abstractions of identity and ancestralism is ubiquitous, and much favoured. Among other things, Levinas objected to – in one instance, Sartre – "mistaking" Judaism's historical being for its "metaphysical essence", and wished to liberate Jews from Enlightenment ideas of emancipation, to free them of Descartes and Spinoza, and reinstate the idea, suitably reconditioned and given a positive valency, of the eternal Jew[21] – which had always been grist to the mill of anti-Semitism, as Sartre indicated. One need of course mention the somewhat incomprehensible elevation of Carl Schmitt to this patristic conventicle, and of course Michel Foucault, after the latter's transit in California which marked his move from rigorous cognitive preoccupations to a more self-indulgent agenda. All these figures are made by many casuistical means to yield a cursory and

---

20 This status was not achieved by the somewhat older Henri Bergson, so important to French thinkers who came to appreciate the irrational, including Levinas, Halbwachs, Deleuze and Teilhard de Chardin. He was implicated with occultism and revivalist Catholicism, and was in his own time been regarded to represent the contrary of secular and scientific attitudes of the Republic: see Robert C. Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France, 1900–1914* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988).

21 Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 207–11.

flat conceptual template for what Eco termed a "neo-Cartesianism of the irrational", all the more so as these authors are usually approached by those drawn to them from the post-colonialist and post-modernist milieu in a condition of eager and impressionable philosophical innocence.

2 Moods and Keywords

As this discussion moves into the *medias res*, my initial position is that post-colonialist and post-modernist directions in the social and human sciences can be characterised by a number of features, none of which is novel or post-anything really. A primary feature is a vitalist and organismic concept of society, a conception of society expressed in terms of biological metaphors, of homeopathy, organic integrity versus infection, disnaturation and distemper, of autonomy and heteronomy, of roots and parasites and so forth.[22] In its earliest, counter-Enlightenment moment, this vitalist concept of society deployed organism against the mechanism of modern science, a trope that persisted in early anti-capitalist romanticism, practically expressed in the Luddite destruction of textile machinery in England in the 19th century, machinery subversive of natural and organic forms of production.

This is complemented by a constructivist epistemology premised on relativism, counterposed to scientism, a kind of cognitive Luddism where knowledge comes to be taken for a form of collective instinct expressed in what are commonly called voices or meanings, and where propositions and discourses are taken for unmediated and direct redactions of nativist sentiment, autonomous of exogenous and heteronomous categories or concepts. This, by necessity, results in a relativistic concept of knowledge, at the limit, in cognitive nihilism. Knowledge is taken here for an expression of social instinct, rendered in terms such as incommensurability, or as *Verstehen* opposed to conceptualisation, not uncommonly conjoined with knowing declamations on knowledge and power. All the while, this constructivist position is overdetermined by the terms of a polemic against positivists and other assorted miscreants, whose positions are generally and

---

22 See Judith Schlanger, *Les métaphores de l´organisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1971); Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, "Organ," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 4, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Kosellek (Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 2004), §§ VIII.2–5, IX.1–2.

in heresiological manner reduced to clichés and schematic representations with little correspondence to actual positions or practices:[23] such, after all, are the methods of polemic, which works with parody.

The other primary feature is a deterministic, historist conception of history.[24] This is a conception of history as the parallel itineraries, in time, of generically different stocks, each with predetermined and abiding characteristics; extraneous intrusions such as colonialism cause derangements of essence, but these are taken for temporary contaminations, the system coming ultimately to restore its original balance homoeopathically and inevitably: hence terms such as Revival, Risorgimento and their cognates. Altogether, a move is made decisively from what was once taken to be the naturalness of reason, to the naturalness of desire, need, locality and of prejudice, which was famously celebrated by Gadamer – Eco's Cartesianism of the irrational.[25] Altogether, we have here a clear instance romanticism in the theories of history and society, which aestheticises political ideas and institutions. History and society become aestheticized; they become sublime, and politics itself becomes a matter for subjective non-political emotional response.

Such, in fact and in brief, are the strong conceptual and categorical modules by which the differentialist politics of identity is transposed into the academic field. One sees the desiderata of scientific research expressed in terms such as fact, reality and objectivity, together with historicist notions such as progress and the Enlightenment, consigned to a status so lowly as to need insistently the stigma of inverted commas. Inverted commas thus used convey knowing incredulity and disparagement by a move of elementary irony conveyed to a reading crowd of a shared

---

23 See, exemplarily still, the early discussion of constructivist sociology of science by Larry Laudan, "The Pseudo-Science of Science," *Philosophy of Social Science* 11 (1981).

24 One of the clearest statements of the entire doctrine is Gadamer's lecture at the German Institute in occupied Paris in 1941: Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Herder et ses théories sur l'Histoire," in *Regards sur l'histoire: Cahiers de l'Institut Allemand*, ed. Karl Epting (Paris: Sorlot, 1941). A very good synoptic characterisation of historism is by Georg Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 (1995): 135–36; see also Sternhell, *Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, 19–24.

25 'Azīz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (Londo: Verso, 2009), 19–20.

sociolect.[26] Nevertheless, despite the insistent disparagement of empiricism, post-colonialist and post-modernist scholarship has generally not been averse to the idea that the criticism of modernity and secularisation is sustained empirically from the evidence of contemporary religious movements. Reference is often made to movements that belie ostensibly the claims of secularism, above all Islamism and Pentecostalism. In the general historiographic scheme, and post-colonial as well as post-modernist scholarship rest on robust and consistent if often implicit conceptual assumptions, these are taken for a revival and a return of the suppressed, a restoration of natural homeopathic balance, speaking truth to a lie. With Casanova, for instance, no post-colonialist but in the flow of a congruent anti-secular polemic emerging from overall congruent circumstances, evoking Pentecostalism or Islamism involves no mere change of perspective, but is fully a corrective perceptual shift commensurate with an abiding reality of the public salience of religion.[27] This is in keeping with historist – as distinct from historicist – assumptions of abiding morphological elements in any given collectivity – Herder's *Kräfte*, national spirit, national character, culture, civilisation, traditions, values, life-forms and so forth. With these trans-historical elements in play, the passage of history amounts to so many conjunctural bumps that leave the underlying essence whole. Neither conjuncture nor future, in this register, are history; they are rather redactions of ethnological destiny. Secularisation and modernisation, not to speak of secularism and modernism, are in effect pronounced illusory because they do not form part of the narrative of destiny.

Before we continue, a clarification of perspective is in order. The empirical evidence used by anti-secular polemics cannot be taken simply as a **return** of religion, or the restoration of an original condition, as would be required by anti-modernist ideological modules. What needs to be apprehended is that societal recourse to religion is a polemical resource, congruent with a significant reconfiguration of the religious field, globally and over the lifetime of the past generation. This is not a return, nor a

---

26 Not unlike the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*, there is here a re-enactment of an oratorical occasion where the inverted comma is expressed by a digital gesture, with the inverted commas conveying a change of tone: Victor Klemperer, "Punctuation," chap. 12 in *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, translated by Martin Brady (London: Continuum Books, 2000).

27 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11.

resurrection, for religion never disappeared, but a recasting, because of history and not in spite of history. Recall of history here is not an appeal to supposedly enchanted depths imagined to be captive to permanences that historism would wish to see, to what some call, imprecisely and inappropriately, path dependency. History refers rather to conjunctural transformations in the past quarter of a century. If one insisted on the mystical vocabularies of inwardness and abidance championed in post-colonialist discourses, transfiguration would serve better than resurrection. Religion was never absent, and never inactive, and it is worth noting the point made by Casanova, quite correctly, that the thesis of the absence or waning of religion has no necessary analytical connection to the standard secularisation thesis,[28] despite claims to the contrary by anti-secular polemics.

Empirical inaptitude is also the case with another feature continuously ascribed to the secularisation thesis by its critics, that it is teleological. With some exceptions of hard teleology, including Auguste Comte and ideological statements of secularism, predestinarian teleology does not figure in the secularisation thesis and, when it does occur, it does so as a hope, not as a constitutive conceptual feature of the thesis. Even when historicist conclusions of the inevitable waning of religion are drawn when interpreting patterns and forms of change over time, and when trends are discerned, including secularisation and functional differentiation correlated with modernity, there is no structural implication of a telos. Correlatively, what is commonly seen as the return to prominence of religion, with spectacular and sanguine force since the end of the Cold War,[29] has had a cyclical history connecting its various moments in complex ways,[30] and is in phase with developments beyond the world of the mind, to which discussions of secularism rarely attend. The renewed significance of religion is in this respect part of a global anti-modernist, anti-Enlightenment counter-revolution repeating previous performances. These had involved nationalism, relativism, anti-rationalism, and have

---

28 José Casanova, "Reply to Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, ed. Charles Hirschkind and David Scott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 16.

29 See Al-Azmeh, "The Discourse of Cultural Authenticity: Islamist Revivalism and Enlightenment Universalism," chap. 2 in *Islams and Modernities*; Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Civilisation as a Political Disposition," *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012).

30 Shorten, "Reactionary rhetoric," 188–96.

been accompanied by brooding meditations on decadence, degeneration, and the twilight of nations and communities, together with a cult of the popular soul.

The present phase of globalisation is the last in a series to date. The first run of this constellation of topoi and sentiments crystallised following the collapse of an old world in 1789 (leading lights: Herder, de Maistre, Burke). The second followed 1848 and 1870 (leading lights: Gobineau, Carlyle, Savigny, von Stein, Le Bon, Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864) with the second eruption of 'the people'. Such moods continued in various forms to shape the malaise of the *fin-de-siècle,* consolidated in the third phase following 1917 and 1918, feeding upon fear of and disgust with the proletariat. It crystallised ultimately in various forms of fascism (some leading lights: Maurras, Spengler, Schmitt, Heidegger, Hasan al-Banna, Golwalkar, and of course Mussolini, Hitler and Rosenberg).

The fourth, following 1989 but with elements in place before, is characterised by identity politics and its various corollaries, such as the polemics against modernity and Enlightenment. These have been correlative to the recession of programmes of progress and development, and also the loss not only of socialism, but also of Keynesianism and other programmes of social solidarity and prophylaxis against socio-political disaggregation. This phase built upon the ideological mobilisation of religion during the Cold War (especially in and by Saudi Arabia, in Poland, in Italy, in the East Indies), and later followed up on the consequences of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. It also built upon a right-wing liberalism nurtured by the anti-Communism of the Cold War, then represented by persons such as Isaiah Berlin, and upon an impasse in political thinking, accompanied later, however briefly, by triumphalist declamations of the end of history. It also mobilised revisionist historiographies of all movements that had previously been considered to have held historical promise, such as the French Revolution, and by a Wilsonian perspective in which a liberal conception of freedom foreclosed the necessity of a political theory of freedom.[31]

As suggested, the older romantic conceptions of history and society were ones that had marked the right in Western Europe from the time of

---

31   See 'Abdallāh Al-'Arwī, *Mafhūm al-Ḥurrīya,* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-'Arabī, 2008), 71, 90. This had been noted relatively early in the Cold War, before hindsight became a guide: Shklar, *After Utopia,* 235–39.

the French Revolution. These had appeared later among Slavophils and other laggard nationalisms, including in Japan (where Heidegger had a conspicuous presence, and still does), in India, and South-East Asia and the Middle East from the late 19th century. These crystallised more integrally in the interwar period in movements such as fascism in the variety of its forms, the Muslim Brothers and the Indian Rashtria Swayamsevak Sangh and radical strands of Romantic Arab, Turkish and Iranian nationalism.[32] One crucial difference between political Romanticism in its first post-1789 phase, and in the present one, is according to Shklar that in the earlier one, the defeat of Zeus betokened the triumph of Prometheus, of hope, while from the middle of the 20th century, the death of God meant the defeat of man as well.[33]

The overarching topos for the pattern of global cycles just outlined in its present phase is culture, with culturalism being the meta-social and meta-historical template that has been adopted as the carrier of anti-modernism.[34] It would be pertinent to sketch briefly the elements that shaped today's culturalism, in which the concept of culture has come to play the role that race had played previously in the analysis and social and political treatment of collectivities. Culturalism is, contrary to what its polemics might imply, very strongly foundationalist, and stands on a grand romantic narrative of the singular, the subject, the self-identical substance, the pre-colonial and pre-modern, the prelapsarian, with stoutly held conceptual assumptions. It assumes that society is characterised by homogeneity and homeopathy of essence; and that the passage of time is best described in terms of abidance and continuity, which in fact extrude from history that which is historical.[35] At the close of the 20th century, these modules had become the common sense of the post Cold-War era, listlessly taken for self-evident, well-worn, familiar, predictable, formulaic and effortlessly repeatable. The broader phenomenon is ideological. When theorised, it has been inspired

---

32 Further traction to this point that I argued over two decades ago in *Islams and Modernities* has been added in recent work: Georges Corm, *Pour une lecture profane des conflits: Sur le retour du religieux dans les conflits du Moyen-Orient* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), 51–57; Sternhell, *Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, 14–17; for right-liberal Cold War anti-Enlightenment declamations see Sternhell, "The Anti-Enlightenment of the Cold War," chap. 8 in *Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*.

33 See Shklar, *After Utopia*, 111, 114–20.

34 Al-Azmeh, "Islamism and the Arabs," chap. 1 in *Islams and Modernities*.

35 Al-Azmeh, 25–26, 30–31.

by echoes of Herder and Fichte, by Treitschke, Gobineau and Maurras, its broader and to us more proximate elaborations owe much to Nietzsche and Klages. The impact that this very broad movement of moods, modules and motifs has had on one mainspring of postism in its present form, Critical Theory, has gone unnoticed generally.

This is particularly the case with the variant of irrationalism represented by the Frankfurt School's aversion to the Enlightenment, complemented by Benjamin's partiality to mystical concepts and vocabularies, much of it inspired by the then strongly felt but not readily perceptible penumbra of Klages' Magical Philosophy and Stefan George's *Denkbilder*. The impact of both has been underestimated, or indeed gone unnoticed, not least as there seems to have been an anthropological congruence between irrationalist *Lebensphilosophie* associated with Klages, and that implicit in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*'s critique of the Enlightenment. The same congruence is pertinent to Benjamin's positions, far nearer to Nietzsche than to Marxism; Benjamin's flirtation with the latter has been vastly overinterpreted. He had, after all, "transformed the counter-Enlightenment critique worked out by magicians into the proper business of a philosopher".[36]

Alongside this, much of the present moment of post-modernism and post-colonialism is owed directly to American cultural anthropology, which has been important for the shaping of culturalism. This is a cultural anthropology decisively inseminated by Franz Boas, directly and through Ruth Benedict's allegedly stable ethnological "patterns" that are said to characterise societies fully, and according to a stable morphology, as well as through Margaret Mead, the latter's student and colleague. This conceptual fare consisted of 19th-century German Romantic nationalist *Völkerpsychologie* and *Völkerkunde*, the Brothers Grimm, folklore studies and ideas of nativism against civilisation. All the while, the ethnographer,

---

36 Jason Josephson-Storm, "Dialectic of Darkness: The Magical Foundations of Critical Theory," chap. 8 in *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 236, 238. See Axel Honneth, "Anthropologische Berührungspunkte zwischen der lebensphilosophischen Kulturkritik und 'Der Dialektik der Aufklärung,'" in *21. Deutscher Soziologentag 1982: Beiträge der Sektions- und ad hoc Gruppen*, ed. Friedrich Heckmann and Peter Winter (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1983), 786–89; Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner, "Ludwig Klages (1872–1956) and the Origins of Critical Theory," *Theory, Culture and Society* 9, no. 3 (1992): 45. For American versions of 'continental philosophy' in this respect, see Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003): 1065–66.

often acting as the natives' tribune, received dutifully from native informants what the latter thought she might like to hear.[37]

All of these anti-modernist, culturalist and nativist directions of thought concur that there is an esoteric, perhaps even occult core, that is lost to modernity, and that this is revived when trans-historical essences return – recall what has been said above about the term 'meaning'. The corollary has often been, since Herder, that there are prelapsarian uncorrupted conditions which the time of modernity had soiled. Anti-modernists seek to evoke the concept of meaning, which figures as a social version of the innate ideas concept, of a knowledge bounded by life and indistinct from life, being life's poetry to modernity's prose, a condition of authenticity, a culture of *Volksgeist*, a psychologistic metaphor taken for a fact.[38]

Ostensible meaning and the various topoi and figures that stand for it are the equivalent of what in the first, romantic phase of anti-modernism was known as the sublime, *das Erhabene,* which Edmund Burke saw as a figure of dread that lay at the heart of all religion, but which is not confined to this particular semantic field, but is shared with other definitions that make recourse to affections and romantic sensibilities and aesthetise society and history. And indeed, in any generic characterisation of anti-modernism as that most perceptive one offered by Compagnon,[39] the sublime represents the aesthetic figure, alongside other component figures and topoi of anti-modernist discourses that this author identifies most usefully. Of these I would mention the historical figure, which I would prefer to designate as the political figure of counter-revolution (the post-1989 instantiations are *revenant* political religion and forms of fascism). Equally important is the philosophical figure of anti-Enlightenment, which I would call culturalism, comprehending both historism and vitalism. The moral or existential figure, which I would designate as the sentimentalist figure of pessimism, to which I would add historical nostalgia. The religious figure indicates an idea of of original sin, which I would reformulate as a fall from a prelapsarian condition, now identified as a pre-colonial and pre-modern state of grace.

37   See especially Tessel Pollmann, "Margaret Mead's Balinese: The Fitting Symbols of the American Dream," *Indonesia* 49 (1990); Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and the Heretic: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996); Adam Kuper, "The Boasians and the critique of evolutionism," chap. 7 in *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (London: Routledge, 1988).

38   Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 28–31.

39   Compagnon, *Les Antimodernes*, 17.

Finally, there is a stylistic figure of tone, voice and accent, with an stress on imprecation and vituperation, and ultimately with dependence on the use of ethos and pathos articulated by tonality, as we have seen.

In all this, historism is a major player, and Heidegger might well be brought up as an exemplary topos and a flag to wave. It is difficult to identify conceptual as distinct from tonal influence from Heidegger, conveyed by fascination with the name. Mystification by both sender and receiver is a crucial feature here, and obscurity is not a technical flaw liable to correction by proper exegesis. To be under Heidegger's influence is to be ensnared by the possibilities afforded by his example for dropping the discipline of thought and surrendering to the play of pathos using analogies, sentiments, metaphors and associations. It is these drifts of an almost erotic fascination, often allied to contempt for democracy, that drew high-grade intellectuals with Olympian aspirations to various manifestations of fascism or romantic conservatism – one might mention the Eranos Group, including Henri Corbin, or various members of the Collège de Sociologie, including Bataille and Caillois.[40] Indeed, there was much hype about the hyper-modernism – aesthetic no less than political – of fascism and national socialism that had a very strong appeal to the intellectuals.[41]

This fascination with the pathos of resonant meaninglessness is not confined to Europe; the anti-modernism of the Iranian Ahmad Fardid, and the concept of Westoxification or Occidentosis, was officiated under a Heideggerian signature.[42] Note that Heidegger has had hardly any resonance in Arabic thinking that has been of a similar nativist cast, using a congruent vocabulary to that of Fardid:[43] this fact gives sustenance to the

40 Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henri Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Stephan Moebius, *Die Zauberlehrlinge: Sozialgeschichte des Collège de Sociologie (1937–1939)* (Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006); Frank Pearce, ed., "The Collège de Sociologie," special issue, *Economy and Society* 32, no. 1 (2003).

41 See, in general, Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

42 Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

43 On which: Mouchir Basile Aoun, *Heidegger et la pensée arabe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011). More important in the Arab World among some nationalists (including the Baath), and fulfilling a similar role of creating mystification and pathos, was Bergson, conveying an appreciation of instinct (here: national instinct) as opposed to reason, the spirit as opposed to mere matter, duration as opposed to change as opposed to reason,

view proposed here, that it is more the tonal aura of transfixed fascination, and rhetorical topoi, that are at play in the connection with Heidegger, rather than any conceptual goods. There is here little that is distinctively Heideggerian in conceptual terms as distinct from what is generically irrationalist, romantic and historist.

Today, this fascination with Heidegger, as with other patristic figures of post-modernism, signals a certain tribal affiliation in the academic world. In rhetorical terms, it manifests ethos, tokens of authority and emblems of commonality, an irresistible fascination binding a group to an aura expressed, as best as possible, in a sociolect. Heidegger's 'alienation' is well suited to a hermeneutic of suspicion where there is also an assumption of durable substance that might be reclaimed and saved. Like aesthicising romanticism overall, Heidegger operates by hypostatising specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical conditions,[44] and by collapsing the distinction between cognition and being, as in the Heideggerian notion of meaning. It is eminently serviceable to musings about loss and destiny,[45] which can only be engaged effectively by a political decisionism, where the *Dasein* moves and creates its enemy in its own self-affirmation and the manifestation of will, in the manner of Carl Schmitt. This is accomplished not by universal reason or the faculty of the understanding, but by knowing resolve, *wissende Entschlossenheit*.[46] My reference to Heidegger in these terms is very much in the spirit of what Kant had to say about Herder: that he had spun a fabric of bold metaphors, poetic images and mythological allusions that serve to obscure, wondering whether "the poetic spirit which enlivens the author's expression has not also at times done violence to his philosophy; whether synonyms on occasion act as substitutes for explanations, and allegories for truths".[47] Whether one considers Heidegger's manner of expression to be inspiring is a matter of taste.

---

and deploying a variety of poetical trope which absolve him of the necessity to offer arguments: see the ironical exposition of Bertrand Russell, "The philosophy of Bergson," *The Monist* 22, no. 3 (1912): 323–27, 332–33.

44 Herbert Marcuse, "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean Paul Sartre's L'Être et le Néant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8, no. 3 (1948): 311.

45 Hans Blumenberg, "Progress Exposed as Fate," pt. 1, chap. 3, "Political Theology I and II," pt. 1, chap. 8, "The Rhetoric of Secularizations," pt. 1, chap. 9 in *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).

46 Karl Löwith, "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism," 177.

47 Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 215–16.

3   Actually Existing Secularism and the Challenge of Fate

There has been a gentler way with decisionism and *wissende Entschlossenheit* in academic work which decided to transpose what it sees as moral or political imperatives into cognitive ones, and thus to privilege the notion of identity understood in terms of culturalist differentialism as a category of analysis. So also the notion of voice, whose very alleged irreducibility makes it definitive and irrefutable. The sociological redactions of destiny that we find in work on anti-secularism and Islamism are of this type, their anti-secular polemics officiated under assumptions of the essential impossibility and illusory character of secularism. Nevertheless, works by sociologists of different stripes pertinent to the context of this discussion, are ones to which sociology is the least of inputs. In these discussions of secularism, meta-sociological categories are in the ascendant, as different variations on "culture", arising from organismic and vitalist historism, to which the idea of the irreducible individuality of cultures and peoples is central. Islamism and secularism appear here as a mutually determinant contrastive pair.

It is now time briefly to offer a general characterisation of the sociological redaction of destiny upon which anti-secular polemics rest. This redaction is in fact the outcrop of a doctrine that has a specific name and a global history, as suggested already. It is called historist vitalism: the idea that societies are held together by trans-historical dispositions (such as tradition or national spirit, Islam or Christianity, all grossly defined) which, despite historical change, always come to constitute an abiding **initial condition** which trumps change and renders it inconsequential except in so far as it causes derangement, and is ultimately reasserted. The historist discourse here operates with biologistic metaphors. It involves, typically, topics of decline, often conflated with change overall, and regarded as estrangement of essence, disnaturation (a word often used by Shakespeare), *Entartung*, de-specification, quite common from the 19th century in psychiatry, criminology and social criticism. Both words had been used commonly for deviance, disease and monstrosity, exemplarily so by Max Nordau, the second president of the World Zionist Congress who took great exception to decadent art and letters (Baudelaire, Wagner and many others), and by Josef Goebbels, who did likewise, more famously. The concordances may not be political, but they are conceptual, shared by the classic Right and

today's identitarian reclamations of whatever political orientation. In all cases, the result of such diremptions of essence will be inevitably, according to this perspective, a grotesque, what Spengler termed a Pseudomorph. Note that the vocabulary expressing biologistic metaphors is metaphysical, and more specifically Neo-Platonic, one of substance, plenitude of being, privation of being.

Homeostatically-conceived human collectivities might rebalance natural and constitutive tempers and humours, generally called roots or traditions or heritages or indeed values, or in different types of discourse, culture or civilisation.[48] These are not subject to transformation in real ways. Change is always externally induced, and takes the form of adulteration, soiling and indeed, defilement. It is a derangement of proper order which causes diminishing vitality, the effects of heteronomous forces – like those brought about by modernity or secularisation upon societies often called Islamic. One might well note the tonal colours of all these and related terms, and the way in which organismic metaphors lend themselves to pathetic sonority. This condition pathology (modernity, secularism) is treatable homoeopathically, with the restoration of tradition, by returning to roots, carried by nostalgia and identitarian reaffirmation. Thus, the idea that Arab societies, being in essence on this reading Islamic societies rather than societies that contain Muslims, need inevitably to return to an initial condition of purity, following confrontations, challenges and periods of contamination by extraneous agents that had acted as debilitating and disnaturing conditions in the body politic and the body social, but did not metastasise uncontrollably or sully the fastness of origins. Such exogenous agents can be specified as colonialism and secularising elites for the purposes of this discussion.

A brief digression can identify elements that are obscured in this culturalism. First, in any given social unit, and all the more so in larger and more complex ones, traditions and social practices are plural. They are arranged in a system of internal differentiation and distribution, and enter into relations domination and hierarchy. Moreover, judgements upon the analytical utility of culture is dependent on the precise object of analysis, not least when culture is taken for a causative element – the idea that culture is an overarching causal and structural element in any given

---

48   Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Typological Time, Patterning and the Past Appropriated," chap. 2 in *The Times of History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007).

large-scale social unit is vacuous. Tradition and the appeal to tradition under the aspect of culture is rather, as in atavism and primitivism, more a politico-discursive resource for those who invoke it, than an active entity, and when an entity, it can be made into an object of anthropological study in so far as it is a hypothesis put forward to account for observed repetition in social practices and representations (rather than, as with Edward Shils, itself to **be** this repetition).[49] In contrast to culturalist claims, and with particular reference to the relationship between the sociological and meta-sociological, Clifford Geertz, often referred to as a patriarch of culturalism, was far from being a cultural determinist. Unlike many post-colonial anthropologists averse to analysing their objects of study, he always remained an anthropologists' anthropologist, producing ethnographic work of the highest possible order in which culture has a place, but within a broader system of relations. This impelled him to consider very seriously the analytical value and operationalist use of the notion of culture: with reference to Bali, he highlighted "the tendency for the divisive effect of social institutions to predominate over the unifying power of cultural ones", and affirmed that "few political elites can have as intensely sought loyalty by means so ingeniously designed to produce treachery as did the Balinese".[50]

The sociological redaction of destiny, the destiny of human collectivities conceived by means of vitalist, biologistic metaphors, would have things otherwise. Arab societies, and Iranian society as well, being, in this register, congenitally predisposed to an ethnological destiny expressed in what is generally known as Islamic culture or Islamic civilisation, are captive to a cultural incapacity for change of real consequence. Post-colonial and post-modernist discourses describe this in terms of resistance and authenticity. The changes undergone by these societies over more than a century had been heteronomous, it is claimed, and in the final analysis a charade. Abidance of essence is captive to the parameters of origin, of the initial

---

49 As in conservative discourse generally, classically expressed by Edward Shils, "Tradition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 2 (1971). Also see Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 32–34; Pascal Boyer, *Tradition as Truth and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2–4, 32–37, 79–86; Marc Augé, *Le sens des autres* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 28–29; Adam Kuper, "Culture, Difference, Identity," chap. 7 in *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

50 Geertz, *Negara*, 45.

condition.[51] We have here a notion of culture as a prison of social instinct rather than as a field of human action, including individual and societal improvement, culture being regarded as a thing rather than a property,[52] overdetermining society and trumping history. Vitalist culturalism is a crude form of social Darwinism in that it regards social collectivities as analogous to animal species. Culturalism, like racism and ethnocentrism, is a sublimated redaction of political communalism which, like other communalisms, operates by the indication of emblems and stigmata that ensure the maintenance and reiteration of boundaries. Islamist vitalism becomes recognisable in a global setting where identity is being taken for common sense.

All culturalist historism today invokes native voice. It proffers a programme of what Taylor called, famously, politely and distantly, a politics of recognition. This is a politics which is redacted at the points of concrete application on the ground, in actual fact, a politics of bluster and special pleading, generally unmannerly to the degree that must surely challenge Taylor's advocacy of and capacity for recognition. Taylor's is a communalist template premised on the self-enclosure of human collectivities, and their cultivation of origins as expressed in ostensible traditions that yield particularistic values, ethics and politics. Culture comes to be regarded as irreducible and *sui generis*, an independent variable, and therefore beyond the reach of sociological and historical analysis. Often counterposed to that which is taken for a teleology of the Enlightenment, this is a reverse teleology which works backwards, paradoxically but unsurprisingly, as the future can be no other than the past in its perpetual initial condition.

Among other things, this perspective of generically distinct voices yields pluralisation and multiplication, seemingly without end. If underdeveloped countries, including those identified as Islamic, cannot in this perspective really be said to have modernised or secularised except inadequately or bizarrely, or to be incapable congenitally of this type of improvement, they can nevertheless be included politely in the conversation and be said to have modernised or secularised multiply, each according to their own way, all seemingly innocent and straightforward, and quite ingenuous

---

51 Well described by Sudipta Kaviraj, "Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity," *European Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 3 (2005).
52 Nicolas Claidière and Dan Sperber, "Defining and explaining culture (comments on Richerson and Boyd, Not by genes alone)," *Biology and Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2008): 291–92.

conceptually, in fact. I have personally used the term Islams, and this has often been misread, stripped of implied irony, and placed in the flow of reclamations of voice and the cognitive Saturnalia of difference and so forth. Yet this usage had in fact sought to reinstate and encourage a critical, properly historical analysis of the themes treated, not to dissolve a category – here, Islam – into senseless plurality, nor to dissolve the categories of Islam and of modernity into skittish revelry, or to announce a solemn redemption of authenticity.[53] My *Islams and Modernities* was intended, in contrast, to reaffirm the purely nominal character of the category "Islam", and to argue against its use as a classificatory category or an analytical or causal concept.

What was most explicitly and clearly intended was not the effacement of general analytical concepts, but the reinstatement of history against culturalist claims for abidance. Multiplying 'secularities' (more on this term below) or modernities, and other targets of this rhetoric of categorical deflation, cannot free historical reality from secularism and modernity.[54] Such multiplications are motivated, one presumes, by the empirical complexity of social transformations. But situationally and contextually, in the final analysis, they seem impelled more by culturalist agendas inimical to secularism, for the accent is placed on representations rather than processes. Thus seeking complexity by telescoping secularisation in "the longue durée of civilizational history", thinking of secularism in terms of "cultural diversity", appealing to "spiritual ontologies" and searching for "cultural meanings", and claiming that this would yield a "cultural sociology of secular modernities":[55] all this together will have a scattering effect depriving the concepts of secularism and modernity of analytical utility.[56] This perspective takes every particular, however its boundaries may have been defined, to stand for the concept, and to relate it to other particulars that are identified by this term, not by concordance under the canopy of the concept, but by sheer difference, with a happy union appearing as an asymptotic horizon. By collapsing the concept into its

---

53   Compare the historiographic multiplication of the Enlightenment in the most perceptive analysis of Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularization," 1066– 69, 1075–76.

54   Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, xiii–xiv.

55   Marian Burchardt and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, "Multiple Secularities: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age," *International Sociology* 28, no. 6 (2013): 605–07.

56   See Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularization," 1075.

instances, the effect is that of effacement of the concept, its transposition to a realm that is not conceptual, and operates no distinction between concept and instantiation. This seems to be the half-intended intention in this template which reserves 'secularism' for the ideological object of polemic rather than addressing practices.

The premise as well as the consequence will be to reduce society and history to culture, at the very least to see culture as the overdetermining instance in social and historical dynamics. Thus the assumption that one cannot see secularisation as occurring "outside culture",[57] whatever the metaphor of inside and out might mean or imply, and however culture may be defined and identified empirically. Needless to say, the present argument is not suggesting that culture understood ethnographically as well as historically is of no consequence, or that social representations are sheer epiphenomena of structures. What is being suggested is that a given society knows no top or bottom; but it does have a hierarchy of functions definable in terms of differential impact on the reproduction of society or of its transformation. If a certain conjuncture be governed by an overdetermination by certain identifiable cultural elements in terms of a broader economy of instances – political, social, ideological and so forth – this will need to be described concretely, rather than taken for a fundamental feature of social life.[58]

These terms of the discussion perforce carry the semantic energy of the terms as used today politically, and gravitate towards a Spenglerian/ Huntingtonian orientation, judging matters in terms of predeterminative origins rather than process, in terms of an ethnological destiny, rather than by empirical considerations. This applies irrespective of political orientation in a conceptual regime where xenophobia and xenophilia mirror each other; political distinctiveness here is trumped cognitively by conceptual concordance. Scholars partial to multiculturalist practices will deny having common ground with conservative or reactionary traditionalists and other nativist identitarians. But this denial will stand precisely on cognitive decisionism, the effacement of the distinction between the ethico-political and the cognitive, and the desire that the former be the latter: this effacement is a function of desire, not knowledge.

57   Burchardt and Wohlrab-Sahr, "Multiple Secularities," 606.
58   See especially Maurice Godelier, *The Mental and the Material*, translated by Martin Thom (London, Verso, 2011), 128–29.

It is not often remembered how enthusiastically Huntington was received in Iran and Saudi Arabia, and how the idea of a dialogue of civilisations rests precisely on assumptions of incommensurable difference.

The terms of reference of the discussions under review have the effect of inflecting towards historism and romanticism, the attempt to accommodate the undeniable empirical variety which the concept is meant to organise, and to cause this variety to drift semantically to the multiplicity of *sui generis* ontologies, cultures and so forth. For quite apart from empirical concerns, it seems incontestable that much of the intent propelling multiplicationism might be understood in terms of a protocol of intercultural courtesy, and as a token of adherence to the celebration of diversity and the irreducibility of voices engaged in a conversation – a manifest case in point of transposing normative interest into cognitive propositions, the 'ought' transmuting into an 'is'. Regarded rhetorically and performatively, the very attribute of multiplicity is the performance of an ethos, of belonging to a particular politico-cultural place rather than another, supporting particular constituencies against others in an environment of violent contestation.

Ultimately, we have with multiplication a mincing of words, like saying gosh and golly, darn and sugar; we have euphemistic usage,[59] a socio-linguistic phenomenon of evasion and circumvention. Concepts and categories, and these include modernity and secularism, are by definition general, pertaining to the whole class of phenomena that are bounded by them, and cannot, as is sometimes charged, be "monolithic": they can become monolithic only when devoid of conceptual sense and rendered into fetishes, like the notion of identity. Concepts deployed comparatively cannot be held captive to nominal multiplication, each a multiple *sui generis*, but must rest on generic commonality: comparison indicates an analytical grid of variations in which differences and similarities are regarded as variations, not as sui generis individuals. Similarities and differences are variations rather than signals of the generic specificity of each term of comparison when these are taken to be a row of adjacent singularities. In conceptual terms, variations indicate particular instances that mediate

---

59 On which see especially Emile Benveniste, "Euphémismes anciens et modernes," in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Günter Kehrer, "Euphemismus," in *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow and Karl-Heinz Kohl (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993).

the general and the individual. Regarded thus, multiplicationism is a variant of nativism and identitarianism, multiple nativisms and multiple identities. One had better either use a concept in its general sense, or drop it. Multiplication collapses concepts into the empirical manifold, rather than treating them for the second-order representations which they are.

Another aspect of the polemical effacement of secularism as an historical, social and cognitive fact, is the erasure of the word. In many recent contexts, the word secularism has been reserved for militant anti-religious and anti-clerical secularist ideologies of the sort that animated the French, Turkish and Mexican states, that is, to the obvious and facile object of polemic. Instead, 'secularity' has been introduced as a substitute for other areas covered by secularism as the condition arising from secularisation, for which one would normally and quite straightforwardly use 'secular' as an attribute: of social arrangements, of legal arrangements for the church in a secular order, and much else. Secularity cannot stand alone as a substantive. It seems as if things were to be described in terms of secularity rather than of secularism, a more adequate description of secular arrangements might be reached without naming or designating them as secular. This seems to my mind to be an uneconomical and evasive term.

There is clearly in these discussions a fundamental confusion between, on the one hand, modernity and secularism as a related pair of analytical categories, both incontestable objective processes, and on the other hand, normative recognitions, misrecognitions, or denials of these same processes, even by many of those undergoing them or participating and living in them. Modernity and secularism as objective structural processes are in many very significant ways intertwined, globally, their instantiations related to each other as members of two intersecting classes of phenomena by a process of combined and uneven development. As long as the discussion is pitched at the level of normative perception by actors or victims, and the actual process described in terms of these representations, the chances of a productive discussion are reduced very considerably. Such a pitch has become normal, with secularism in India, for instance, reduced by one scholar to 'a credo',[60] ignoring actual social and political transformation, or, with reference to the German Democratic Republic

---

60   Triloki Nath Madan, "Secularism and the Intellectuals," *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 18 (1994): 1095.

defined simply as 'an interpretative frame',[61] with a similar abatement of the sociological gaze which seems little interested in that which is being interpreted and by whom. Or again, as with Asad, sweepingly pronounced part of a 'regime of truth',[62] truth being used in a relativistic sense devoid of what one would regard as cognitively normative and with no reference to any regime of verifiability, thus used indifferently for any sort of opinion, however absurd. What is forgotten in this type of conceptualisation is that secularism is itself a major actor in the cognitive, normative, and social transformation of societies, which together make possible analytical concepts that render secularism an object of scientific apprehension and elaboration.

Being general by definition, concepts are quite naturally applicable outside the immediate circumstances which made their naming, delimitation and elaboration possible, and this is pertinent to two concepts of relevance to this discussion, secularisation and religion. One is surprised that few have had qualms about using the concepts of the economy and of society, made possible and developed in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, outside of Europe, yet declare reserve when the discussion pertains to the concepts of secularisation and religion.[63] Similarly, one finds that Weber is decried as foreign to the phenomena of religion and secularism outside Europe, while Foucault or Wittgenstein pass muster without comment. In the same vein, one might look at the way in which the secularisation thesis is considered in vitalist terms, affirmed in historist terms as post-Christian, a sort of "Christianity in sheep's clothing",[64] and denied in other settings, at best relegated to one among many multiple and incommensurably sui generis secularities.

Correlatively, the applicability of the notion of religion to Islam is denied. Denials of the applicability of the concept, and even of the very existence of the phenomenon of religion, are more frequent today than in

61 Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, Thomas Schmidt-Lux, and Uta Karstein, "Secularization as Conflict," *Social Compass* 55, no. 2 (2008).

62 Enayat, "Secularism, Christianity and Imperialism," chap. 2 in *Islam and Secularism*.

63 For the economy: Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977); for society: Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

64 Jonathan Sheehan, "Thomas Hobbes, D.D.: Theology, Orthodoxy, and History," *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 2 (2016): 251.

the recent past, and the discussion have an air of disputes over the number of angels that might stand at the head of a pin. One reason frequently invoked is that the concept of religion emerged only in post-Reformation Europe. This is a curious and common contention adopted by Asad, curious not only because the Islam to which Asad refers and the one he takes to be a normative discursive tradition is the one that has been thoroughly Protestantised, in the same way as were modern varieties of Hinduism and Buddhism, as we shall see, but also of course because the Qur'anic text itself has available a clear and distinct notion of religion that corresponds to the one that Asad and many others attribute to the Reformation.[65]

More important than the Qur'an is of course the history of the distinction of religion as a domain in political and institutional practices that might be termed Islamic, including the notion of *siyāsa sharʿīya*, which is politics and law *more religio*, much vaunted by fundamentalists.[66] Even if *siyāsa*, Arabic for politics as the husbandry of humans (and indeed for animal husbandry as well), were to be regulated by the strictures of Muslim jurisprudence, the analytical difference between worldly politics and the concerns of religion, and the distinctiveness of practices in each of these domains, was always maintained in Muslim political practices and traditions, including the bifurcation of the classical system of justice. This distinction, both in theory and in practice, is ubiquitous; it is not confined to Islam, nor was it an invention of modernity, of the polemical needs of secularism, or of the Reformation. One may cite *dharma* and *artha* or *daṇḍ*á in classic Indic polities, or the distinction between *lokottara* and *laukika*, the religious and the worldly, or indeed the concept of *agāma* as religion, in Sri Lanka.[67]

---

65 For the Qur'an, a start might be made with Q 5:3, 2:132, 3:19, 85, and see David Marshall, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers* (London: Curzon, 1999); for Asad and his Islamic discursive traditions, Enayat, "Secularization Theory and its Discontents," chap. 4 in *Islam and Secularism*; for comment on Asad's acquaintance with these traditions: Enayat, *Islam and Secularism*, 50. Reference to the Qur'an is pertinent here as it is a text that Asad would have been well advised to have read as he wrote about Muslim discursive traditions. For broader comment of Asad in relation to what is known from the history of religion, ʿAzmī Bishāra, *Ad-Dīn wa'l-ʿAlmāniyya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī,* vol 2. (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2012–2015), 2: 804.

66 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities* (London, I. B. Tauris, 1997), 118–19, 163–88.

67 Martin Southwold, "Buddhism and the Definition of Religion," *Man, New Series* 13, no. 3 (1978): 263. It being noted that the author is not entirely in agreement with the meaning

More generally, a concept need not be native or emic in order for it to be applicable analytically to a specific setting. Being exogenous in generic, geographical terms is no reason why a concept – such as the economy, or religion – should be abandoned. The concept of religion is by no means one that was concocted by secularists in the age of the Enlightenment. This view is false empirically, on both historical and contemporary evidence. Religion, like society and the economy, designates a polythetic class of phenomena. Among other places, it was clearly perceptible in 16th-century Japan, both by Buddhist priests and Catholic, non-Protestant Christian missionaries, where the distinction and interdependence between ōbō/*rājā dharma* and *buppō*/*Buddha dharma*,[68] occurred in a way reminiscent of classical Muslim political works. A recent special number of *Japan Review* dedicated to 'formations of the secular in Japan,' was motivated by the claim that 'the secular' was uniquely Western, and proceeded to produce a series of articles based upon both historical and empirical social research that showed that the distinction between the secular and the religious (*sezoku/ shūkyō*) was central to state formation, and that this was just as native to Japan, which had not at the time been colonised, as social realities, and not only as post-Reformation abstractions, like anywhere else – it seems to be an historically preponderant situation. Even Casanova, in an article flirting with post-colonial terminology, felt moved to admit that conditions in Japan prior to modernity provided evidence for secular arrangements independent of Western developments, and ascribed "proto-secularity", somewhat half-heartedly and as if giving way too much to an undeserving quarter, to the Chinese imperial state also.[69]

In all, studies that have just been cited, and other studies based on intensive fieldwork seeking to describe and analyse social processes,

---

here indicated for *agāma*. See now Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religion and Political Change in World History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019), 71–74

68 See especially Christoph Kleine, "Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–8, 19–21; Brian C. Wilson, "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion," in *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*, ed. Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Brian C. Wilson (Leiden: Brill, 1998). For more general orientation: Rodney Needham, "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences," *Man, New Series* 10, no. 3 (1975).

69 José Casanova, "Asian Catholicism, Interreligious Colonial Encounters and Dynamics of Secularism in Asia," in *The Secular in South, East, and Southeast Asia*, ed. Kenneth Dean and Peter van der Veer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 26, 32.

underline the wealth of the empirical manifold and the variety of developments related by both unevenness and systemic connection. Once one decides to focus on reality as distinct from polemical representation of reality, one can conduct research and cogent ethnographic as well as political analysis without needing recourse to the vocabularies of evasion, with minimal conceptual distraction or waste of analytical energy.[70]

In yet another historist and vitalist move, anti-secular polemics have generally construed secularism as a movement inside religion (one notes that culture and religion are often used interchangeably in this type of discourse, especially with regard to Islam). This is in contrast to what actually existing secularism has been historically: a constituent element in a broader process of societal differentiation in modern global history, one to which teleologies attributed to modernisation theory by its critics are irrelevant.[71] Secularism was a product of the rise of novel institutions, social structures of authority, and cognitive facilities and institutions, functionally autonomous from religion and its institutions, responding to new social needs rather than usurping those hitherto fulfilled by religion and its institutions. The contrast between the two was generated as the latter sought polemically to resist the expansion of the new. Indeed, the conflation of two distinct matters is most common: between the sociological concept of functional differentiation, and the normative understanding of secularism, the last in turn conflating secularism as an objective development and as a political ideology of state.

In all cases, there is in this perspective on things a presumption not only of the constitutive primacy of religion, but also a fantasmatic assumption of societal homogeneity under the canopy of an order termed Christian. Religion appears here as an overdetermining factor, an independent variable, which is in actual fact an idea inimical to the spirit of inquiry, leaving a blank on the very topic that needs explanation.[72] Correlatively, it is noteworthy that the grafting of secularism onto the history of Christianity

---

70 See the outstanding collection of studies of India, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, Bahrain, Indonesia in: Nils Bubandt and Martjin van Beek, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in Asia. Anthropological Explorations of Religion, Politics and the Spiritual* (London: Routledge, 2012).

71 Among others: Casanova, *Public Religions*, 18–19; David Yamane, "Secularization on Trial: In Defence of a Neosecularization Paradigm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (1997); David N. Gellner, "Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism. Anthropological Perspectives," *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (2001).

72 See Mary Douglas, *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*

has for some time now been very much in vogue, primarily in arguments against Islam's receptivity to secularism. Asad concurs entirely, like the vast majority of secularism's Islamist and post-colonialist critics.[73] This is a variation on an older trope of denigration directed at the Enlightenment, later at Marxism, and now at secularism, when considered as both pseudo-religious and para-religious movements. This is an old trope, used by Herder and de Maistre, persisting most famously with Carl Schmitt, shared by Heidegger's ambivalent acolyte Karl Löwith, and leaving an imprint on the Frankfurt School. This trope continued to flourish in Cold War polemics that continues to thrive today. It rests on superficial associations, including those between psychological states that characterise revolutions and messianic stirrings.[74]

In this historist and vitalist regard, secularisation is seen in a rather cavalier manner as the subtraction of religion, curiously with its continued existence under another, spuriously secular signature, as Enlightenment or Communism. This is lazy thinking, formulaic and effortlessly repeatable. Subtraction in these discussions often refers to institutional transformations undergone by organs of religion, but such transformation within were slight in historical fact, and the locations of secularism have been in new structures. Ultimately, the argument is anchored more firmly in the anti-modern figures of nostalgia and of the sublime. These two melancholy matters are brought together by the notion of secularisation (and modernisation: the two are often interchangeable in some discussions) as a form of loss,[75] of alienation, what Taylor regretted poignantly and eloquently as 'excarnation', of 'buffeted' selves, in the secular 'wasteland',[76] resulting from immanence that had set

---

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 51, who finds in this the fundamental weakness of Weber's theory of religion.

73 Asad's ideas in this respect and in many others are stated with greater explicitness, contextualisation and penetration, and sustained by broader reading in Arabic by, for instance, the late ex-Marxist cultural Islamist ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Masīrī in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Masīrī and ʿAzīz Al-ʿAẓma, *Al-ʿIlmānīya taḥt al-mijhar* (Damascus: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1990).

74 Richard Shorten, "The Enlightenment, Communism and Political Religion: Reflections on a Misleading Trajectory," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8, no. 1 (2003); Sternhell, "Anti-Enlightenment of the Cold War;" see Judith Shklar, "The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia," *Daedalus* 94, no. 2 (1965): 373, 375.

75 This point is stressed by Blumenberg with regard to modernity: Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy*, 116–20, 533.

76 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 37–42, 138, 307–21, 448–90, 613–14, 770, 772.

aside transcendence with its sense of 'fullness',[77] a usurpation of the authentic, a privation of essence, a state of unwholesomeness, a disnature, in counterpart to which reaffirmation and, often enough, restoration, including that of an Islamic prelapsarian utopia or life taken for an Islamic discursive tradition, is the active mystique: all of these poetical terms, reminiscent of classical romanticism, and now redolent of the occult, after one had subtracted away the pop-psychological considerations and vocabularies one encounters often in these types of analyses.[78]

In the final analysis, the specious character of the subtraction model is that it posits a morphological continuity between historical formations which does not in fact obtain. The model extrudes all consideration of historical breaks and social transformations that came with modernity, including the rise of new social, political and cultural forces, institutions, dynamics and arrangements to which secularism is related. Modernity is the overarching concept in this discussion, and encompasses the novel and autonomous emergence of institutional, political and cognitive secularism and systemic processes of secularisation.[79] The fact is that the anachronism of the subtraction thesis is based on a prior, underlying analytical premise. This is a prior assertion of the organic and seamless relation between secularism and Christianity. This will bring us back to historism, culturalism and traditionalism, and their joint rhetorical trope, that of the return of religion as to an initial condition of purity unadulterated by history, that is, unadulterated and uncomplicated by the history of secularism and modernity. The return here figures as a moment of awakening and clarity which removes the illusions of change.

There are two volleys to this prior analytical premise of morphological continuity. One is broadly historicising in spirit, albeit conducted in the form of an historist narrative of essential continuity. This is represented by Casanova and Taylor, in two significant books, the former sociological,

---

77 See especially the comment of Craig Calhoun, "Review of Taylor, A Secular Age," in *European Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 3 (2008).

78 This tragic sentimentalism is shared by Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013).

79 Specifically with regard to the Arab World: Al-Azmeh, *Secularism*; in shorter compass: Gudrun Krämer, "Secularity Contested: Religion, Identity and the Public Order in the Arab Middle East," in *Multiple Secularities Beyond the West: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age*, ed. Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Matthias Middell (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

the latter a psycho-conceptual history. The other volley maintains a distance from history by a distrust, which is expressed in the name given to the undertaking, that is 'genealogical', and has a somewhat remote claim to anthropology. It is represented here by various widely-quoted essays by Talal Asad. Claiming to be an insider's – 'emic' is a common term – recasting of the past in light of the present, genealogists compose pedigrees, virtual histories of ethos. Taylor's and Casanova's are well-integrated comprehensive studies; Asad's, in contrast, seems truncated by a rather fragmentary acquaintance with the subject, but no less influential for being so.

In the spirit of morphological continuity, we are told that secularisation is "identified with a particular civilizational trajectory",[80] one which is described by Taylor at length with reference to the North Atlantic region, to which he adds psycho-historical factors of the embedding and disembedding of individuals, in what amounts to a comprehensive attack on modernity, reflecting an almost brooding Roman Catholic position.[81] Reference to criticisms of capitalism by Marx, when speaking of fetishism of the commodities, of alienation, and of religion, in ways much more nuanced and complex than is usually admitted,[82] would have enriched and nuanced considerably this attitude of discontent and disenchantment with civilisation.

Yet for all the high-grade philosophical skills one would expect from Taylor, discussion of separate civilisational trajectories is still guided by the conflation of historical dynamics with an essentialist ethnology of the West. The West is seen to have been grounded essentially in Christian traditions, understood monolithically and monocausally, and in a view of progress and of the Enlightenment beclouded by distaste and distrust. The unstated postulate is that his North Atlantic domains had been 'societies of faith', a cliché which recent historical research has dented considerably and nuanced beyond the proportions that would make this idea serviceable for the sort of argument discussed here. But in this type of argument, empirical material cannot vitiate the scheme.

---

80 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 36.
81 On which see especially Matthew Rose, "Tayloring Christianity: Charles Taylor is a Theologian of the Secular Status Quo," December 2014, https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/12/tayloring-christianity.
82 See Alberto Toscano, "The Clash of Abstractions: Revisiting Marx on Religion," chap. 5 in *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (London: Verso, 2010).

Casanova, some of whose arguments also stand on this silent postulate, is enough of a robust sociologist to state that the assumption that pre-modern Europeans were more religious than today is one "in need of confirmation"[83] – the same can be said about over-islamising Muslims of both today and yesterday. Yet Casanova makes the same sort of conflation nevertheless, one that is widely disseminated by the Catholic church, when he claims that secularism is the product of a specifically Western modernity, specifically Western meaning continuous with its past essentially, and that it is therefore "fundamentally and inevitably post-Christian"[84]. We have here a postist location with the discursive effect of extruding history and eliminating the weight of systemic and morphological historical breaks that came with modernity. I shall come to this particular posture of postism in a moment. Casanova, robustly sociological in outlook, insists that the multiplication of secularism, like that of modernity, should "open the possibility that other religions may also play a role in institutionalizing their own patterns of secularization".[85] He thus locates these processes, multiplied by the factor of civilisation and tradition in the manner that has already been encountered, within religion. The unspoken assumption is that religion, presumably taken for a culture in the sense of historist culturalism, is the determinant instance in the development of a particular historical formation, and is an independent variable.

Casanova claims further that secularism first arose as a Western theological category:[86] this conveys a close fit with the traditionalist and civilisational – culturalist – discourse here proffered, but its meaning is, on closer examination, uncertain. I am not aware of secularism as a Christian theological category as such. Secularisation as a dispensation for those with monastic vows to live outside their cloisters has a place in canon law. The secularisation of Church properties by the state is not a theological concept. Reference might be made to Augustine's notion of the two cities in support of claiming that secularism be a theological category. But this would require a proper argument from Augustine's theology of history, which is only tangentially theological. If such a claim were to be made,

83   Casanova, *Public Religions*, 16.
84   José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularism," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan van Antwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 63.
85   Casanova, *Public Religions*, 234.
86   Casanova, 61.

it needs to be properly argued. More generally, it would be helpful if one resisted the very common temptation to dub whatever is related to religion or the church as 'theological'. What we are left with is a drift that we can see more clearly when we speak of Islam, namely, the drift, presented as self-evident common sense, towards identifying past with future, and identifying culture, civilisation and religion without stating that one is doing so. This is a drift towards rendering religion the defining element of culture, of civilisation, of history, and indeed of secularism.

In this way, the idea that secularism, the autonomous institutional, social and cognitive line of development in the context of social differentiation occurring within and alongside global modernity, might involve a common trans-geographical social dynamic, however uneven and varied, is made to devolve to an illusion or a conceit, at best to a colonial or elitist imposition. There is, with Casanova, and as a clear consequence of historism rather than of history, a meta-historical assumption of incommensurable historical itineraries, which some call civilisations, yielding incommensurable multiple modernities, denominated by him as post-Hindu, post-Confucian and post-Muslim.[87] Post-Muslim modernity in this register would be vulnerable to the argument now commonly taken for granted by many, and emerging from the comparable assumptions, that Islam – without qualification – is necessarily at odds with modernity, which is incompatible with Islam's "ontological and theological commitments".[88] This is a specious and often contra-factual type of historical argument which is anti-sociological. But it is one that Casanova shares nevertheless with very many others – including Hindu and Muslim culturalists of various hues, cultural nationalists, fundamentalists and civilisation and identity warriors of all stripes.

Patronising multiculturalist impulses to postulate a multiplicity of incommensurables in the spirit of a polite conversation aside, there is an objective global dynamic that vitiates this vitalist historism and renders culturalism and its narratives more like fables eagerly believed than verifiable facts. This dynamic is of European origin and impulse, but is also one whose cognitive, social and cultural goods were internalised and made local everywhere, in a variety of forms and to varying extents. The

---

87 Casanova, 64.

88 Michael Alan Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 292.

polemics against Eurocentrism are often incoherent in that they use the various possible senses of the term interchangeably, often assuming all Euro-centred historical analyses to be Eurocentric ideologically. This is why ideas about provincialising Europe are so manifestly delusional, for Eurocentrism in regarding modern history has solid empirical foundations, and is surely more than just an ideological gloss – had it not been so, the fuss? There may well be ethical or political motivations for such postures of denial, but it is clearly illegitimate to transpose these into imperative cognitive and historical propositions, and to correct political asymmetries by a cognitive decisionism and appeal to nativism.

4   One Genealogy of Post-colonialist Eminence

The above lines of argument with what appear to be appeals to the definitive wisdom and finality of native voice is complemented by the positions on Asad in various essays. His is an apology for nativism and relativism, despite a "cosmopolitan impulse",[89] not untypical of expatriate post-colonialists living in North America.

This apology is grounded in a rhetoric of attachment, investment and reverie, consistently transposing what are perceived to be ethical and sentimental imperatives to the cognitive domain. Such apology tends to veer thereby from the sociology of politics to a sentimentalist and often self-indulgent psychopolitics of advocacy, with a few sparse footnotes added, implying the sort of cognitive decisionism evoked above. It comes from a side of the multicultural spectrum, in which disenchantment with Europe upon discovering that it is imperfect, slips into a mournful judgment of historical invalidation, the ultimate spiritual provincialisation.

Asad's evident disenchantment is reminiscent of that of the Austro-Hungarian born Leopold Weiss who, upon conversion to Islam in the 1920s, took the name Muhammad Asad, in ways that bring up interesting commonalities and illustrate well the continuities in anti-modernism between its various epochs, here the continuities between the interwar period and that in recent decades. A comparison such as this is not as vicarious as it may appear, for it illustrates well the retrogressive relations

---

89   Enayat, *Islam and Secularism*, 90.

between post-colonialist moods of this, post-modernist fin-de-siècle and the previous, anti-modernist fin-de-siècle, animated by a sense of disenchantment along with a resort to romanticism, espousing organismic notions of society and polity. This stood uneasily in relation to a haughty discontent with and distaste for what had been regarded by many as a human condition inevitably wedded to conditions of vitalism and organism.[90]

There are fundamental concordances between the views of the two. They shared a discontent with what both regarded as the fundamentally lasting foundational imprint of Christianity on the contemporary West, as Muhammad Asad put it, coexisting paradoxically with the West's loss of "organic coherence of mind". This diagnosis bears comparison with the condition of discontent described by Taylor, with a not too dissimilar profile, sharing a set of shared anti-modernist and anti-secular motifs. In contrast, Islam offered Muhammad Asad a wholesome option, one that suffered none of the alienation and disincarnation of which Taylor spoke. He perceived Islam in the Arabian Peninsula of the 1920s, as a total form of life adopted by people who had kept their soul together, bound together by a kinship of common outlook - a total and organic condition contrasted to diremption, alienation and incompleteness. Such sentiments of dissatisfaction – the aesthetic, moral, and theological figures sketched by Compagnon – lend credibility and allocate primacy, in a mood of contrastive *ressentiment*, to what is perceived as Europe's utter other. T. Asad was disenchanted by Europe and disabused of her in 1967 and 1991.[91] One might suggest a temper of disenchantment correlated with sympathy for nativism arising from this disenchantment, if one wished to ponder and understand support for the mob baying for Salman Rushdie's blood.

T. Asad calls his chosen procedure of understanding "genealogy" rather than history, maintaining that one should break with what he takes to be the coercive constraints of sociological truth. These are, of course, constraints on politico-aesthetic indulgence, and are imperatives of socio-historical rationality; they are not a flag-waving celebration of abstract reason, but the practice of reason's analytical capacities. This epistemological position, again, bespeaks an attitude congruent with that represented a generation earlier by M. Asad, who stated categorically that

---

90   See Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.
91   Talal Asad, "Muhammad Asad between Religion and Politics," *Insan ve Toplum Dergisi* 1 (2011): 165.

Muslim matters cannot be approached with Western concepts or from Western historical experiences,[92] thereby collapsing cognition into life in the manner discussed above. Genealogy according to Foucault, who is generally regarded as the alpha and omega of the matter, is a procedure that rejects metahistorical deployment of ideal meanings and teleologies, and is thus, in principle, opposed to the search for origins. Both authors discussed here are after origins perpetually and wholesomely present, that is, the abidance of supposed initial conditions as required by the overarching essentialism of such vitalist and historist thinking.

Not unexpectedly, T. Asad suggests that one should learn to treat Enlightenment assumptions as belonging to "specific kinds of reasoning", and therefore, from the perspective of relativism and of the vitalist, social-instinct mode of cognition. Assumptions made by turns of mind informed by the Enlightenment are not valid grounds from which the understanding of the non-Enlightenment traditions must begin -‾ note the automatic drift from actually existing realities, and appeal to traditions. Much concerned with the operations of power and ideology in anthropology and in cultural translation, what Asad does here is appeal to the notion of *Verstehen*, wielded in such a way as to result in patterning, sympathy and antipathy, but little analytical understanding. Witness, for instance, Asad's disciple, one might say his late ethnographer persona, the late Saba Mahmood's plea that hyper-pietist practices by some Egyptian women should be seen as technologies of the self.[93] The term 'technologies of the self' is not native or emic, having been coined by Michel Foucault. But it is nevertheless apt, if used in a cursory way to convey pathos, but to deliver little determinate sense or analytical understanding. However, despite the pathos it conveys, and its association with the empowerment of self-fashioning, the term is so abstract as to be inappropriate and misleading. For the hyper-pietist conversions of women studied by Mahmoud involve, structurally, the reconstitution of selves by means of compliance to norms propagated, not always pacifically, by Islamist political organisms, the whole process staged in the name of authentic tradition.

---

92 Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1980 [1961]), 18.
93 Saba Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of ṣalāt," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001).

Translated from the post-colonialist sociolect, which aims to amplify sentiment, to social science terminology, which seeks an analytical understanding, such conversions would qualify as procedures of re-socialisation and the inculcation of a habitus by an authority. The procedure described is a re-socialisation of such wrenching violence as to involve the induction of fear, weeping and elation, to which Mahmood's objects of study (pietist women) admit truly and straightforwardly[94] – in anthropological terms, it is best described as a dysphoric ritual of initiation and rite of passage. The Salafist, pietistic juridification of individual subjects, and especially of women, flattens subjectivity and selfhood by reducing them to legal instances of compliance. Demystified, this technology of the self turns out to have little to do with self-empowerment, construction of personal capacity or the exercise of personal freedom, and turns out rather to be self-truncation and the excision of the will and self-subjugation. The law, and self-fashioning according to the exacting requirements of the law, sustains the persona, not the person, for the refashioned subject, now really a virtual subject, is deprived of interiority as it wills itself to be reduced to legal facts and acts – apt performance driven to the edge of self-parody. In broader terms, one might think of the spread of feminine pietism (and its male counterpart) historically in terms comparable to the spread of moral panic elsewhere, and related to fits of collective hysteria and collective fainting reported among adolescent and young adult women in Egypt, Palestine and Indonesia in the past two decades. None of this has anything to do with the recovery of tradition.

Ultimately, genealogy becomes a speech act of historical reparation for wrongs conjectured by the author, and for the reaffirmation of the self, both being the advocacy counterpart to apology. In such circumstances, the work of the anthropologist is confined to apologetic portrayal weighted by a culture held to be *sui generis*, with analytical discourse, necessarily etic, branded as intrusive. What is taken for culture – or tradition or any of its associated terms – figures as an all-explanatory inertial energy, ultimately

---

94 Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual," 839–45. One might usefully consult Lamis Al-Solaim and Kate Loewenthal, "Religion and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder among Young Muslim Women in Saudi Arabia," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 14, no. 2 (2011); and Maja Nedeljkoic et al., "Cultural Issues in Understanding and Treating Obsessive Compulsive and Spectrum Disorders," in *Oxford Handbook of Obsessive-Compulsive and Spectrum Disorders*, ed. Gail Steketee (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), 496–519, 501–02.

a cliché, bereft of anthropological analysis and indeed with social and other explanatory context missing. This is very much in keeping with what has been suggested as being a juxtaposition of raw empirical data and meta-sociological purpose.

Now for more specific comment, through the byways of Asad's sinuous reservations, nuances and caveats, whose overall economy often escapes some of his readers as it beguiles them, or which might be irrelevant to those who turn to him for Solomonic guidance. Asad questions the notion of the secular and the related notion of religion.[95] He proposes that the idea of religion is one that is irretrievably manacled to its European conditions of emergence, in the way discussed above. Like other concepts subject to operational reluctance on the grounds of origin and of nativist arguments for cognition, this position is open to criticism as a fallacy of partial description, that since concepts may emerge from social activity, they are reducible to them – quite apart from the formulaic simplification of Foucault's pronouncements on knowledge and power.

This is a persistent drift in post-modernist and post-colonialist writing, where operations of causality are displaced, and the very notion of causality, when used at all, is taken in the constructivist manner for the attribution of causality only, vaguely Humean but with little of Hume's subtlety. Thus Bruno Latour, for instance, commenting on the death from tuberculosis of Ramses II more than 3,000 years ago, as shown by the results of an autopsy of his mummified remains. Latour asserted that this Pharaoh could not possibly have died of tuberculosis, whose bacillus was not known at the time of Ramses' death, concluding that this attribution of the cause of death was anachronistic, retrospective causality, and, as such, illegitimate[96] – let it be noted that the emphasis is on legitimacy, not on cogency or validity. Geertz wondered how one would be able to proceed with (in his case) anthropological work without needing to assert that anthropology is actually possible, given persistent post-colonialist and post-modernist anxieties of this kind.[97]

This endless Pyrrhonism, an ancient form of cognitive filibuster, is one eddy flowing into the constructivist view of religion of concern here. It is

---

95   On Asad's views of secularisation overall, see Enayat, "The Body, Pain and Agency," chap. 5 in *Islam and Secularism*.

96   Bruno Latour, "Ramsès II est-il mort de la tuberculose?," *La Recherche* 307 (1998): 84–85.

97   Geertz, *After the Fact*, 128–30.

incontestable that new religions have been constructed to suit conditions emerging from the colonial order and from modern state systems emerging from the overthrow of the colonial order. In Bali, for instance, a clichéd canonical Hinduism was fashioned suitable for integration into the institutes of the Indonesian state. Colonial New Zealand provides another instance.[98] Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism were also in many crucial respects brought into the ambit of modernity according to the global template for religion provided by Protestantism.[99] But this is something quite distinct from an ostensible dead weight of origin rendering the analytical category of religion itself irrelevant. As Casanova rightly maintains, to dissolve religion and secularism into genealogy and archaeology – another term used by Foucault, subsequently used for ethos and pathos – would leave us analytically impoverished and without adequate conceptual tools.[100] One wishes that he himself had resisted this drift with consequent thoroughness.

This is all culturalist solipsism par excellence. Building upon this position, Asad proposes a nativist rhetoric of attachment. The Islamic religion, he declares solemnly, was the result of a discursive process,[101] apparently without roots in a general historical and anthropological category of religion, or in its own complex actual history. An anthropology of Islam should begin where Muslims are said to begin, with the discursive tradition relating to the Muslim canon, and the practice of what he calls, quite aptly, "apt performance" driven by the canon,[102] which others, wishing to restore its amplitude, might call psychodrama. Islam is not, as

98 Michel Picard, "What's in a Name? Agama Hindu Bali in the Making," in *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia*, ed. Martin Ramstedt (London: Routledge, 2004); Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Unknown God: Myth in History," chap. 5 in *Imagining Religion* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

99 ʿAzīz ʿAl-Aẓma, "Al-Iṣlāḥīyūn al-nahḍawīyūn wa fikrat al-iṣlāḥ," *Al-Mustaqbal al-ʿArabī* 455 (2017); Reinhard Schulze, "Islam und Judentum im Angesicht der Protestantisierung der Religionen im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*, ed. Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011); Richard Gombrich, "Protestant Buddhism," chap. 7 in *Theravada Bhuddism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

100 Casanova, "A Reply," 15.

101 Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

102 Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14–15. Curiously, the discursive traditions seem to correspond to what M. Asad would have described as Pharisaic self-righteousness: Muhammad Asad, *Road to Mecca* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1980 [1954]), 161, 175.

Asad maintains rightly, a distinctive social structure. Yet in making this assertion, Asad causes sociological and anthropological scrutiny of social structure and process appear irrelevant to the anthropologist working in this register of essence.

Islam is thus liberated from the social moorings of its practices, and becomes mystified as tradition, that is, discourses appealing to a historist ideal that give correct form to given practices precisely because they had been established by history.[103] Asad's Islam is a mentalist construct with associated performances, albeit shod of its status as an anthropological category, yet creating the same problems that Asad sees in his criticism of Geertz – it must be said, in fairness and contrary to what is asserted, that Geertz does take religion for 'an essence'.[104] What is it, one wonders, that impels Asad to describe these ostensible traditions which he sees as defining the Muslim religion as being "strongly held",[105] without indications of who it is who holds to what traditions strongly, and when and under what circumstances, and with what sense given to strength here? This kind of impressionistic statement is as common in popular journalism as in scholarship. Clearly, what Asad and Mahmood describe as the norm are not normal Muslims, whatever these may be; they are Muslim beings who are "pre-eminently and determinatively religious",[106] in fact, super-Muslims, virtually performed by the scholar. And these, consumed by piety or fanaticism or both, clearly do not exist, and never did, except as anomalies to the eyes of Muslims themselves, as fringes that have recently, however, asserted themselves politically and visually in salafi and jihadist groups.

We are back to homeostatic, incommensurable traditions, engaged in the polite protocol of recognition (Asad is pessimistic overall) between untranslatable registers, expressing themselves in indigenous voices, which are ultimately affective, aesthetic, and political choices, unrelated to cognitive categories. Native voice is irreducible, and therefore not open to analytical reason, resting upon assertion without recall or recourse. Being

---

103 Asad, *The Idea*, 14.
104 Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 115–16; Talal Asad, "Responses," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, ed. Charles Hirschkind and David Scott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 210. See Steven Caton, "What is an 'Authorizing Discourse'?," in *Powers*, ed. Charles Hirschkind and David Scott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 45.
105 Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 267.
106 Enayat, *Islam and Secularism*, 92.

matters of political, ethical, or traditionalist choice, all voices but the native are liable to corrosion, including the voice of scientific reason that expresses itself in terms of categories of the social and human sciences, and nothing remains admissible but to take discourses on the terms of the research object herself. Thus, for instance, Saba Mahmood, building upon Asad's scepticism about the notion of religion, studied networks of feminine piety in Egypt minutely and illuminatingly, with its rituals, reflections, habit formations and corporeal discipline. As she did so, she insisted with self-effacing modesty that, rather than conceptualise her material and turn her subjects into objects, as a researcher would be required to do, her work should lead to parochialising the researcher's assumptions.[107] One always welcomes calls to self-reflexivity. But this would need to be a conceptual self-reflexivity, rather than an ethical discipline of self-fashioning counterposed to cognitive purpose, or a form of contrition, penance and confession, reminiscent of the medieval Latin Christianity that had elicited Asad's curiosity some decades before.

Self-patterning clichés, including self-parodic ones, recognised and represented but not interpreted, come to have greater salience than sociological reason. We are, after all, in the domain of figures of the organism. Similarly, in a long discussion of Saudi *nasiha,* texts of advice offered to royal Saudi authorities by younger Wahhabi *'ulama* whose conservatism is inflected by political vocabularies derived from standard tropes of the Muslim Brother movement, Asad reiterates the point that any assumptions of a singular rationality that might be used to judge the matter need to be regarded as an imposition. He interprets limitations of *nasiha* materials and attitudes to be due, not to incapacity to countenance change, nor to an intrinsic contradiction between reason and religion, but to a "particular discursive tradition" and its associated disciplines.[108] *Nasiha* is therefore not related to clerical or national politics, nor to ideologies, social change and inter-generational relations, and is not simply repressive and patrimonial. Primarily, Asad believes that it stands on the assumption of a moral order of virtuous individuals partly responsible for one another's moral condition,[109] a form of peaceable mutual vigilantism.

---

107 Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 36.
108 Asad, *Genealogies*, 232.
109 Asad, 233.

The interpretation and analysis of the documents discussed are of the same order as the document, at best giving voice to what Asad would regard as a self-exegetical effort of the document by the document and its authors. With neither qualification nor analysis in terms of political and institutional anthropology, or thinking about what it might be that empowers one to claim the prerogative of a busy-body in a domain deliberately voided of politics, Asad's account seems noticeably unsatisfying. The line between, on the one hand, the anthropology of modernity, as Asad calls it, where modernity is for once an actual object of analysis, and which is in fact an anti-modernist pseudo-historical polemic, and, on the other hand, advocacy of tradition, is nowhere apparent.

Asad's tonalities are noticeably calm, even placid, at once composed and quizzical, and tend to convey a discontented and somewhat vexed, arguably aggrieved, antipathy to many of the conditions he describes. Saba Mahmood was a rather more muscular tribune for her charges than Asad, and is almost emblematic of the overdetermination of academic practice by the adversarial mood and by a sense of indignation, inculcated as an institutional habitus and as a constituent element to the sociolect mentioned already. She took this pathway of Asad much further, in a patent vindication of obscurantism.[110] Speaking, like Asad, against the secular notion of religion, which, she claims, is "abstract",[111] whatever this dismissal implies or means, she takes to task certain advocates of Muslim reform (Abu Zayd, Hanafi, and others) for pleading for the historicity of Qur'anic interpretation, on the grounds that this procedure "disenfranchises" traditional modes of interpretation.

I will not go into the historical facts of the matter, including who it is in fact who disenfranchises whom, and whether what she terms traditional is in fact traditional by any proper historical description, and how. Historical fact will not be relevant to Mahmood's argument, which is rounded off politically by suggesting that these Muslim reformists were just tailoring their work to an imperialist agenda, implying in effect that they worked to an agenda set by the CIA: figures "demonised" by Mahmood for undermining what she liked to suppose were authentic inherited narratives.[112] It seemed

---

110 Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006).
111 Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire," 324.
112 Ebrahim Moosa and Sher Ali Tareen, "Revival and Reform," *The Princeton Encyclopedia*

unnecessary to either Asad or Mahmood to check whether what they had been told were matters of tradition were in fact any more than very recent and group-specific, sub-cultural reconstitutions of the Muslim religion, along lines quite precisely analogous to those of exigent Calvinism and more radical forms of Protestantism.

The irrationalist doctrine, attendant upon vitalism and discussed throughout this essay, is in this case tailored to an apology for contemporary identitarian Islamism, and its more traditionalist expressions apparently favoured by Asad and Mahmood. This preference worked to elevate this inflection of Islam, *pars pro toto,* to stand for Islam in general, past and present. In order to accomplish this, Asad used the very conception of religion he decries so much to speak of the Super-Muslims of Europe and of their strong attachments to their discursive traditions or, rather, to reconstitute them as such. He advocates in effect a political society of *Stände* (Estates), conceived as religious denominations, somewhat analogous to a confederation of Millets living in contiguity, but, unlike the classical Ottoman system, without relations dominance. This is in effect a social model for a polity without politics, a geographical contiguity of minorities, informed by a notion of religion and denomination which is not only that of the Reformation, but is also Qur'anic.[113] For, Asad maintains, Muslim immigrants (he still calls them immigrants rather than citizens, irrespective of generation), cannot be satisfactorily represented in Europe, given Europe's ostensible ideological construction.[114] That they are represented as citizens like other citizens, however humanly imperfect the system, and without special pleading, seems to be uninteresting.

What is in fact at issue is not representation, which all citizens have, but citizenship, which is nowhere addressed. Asad seeks to represent Muslims as Muslims,[115] that is, as a minority defined not so much sociologically, as characterised in the historist mode by historical narratives which still remain to be identified, by allegedly embodied memories, feelings and

---

of Islamic Political Thought, ed. Gerhard Boewering (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2013), 468. See the further comments of Ebrahim Moosa, "Disruptions and Reconnections: Re-Discovering and Re-Making Muslim Tradition in Late Modernity," in *The Idea of Tradition in Late Modernity*, ed. Albert Howard (forthcoming), 88–91.

113 Talal Asad, "Muslims as a 'Religious Minority' in Europe," chap. in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

114 Asad, 159.

115 Asad, 173.

desires which he ascribed to them as a group. In this, Muslims are described as if they were a homogeneous group,[116] to which one needs to add the very considerable amount of politically-induced false memories that come into the conjuring of memories which are ostensibly shared and alive, but in fact virtual. Upon these Muslims, Asad grafts ways of life and practices articulated by bookish traditions, which he deems to be "deeply held": it is these, rather than actually existing Muslims, that need political institutions to represent them, an image harking back to medieval casts of mind.[117]

It is manifestly clear that this whole argumentative edifice is geared towards traditionalist forms of identitarianism: the deliberate construction of minorities, and specifically of Muslim minorities in Europe and elsewhere. This is a politics of recognition which operates more with categorisation and stereotypification than with apprehension of reality. Its implementation calls less for retrieval than for a considerable degree of re-socialisation according to institutes allegedly traditional but in fact within the domain of neo-traditionalist forces of today. This is much like the fashioning of pietist women in Egypt. That Asad, with his subtleties and caveats, ultimately holds that identity is always made, is only one of many ideas that seem lost on some of his more challenged readers. However, this is not what, in actual fact, the reader gets cumulatively, the finer points of Asad's judgement being often incompatible with his political advocacy.

What Asad takes for Muslim identity, and what Casanova or Taylor take for civilisational paths, are not forces of nature that predestine human collectivities to specific outcomes or to restricted horizons of possibility. British and Egyptian Muslims cannot summarily be reduced to a homogeneous community. Local voice, be it in Riyadh or in London, is not a voice of nature. It is a habitus of affectation and contrivance, elaborated by apt performance, however ingenuous and seemingly spontaneous, and however sincerely performed or meretriciously self-parodic. In both Jakarta and Cairo, what is regarded as local Muslim voice is the result of a recent historical development deploying much political and social engineering. Asad never extended his line of thought to propose that his own advocacy of tradition might be apt performance of anti-modern ideology. One interesting thing here is that with the use of apt performance as an interpretative device, Asad is conceiving religious

116 Asad, 174.
117 Asad, 178.

practice as a psychodrama, which is really a view of religion which is not only particularly marked by the Reformation, but is equally marked by the re-socialising modes of politico-religious activism associated with the Muslim Brothers.

So too are social and cultural Islamisation, and salafication in the Arab World in recent decades. With exceptions, these are not in substantive continuity with the past, and this applies most specifically to fundamentalism and stringent pietism or social salafication. Identity, it must be stressed, is less an indicative concept than a performative one,[118] and hence a contextual political designation. In the context discussed here, and to return to the discussion of modernisation and social differentiation, the identitarian conception of Islam as a total socio-political and ethical superstructure corresponding to the nature of society makes perfect sense. It is, after all, the secularisation thesis, with its stress on social differentiation, that is able to account for the emergence of religion as an independent instance which then comes to make total claims on representing society. Secularism is not a phenomenon that defines the relation between Islam and the West or that can be defined by this relation; it is in actual fact a struggle within Muslim majority countries themselves.

---

118 Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Identity in the Arab World," in *Keywords: Identity,* ed. Nadia Tazi (New York, NY: The Other Press, 2004).

5 Bibliography

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory*. London: Verso, 1992.

Ahmad, Aijaz. "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Post'-Condition." *Socialist Register* 33 (1997): 353–82.

Al-ʿArwi, ʿAbdallah. *Mafhūm al-Ḥurrīya*. Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2008.

Al-ʿAẓma, ʿAzīz. *Dunyā ad-Dīn fī ḥāḍir al-ʿArab*. Revised edition. Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 2002.

Al-ʿAẓma, ʿAzīz. "Bayn at-tārīkh waʾl-istikāna liʾl-qadar." *Bidāyāt* 14 (2016): 104–11.

Al-ʿAẓma, ʿAzīz. "Al-Iṣlāḥiyūn al-nahḍawīyūn wa fikrat al-iṣlāḥ." *Al-Mustaqbal al-ʿArabī* 455 (2017): 75–99.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Polities*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1997.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. "Identity in the Arab World." In *Keywords: Identity*. Edited by Nadia Tazi, 47–64. New York, NY: The Other Press, 2004.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *The Times of History*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Islams and Modernities*. 3rd ed. London: Verso, 2009.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. "Civilisation as a Political Disposition." *Economy and Society* 41, no. 4 (2012): 501–12.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Secularism in the Arab World: Contexts, Ideas and Consequences*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

Al-Masīrī, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, and ʿAzīz Al-ʿAẓma. *Al-ʿIlmaniya taht al-Mijhar*. Damascus: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1990.

Al-Solaim, Lamis, and Kate Loewenthal. "Religion and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder among Young Muslim Women in Saudi Arabia." *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 14, no. 2 (2011): 169–82.

Anderson, Perry. *The H-Word: The Peripeteia of Hegemony*. London: Verso, 2017.

Aoun, Mouchir Basile. *Heidegger et la pensée arabe*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011.

Asad, Muhammad. *The Road to Mecca*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1980 [1954].

Asad, Muhammad. *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1980 [1961].

Asad, Talal. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*. Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986.

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Asad, Talal. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Asad, Talal. "Responses." In *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*. Edited by Charles Hirschkind and David Scott, 206–41. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Asad, Talal. "Muhammad Asad between Religion and Politics." *Insan ve Toplum Dergisi* 1 (2011): 155–65.

Augé, Marc. *Le sens des autres*. Paris: Fayard, 1994.

Benveniste, Émile. "Euphémismes anciens et modernes." In *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 308–14. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

Billig, Michael. "Towards a Critique of the Critical." *Discourse and Society* 11, no. 3 (2000): 291–92.

Bishāra, 'Azmī. *Ad-Dīn wa'l-'Almānīya fī Siyāq Tārīkhī.* 2 vols. Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 2012–2015.

Blumenberg, Hans. *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age.* Translated by Robert M. Wallace. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Böckenförde, Ernst-Wolfgang. "Organ." In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe.* Vol. 4. Edited by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart KoLosellek, 519–623. Stuttgart: Klett-Kotta, 2004.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Identity and representation." In *Language and Symbolic Power.* Edited by John B. Thompson, 220–28. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991.

Boyer, Pascal. *Tradition as Truth and Communication.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Bubandt, Nils, and Martjin van Beek, eds. *Varieties of Secularism in Asia: Anthropological Explorations of Religion Politics and the Spiritual.* London: Routledge, 2012.

Burchardt, Marian, and Monika Wohlrab-Sahr. "Multiple Secularities: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age." *International Sociology* 28, no. 6 (2013): 605–11.

Calhoun, Craig. "Review of Taylor, A Secular Age." *European Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 3 (2008): 455–61.

Casanova, José. *Public Religions in the Modern World.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Casanova, José. "A Reply to Talal Asad." In *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors.* Edited by Charles Hirschkind and David Scott, 12–30. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Casanova, José. "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularism." In *Rethinking Secularism.* Edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan van Antwerpen, 54–74. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Casanova, José. "Asian Catholicism, Interreligious Colonial Encounters and Dynamics of Secularism in Asia." In *The Secular in South, East, and Southeast Asia.* Edited by Kenneth Dean and Peter van der Veer, 13–35. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Caton, Steven C. "What is an 'Authorizing Discourse'?" In *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors.* Edited by Charles Hirschkind and David Scott, 31–56. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Claidière, Nicolas, and Dan Sperber. "Defining and explaining culture (comments on Richerson and Boyd, Not by genes alone)." *Biology and Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2008): 283–92.

Compagnon, Antoine. *Les Antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes.* Paris: Gallimard, 2006.

Cooper, Frederick. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005.

Corm, Georges. *Pour une lecture profane des conflits : Sur le retour du religieux dans les conflits du Moyen-Orient.* Paris: La Découverte, 2015.

Dirlik, Arif. *The Postcolonial Aura.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

Douglas, Mary. *In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Dumont, Louis. *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Enayat, Hadi. *Islam and Secularism in Post-Colonial Thought: A Cartography of Asadian Genealogies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Felski, Rita. "Suspicious Minds." *Poetics Today* 32, no. 2 (2011): 215–34.

Freeman, Derek. *Margaret Mead and the Heretic: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Herder et ses théories sur l'Histoire." In *Regards sur l'histoire: Cahiers de l'Institut Allemand*. Edited by Karl Epting, 9–36. Paris: Sorlot, 1941.

Geertz, Clifford. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Geertz, Clifford. *After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Gellner, David N. "Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism: Anthropological Perspectives." *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (2001): 337–40.

Gillespie, Michael Allen. *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Godelier, Maurice. *The Mental and the Material*. Translated by Martin Thom. London: Verso, 2011.

Gombrich, Richard. *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. London: Rentledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

Griffin, Roger. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. London: Palgrave, 2007.

Grogin, Robert C. *The Bergsonian Controversy in France, 1900–1914*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988.

Hallaq, Wael B. *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Hirschkind, Charles, and David Scott, eds. *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Honneth, Axel. "Anthropologische Berührungspunkte zwischen der lebensphilosophischen Kulturkritik und 'Der Dialektik der Aufklärung'"In *21. Deutscher Soziologentag 1982: Beiträge der Sektions- und ad hoc Gruppen*. Edited by Friedrich Heckmann and Peter Winter, 786–92. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1983.

Iggers, Georg. "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 (1995): 129–52.

Josephson-Storm, Jason. *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Kaiwar, Vasant. *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014.

Kant, Immanuel. *Political Writings*. Edited by Hans Reiss. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Kaviraj, Sudipta. "Outline of a Revisionist Theory of Modernity." *European Journal of Sociology* 46, no. 3 (2005): 497–526.

Kehrer, Günter. "Euphemismus." In *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*. Edited by Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow, and Karl-Heinz Kohl, vol. 3, 369–77. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993.

Kleine, Christoph. "Religion and the Secular in Premodern Japan from the Viewpoint of Systems Theory." *Journal of Religion in Japan* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–34.

Klemperer, Victor. *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook.* Translated by Martin Brady. London: Continuum Books, 2000.

Krämer, Gudrun. "Secularity Contested: Religion, Identity, and Public Order in the Arab Middle East." In *Multiple Secularities beyond the West: Religion and Modernity in the Global Age.* Edited by Marian Burchardt, Monika Wohlrab-Sahr, and Matthias Middell, 121–37. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.

Kuper, Adam. *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion.* London: Routledge, 1988.

Kuper, Adam. *Culture: The Anthropologists' Account.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Latour, Bruno. "Ramsès II est-il mort de la tuberculose?" *La Recherche* 307 (1998): 84–85.

Laudan, Larry. "The Pseudo-Science of Science." *Philosophy of Social Science* 11 (1981): 173–98.

Lepenies, Wolf. *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Löwith, Karl. "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism." In *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader.* Edited by Richard Wolin, 167–85. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.

Madan, Triloki Nath. "Secularism and the Intellectuals." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 18 (1994): 1095–96.

Mahmood, Saba. "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of ṣalāt." *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001): 827–53.

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Mahmood, Saba. "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation." *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 323–47.

March, Andrew. "Political Theory: Islam." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (2015): 103–23.

Marcuse, Herbert. "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean Paul Sartre's L'Être et le Néant." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8, no. 3 (1948): 309–36.

Marshall, David. *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers.* London: Curzon, 1999.

Mirsepassi, Ali. *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Moebius, Stephan. *Die Zauberlehrlinge: Sozialgeschichte des Collège de Sociologie (1937–1939).* Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006.

Moosa, Ebrahim, and Sher Ali Tareen. "Revival and Reform." In *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought.* Edited by Gerhard Boewering, 462–70. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2013.

Moosa, Ebrahim. "Disruptions and Reconnections: Re-Discovering and Re-Making Muslim Tradition in Late Modernity." In *The Idea of Tradition in Late Modernity.* Edited by Albert Howard, 77–100. Forthcoming.

Moyn, Samuel. *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Nedeljkoic, Maja, Richard Moulding, Elham Foroughi, Michael Kyrios, and Guy Doron. "Cultural Issues in Understanding and Treating Obsessive Compulsive and Spectrum Disorders." In *Oxford Handbook of Obsessive Compulsive and Spectrum Disorders.* Edited by Gail Stekeltee, 496–519 Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Needham, Rodney. "Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences." *Man*, *New Series* 10, no. 3 (1975): 349–69.

Odouev, Stepan. *Par les sentiers de Zarathoustra: Influence de la pensée de Nietzsche sur la philosophie bourgeoise allemande.* Translated by Catherine Emery. Moscou: Éditions du Progrès, 1980.

Paramore, Kiri. "Premodern Secularism." *Japan Review* 30 (2017): 21–37.

Pearce, Frank, ed. "The Collège de Sociologie." Special issue, *Economy and Society*, 32, no. 1 (2003).

Picard, Michel. "What's in a Name? Agama Hindu Bali in the Making." In *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia*. Edited by Martin Ramstedt, 56–75. London: Routledge, 2004.

Pollmann, Tessel. "Margaret Mead's Balinese: The Fitting Symbols of the American Dream." *Indonesia* 49 (1990): 1–35.

Poutot, Clément, ed. "Le Collège de Sociologie." Special issue, *Anamnèse* 8 (2013).

Rancière, Jacques. "The Concept of Critique and the Critique of Political Economy." *Economy and Society* 5, no. 3 (1976): 352–76.

Rose, Matthew. "Tayloring Christianity: Charles Taylor is a Theologian of the Secular Status Quo." December 2014. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/12/tayloring-christianity.

Rots, Aike P., and Mark Teeuwen. "Introduction: Formations of the Secular in Japan." *Japan Review* 30 (2017): 3–20.

Russell, Bertrand. "The philosophy of Bergson." *The Monist* 22, no. 3 (1912): 321–47.

Ryle, Gilbert. "Martin Heidegger: 'Sein und Zeit'." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 1, no. 3 (1970): 3–13.

Sarkar, Sumit. "The Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies." In *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. Edited by Vinayak Chaturvedi, 300–23. London: Verso, 2000.

Schlanger, Judith. *Les métaphores de l'organisme*. Paris: Vrin, 1971.

Schulze, Reinhard. "Islam und Judentum im Angesicht der Protestantisierung der Religionen im 19. Jahrhundert." In *Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*. Edited by Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit, 139–64. Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011.

Scott, David. "Appendix: The Trouble of Thinking: An Interview with Talal Asad." In *Powers of the secular modern: Talal Asad and his interlocutors*. Edited by David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, 245–303. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Sheehan, Jonathan. "Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay." *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (2003): 1061–80.

Sheehan, Jonathan. "Thomas Hobbes, D.D.: Theology, Orthodoxy, and History." *The Journal of Modern History* 88, no. 2 (2016): 249–74.

Shils, Edward. "Tradition." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 2 (1971): 122–59.

Shklar, Judith. *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1957].

Shklar, Judith. "The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia." *Daedalus* 94, no. 2 (1965): 367–81.

Shorten, Richard. "The Enlightenment, Communism and Political Religion: Reflections on a Misleading Trajectory." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 8, no. 1 (2003): 13–37.

Shorten, Richard. "Reactionary rhetoric reconsidered." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 2 (2015): 179–200.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Imagining Religion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Southwold, Martin. "Buddhism and the Definition of Religion." *Man*, *New Series* 13, no. 3 (1978): 362–79.

Stauth, Georg, and Bryan S. Turner. "Ludwig Klages (1872–1956) and the Origins of Critical Theory." *Theory, Culture and Society* 9, no. 3 (1992): 45–63.

Sternhell, Zeev. *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*. Translated by David Maisel. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Strathern, Alan. *Unearthly Powers: Religion and Political Change in World History.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Stuart Hughes, Henry. *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930*. New York, NY: Knopf, 1958.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Taylor, Charles. "Western Secularity." In *Rethinking Secularism*. Edited Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan van Antwerpen, 31–53. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Toscano, Alberto. *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea*. London: Verso, 2010.

Turner, Bryan S. *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Wasserstrom, Steven M. *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henri Corbin at Eranos*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Wilson, Brian C. "From the Lexical to the Polythetic: A Brief History of the Definition of Religion." In *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*. Edited by Thomas A. Idinopoulos and Brian C. Wilson, 141–62. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

Wohlrab-Sahr, Monika, Thomas Schmidt-Lux, and Uta Karstein. "Secularization as Conflict." *Social Compass* 55, no. 2 (2008): 127–39.

Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the People Without History*. 2nd ed. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010.

Wolin, Richard. *Heidegger's Children: Hanna Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Wolin, Richard. *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Yamane, David. "Secularization on Trial: In Defence of a Neosecularization Paradigm." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (1997): 109–22.