› Secularism and Secularization. Postcolonial Genealogy and Historical Critique

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Content

Shorn of its normativity and predictive confidence and circumscribed in its geographic scope, the theory of secularization has nonetheless received important twenty-first century restatements. Philosopher Charles Taylor recounts the story of secularization as a disenchantment not of religious beliefs, but of the framework in which they are situated. Despite the periodic resurgence of religion in Europe and North America, its frame, he argues, has become immanent. This means that believers and unbelievers alike share an awareness that faith is not longer a given; it now involves choice. Historian Hugh McLeod has similarly argued that the long-term transformation of religion in Europe is best described not as a collapse of Christianity, but rather as a "decline of Christendom," in which the churches successively lost public and state power.[1]

While there is a general agreement among many scholars that our current condition is marked by the coexistence of religion and secularity, confusion reigns regarding the definition and the place of secularism. In *A Secular Age*, Taylor defines secularism as the erroneous, yet commonly held notion that arguments against religion in the name of modern science were a principal force producing secularity. Despite the fact that Taylor names exposing this fallacy one of the chief aims of his book, political scientist Wendy Brown summed up his thesis as "a history of Christian secularism" and the first Library of Congress subject heading of *A Secular Age* is "secularism."[2] This apparent mislabeling is not a sign of careless reading, as much as it is a sign of the powerful pull that the term secularism exerts in scholarship today. Multiple critical projects can and do operate under its umbrella, giving the term a global and interdisciplinary appeal. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that secularism is one phoenix that has arisen from the ashes of modernization theory.

Much of the excitement surrounding secularism as a field of inquiry has come from postcolonial studies, which has identified secularization not as a neutral social theory, but rather as the scientific auxiliary of a technique of statecraft developed and deployed in the nineteenth century to unify nations and divide colonial populations. By removing the "ization" and adding "ism," the new critical histories have signaled their effort to demystify or, better yet, secularize the theory of secularization by revealing that what was once held for science was, in fact, ideology. Secularism, accordingly, encompasses the discourses, policies, and constitutional arrangements, whereby modern states and elites have sought to regulate religion and, in the process, contributed to the "immanent frame" in which religion is now located.[3]

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[1] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), Hugh McLeod, "Introduction," in *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–26.

[2] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 4; Wendy Brown, "Introduction" in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, eds., (Berkeley, Calif.: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California, 2009), 10.

[3] On the demystification of secularization, see Aamir R. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). The number of collected volumes on secularism continues to grow: Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and its critics* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Anuradha Needham and Rajeswari Rajan, eds., *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Craig Calhoun, Mark

In the course of writing a book on nineteenth-century German rationalist dissent, Freethought and atheism, I found the new literature on secularism extremely useful and stimulating.[4] But I soon realized that my informants could not be easily enclosed in the history of secularism-*cum*-secularization told by post-colonial scholars. To begin with there exist two definitions of secularism. The term was coined in 1851 as a self-appellation by British Freethinkers to clarify their essential aims. It tied advocacy of immanent worldview and ethics to anticlerical critique. The second definition, which I have just outlined, emerged in the early 1960s to describe the religious policies, not of the United States and its history of separation of church and state, but rather of countries, specifically Turkey and India, where separation was linked to modernizing ideologies of the state.[5]

If it were merely a problem of definition, one could separate these phenomena by naming one worldview secularism, and the other political or governmental secularism. However, their histories were intertwined. The liberal elites who backed secularization shared with more plebian freethinkers assumptions about the cultural relevance of natural science, the emancipation of religious minorities and the need to limit church control of public education. At the same time, they were competitors, who clashed over political practices and epistemological assumptions. The theorists of political secularism have tended to overlook these clashes and subsumed worldview secularism under the liberal project of secularization. In the process, they have given their usage of the term "secularism" a pedigree that goes back to 1851. In this essay, I question this pedigree by returning to the history of the struggle over control of the terms "secularization" and "secularism" fought between freethinkers, liberals and conservative Christians in Britain and Germany.

1. Secularisms: Plural and Singular

Awareness of the historical presence of these two competing forms of secularism brought me to what I see as the Archimedean point -- and key methodological dilemma -- of the new theories of political secularism. On the one hand, these scholars eschew any teleological claims, and see themselves as advocates of the subaltern, the fragmentary, the irreducible. On the other, they make constant recourse to secularism in the singular, and repeatedly employ a cast of hegemonic agents, who are understood to be ultimately driving secularism, in terms of class: the bourgeoisie, in

Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig J. Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Ranjan Ghosh, ed., *Making Sense of the Secular: Critical Perspectives from Europe to Asia* (London: Routledge, 2013); Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal Mandair, eds., *Secularism and Religion-Making* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[4] Todd Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[5] A link between the two definitions of secularism is found in the incorporation of the French term *laïcité* (laiklik) in the Turkish constitution of 1923. *Laïcité* fused the Republican cultural projects of anticlericalism, positivism and state secularization. It was enshrined in the French separation law of 1905, which became an international model for reformers.

terms of ideology: liberalism, in terms of institutions: the centralized, bureaucratic nation-state.

Scholars of secularism resolve the tension between the particular and the universal in different ways. Social theorist Ashis Nandy argued in 1990 that the mounting religious conflicts in India revealed that political secularism was a colossus standing on clay feet. Underneath a thin crust of Westernized state elites, who had inherited an antireligious orientation from the colonial regime, most Indian politicians only paid lip service to Western norms, while promoting more pluralist and more authentically Indian understandings of the public role of religion.[6] By and large, the critical scholarship has not taken Nandy's lead and baldly dismissed secularism as a false ideology designed in the West and ill fitted for Indian society. Instead they have investigated secularism in practices and discourses produced at discrete sites across the face of global modernity, where elites and state actors faced the challenges posed by religious communities to the emergent national and imperial states.[7] In the pivotal text of the new literature, *Formations of the Secular*, anthropologist Talal Asad proposes that scholars employ Michel Foucault's genealogical method, whereby major aspects of modernity, such as secularism, are traced back to earlier micropolitical scenarios, from which they were liberated and made use of in other, larger arenas. He names secularism an "embedded concept" of humble origins, which began in the "[l]ong-standing habits of indifference, disbelief, or hostility among individuals towards Christian rituals and authorities" but which became "entangled with projects of total social reconstruction by means of legislation." [8] The invention of the term "secularism" in 1851 by British Freethinkers serves Asad as a case in point. It marks the moment at which the anticlericalism of marginal groups of subaltern radicals and Owenite socialists was transformed and passed to the more powerful social forces of British liberalism. The larger context for this shift, according to Asad, is the emergence of the modern nation state with its bureaucratic regimes of managing the population, which Foucault designated as governmentality.

Thus, from multiple origins, secularism took on a more singular character, as it became a core doctrine of liberalism and practice of the state. Asad reintroduces the difference between the universal and plural in his subsequent distinction between secularism, as a "political and governmental doctrine that has its origin in nineteenth-century liberal society" and "the secular" as a "concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life," but for which there existed no "single line of filiation."[9]

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[6] Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and Recovery of Religious Tolerance" in Veena Das, ed., Mirrors of Violence, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 69-92. On the evolution of an "Indian secularism," see Rajeev Bhargava, *The Promise of India's Secular Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[7] According to Gauri Viswanathan, the colonial context encouraged missionary educators in the 1840s and 1850s to support secularist education as a means to wean Indians from their prior beliefs and prepare them for Christian conversion, Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 46–67.

[8] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 17, 24, 23.

[9] Ibid., 25.

The challenge, according to the editors of a recent volume, is to place "plural secularism*s*" "in relation to the overarching narrative that gives them both political authority and affective power."[10] More concretely, anthropologist Peter van der Veer invites us to examine how supposedly Western ideas of "rationality and progress were […] produced and universally spread in the expansion of European power" but "inserted in different historical trajectories" in places like India and China. Focusing on the state and elite groups, van der Veer emphasizes continuities in Chinese state secularism from the Imperial period to Maoism, and compares this to the secularism of similarly hegemonic groups in India.[11]

While I admire these studies, I take issue with the underlying narrative produced by the assumption that national and imperial projects of secularization were consolidated by 1850 and extended globally thereafter under the auspices of liberalism and the modern state. Despite insistence on local variation, the narrative places the history of secularism within a linear process of continual adjustment without serious reversal. Most of the literature draws its examples from the British Empire and many of its authors work in North American universities, two settings, where, arguably, liberalism has remained the dominant political system since the nineteenth century.

In short, even if they investigate micro-political developments, the histories of secularism tend to be universal histories. To the degree that these histories consider worldview secularism, they incorporate it as a factor in the elaboration of a larger and essentially singular project of emergent secularity. The same applies to a work inspired by Taylor's *A Secular Age*, such as John Lardas Modern's *Secularism in Antebellum America*, which places worldview atheism alongside Protestant evangelicalism, spiritualism, and phrenology, as one of the myriad religious experiments that emerged in a dialectical relationship to a rising secular order.[12]

This essay argues, by contrast, that the history of worldview secularism complicates and contradicts the assumptions made in the new universal histories of the secular. Employing the tools of conceptual history, which holds that words themselves bear the traces of social, religious, and intellectual struggles, I will examine the relation of worldview secularists and their interlocutors as revealed through the history of the term "secularism" and its cognate concepts. I begin by returning to the coining of the term secularism in 1851, and asking whether the neologism added semantic grist to the liberals' mill, as Asad suggested, or whether it was not also throwing a wrench into the works. The essay then turns to Germany to explore how competition between worldview secularism and political secularism was reflected in the emergence of early sociological theories of secularization around 1900. It asks why the liberal theory of secularization did not gain widespread acceptance and why the terms "secu-

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[10] Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (eds.), *Secularisms* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 7.
[11] Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 144–167.
[12] Lardas Modern reads this explosion of religious experiment as part of what Taylor termed the "nova effect." The book is centered on 1851, the year of the publication of Melville's Moby Dick, and also, coincidentally, the year in which the "secularism" was coined. John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America with Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and Their Metaphors: Featuring Discussions of Mass Media, Moby-Dick, Spirituality, Phrenology, Anthropology, Sing Sing State Penitentiary, and Sex with the New Motive Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

lar," "secularism," and "secularization" only achieved their contemporary meanings in Germany after 1945. The answers to these questions provide a vantage point from which to critically rethink the universal history of political secularism.

2. The Emergence of Secularism in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s

In a recent publication, the prominent sociologist of religion Bryan Turner argues that the "ideas of a 'secular' society" grew out of Holyoake's secularist movement.[13] Yet, a look at the 1840s reveals that -- at least on the level of terminology--the opposite appears to be true: "secularism" emerged from "the secular." The adjective "secular" had been widely used in the early nineteenth century to differentiate parish from ecclesiastical and monastic clergy, or profane from religious music. The binary "secular and religious" became politicized in the 1840s in the context of debate over national primary education. A government plan to give the established Church of England privileged influence over a compulsory school system elicited protests from Protestant dissenters in 1843, which in turn provided an opening for advocates of secular education. In a July 1843 speech in the House of Commons, an M.P. argued that Britain should follow the example of several American states and Holland and make the schools secular and nondenominational, allowing, however, the various churches to delegate ministers for religious instruction. Such national education would help "in counteracting an insurrectionary spirit" and "putting an end to the Welsh and Gaelic languages."[14] Striking a similar tone, a pamphlet of that year argued that secular education would aid in the moral disciplining of the "lower orders." These claims demonstrate that, like earlier arguments in favor Catholic and Jewish emancipation, liberal calls for nondenominational education emerged out of concern over national unity in a competitive international and colonial context.[15]

The debates over school secularization were not devoid of worldview secularism. Many assumed that secular education based in science was not only fairer than religious education, but also superior to it. Anticlericals, including George Combe, Britain's most famous phrenologist, began to promote their own worldviews in the name of nondenominational, scientific education. The workers education movement, which formed a center of Freethought, aligned itself with school reform and a Secular Education League was founded in London in 1847 in the Gould Square Mechanics' Institute. The Owenite radical and leader of English Freethinkers, George Holyoake, signaled his interest in the term by subtitling *The Reasoner* a "Secular and Eclectic

[13] Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 128.

[14] "Debates and Proceedings in Parliament" *The Spectator*, July 29, 1843, p. 2.

[15] Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); David Cesarani, "British Jews," in *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews, and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst, eds. (Manchester UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 33–55; Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

journal' in March 1849.[16] A clear sign of the impact freethinkers were having on the meaning of "secular" came in 1850, when a leading liberal Richard Cobden addressed a congress convened to found a National Secular School Association. He rejected this proposed name because to his ear "secular" meant "not religious" rather than "non-sectarian." If school reformers associated their cause with irreligion, Cobden warned that they would be "opening up a chink in their armour which they would some day have rivet up with more difficulty and discussion."[17] The delegates were apparently convinced and chose the name National Public School Association instead.

Holyoake defined "secularism" in 1851 as "a development of freethinking, including its *positive* as well as its *negative* side. Secularists consider freethinking as a double protest—a protest against specific speculative error, and in favour of specific moral truth." According to Asad, the strategic benefit of "secularism" over the more exclusive and harsh term "atheism" was to position the freethinkers to "direct an emerging mass politics of social reform in a rapidly industrializing society." A statement made by leading Unitarian intellectual of the day, Harriet Martineau, corroborates this interpretation. "[T]he term Secularism" she wrote approvingly in 1853, had the advantage of "including a large number of persons who are not atheists and uniting them for action" as well as getting rid of "a vast amount of prejudice."[18]

Thus we see that the neologism secularism did not produce the secular, as much as it appeared within the field of meanings opened up by the politics of secular education. However, this did not make Holyoake's position identical with those of his desired allies in the movement for secular schools, such as working-class Christian dissenters or middle-class liberals. By shunting off primitive atheism and declining to enter a contest for absolute truth in the religious realm, Holyoake positioned secularism to appear not as a denial of Christianity, but as a competing creed. As yet another dissenting sect, secularism could petition for inclusion in the rights and privileges owed to all religious societies, including the right to provided religious (or ethical) instruction in public schools. At the same time, however, the semantic overlap with the secular claimed for secularism a privileged position as the only "religious" creed compatible with the secular content of scientific education.

Holyoake was attacked by opponents on the right and the left for hiding his atheism in "the secular." One Protestant minister called him a rattlesnake that had discarded

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[16] George Combe, *What Should Secular Education Embrace* (Edinburgh, London: Maclachlan, Stewart, & co.; 1848); Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), 142.

[17] S. E. Maltby, *Manchester and the Movement for National Elementary Education 1800-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1918), 78–79. A writer in *The Reasoner* insisted that "secular" was the only proper term that could encompass a national education, because it created parity not just among the sects, but also among those "of no sect." Austin, "What's in a Name?" *The Reasoner*, no. 8, vol. 10 (1850), 88-89

[18] George Holyoake, "The Principles of Secularism," *The Reasoner*, Jan. 8, 1854, reprinted in: Edward Royle, *The Infidel Tradition from Paine to Bradlaugh* (London: Macmillan, 1976): 151-152; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 24; Martineau quoted in George Holyoake, *English Secularism: A Confession of Belief* (Chicago: Open Court, 1896).

his rattle, but was no less venomous.[19] However, this move had another cost: Holyoake's semantic distinctions were difficult to maintain. Late in the century, he protested that his term secularism was being usurped and confused with secularity:

Things secular are as separate from the Church as land from the ocean. And what nobody seems to discern is that things secular are in themselves quite different from Secularism. The secular is a mode of instruction; Secularism is a code of conduct. [...] Secularist teaching would [conflict with theology], but secular instruction would not.[20]

Holyoake inserted "mode" and "code" to shore up the distinction between political secularization and worldview secularism.[21] Holyoake's frustration at the failure of the public to uphold this distinction is instructive. On the one hand, it supports Asad's implicit claim that worldview secularism had become subordinated to liberal dominance and political secularization. On the other, it indicates that secularists continued to resist this subordination. In order to demonstrate how this secularist resistance could in turn shape--and even deform--liberalism, I turn now to the German case.

3. Liberals and Secularists in Nineteenth-Century Germany

By treating worldview secularists and advocates of state secularization as two distinct groups with different social and political characteristics--the former being more lower-class and politically radical, the latter being more liberal and middle-class--I am running roughshod over numerous gray areas. There were of course, wealthy, reactionary advocates of a monistic conception of the universe, just there were radical socialists who defended Christianity. I employ these as ideal types that allow me to make an intervention into a critical literature that tends to focus only on one group, namely liberals. These ideal types are also useful for making comparisons between the British and German experiences of secularism and secularization, which diverged after roughly 1870. Up until mid-century, the relationship between worldview secularists and the liberals had been relatively harmonious in both Britain and Central Europe. Liberals justified state secularization by championing the rights of secularists and other religious minorities, and, in both regions, leading liberals tended to be Protestant, bourgeois and educated, while organized secularists found their chief support in the lower-middle and working classes.

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[19] Charles Southwell, *Review of a Controversy between the Rev. Brewin Grant and G.J. Holyoake* (London, 1853), 19. The atheist Freethinker, Charles Bradlaugh criticized Holyoake's term in an 1870 debate. Holyoake and Bradlaugh, *Secularism, Scepticism, and Atheism: Verbatim Report of the Proceedings of a Two Nights' Public Debate Between Messrs. G.J. Holyoake & C. Bradlaugh: Held at the New Hall of Science, London, on the Evenings of March 10 and 11, 1870* (London: Austin, 1870).
[20] Holyoake, *English Secularism*, 2.
[21] In another passage, Holyoake introduces "secularity" as the aim of the "mode" of secular education. In the field of religion "irreconcilable diversity exists," while "[i]n secularity there is no disunity." Only secularity, which took no stance on the validity of the competing moral codes, could form the basis of liberal governance. Ibid., 67.

But whereas British liberalism was able to bridge the social gap between these groups, with the rise of socialism in the 1870s, German liberalism was not. This rift colored relations between established German intellectuals and organized secularists. Major figures of German science, such as Emil Du Bois-Reymond and Rudolf Virchow, sought to disentangle science from secularist worldview. Virchow, who only four years earlier had announced his support for a *Kulturkampf*, a "culture war" against Catholicism in the Prussian Diet, struck a defensive tone in a famous speech of 1877, in which he urged fellow liberals to imagine "how the theory of evolution appears in the head of a socialist."[22]

Over the next half-century, the chief organizations of German secularism — Freethought and Free Religion — became increasingly identified with socialism, often to the chagrin of their middle-class leaderships. In October 1912, a leading liberal politician was pleased to report the absence of any of party colleagues at the meeting of the International Federation of Freethinkers in Munich, which "some time ago, would have been visited overwhelmingly by those who belong to political liberalism." Having been overcome in "the leading intellectual stratum," secularist ideas "today find their last echoes in the lower strata of the nation."[23]

The conflict between radical secularists and liberal secularizers has not featured in recent studies of religious conflict in nineteenth century Germany. These have centered on the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s and have generally employed binary models to portray the conflict as a manifestation of the confessional antagonism between Protestantism and Catholicism[24] or as a clash between liberalism with its conception of state secularity and Roman Catholicism with its vision of a Christian order.[25]

Although the historians of the *Kulturkampf* are only beginning to receive postcolonial studies, they operate from a similar model of religious-secular conflict. Both identify policies of secularization as tools of Protestant liberals aiming at cultural hegemony. Several historians of Germany now argue that Weber's theory of seculari-

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[22] Rudolf Virchow, *Die Freiheit der Wissenschaft im modernen Staat. Rede gehalten in der dritten allgemeinen Sitzung der fünfzigsten Versammlung deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte zu München am 22. September 1877* (Berlin: Wiegandt, Hempel & Parey, 1877), 7. Todd Weir, "The Riddles of Monism: An Introductory Essay," in *Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion and the History of a Worldview,* Todd Weir, ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–44.
[23] *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*, no. 548, Oct. 26, 1912.
[24] Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Olaf Blaschke, "Das 19. Jahrhundert: Ein Zweites Konfessionelles Zeitalter?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000): 38-75; Helmut Walser Smith and Christopher Clark, "The Fate of Nathan," in *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1800-1914*, Helmut Walser Smith, ed., (Oxford: Berg, 2001): 3-29; Gangolf Hübinger, "Confessionalism," in *Imperial Germany: A Historical Companion*, Roger Chickering, ed., (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1996): 156 - 184; Lucian Hölscher, "Konfessionspolitik in Deutschland zwischen Glaubensstreit und Koexistenz," in *Baupläne der sichtbaren Kirche: Sprachliche Konzepte religiöser Vergemeinschaftung in Europa*, Lucian Hölscher, ed., (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007): 11-53.
[25] Michael Gross, *The War against Catholicism: Liberalism and Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Tim Verhoeven, *Transatlantic Anti-Catholicism: France and the United States in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Manuel Borutta, *Antikatholizismus: Deutschland und Italien im Zeitalter der europäischen Kulturkämpfe* (Göttingen: Vandehoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

zation should be interpreted as a partisan contribution to the anticatholic *Kultur-kampf* in which he, as a Protestant liberal, was raised.[26]

There are developments at the height of the *Kulturkampf* that support the claim that anticatholic struggle pushed liberals to formulate broader projects of societal declericalization. The 1874 New Year's editorial of one of the most influential liberal papers, the Berlin *Nationalzeitung,* predicted that the coming year would realize "[w]hat we have hoped for for so long [...] We will be able to live and die as citizens outside the shadows of the church."[27] Yet, I would argue that worldview secularism disrupts the binaries with which the new histories of the *Kulturkampf* have been written. There had been relative harmony between radical secularists and their liberal allies at the outset of the Kulturkampf in 1871, but this gave way to the discord marked by Virchow's speech of 1877. In 1878, when liberal anticlericalism had largely fallen silent, Social Democratic anticlerical Johann Most created a furor when he launched a campaign for church-exiting (*Kirchenaustritt*) among working-class Protestant Berliners. It was at this point that leading liberal voices, such as historian and antisemite Heinrich von Treitschke, suddenly rediscovered the Christian essence of the German nation. Such developments require us to revise the bi-confessional model of nineteenth-century German religious politics and go beyond a tri-confessional one including Judaism to arrive at a quadriconfessional model including secularism.[28]

How does the quadriconfessional understanding of religious conflict contribute to our history of concepts? What if, instead of an expression of liberal Protestant triumphalism, the first formulations of the secularization theory by sociologists Max Weber and Ferdinand Tönnies also contained signs of a strategic retreat? Nearly half a century ago, the political philosopher Hermann Lübbe proposed that as these liberal sociologists plucked the term "secularization" out of the arsenal of political anticlericalism and transformed it into a social scientific term to describe an impersonal, macrohistorical process, they had effectively "neutralized" secularism.[29]

Lübbe has been criticized for misrepresenting those few instances where the terms "Säkularisierung" or "Säkularismus" were actually used in the German debate.[30] However, I think that his instinct is correct. The neutralization mechanism operated not via the term "secularism" but via the secularist project itself. A clear example is

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[26] According to Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser secularization theory remains perhaps "the most enduring legacy of the European culture wars" of the nineteenth century. "Introduction," *Culture Wars*, 7. Similar arguments by Borutta, *Antikatholizismus*, 414-415; and Oded Heilbronner, "From Ghetto to Ghetto: The Place of German Catholic Society in Recent Historiography," *Journal of Modern History 72*, no. 2 (2000): 453-495.
[27] Quoted in anon., *Adolf Stöcker und die Angriffe seiner Gegner im Lichte der Wahrheit. Von einem Nichtpolitiker* (Berlin: Martin Warneck, 1901), 14. A month later, Rudolf Virchow justified an anticlericalism out of the spirit of Protestantism, when he declared in the Prussian *Landtag* that just "as Luther saw in the church the actual Antichrist, so it is our view that we recognize the actual Antichrist in that which is called church, at least in great segments thereof." Quoted in Rudolf Lill, ed., *Der Kulturkampf* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997), 164.
[28] Weir, *Secularism*, 17-22, 173-218.
[29] Hermann Lübbe, *Säkularisierung. Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Karl Alber, 1975).
[30] Hermann Zabel, "Verweltlichung/Säkularisierung: Zur Geschichte einer Interpretationskategorie" (PhD, Münster, 1968), 18–19.

offered by Tönnies's programmatic speech given at the founding meeting of the German Society for Ethical Culture in 1892. At the meeting, the founders — liberal professors, nobility, and businessmen — were confronted by leading German secularists, including the biologist and monist Ernst Haeckel, who had turned out to demand that a secular ethics necessarily wage a struggle against the churches and support their worldview. Opposing this view, Tönnies argued that a science of ethics based on the comparative analysis of the moral content of different religions offered a more effective strategy for ending the religious conflicts of the era. This science of ethics created a perspective above the religions that could synthesize them on a higher order, rather than calling on one to submit to the other. Importantly, Tönnies subjugated the worldviews of Darwinian-inspired natural scientific secularism and Marxism to the same critique as the churches by treating them as objects of ethical analysis. The appeal of Ethical Culture to freethinking liberals is clear. It offered a path to national (or for liberal cosmopolitans like Tönnies a transnational) spiritual unity without abandoning their respective confessions, while at the same time defanging radical secularism by relegating it to one (under-reflected) religious source among many. [31]

The science of ethics could secularize secularism, but at a cost to liberals. They had to abandon the dream of a unified worldview grounded in natural science. Some two decades later, philosopher Heinrich Rickert and sociologist Max Weber formalized this neutralization of secularism, when they argued that worldviews constituted a system of thought based on value and not on empirical truth.[32]

The essential point here is that early, canonical statements of the sociological theory of secularization emerged not at the highpoint of the Kulturkampf, when many German liberals understood themselves to be locked in a binary struggle between scientific modernity and recidivist religious traditionalism, but rather at the point at which this binary began to break down. Radical secularism, aligned politically to socialism, ruptured the loose harmony of political and worldview secularism, and contributed to the ongoing fracturing of the earlier liberal consensus on religious progress. Thus while some liberals remained true to positivist worldview and with Haeckel called out "impavidi progrediamur!" [we must proceed without fear], others argued for a division of science and politics from ultimate questions, and still others embraced anti-materialism and antisemitism.[33]

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[31] *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur,* vol. 1, no. 1, Nov. 20, 1892, 7. Tönnies' famous work of 1887, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, offered a sociological theory of modernization. Todd Weir, "The Specter of 'Godless Jewry': Secularism and the 'Jewish Question' in Late Nineteenth Century Germany," *Central European History* 46, no. 4 (2013): 815–49.
[32] Weber, Max. "Die Grenznutzlehre und das 'psychophysische Grundgesetz'." In G*esammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, edited by Johannes Winckelmann, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988), 384-399. (1908); Heinrich Rickert, "Psychologie der Weltanschauungen und Philosophie der Werte," *Logos* IX, 1920/21.
[33] Weir, "Riddles."

4. Secularization, Secularism and Christianity in Twentieth-Century Germany

Whereas Tönnies criticized monist worldview out of his own secularist commitment, Weber did so out of an affinity with cultural Protestantism. One of his chief innovations, as set out in the *Protestant Ethic*, was to locate the driving force of secularization not in worldview secularism but rather in the history of religion itself. Weber's disentanglement of secularization and secularism was echoed in the work of theologian Ernst Troeltsch. Yet, despite these efforts, the leading Christian thinkers in Germany, Protestant and Catholic alike, largely rejected the term "secularization," because, according to Lübbe, it contained "too much polemic of its freethinking origin."[34]

The terms "Säkularismus" and "Säkularisierung" were only popularized in Germany in the late Weimar republic, in part by Protestant ministers, who had returned from the 1928 Jerusalem conference of the International Missionary Council impressed with the keynote speech delivered by the Quaker Rufus Jones on "Secular Civilization and the Christian Task." Rufus argued that a turning point had been reached by Western civilization and that instead of being the hub from which Christianity was exported into the heathen world, the West was now threatened by heathens in its European core. German theologians translated Rufus's terminology and defined "Säkularismus" as the collectivity of "all forces opposing the faith." It was, according to missionary Siegfried Knak, the "worldview and attitude" behind the "commerce, politics, industry and technology" of the day. Crucially, this definition of secularism conflated radical Freethought and communism with the secularization of modern civilization.[35]

The theory that secularization was a pathology caused by secularism was articulated in the concept of "Kulturbolschewismus" then being advanced by Catholic and Protestant theologians and politicians. The political function was to connect Soviet communism to socialism and liberalism, something achieved by pointing to a common secularist root. Karl Hutten, a Protestant minister, called communism "not only a political movement – in our German Bolshevism that is perhaps not even the essential matter – rather it is a spiritual orientation (*Gesinnung*)." This "worldview of radical immanence (*Diesseitigkeit*) and godlessness" has its origin "above all in fallen liberalism. There is almost a straight line between ruined liberalism and Bolshevik cultural revolution." [36] A similar argument was made in the May 1931 papal encyclical "Quadragesimo anno" which called on Catholics to "remember that Liberalism is the father of this Socialism that is pervading morality and culture and that Bolshevism will be its heir."[37]

Weber and Troeltsch's distinction between secularization and secularism could not catch hold in Germany prior to 1933, because, I would argue, liberals and conserva-

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[34] Lübbe, *Säkularisierung*, 59.
[35] Kurt Nowak, "Zur protestantischen Säkularismus-Debatte um 1930," *Wissenschaft und Praxis in Kirche und Gesellschaft* 69 (1980): 37– 51; Siegfried Knak, *Säkularismus und Mission* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1929), 2.
[36] Karl Hutten, *Kulturbolschewismus. Eine deutsche Schicksalsfrage*, (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1932), 1, 3, 4.
[37] Papal encyclicals online: www.papalencyclicals.net (accessed: August 25, 2014).

tives proved unable to neutralize worldview secularism either semantically or politically. It was only after the war that the prominent German theologian Friedrich Gogarten was able to distinguish between a healthy secularization compatible with modern Protestantism and a secularism that resulted from the irrational apotheosis of the secular. Secularization, he wrote, was "the necessary and legitimate consequence of Christian faith," while secularism was a "perversion (*Entartung*) of secularization." Already in 1950, another Protestant theologian, Friedrich Karl Schumann, had ascribed to secularism the status of a theological-philosophical error, "a misunderstanding of the genuine Christian differentiation of 'spiritual' and 'worldly' produced within the Christian domain." [38]

Numerous social, political, and religious transformations would have to be considered to account for this revaluation and acceptance of secularization in the period after 1945. The transformations began already in 1933 when the Nazi regime fundamentally reorganized confessional politics by eliminating Freethought and communism and by ghettoizing Germany's Jews. One Protestant theologian proclaimed the "end of secularism" already in 1935. [39] Following the elimination of National Socialism, which many Christians had come to see as another variation of secularism, politics became more consensual and centrist in postwar West Germany. Many Protestant churchmen, among them Gogarten himself, were happy to forget their own experimentation with völkisch theology and Christian worldview during years prior to 1945. [40] The destruction of the German state, the lessening of confessional tensions through the founding of the CDU, and the spirit of anticommunism all led to the elimination of the quadriconfessional field in West Germany. In East Germany, secularism became an element of state educational and religious policy.

5. Conclusions

The conceptual history of "secularism" and "secularization" has shown that worldview secularism should not be prematurely subsumed under the liberal political drive for state secularization. Liberals did not merely assimilate the useful tools provided by worldview secularists, they actively combatted secularism. Richard Cobden in 1850, Rudolf Virchow in 1877, Ferdinand Tönnies in 1892 or Max Weber after 1900 all sought to neutralize secularism at the same time that they were seeking to tame religion. Yet, at least in Germany, this neutralization was not entirely successful. When the terms secularism and secularization finally entered German public debates around 1930, they were used in Protestant church circles largely as synonyms. Only with the collapse of the confessional system and the banning of secularism as an important and divisive component of domestic politics, did German church leaders finally accept secularization as legitimate process within Christian history.

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[38] Friedrich Gogarten, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit: Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem* (München, Hamburg: Siebenstern, 1958 [1953]), 143-144. Friedrich Karl Schumann, *Zur Überwindung des Säkularismus in der Wissenschaft* (Berlin-Spandau: Wichern, 1950), 20.

[39] Hans Schomerus, *Das Ende des Säkularismus* (Hamburg: Hanseat. Verl. Anst., 1935).

[40] On Gogarten's own contribution to the synthesis of völkisch racial thought and Protestant theology in the 1920s and 1930s, see Wolfgang Tilgner, *Volksnomostheologie und Schöpfungsglaube: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kirchenkampfes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 167–179.

Although I find strong divergences between the German and the British or American experiences of secularization, I am not breaking a lance for the return of the *Sonderweg* interpretation to German history. Rather I see elements of the German experience, in particular the clash between states with established religions and radical secularism allied to the political Left, as typical for many regions across the globe. This conclusion suggests a number of points in an agenda for research that might correct the framework with which scholars are currently addressing the global history of secularism(s).

1. The histories of political secularism and worldview secularism should be brought together, but in a fashion that acknowledges the gulf between their respective definitions and agents. This means, on the one hand, identifying, as van der Veer has, the ways in which radical secularists worked through forms of secularization developed in the nineteenth-century by liberals. At the same time, however, one should question the assumption that state secularization was a singular, global process with local variations. Here I would agree with Hugh McLeod, when he argues that "[r]ather than seeing secularization as an impersonal 'process' [...] it would be better to see this as a 'contest', in which adherents of rival world-views battled it out."[41]

2. With an eye to the deep transnational conflicts over religion that occurred between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, one should rethink the continuities suggested by much of the current research. Rather than seeing the evolution of secularity as an essentially unbroken line connecting the high point of classical European liberalism to the neo-liberal present, the German example indicates a discontinuous history. Such discontinuity can be investigated through comparative semantic histories of terms, such as "secularism" or "worldview."

3. The periodization provided by the studies of political secularism needs correction. I would posit an "age of secularism" or "age of worldviews" in the century between the 1840s and roughly 1949. I would further divide this into two periods in which the "culture wars" took different forms. In the first period, lasting roughly until the First World War, the culture war was dominated by liberals and the major target was the Catholic Church. In the second period, beginning with the revolutions in Mexico, Russia and Central Europe, there were greater levels of real and symbolic violence and the target was all established churches and in many cases, organized religion as a whole. This second culture war differed from the nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf* in that it was not principally being driven by liberals in alliance with the modern state (though this did occur in Mexico), but rather by a revolutionary Left acting from within the state (USSR and Spain) or as anti-state actors (Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, India, China).

4. Several points of research emerge around the question: did worldview secularism cease to be a significant social force and, if so, when and where? For Western Europe there was watershed in the period 1945-1949. To what extent did the an understanding of secularization and secularism as separate phenomena develop out of the religious struggles of the first half of the twentieth century, when the war of worldviews

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[41] Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 28.

overlapped with civil wars, and to what extent was it an exogenous development that originated in the Cold War or Pax Americana? In Eastern Europe, and presumably other global regions under communist rule, efforts were made in the 1950s and 1960s to build a secularist-socialist culture. What should be made of the fact that these efforts appear to have faltered at roughly the same time that church attendance dropped off in Western Europe, i.e., in the late 1960s? In other words, what role did Cold War detente play in the emergence of our very recent secular age?