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Eurocentric Secularism and the Challenge of Globalization

José Casanova*

The point of departure of any discussion of “the secular,” “secularization,” or “secularism” should be the recognition that all these concepts derive from a Western Christian theological and legal-canonical category, that of the *saeculum*, which finds no equivalent not only in other world religions, but even in Byzantine Christianity. As a world-view or ideology, secularism can be defined as “Eurocentric” when it ignores its own particular genealogy in the historical process of Western Christian secularization and presents itself as the mature teleological outcome of a universal process of human development from religious belief to secular unbelief. Paradoxically, what makes secularism ethnocentric is not the reflexive awareness of its European Christian origins, but rather the presumption that a particular historical European development is paradigmatically universal and has therefore normative validity.

My lecture is divided in three parts. First, I will offer a very schematic reconstruction of the complex process of Western Christian secularization from

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the comparative perspective of the axial revolutions. The second part will present brief outlines of the two main forms of secularism, namely political secularism and historico-philosophical secularism, by looking at the way in which they appear not only in social scientific discourse, but also in contemporary public debates in the West, particularly in Europe. The concluding section will point to some of the challenges which contemporary processes of globalization present to our Eurocentric conceptions of secular modernity.

Western Christian Secularization

The process of secularization in all its many dimensions can only be understood hermeneutically as a particular historical dynamic that emerges in the West first from within and then against medieval Latin Christendom, rather than as a universal process of human development from “belief” to “unbelief,” or from “primitive” religion to rational knowledge, this later being a secularist self-reflexive conceptualization that emerged out of the Enlightenment critique of “religion.” Indeed, the particular historical dynamics of the modern process of secularization are both derived and determined by the unique dichotomous classification of reality into religion and saeculum which became institutionalized in Medieval Christendom.

From the comparative perspective of the axial revolutions, the process of Western secularization appears as a radicalization of the great disembedding of the individual from the sacred cosmos and from society that was first initiated by the axial revolutions. In the context of a general theory of “religious” evolution, one may understand this process as a redrawing of the boundaries between sacred/profane, transcendence/immanence, religious/secular. All too often we tend to view these dichotomous pairs -- sacred/profane, transcendent/immanent, religious/secular -- as synonymous. But it should be obvious that these three dichotomous classificatory schemes do not fit neatly within one another. The sacred tends to be immanent in pre-axial societies, transcendence is not necessarily religious in some axial civilizations, and obviously some secular reality (the nation, citizenship, the individual, inalienable rights to life and freedom) can become sacred in the modern secular age.

What defines the axial revolutions is precisely the introduction of a new classificatory scheme that results from the emergence of “transcendence”, of an order, principle, or being, beyond this worldly reality, which now can serve as a transcendent principle to evaluate, regulate, and possibly transform this worldly reality. In the case of radical monotheism, religious transcendence may lead to the de-sacralization of all immanent reality. But, as in the case of the Platonic world of “ideas,” or the Confucian reformulation of the Chinese tao, transcendence does not need to be “religious,” nor does all “religion” need to become transcendent.

Within this perspective, the religious/secular dichotomy is a particular medieval Christian version of the more general axial dichotomous classification of transcendent and immanent orders of reality. Unique to the medieval system of Latin Christendom, however, is the institutionalization of an ecclesiastical-sacramental system of mediation, the Church, between the transcendent *Civitas Dei* and the immanent *Civitas hominis*. The church can play this mediating role precisely because it partakes of both realities. The modern Western process of secularization is a particular historical dynamic that only makes sense as a response and reaction to this particular medieval Latin Christian system of classification of all reality into “spiritual” and “temporal”, “religious” and “secular.”

In his most recent work, *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor has clearly shown that the historical process of modern secularization begins as a process of internal secular reform within Latin Christendom, as an attempt to “spiritualize” the temporal and to bring the religious life of perfection out of the monasteries into the *saeculum*, thus literally, as an attempt to secularize the religious. The process of spiritualization of temporal-secular reality entails also a process of interiorization of religion, and thus a certain de-ritualization, de-sacralization or de-magicization of religion, which in the particular case of Christianity takes naturally the form of de-sacramentalization and de-ecclesialization of religion. The repeated attempts at Christian reform of the *saeculum* began with the papal revolution and continued with the emergence of the spiritual orders of mendicant and preaching friars bent on Christianizing the growing medieval towns and cities.

Throughout the Middle Ages there emerged already all kinds of monastic fundamentalist movements as well as sectarian groups and gnostic-heterodox

movements which attempted to overcome the existing dualism between immanent and transcendent reality, either extending the life of Christian perfection beyond the monastery or attempting to bring a radical transformation of the saeculum in accordance with Christian transcendent principles. With many variations these will be the two main paths of secularization, exemplified by the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, which will culminate in our secular age. In different ways both paths lead to an overcoming of the medieval Catholic dualism by a positive affirmation and revaluation of the saeculum, that is, of the secular age and the secular world, imbuing the saeculum with a quasi-sacred meaning as the place for human flourishing.

The Protestant path, which will attain its paradigmatic manifestation in the Anglo-Saxon Calvinist cultural area, particularly in the United States, is characterized by a blurring of the boundaries and by a mutual reciprocal infusion of the religious and the secular, in a sense making the religious secular and the secular religious. It takes also a form of radical de-sacramentalization which will assume an extreme form with the radical sects in their attempt to dismantle all ecclesiastical institutions and to turn the ecclesia, the congregation, into a merely secular association of visible “saints.”

The French-Latin-Catholic path, by contrast, will take the form of laicization, and is basically marked by a civil-ecclesiastical, and laic-clerical antagonistic dynamic. Unlike in the Protestant pattern, here the boundaries between the religious and the secular are rigidly maintained, but those boundaries are pushed into the margins, aiming to contain, privatize and marginalize everything religious, while excluding it from any visible presence in the secular public sphere. When the secularization of monasteries takes place first during the French Revolution and later in subsequent liberal revolutions, the explicit purpose of breaking the monastery walls, is not to bring the religious life into the secular world, as was the case with the Protestant Reformation, but rather to laicize those religious places, dissolving and emptying their religious content and making the religious persons, monks and nuns, civil and laic before forcing them into the secular world.

This alternative road to secular modernity overcomes the dualism and tension between the saeculum and the transcendent order through the naturalization of the transcendent principles and norms, eliminating any supernatu-

ral or “religious” reference and translating the transcendental vision into immanent projects of radical transformation of the world. This will be the road taken in much of continental Europe, through the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the liberal and proletarian revolutions.

In the Latin-Catholic cultural area, and to some extent throughout Europe, there was a collision between religion and the differentiated secular spheres, that is, between Catholic Christianity and modern science, modern capitalism and the modern state. As a result of this protracted clash, the Enlightenment critique of religion found here ample resonance; the secularist genealogy of modernity was constructed as a triumphant emancipation of reason, freedom and worldly pursuits from the constraints of religion; and practically every “progressive” European social movement from the time of the French Revolution to the present was informed by secularism and had frequently an anti-religious élan. The secularist self-narratives, which have informed functionalist theories of differentiation and secularization, have envisioned this process as the emancipation and expansion of the secular spheres at the expense of a much diminished and confined, though also newly differentiated, religious sphere.

In the Anglo-Protestant cultural area, by contrast, and particularly in the United States, there was “collusion” between religion and the secular differentiated spheres. There is little historical evidence of any tension between American Protestantism and capitalism and very little manifest tension between science and religion in America prior to the Darwinian crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. The American Enlightenment had hardly any anti-religious component. Even “the separation of church and state,” that was constitutionally codified in the dual clause of the First Amendment, had as much the purpose of protecting “the free exercise” of religion from state interference and ecclesiastical control as that of protecting the federal state from any religious entanglement. It is rare, at least until very recently, to find any “progressive” social movement in America appealing to “secularist” values. In the United States, the triumph of “the secular” came aided by religion rather than at its expense and the boundaries themselves became so diffused that, at least by European ecclesiastical standards, it is not clear where religion begins and the secular ends.

Following Charles Taylor, one can say that our “secular age” is characterized by the structural interlocking constellation of the differentiated cosmic, social and moral orders into a self-sufficient immanent frame within which we are constrained to live and experience our lives, secular as well as religious. Our cosmic order is configured as a disenchanted, impersonal, vast and unfathomable, yet scientifically discoverable and explainable universe, which is nevertheless paradoxically open to all kinds of moral meanings, can evoke in us the numinous experience of a *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinans* as well as a mystical sense of a profound unity of our inner nature with outer Nature.

Our social order is comprehended as a self-constituted and socially constructed impersonal and instrumentally rational order of mutual benefit of individuals coming together to meet their needs and fulfill their ends. In the process those individual agents establish collectively new specifically modern forms of sociation, the most prominent of which are the market economy, the citizenship democratic state and the public sphere, all being characterized in principle by immediate, direct and equal access.

Our moral order is built around the image of the buffered self, a disengaged and disciplined rational agent equally impervious to external animated sources and in control of its own inner passions and desires, ruled either by utilitarian calculus in the pursuit of individual happiness or by universalistic maxims inspired and empowered to beneficence not only by a rational impartial view of things but by the discovery of human dignity, sympathy and solidarity.

All three orders, the cosmic, the social, and the moral are understood as purely immanent secular orders, devoid of transcendence, and thus functioning *etsi Deus non daretur*. It is this phenomenological experience that, according to Taylor, constitutes our age paradigmatically as a secular one, irrespective of the extent to which people living in this age may still hold religious or theistic beliefs. Moreover, intrinsic to this phenomenological experience is a modern “stadial consciousness,” inherited from the Enlightenment, which understands this anthropocentric change in the conditions of belief as a process of maturation and growth, as a “coming of age” and as progressive emancipation. Modern unbelief is not simply a condition of absence of belief, nor

merely indifference. It is a historical condition that requires the perfect tense, “a condition of 'having overcome' the irrationality of belief.” (p. 269)

It is this phenomenological experience that constitutes the foundation of secularism as a modern ideology. This historical consciousness turns the very idea of going back to a surpassed condition into an unthinkable intellectual regression. It is, in Taylor's words, “the ratchet at the end of the anthropocentric shift.” (p.289). For that very reason, all analytical and phenomenological accounts of modernity are irremediably also grand narratives, indeed are always embedded in some genealogical account.

But the fundamental and still unresolved question in contemporary debates about secularization is what this structural meaning of secularization as a historical process of transformation of Western European societies may have to do with the more widespread meaning of the term secularization today, namely with the decline of religious beliefs and practices among the people living within this immanent frame in the secular age. That the decline of religious beliefs and practices is a relatively recent meaning of the term secularization is indicated by the fact that it does not yet appear in the dictionary of any modern European language. Yet, today this is the most common usage of the term secularization among ordinary people in all European societies.

For me, the most interesting issue sociologically is not the fact of progressive religious decline among the European population, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularization paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a “secularist” self-understanding that interprets the decline as “normal” and “progressive”, that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a “modern” and “enlightened” European. In this respect, the secularization thesis has assumed in Europe the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. This becomes anecdotically evident the moment one compares the responses to surveys of religiosity in Europe and the United States.

We know that in the United States people tend to lie to the pollsters, exaggerating the frequency with which they claim to pray or to attend religious services. Obviously, Americans tend to think that they ought to be religious and feel somewhat guilty that they are not as religious as they think they ought to be. There is no doubt that Americans want to be and claim to be

very “modern,” yet they identify their modernity with religion rather than with secularity. Europeans, by contrast, take for granted that to be modern means to be secular. These very different phenomenological experiences across the Atlantic not only reflect the two very different patterns of secularization described above, but actually operate as self-fulfilling prophecies which help to shape the persistence of the two different European and American patterns today.

Historico-philosophical and political secularism

It is the stadal consciousness of having overcome the irrationality of religious belief as a progressive process of human development that constitutes the phenomenological foundation of historico-philosophical secularism. Today this secularism is usually no longer articulated into the kind of explicit secularist philosophies of history typical of the 18th century Enlightenment or of 19th century positivism, although we see today a resurgence of a rather aggressive militant type of secularism in the works of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, among others. But as a taken for granted assumption, as a form of “unthought,” it permeates modern European consciousness.

Analytically, of course, one must distinguish between historico-philosophical and political secularism. One can in principle be a political secularist without sharing any of the anti-religious assumptions of historico-philosophical secularism. But in fact, the two grounding assumptions of secularism, that religion is a pre-rational form of belief to be superseded by rational knowledge and that religion is intolerant, is prone to conflict and therefore is dangerous for democratic politics, both of them are closely interwoven in European secularism, in academic discourse as well as in public debates.

The “secular” nature of the modern European state and the “secular” character of European democracy serve as one of the foundational myths of the contemporary European identity. There is a frequently heard secular European narrative, usually offered as a genealogical explanation and as a normative justification for the secular character of European democracy, which has the following schematic structure: Once upon a time in medieval Europe

there was, as is typical of pre-modern societies, a fusion of religion and politics. But this fusion, under the new conditions of religious diversity, extreme sectarianism, and conflict created by the Protestant Reformation led to the nasty, brutish and long-lasting religious wars of the early modern era that left European societies in ruin. The secularization of the state was the felicitous response to this catastrophic experience. The Enlightenment did the rest. Modern Europeans learnt to separate religion, politics, and science. Most importantly, they learnt to tame the religious passions and to dissipate obscurantist fanaticism by banishing religion to a protected private sphere, while establishing an open, liberal, secular public sphere where freedom of expression and public reason dominate. Those are the favorable secular foundations upon which democracy grows and thrives. As the tragic stories of violent religious conflicts around the world show, the unfortunate deprivatization of religion and its return to the public sphere will need to be managed carefully if one is to avoid undermining those fragile foundations.

I call this a foundational myth because it is a rather inaccurate depiction of European historical developments and it is not even a fair characterization of “really existing democracies” in Europe today. The religious wars of Early Modern Europe did not ensue, at least not immediately, into the secular state but rather into the confessional one. The principle *cuius regio eius religio*, established first at the Peace of Augsburg, is not the formative principle of the modern secular democratic state, but rather that of the modern confessional territorial absolutist state. Nowhere in Europe did religious conflict lead to secularization, but rather to the confessionalization of the state and to the territorialization of religions and peoples. Moreover, this early modern dual pattern of confessionalization and territorialization was already well established before the religious wars and even before the Protestant Reformation.

The Spanish Catholic state under the Catholic Kings serves as the first paradigmatic model of state confessionalization and religious territorialization. The expulsion of Spanish Jews and Muslims who refused to convert to Catholicism is the logical consequence of such a dynamic of state formation. Ethno-religious cleansing, in this respect, stands at the very origin of the early modern European state. From such a perspective, the so-called “religious wars” could also more appropriately be called the wars of early modern

European state formation. Religious minorities caught in the wrong confessional territory were offered not secular toleration, much less freedom of religion, but the “freedom” to emigrate.

The secularization of the European state would arrive, if at all, much later and would not necessarily contribute always to democratization, as the secularist Soviet type regimes most clearly show. Yet, despite its obvious historical inaccuracy, this common narrative of European secularization is not only frequently repeated by European elites but appears to be deeply sedimented in the collective memory of ordinary people across most European societies.

It is indeed astounding to observe how widespread the view throughout Europe that religion is intolerant and creates conflict is. According to the 1998 ISSP public opinion survey, the overwhelming majority of Europeans, practically over two thirds of the population in every Western European country, holds the view that religion is “intolerant.”¹ Since people are unlikely to expressly recognize their own intolerance, one can assume that in expressing such an opinion Europeans are thinking of somebody else's “religion” or, alternatively, present a selective retrospective memory of their own past religion, which fortunately they consider to have outgrown. It is even more telling that a majority of the population in every Western European country, with the significant exception of Norway and Sweden, shares the view that “religion creates conflict.”

What would seem obvious is that such a widespread negative view of “religion” cannot possibly be grounded empirically in the collective historical experience of European societies in the 20th century or in the actual personal experience of most contemporary Europeans. It can plausibly be explained, however, as a secular construct that has the function of positively differentiating modern secular Europeans from “the religious other,” either from pre-modern religious Europeans or from contemporary non-European religious people, particularly from Muslims. Most striking is the view of “religion” in the abstract as the primary source of violent conflict, given the actual historical experience of most European societies in the 20th century. “The Euro-

¹ In Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion in Europe at the End of the Second Millenium* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 2003) Table 5.2 on Hostility Towards Religion in Europe, p. 78

pean short century,” from 1914 to 1989, using Eric Hobsbawm's apt characterization, was indeed one of the most violent, bloody, and genocidal centuries in the history of humanity. But none of the horrible massacres can be said to have been caused by religious fanaticism and intolerance. All of them were rather the product of modern secular ideologies.

Yet contemporary Europeans obviously prefer to selectively forget the more inconvenient recent memories of secular ideological conflict and retrieve instead the long forgotten memories of the religious wars of early modern Europe to make sense of the religious conflicts they see today proliferating around the world and increasingly threatening them. Rather than seeing the common structural contexts of modern state formation, inter-state geopolitical conflicts, modern nationalism and the political mobilization of ethno-cultural and religious identities, processes central to modern European history that became globalized through the European colonial expansion, Europeans prefer seemingly to attribute those conflicts to “religion,” that is, to religious fundamentalism and to the fanaticism and intolerance which is supposedly intrinsic to “pre-modern” religion, an atavistic residue which modern secular enlightened Europeans have fortunately left behind. One may suspect that the function of such a selective historical memory is to safeguard the perception of the progressive achievements of Western secular modernity, offering a self-validating justification of the secular separation of religion and politics as the condition for modern liberal democratic politics, for global peace and for the protection of individual privatized religious freedom.

But how “secular” are the European states? How tall and solid are the “walls of separation” between national state and national church and between religion and politics across Europe? To which extent should one attribute the indisputable success of post-World War II Western European democracies to the triumph of secularization over religion? France is the only Western European state which is officially and proudly “secular,” that is, that defines itself and its democracy as regulated by the principles of *laïcité*. By contrast, there are several European countries with long-standing democracies which have maintained established churches. They include England and Scotland within the United Kingdom and all the Nordic Lutheran countries: Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Finland and, until the year 2000, Sweden. Of the new democracies, Greece has also maintained the establishment of the Greek Or-

thodox Church. This means that with the exception of the Catholic Church, which has eschewed establishment in every recent (post-1974) transition to democracy in Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain) and in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia), every other major branch of Christianity (Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Orthodox) is officially established somewhere in Europe, without apparently jeopardizing democracy in those countries. Since on the other hand there are many historical examples of European states which were secular and non-democratic, the Soviet-type communist regimes being the most obvious case, one can, therefore safely conclude that the strict secular separation of church and state is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for democracy.

Indeed, one could advance the proposition that of the two clauses of the First Amendment to the US Constitution “free exercise” of religion, rather than “no establishment,” is the one which appears to be a necessary condition for democracy. One cannot have democracy without freedom of religion. Indeed “free exercise” stands out as a normative democratic principle in itself. The “no-establishment” principle, by contrast is defensible and necessary only as a means to free exercise and to equal rights. Dis-establishment becomes politically necessary for democracy wherever an established religion claims monopoly over the state territory, impedes the free exercise of religion, and undermine the equal rights of all citizens. This was the case of the Catholic Church before it officially recognized the principle of “freedom of religion” as an unalienable individual right. In other words, secularist principles per se may be defensible on instrumental grounds, as a means to the end of free exercise, but not as an intrinsically liberal democratic principle in itself.

Alfred Stepan has pointed out how the most important empirical analytical theories of democracy, from Robert Dahl to Juan Linz, do not include secularism or strict separation as one of the institutional requirements for democracy, as prominent normative liberal theories such as those of John Rawls or Bruce Ackerman tend to do. As an alternative to secularist principles or norms, Stepan has proposed the model of the “twin tolerations,” which he describes as “the minimal boundaries of freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for

religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions.”² Within this framework of mutual autonomy, Stepan concludes, “there can be an extraordinarily broad range of concrete patterns of religion-state relations in political systems that would meet our minimal definition of democracy.”³

This is precisely the case empirically across Europe. Between the two extremes of French *laïcité* and Nordic Lutheran establishment, there is a whole range of very diverse patterns of church-state relations, in education, media, health and social services, etc., which constitute very “unsecular” entanglements, such as the consociational formula of pillarization in the Netherlands, or the corporatist official state recognition of the Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany.⁴ One could of course retort that European societies are *de facto* so secularized and, as a consequence, what remains of religion has become so temperate that both constitutional establishment and the various institutional church-state entanglements are as a matter of fact innocuous, if not completely irrelevant. But one should remember that the drastic secularization of most Western European societies came after the consolidation of democracy, not before, and therefore it would be incongruent to present not just the secularization of the state and of politics, but also the secularization of society as a condition for democracy.

In fact, at one time or another most continental European societies developed confessional religious parties which played a crucial role in the democratization of those societies. Even those confessional parties which initially emerged as anti-liberal and at least ideologically as anti-democratic parties, as was the case with most Catholic parties in the 19th century, ended up playing a

² Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics*, p. 213.

³ Stepan, *Ibid.* p.217.

⁴ John Madeley has developed a tripartite measure of church-state relation, which he calls the TAO of European management and regulation of religion-state relations by the use of Treasure (T: for financial and property connections), Authority (A: for the exercise of states' powers of command) and Organization (O: for the effective intervention of state bodies in the religious sphere). According to his measurement all European states score positively on at least one of these scales, most states score positively on two of them, and over one third (16 out of 45 states) score positively on all three. John T.S. Madeley, *Unequally Yoked: the Antinomies of Church-State Separation in Europe and the USA*, paper presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, August 30-September 2.

very important role in the democratization of their societies. This is the paradox of Christian Democracy so well analyzed by Stathis Kalyvas.⁵

The Challenge of Globalization to Eurocentric Conceptions of Secular Modernity

The sociological theory of secularization has tended to explain patterns of secularization in terms of levels of modernization, as if secularization necessarily followed modernization, in the sense that modernization itself is the cause or precipitator of secularization. The more modern a society, the more secular it is supposed to be. Such an assumption, which is already problematic in terms of the internal variations within Europe, becomes even more untenable the moment one adopts a global comparative perspective. Until very recently most discussions of secularization had assumed that European religious developments were typically or paradigmatically modern, while the persistence of religion in modern America was attributed to American “exceptionalism.” It was assumed that Europe was secular because it was modern. America was the exception that confirmed the European rule. Progressive religious decline was so much taken for granted as a normal process of modern development that what required an explanation was the American ‘deviation’ from the European ‘norm.’

But the fundamental question is whether secularization in the derived sense of decline of religious beliefs and practices, which takes the paradigmatic European form of “unchurching,” that is, of ceasing to belong to Christian churches and to practice “church” religiosity, is likely to take place without having undergone first the historical experience of secularization in the primary structural sense of transformation of the Christian churches from the system of medieval Christendom through Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the territorialization and confessionalization of the absolutist state churches, and the subsequent secularization of the state. Without the phenomenological experience of stadial consciousness associated with the stages

⁵ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

of European historical secularization, processes of modernization elsewhere may not have the same secularizing effect as in Europe.

This is the fundamental lesson of American exceptionalism. Of crucial relevance is, first of all, the historical fact that people in the United States did not have to overcome either the established ecclesiastical institutions or what Taylor calls the paleo-Durkheimian conditions of belief of the old European ancient regimes.

Equally relevant is, secondly, the fact that the United States were already born as a brand new modern secular republic and that its very foundation coincides with the neo-Durkheimian “age of mobilization” in the sense that religious mobilization and political mobilization are simultaneous and co-foundational in the Christian secular republic so that the American Enlightenment and the American civil religion are for all practical purposes devoid of the kind of anti-Christian animus which permeates Taylor's genealogical account of exclusive humanism. In other words, an anti-Christian or anti-religious secular animus is unlikely to emerge, when the very Christianization of the American people was the historical outcome of the religious-political mobilization that accompanied the Great Awakenings and the socio-historical transformations of American democracy.

Finally, the turning point in the radical secularization of European societies is undoubtedly connected with the “age of authenticity,” a phenomenological condition which owes much to the Romantic reaction that Taylor has so persistently illuminated for us throughout his work, and that became democratized throughout the North Atlantic world with the counter-cultural movement and youth rebellions of the 1960s. Yet in the United States one could say that, at least in the sphere of religion the Age of Authenticity was already present and operative in the Second Great Awakening, certainly in the Burned Over District of upstate New York and in the myriad of utopian communities and radical spiritual experiments in all directions which Jon Butler has appropriately and suggestively characterized as “the spiritual hothouse of Ante-Bellum America.”

What if one turns the table on the European theories of American exceptionalism and views the historical process of secularization of Latin Christendom as the one truly exceptional development, unlikely to be reproduced any-

where else in the world with the same stadal sequential arrangement. It does not mean that one has to accept the now emerging theories of European exceptionalism, promoted by Peter Berger among others, according to which secularity is a singular European phenomenon unknown in the rest of the world other than among Westernized elites, so that the global condition is rather one of the de-secularization of the world and religious revival. There are plenty of indications of secularity in Japanese or Chinese cultures, for instance. What they lack, however, is precisely the stadal consciousness, and without it, one may ask, can the immanent frame of the secular modern order have the same phenomenological effect in the conditions of belief and unbelief in non-Western societies? Without an “stadal consciousness” can the secularist self-understanding of Western European modernity have the same effect also in non-Western societies? Or will it be rather recognized for what it obviously is, namely, a particular Western Christian process of secularization without the same force in non-Christian societies, which did not undergo a similar process of historical development, but rather always confronted Western Secular Modernity from its first encounter with European colonialism as “the other”?

It just happened, of course, as we are only now becoming increasingly aware, that this particular historical pattern of Western Christian secularization became globalized through the also very particular historical process of European colonial expansion. As a result the immanent frame became in a certain sense globalized, at least certain crucial aspects of the cosmic order through the globalization of science and technology, certain crucial aspects of the institutional social order of state, market and public sphere, and certain crucial aspects of the moral order through the globalization of individual human rights. But the process of European colonial expansion encountered other post-axial civilizations with very different social imaginaries, which often had their own established patterns of reform in accordance with their own particular axial civilizational principles and norms.

The modern secular immanent frame has indeed become globalized. But this has happened as an interactive dynamic interlocking, transforming and re-fashioning of pre-existing non-Western civilizational patterns and social imaginaries with modern Western secular ones. Moreover, in the same way as “our” modern secular age is fundamentally and inevitably post-Christian, the

emerging multiple modernities in the different post-axial civilizational areas are likely to be post-Hindu, or post-Confucian, or post-Muslim, that is, they will also be a modern refashioning and transformation of already existing civilizational patterns and social imaginaries.

If globalization entails a certain de-centering, provincializing and historicizing of Europe and of European secular modernity, even in relation to the different pattern of American modernity within the same immanent frame, then it is unlikely that “our” secular age will simply become the common global secular age of all of humanity, or that “our” secular age will become absolutely unaffected by this process of globalization and by the encounter with the emerging non-Western and in many respects non-secular modernities. Without any claim to forecasting, some patterns are already becoming visible in our global present.

One likely effect is the further expansion of what Taylor describes as the *nova* and *supernova* effects of the age of experience, so that all religions of the world, old and new, pre-axial, axial, and post-axial, become available for individual appropriation anytime and anywhere, thus multiplying the options of conversion and of individual search for transcendence.

The more relevant question is whether the already apparent emergence of multiple and successful non-Western modernities, beyond the single case of Japan, signaled by the rise of China and India as global economic, political and socio-cultural powers, is likely to shake at least the “stadial consciousness” of Western secular modernity. We do not know whether this is likely to be accompanied by the emergence of a global post-secular age, in which the particularism and exceptionalism of Western secular modernity become increasingly visible. But it is likely to have the effect of forcing Europeans to become for the first time reflexively aware of their post-Christian secularity. As is already happening with the rather hostile reception of Islam in Europe, this is likely to be accompanied by the reflexive reaffirmation and reformulation of European Christian and secular identities. It may be a bit premature to speak of a post-secular Europe. But if within non-Western civilizations, new modern forms of post-Hindu, post-Buddhist, post-Confucian, or post-Muslim forms of transcendence become widely and globally available, then we will be compelled to speak of a global post-secular age. This new global age is likely to be characterized by the increasing loosening of territorial civi-

lizational boundaries and by the spread of what could be called global denominationalism.

Until very recently, the civilizational *oikoumenē* of all world religions had very clear territorial limits, set by the very world regimes in which those religions were civilizational and thus territorially embedded and by the geographically circumscribed limitations of the existing means of communication. The Bishop of Rome may have always claimed to speak *urbi et orbi*, to the city and to the world. But in fact this has become a reality first in the 20th century. What constitutes the truly novel aspect of the present global condition is precisely the fact that all world religions can be reconstituted for the first time truly as de-territorialized global imagined communities, detached from the civilizational settings in which they have been traditionally embedded. Paraphrasing Arjun Appadurai's image of "modernity at large", one could say that the world religions, through the linking of electronic mass media and mass migration, are being reconstituted as de-territorialized global religions "at large" or as global *ummas*.

It is this proliferation of de-territorialized transnational global imagined communities, encompassing the so-called old world religions as well as many new forms of hybrid globalized religions such as the Bahais, Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Afro-American religions, Falun Gong, etc, that I call the emerging global denominationalism. Of course, they compete with many other forms of secular imagined communities or *ummas*. But all those transnational imagined religious communities present fundamental challenges to our theories of secular modernity, to international relations theories which are still functioning within the premises of a Westphalian international system and to secular cosmopolitan theories of globalization.

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