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FOCUS

PROJECT

Internal and External Dynamics of Secularization within Western Christianity and Islam

I plan to undertake an investigation of the reciprocal dynamics of differentiation between "the religious" and "the secular" within Western Christianity, both within Protestant and Catholic culture areas, and the parallel but different dynamics taking place within Islam in response to the global expansion of secularism. I plan to view the contemporary transformations of Islam, both within Muslim societies and in immigrant diasporas in the West, as forms of *aggiornamento*, analogous to the transformations of Catholicism in its encounter with secular modernity. But to grasp the complexities of the diverse Islamic *aggiornamentos*, we need to rethink critically the categories of modern secular differentiation we have inherited from Western European developments.

In my previous work, I challenged two key components of the theory of secularization, the decline of religion and the privatization of religion, but I left untouched the core of the traditional paradigm. A less Eurocentric and more global comparative perspective demands that we dissociate the particular theory of European secularization from general theories of modernization that prescribe secular differentiation as a norm for all "modern" societies. If the discourse of "multiple modernities" is to become pragmatically relevant, we need to articulate non-secular conceptions of modernity that can offer alternatives to secularist "cosmopolitan" projects, to the tautological identification of Islam and "fundamentalism", and to the self-fulfilling prophecies of "the clash of civilizations".

Recommended Reading

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

- "Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective." In *Predicting Religion*, edited by Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

- "Der Ort der Religion im säkularen Europa." *Transit. Europäische Revue* 27 (2004): 86-106

COLLOQUIUM, 25.04.2006

Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective

Over a decade ago, I suggested that in order to speak meaningfully of "secularization" we needed to distinguish three different connotations:

1) Secularization, as decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies, often postulated as a human universal developmental process. This is the most recent but by now the most widespread usage of the term in contemporary academic debates on secularization.

2) Secularization, as privatization of religion, often understood both as a general modern historical trend and as a normative condition, indeed as a precondition for modern liberal democratic politics. Public Religions in the Modern World, put into question the empirical as well as the normative validity of the privatization thesis.

3) Secularization, as differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), usually understood as "emancipation," from religious institutions and norms.

This is the core component of the classic theories of secularization, which is related to the original etymological-historical meaning of the term. It refers to the transfer of persons, things, meanings, etc., from ecclesiastical or religious to civil or lay use, possession or control.

While the decline and privatization theses have undergone numerous critiques and revisions in the last fifteen years, the understanding of secularization as a single process of functional differentiation of the various institutional spheres or sub-systems of modern societies remains relatively uncontested in the social sciences, particularly within European sociology.

My revisionist reformulation of the theory of secular differentiation begins with the recognition of the particular Christian historicity of Western European developments as well as of the multiple and diverse historical patterns of secularization and differentiation within European and Western societies. Such a recognition in turn should allow a less Euro-centric comparative analysis of patterns of differentiation and secularization in other civilizations and world religions; and more importantly the further recognition that with the world-historical process of globalization initiated by the European colonial expansion, all these processes everywhere are dynamically interrelated and mutually constituted.

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Casanova, José (2016)

The Jesuit through the prism of globalization, globalization through a Jesuit prism

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=861906675>

Casanova, José (Washington, DC,2016)

The Jesuits and globalization : historical legacies and contemporary challenges

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=834151510>

Casanova, José (Barcelona,2012)

Genealogías de la secularización

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Autores, textos y temas

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The religious situation in Europe

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=670716480>

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Europas Angst vor der Religion

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=588932183>

Berliner Reden zur Religionspolitik

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Casanova, José (2007)

Rethinking secularization : a global comparative perspective

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Aggiornamenti? : Katholische und muslimische Politik im Vergleich

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Einwanderung und der neue religiöse Pluralismus : ein Vergleich zwischen der EU und den USA

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