

The modern secular society has played havoc with this sense of sacredness, leaving us without symbols and their spirituality and mystery.

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Chapter 2 : Professor Gideon Aran: Impurity and Danger Prof. Gideon Aran

Introduction contemporary Secularity and Secularity in American public life. The reason, of course, is that the United States was heir to the Protestant heritage of the Reformation, whereby religious individualism.

Instead, he sees secularism as a development within Western Christianity, stemming from the increasingly anthropocentric versions of religion that arose from the Reformation. At the same time, this book seems to step up the ambition somewhat: Rather, he wants to elucidate the very idea of a secular world. For Taylor, the difference between the pre-modern Western world and the modern West is not simply that beliefs held then are no longer accepted today; it is that the entire framework of thought has changed. Most have focused on decline as the essence of secularism—either the removal of religion from sphere after sphere of public life, or the decrease of religious belief and practice. But Taylor focuses on what kind of religion makes sense in a secular age. Taylor is asking not only how secularism became a significant option in a civilization that not so long ago was explicitly Christian, but what that change means for the spiritual quest, both of those who are still religious and those who consider themselves secular. His account resists the idea that the rise of secularism is a process of subtraction, of loss, and of disenchantment. Its dense pages brim with original observation, cogent argument constructed from sources in a wide array of disciplines, and generous ecumenical gestures, even towards humanists. His story is complex, somewhat repetitious and yet unflinchingly interesting: *A Secular Age* is a first-class map of the spiritual terrain of Western modernity as well as the road that got us here. It is at once encyclopedic and incisive, a sweeping overview that is no less analytically rigorous for its breadth. Its subject is a philosophical history of the past, present and future of Western Christendom. As such, it begins with a deceptively simple question: How did it become possible for anyone to not believe in God? As philosophers go, Taylor is a kind of behaviorist, more concerned with elaborating the implications of a way of thinking than with showing its contradictions. Unlike most philosophers, though, Taylor seems at pains to remain accessible to a general audience to capture complex philosophical debate in ordinary language. Its central thesis is that secularization must be understood not simply as the decline of certain beliefs and institutions, but as a total change in our experience of the world. There are subtle, original discussions of the modern self, of changing conceptions of time, of the religious landscape of art, and much else besides. Taylor has a great gift of empathy, an ability to inhabit and bring to life the mental world of both believers and unbelievers. A true Hegelian, he sees the goal of philosophy as understanding, not judgment. For all its imposing intellectual density, it is a delight to read; at times, it was literally impossible to put down. Yet it is also a work that ought to be read by degrees—one chapter at a time, with ample pause for reflection. Our forefathers did not live this way and our grandchildren might not either. Considering the doubts about extreme secularism, it is possible we are entering a new Age of Spirit. Binding all that detail together is an argument that Taylor manages to sustain over nearly eight hundred pages. In return you will be convinced that Charles Taylor is one of the smartest and deepest social thinkers of our time. Taylor wants to lay out what it takes to go on believing in God, in the absence of any equivalent to the intellectual, cultural and imaginative surroundings in which pre-modern religion was quietly embedded. This is something deeper and more diffused than philosophical theories or thought-out positions. It transforms the secularization debate. Penetrating and dense, it would take months to fully digest. But, although Taylor clearly articulates his disdain for the view that modernity ineluctably led to the death of God, he goes far beyond a literature review. In addition to its conceptual value, this study is notable for its lucidity. Taylor has translated complex philosophical theories into language that any educated reader will be able to follow, yet he has not sacrificed an iota of sophistication or nuance. He concludes that a focus on the religious has never been lost in Western culture, but that it is one among many stories striving for acceptance. This is one of the most important books written in my lifetime. I am tempted to say the most important book, but that may just express the spell the book has cast over me at the moment. There is no book remotely like it.

Chapter 3 : From Secularity to World Religions – Religion Online

Secular and secularity derive from the Latin word saeculum which meant "of a generation, belonging to an age" or denoted a period of about one hundred years. In the ancient world, saeculum was not defined in contrast to any sacred concerns and had a freestanding usage in Latin.

Birks Professor of Comparative Religion *The Religious and the Secular in the Modern World* When the relationship between the religious and the secular is such as involves the complete dominance of one over the other, then it results in the curtailment of both religious and political freedoms. The religious overshadowed the secular at one point in the history of the Western world. The secular realm then emerged from under the shadow of the religious, by liberating the political, the legal, and the educational dimensions of public life from religious dominance. We have now reached a point, when the secular overshadows the religious to such an extent, that it is the secular constitutions which guarantee religious freedom. In the heyday of secularism, right after the Second World War, the progressive secularization of the rest of the world, along the lines it had occurred in the West, especially Europe, was considered axiomatic. This belief was shared by the otherwise rival economic systems of capitalism and communism, and also by the rival political systems of liberal democracy and totalitarianism. Thus the general intellectual climate, in the middle of the last century, saw religion as on its way out of the public square, if not out of life altogether. The Iranian Revolution of , however, upset this eschatological apple cart, and, since then, the role of religion in public life the world over has been gaining in salience. Thus the question of the relationship of the religious and the secular, once taken as settled, is back on the table, with a new sense of relevance, in our modern world. We might begin by looking at some lessons provided by history on the nature of their relationship, in order to assess their relationship in the modern world. And as soon as we cast such a didactic glance at history, it becomes apparent that we have enough historical evidence to indicate what happens when either of the two elements in the dyad gain virtual ascendancy over the other. The medieval times bear witness to what happens when religion comes to prevail over the secular, and the modern times, until very recently, bear witness to what happens when the secular comes to prevail over the religious. The antithetical variation in the equation may contain many lessons, depending on the lens used to view them. Let us choose to look at them through the lens of human rights, as embodying the human aspiration for political and religious freedom. A survey of the history of the Western world yields a curious coincidence of opposites, when viewed through this lens. In the medieval period, the religious supervened over the secular, so that the rights, even of kings in the political realm, were abridged, to say nothing of the common person. One might expect this to be the case but another consequence was unexpected -- that the religious freedom of the faithful was also abridged. Orthodoxy reigned supreme during this period and heresy-hunting remained the flavour of the times. In other words, the collapse of the two realms ironically resulted in the diminution of both political and religious freedoms. Modern times saw a role-reversal in this respect and the secular came to supervene over to the religious. The extreme example of this is provided by the communist countries. The collapse of the two realms in these countries, which came about with the dominance of the secular over the religious, also ironically resulted in the curtailment of both religious and political freedom in these countries. One would have expected the curtailment of religious freedom in a situation in which the secular realm supervened over the religious, but what ensued in the communist countries was the loss not only of religious but also political freedoms. It is important to recognize this point namely, that in the event of one of the two realms -- the religious and the secular -- being overwhelmed by the other, a contraction of freedom in both the realms follows , as it is counter-intuitive. The parts of the world where such a development did not occur were those characterized by liberal democracies, which clearly provided for religious freedom as part of the secular dispensation. They were able to preserve both their political and religious freedoms. The lesson from history then is clear. When the relationship between the religious and the secular is such as involves the complete dominance of one over the other, then it results in the curtailment of both religious and political freedoms. As noted earlier, this conclusion contains an element of expectation-dissonance, as one would expect religious freedom to flourish in the case of the

dominance of the religious over the secular, and expect political freedom to flourish in the case of the dominance of the secular over the religious. Any vision of utopia then must recognize that it will not be achieved by one of the two obliterating, or dominating over, the other. Attractive as such options might appear in the thoroughness of the erasure of the other, the obliteration or domination of one by the other is a recipe for dystopia. The sobering lesson which one derives from a study of history in respect to the relationship between the two is that both the realms must enjoy relative freedom; that if one of the two dyads prevails over the other, both lose their freedoms. But how does this lesson apply to our times? We need to revert now to the belief in the inevitability of the long-term secularization of the globe, to which such eminent thinkers as Peter Berger once subscribed along with many others. We must now recognize that this belief -- that the secular realm was destined to overwhelm the religious -- was entertained by both capitalist and communist countries, although encountered in its more virulent form in the communist countries. In other words, the state of affairs, which the communist countries were seeking to bring about by the use of drastic measures, was expected to come about on its own, through the operation of impersonal and also invisible forces, in the liberal capitalist democracies. The liberal capitalist democracies did not have to take recourse to such measures adopted by communist countries, as the churches would close down on their own, when people stopped attending them, as religion became a purely personal matter and retreated into the private square. The events of the past few decades in the modern world have demonstrated that this covert triumphalism of the secular world view is as dangerous as the overt triumphalism of secular totalitarianism. And further, that each of the two realms -- the secular and the religious -- should recognize the inevitable presence of the other as an empirical fact, and the further recognize the historical fact that the complete dominance of one realm by the other ends up in the diminution of freedoms in both.

Introduction. Contemporary Secularity and Secularism Barry A. Kosmin Secularism and its variants are terms much bandied about today, paradoxically, as a consequence of religion seeming to have become more pervasive and influential in public life and society worldwide.

Perhaps best known for his text on the sociology of religion, *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger has also shown a keen interest in issues of development and public policy and in the nature of religious belief in the modern world, as evident in *A Far Glory: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience*. This article appeared in the *Christian Century*, January 16, pp. Copyright by The Christian Century Foundation; used by permission. Current articles and subscription information can be found at www.mylutheran.com. My incurably Lutheran sensibility tells me that such a view is sinful, and my even more incurable sense of the comic says that it is ridiculous. Still, after an initial hesitation, I accepted. I did so precisely because I believe that my mind is not so unusual for its peregrinations not to have some common utility. My experiences over the past ten years are, by and large, commonly accessible, and it seems to me that most of my conclusions could be arrived at by anybody. In between; most of my work as a sociologist was directly concerned not with religion but with modernization and Third World development, as well as with the problem which first preoccupied me in the Third World of how sociological insights can be translated into compassionate political strategies. Yet these sociological excursions, as it turned out, had an indirect effect on my thinking about religion. If I were asked for the most important experience leading from the one book to the other, I would have to say the Third World. In the 1950s I was preoccupied with the problems of secularity, and *A Rumor of Angels* was an attempt to overcome secularity from within. The Third World taught me how ethnocentric that preoccupation was: Conversely, the Third World impresses one with the enormous social force of religion. It is this very powerful impression that eventually led me to the conclusion, stated in *The Heretical Imperative*, that a new contestation with the other world religions should be a very high priority on the agenda of Christian theology. As I understand my own thinking, it has not moved in a radical way during this period. The problems that have preoccupied me have shifted considerably, but my underlying religious and political positions have remained more or less the same. To the extent that I have moved, though, I have moved further to the "left" theologically and further to the "right" politically. This development has confused and also distressed some of my friends though, needless to say, some have been cheered by what others found distressing. Again, the Third World has been crucial for both movements of thought. It has given me empirical access to the immense variety and richness of human religion, and thus has made it impossible for me once and for all, I believe to remain ethnocentrically fixated on the Judeo-Christian tradition alone. I moved more radically in the 1960s and early 1970s in my thinking about religion mainly, it seems in retrospect, under the impact of experiencing America after what John Murray Cuddihy has aptly called "the fanaticisms of Europe", outgrowing the neo-orthodox positions of my youth and finally concluding that my thinking fitted best within the tradition of Protestant liberalism. But the personal as well as intellectual encounter with the Third World gave that liberalism a scope that I could not foresee earlier. I can say with confidence that the human misery of Third World poverty and oppression has shocked me as deeply as it can anyone coming from the comfortable West, and I have been and continue to be fully convinced of the urgency of seeking alleviation for it. But my efforts to understand the causes of this misery and to conceive plausible strategies for overcoming it have impressed me with the utter fatuity of the alleged solutions advocated by the political "left".

Modified Views of Secularization It so happens that, for me, the decade staked out by *The Christian Century* coincided with visits to Rome both at the beginning and the end. It was a fascinating event, especially in the contacts it provided between members of the Roman ecclesiastical establishment and a somewhat wild assortment of scholars who had worked on the problem of secularization. The proceedings of the conference were subsequently published in a book aptly titled *The Culture of Unbelief*. One incident from the conference that has stuck in my memory took place at a party. A leading Demochristian politician, very puzzled, asked a monsignor from the secretariat what this conference was all about. The crusty old gentleman of the *Democrazia Christiana* listened very carefully, then raised his hand and said in a firm voice: A few

weeks later I went to Mexico, at the invitation of Ivan Illich -- a trip that turned out to be decisive in concentrating my attention on the Third World. I remember telling Illich the story. He laughed, but he did not think it as funny as I did. Illich is often right often, not always. In this instance, his finding the idea of prohibiting secularization less outrageous than I found it was wise. In I was in Rome just as the Iranian revolution was breaking out. I watched the events in Iran on Italian television with a good deal of nervousness, as I was supposed to fly to India via Tehran. There were the vast masses of Khomeini followers, with their posters and banners, seemingly stretching to the horizon. And they kept chanting: Indeed, a dramatic prohibition of secularization is exactly what Khomeini had in mind, and, whatever the eventual outcome of the Iranian revolution, it must be conceded that he has been rather successful in this undertaking thus far. Certainly in the Islamic world, from the Atlantic Ocean to the China Sea, it is religion that offers a militant challenge to every form of secularity including the Marxist one, and not the other way around. In the event, the turmoil in Iran forced me to change my travel plans and fly directly to India -- my first visit there, one that immersed me more completely than ever before in a non-Western religious culture. And while Hinduism, for many reasons, does not exhibit the dynamism of contemporary Islam, it too most assuredly is not behaving as the idea of secularization I held in the s would have predicted. The Third World is not the only reason why I have modified my earlier view of secularization. There has been impressive evidence of religious resurgence in North America. There has also been a significant religious revival in at least certain sectors of Soviet society, all the more significant because of a half-century of determined and sophisticated repression. This does not mean, as some have suggested, that secularization theory has been simply a mistake. But one can now say, I think, that both the extent and the inexorability of secularization have been exaggerated, even in Europe and North America, and much more so in other parts of the world. In itself, this is no more than a revision of a sociological thesis under the pressure of empirical evidence. As such, it is theologically neutral. Yet, inevitably it seems to me, at any rate, it suggests that the problem of secularity is not quite as interesting for the Christian mind as many of us used to think. After all, it is one thing to engage in intellectual contestation with a phenomenon deemed to be the wave of the future, quite another to do so with one of many cultural currents in play in the contemporary world. The Crisis of Modernity Sociologically speaking, the phenomenon of secularization is part and parcel of a much broader process -- that of modernization. In the context of Christian theology, of course, the dialogue with secularity which, I suppose, one can simply describe as the mind-set resulting from secularization has been pretty much the same as the dialogue with modernity -- or with that well-known figure "modern man, whom Rudolf Bultmann and others conceived to be incapable of believing the world view of the New Testament. Speaking sociologically again, there are good reasons for thinking that modernity, and modern secularity with it, is in a certain crisis today. It became clear to me in the Third World that modernization is not a unilinear or an inexorable process. Rather, from the beginning, it is a process in ongoing interaction with countervailing forces which may be subsumed under the heading of countermodernization. It is useful, I think, to look at secularization in the same way -- as standing in ongoing interaction with countersecularizing forces. The details of this relationship cannot be spelled out here. Suffice it to say that countermodernization and countersecularization can be observed not only in the Third World but also in the so-called advanced industrial societies, those of both the capitalist and the socialist varieties. All of this strongly suggests a shift in theological attention, away from the much-vaunted engagement with modern consciousness and its theoretical products. It should be stressed that this is not to say that some of the latter products do not continue to offer theological challenges. Also, it is clear that, theories and world views apart, the modern situation continues to pose ethical problems of great gravity -- but that is not quite the same as what the dialogue with "modern man" was to be about. There is much of this around today for instance, in the radical wing of the ecology movement, and some of it is quite appealing, but it will not stand up under rigorous scrutiny. It is not so much that we cannot go back there is no law that says that the clock cannot be turned back -- it can be, it has been, but that the human costs of demodernizing would be horrendously large. Take just one item: One of the most dramatic consequences of modernity has been the marked decline in infant mortality. The Compulsion to Choose Already in the early s, when I was working with Thomas Luckmann on new ways of formulating the sociology of knowledge, it had become clear to us

that secularization and pluralism were closely related phenomena. The root insight here is that subjective certainty in religion as in other matters depends upon cohesive social support for whatever it is that the individual wants to be certain about. Conversely, the absence or weakness of social support undermines subjective certainty -- and that is precisely what happens when the individual is confronted with a plurality of competing world views, norms or definitions of reality. I continue to think that this insight is valid. Increasingly, however, it has seemed to me that, of the two phenomena, pluralism is more important than secularization. The modern situation would present a formidable challenge to religion even if it were, or would come to be, much less secularized than it now is. Competition means having to choose. That is true in a market of material commodities -- this brand as against that, this consumer option as against that. Whether one likes it or not, the same compulsion to choose is the result of a market of world views -- this faith or this "life style" against that. I have called this crucial consequence of pluralism "the heretical imperative," and I have tried in my recent book of that title to analyze different theological responses to this rather uncomfortable situation. Again, I do not perceive my thinking as having changed dramatically on these matters. But at least two accents have changed. First, it is much clearer to me now why the theological method not necessarily any of the contents of classical Protestant liberalism, with its stress on experience and reasonable choice, is the most viable one today. And second, because of my previously mentioned encounter with the Third World, I now have a much broader notion of the range of relevant choices in religion. As a result of this perspective on the religious situation and its theological possibilities, I have for quite a while found myself in a sort of two-front position. This conviction makes it impossible for me to seek alignment with any form of orthodoxy or neo-orthodoxy. All these strategies are finally and, indeed, rather soon self-liquidating, as they rob the religious enterprise of whatever plausibility it still has within the consciousness of individuals. Incidentally, this does not mean that I have no empathy with either the "right" or the secularizing-"left" positions. The former was the position of my youth, in the form of a sort of muscular Lutheranism, and if nothing else the nostalgias of middle age assure a lingering empathy. As to the latter position, it is not just a matter of "some of my best friends" and all that. More important, anyone who lives and works in a modern secular milieu undergoes every day the same cognitive tensions that move people toward this position, and a high degree of empathy is thereby given almost automatically. In this connection, a word should be said about an event with which I was associated, the so-called Hartford Appeal of -- a statement that forcefully repudiated various secularizing trends in contemporary theological thought. It was widely regarded as a neo-orthodox manifesto. Whatever may have been the understanding of others connected with the event, this was not the way I understood it. For me, Hartford delineated what separated me from those to the "left" of the liberal position I espoused. Such delineation continues to be necessary, I believe though, in retrospect, it is debatable whether the style of the Hartford Appeal was the most suitable. For me, however, delineation with regard to the theological "right" is equally important, and I hope that *The Heretical Imperative* has now fulfilled this purpose. The worst thing about being in the middle is not that one is shot at from both sides. In this instance that is not so bad, as there are a lot of people in the same location. More disturbing is the thought that a via media, especially in religion, is always beset with tepidness.

Chapter 5 : Secularity - Wikipedia

Christianity and Modern Thought. Various. It was that secularity was the system, rather than the substance of that secularity. The Pillars of the House, Vol. 1 (of 2).

Religion occupies a unique place in our understanding of modern society and nation-statehood. Having played a particular role in the formation of the European nation-state system itself, religion has had the dubious privilege of being considered somehow unlike other kinds of social practice and organisation, at once special and especially dangerous. Real modernity must be democratic, runs the logic; and real democracy must be secular. While religious experience and practice seemed to be declining in many parts of the world, this vision was untroubled. Today, however, it has become commonplace to recognise the vitality of some forms of religion and, what is more, its vitality in precisely those democratic contexts that it was once considered to be anathema to. The impact of this shift is hard to overstate. It amounts to a dethroning of one of the longest-held and deepest-seated aspects of modern understandings and identities. It has led to one of the most profound shifts in general and academic thought about what modernity means and how it can be conducted most progressively. What this does not mean, however, is that the notion of secularism is dead. Hence, a renewed focus on religion gives rise to a renewed focus on secularism as well. The idea of secularism has its roots in western experience and intellectual traditions, but has nevertheless travelled widely. It has sometimes travelled with colonialists but often by virtue of being, as Chris Hann, director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, has put it, "a good idea". But has its success as a global concept masked empirical complexities that would help us understand the relationship between religion and modernity in general? Speaking at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna with Hann, the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has suggested that Indian history challenges western conceptions at their core: And even in Europe, the most secularised continent birthplace of the secularisation thesis, things are more complicated than they appear. Evangelism, in particular, has been involved in the generation of new forms of cultural materialisation, and scholars are beginning to emphasise how important such movements have been as a motor behind the development of modern communications methods and technologies. One implication of this is that, if secularism is in fact a complicated and variable phenomenon, we need to consider whether our understanding of "religion" is of a real existing thing or is a particular construction arising from a certain secularist outlook. Evidence for this is that our notions of religion do not always work well outside of a European context. People are increasingly discussing, in fact, the various things that a secularist framework projects on to religion with the underlying concern being how these false understandings impinge upon religion. But equally important is the possibility that false ideas of religion associated with local notions and experiences of secularism are what our secular apparatus is built upon. If we are designing secularism our secularist law, policy, community practice and so on based upon a false notion of religion, we may end up with an empty secularism on our hands. It may be that, in some ways, we are encumbered with such a secularism already. Our energies have been very focused on religion for some time now, but we are seeing a shift in interest, from religion to secularism and to non-religion. Religion still dominates research agendas, media commentary, policy debate however, and it is important to be clear that this imbalance means we are only looking at part of the picture and addressing only some of the questions that need to be asked.

Chapter 6 : What is secularism? - ABC Religion & Ethics

The modern world, in its self-awareness, is the product of the disengagement of the secular from the religious, which makes the discussion of this issue particularly fraught.

Whatsapp In September of , Talal Asad, William Connolly, Charles Hirschkind and I met at the annual American Political Science Association conference to discuss two seminal texts in a recently emerging field of study, which could tentatively be called the critical study of secularism. *Christianity, Islam and Modernity* , each now roughly a decade old. In preparing for this conversation, we did not set the task of doing justice to the scope and subtlety of these texts, but aimed instead to use them as a starting point for taking stock of and thinking about the ground that has been covered in the critical study of secularism since their original publication. What follows here are six questions that emerged for me in re-reading *Why I am not a Secularist* and *Formations of the Secular*. There may, however, be important reasons for the muddle that besets critical literatures on "the secular," "secularity," "secularism" and "secularization," sending them around this question again and again. To be sure, they acknowledge and grapple with the persistence of familiar and, in some sense, indispensable answers: And yet they also show how such answers are insufficiently accurate, woefully unhistorical, and incomplete in more fundamental ways. In reframing the question, Talal Asad argues not about secularism per se, but about "the secular. It is a possible object of anthropological analysis. It has a discernible grammar, but it is also historically layered, at times contradictory, quite complex, and best approached indirectly. By way of comparison with "the secular," secularism is relatively easy to locate as a "concept" and a "doctrine" bound together with, or "centrally located within," a concept of "modernity" that has recently "become hegemonic as a political goal," however unequally it is attained in practice around the globe. But "the secular" is not reducible to secularism, and it bears upon rudimentary attitudes toward the human body, contributes to specific ways of training, cultivating and structuring the senses, and grounds specific conceptions of the human. Secularists prefer to connect secularism to the European experience of toleration among diverse forms of Christianity, "because it paints the picture of a self-sufficient public realm fostering freedom and governance without recourse to a specific religious faith. Perhaps more precisely, wherever secularism comes from, it can be engaged as a particular political ideal, voiced in a certain way, by an identifiable constituency. As a preliminary definition, secularism is an idealized vision of political life that "strains metaphysics out of politics" and "dredges out of public life as much cultural density and depth as possible" in order to secure the authority of public reason and a rational morality, and the legitimacy of both to govern within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state until such a time as they can govern universally. But let me now draw out some precise questions from this: To what extent is secularism itself an essentially contested concept that is constantly open to reconfiguration? In what ways has the operative significance of secularism shifted in the last ten years? To what extent has it become important to contest or defend new aspects of the secular and new turns of secularism in line with these changes? How is secularism related to Christianity? Charles Taylor, in his recent book *A Secular Age* , makes a subtle argument about the emergence of a secular age that inherits and perfects the Christian tradition, though Hegel seems to have put a similar thesis in bolder form in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Where Kantian secularists emphasize the detachment of secular reason from religious tradition, Hegelian secularists emphasize the work done by a specifically Christian religious tradition in preparing secular reason, and thus the continuity between this tradition and modern secularism. Secularist discourses today tend to flicker between Hegelian and Kantian modes, pitching secularism at times as an extension of Christianity and at times as a rebuke to Christianity, though these two modes do not seem to be mutually exclusive. When Asad, in *Formations of the Secular*, approaches the intersection of secularism conceived as a modern pattern of organizing public life and religion conceived as part of an older tradition , it draws attention to the ways in which an historically specific concept of "the secular" places religions in a hierarchical order. It brings to light, in other words, how some kinds of religion are determined to be compatible with liberal, democratic modernity, while others are not. To quickly follow this second thread, a significant measure of Kantian moral and political thought inherits the concepts

and commitments of the Judaic and Christian traditions, as well as their confusions - problems, in particular, with the fundamental conceptions of freedom, responsibility and will. As Connolly puts it: Rather than arguing that a generic Christianity - or, slightly more specifically, Protestant Christianity - set the conditions for modern secularity, it seems to suggest that Kantian secularism and, for example, Augustinian Christianity emerge as responses to the human predicament, each with possibilities and limitations, some of which are shared. Again, let me draw these observations into a question: Are Euro-American secular discourses becoming more Hegelian and less Kantian, meaning that they increasingly tie secularism strongly to Christianity and to a story about western civilization, rather than to the exclusion of metaphysics and the purity of reason? If so, what new problems does such a reorientation present? Can modern secularism be understood as a process of conversion? In addressing the connection between secularism and Christianity, Asad reaches a formulation that could be shared by Connolly: John Locke, as a key early modern proponent of the regimes of toleration that preceded modern secularism, similarly understood conversion to play an important role in thinking about tolerance. Early modern debates about secularism, it should be recalled, were often debates about the impropriety of forced religious conversion. The connection proposed here between the problem of modern secularism and the figure of religious conversion should be surprising insofar as religious conversion was explicitly excluded from the purview of political institutions, and from the conceptual vocabulary of political thought, precisely as a concept of separation became ascendant in early European modernity. A constitutive moment, in fact, of the modern separation of public and private spheres consisted in excluding religious conversion from public life and consigning it to the private - such is a plausible way of understanding the core of the seventeenth century debates over tolerance. While this exclusion formed a precondition for a more tolerant politics, it also restricted the theoretical vocabulary within which processes of social transformation could be described - tolerance was purchased by introducing new regulations upon the public sphere and upon speaking subjects, and it was also purchased at the cost of diminished aspirations for a deep and genuine pluralism. As part of rethinking the possibilities of modern secularism, it would seem worthwhile to ask which resources can be drawn from those "religious" traditions that have been excluded by the various modes of secularism. By promoting the principle of separation to a central place, the modern secular imaginary isolates a single part of a much larger, multifaceted process which reshapes the specific practices, institutions and discourses that condition experience in both political and religious domains. As Asad and Connolly both note, this larger process has produced a series of variable boundaries between politics and religion throughout history - and not only modern and western history. In the context of modern Euro-American secularism, I would like to suggest, this process unfolds as a process of conversion; ironically, it is a process of conversion in which modern secularism emerges by excluding religious conversion from public life, and from its own narrative self-identity. Within the Augustinian tradition, conversion refers to a transformational process of ethical character formation and communal re-orientation that is retrospectively consolidated through the production of a new narrative self-identity. Such a figure foregrounds the transformation of individuals in relation to communities mediated by narrative, which is by no means merely a religious phenomenon, but occurs instead within politics generally, and within the politics of modern secularism specifically. Figuring the emergence of modern secularism as a process of conversion, I would suggest, might allow us to grasp how secularism has in fact emerged in new, distinctly modern forms by reshaping institutions, practices, sensibilities, communities, discourses, and yet how these transformations are both exaggerated and catalysed by the simplifying figure of secularism as the separation of church and state posited through retrospective narration. This places the problem of secularism in the register of thinking a secular body opened by Charles Hirschkind. In other words, the social transformations that produced modern Euro-American secularism excluded forced conversion from politics through a conversion of political and religious sensibilities, a process which has since been obscured by a conversion narrative that simplifies and obscures its outlines. If modern secularism is produced through various exclusions of religion, in a general sense, could opening secularism toward the future depend on re-opening various religious archives? More specifically, if secularism is bound to the problem of excluding conversion in an historical sense, is it possible that recovering a figure of conversion can illuminate the contours of secularism as a process of transformation

in a theoretical sense? Does it help to make sense of secularism, and of the nature of its connection to Christianity and perhaps other traditions as well, to view it as a process of transformation figured as a process of conversion? Pain, suffering and the limits of the secular? Meditations on pain and suffering are central to the arguments of both *Why I am not a Secularist* and *Formations of the Secular*. Connolly and Asad agree that a key motivation for secularism is the perceived need to manage and potentially eliminate pain and suffering. Connolly argues that secularists often blind themselves to certain forms of pain and suffering, and Asad adds that secular liberal democracies harbor profound contradictions with respect to pain, which appear when they inflict unavowed suffering, for example, through torture. Connolly and Asad differ, however, insofar as Asad attributes the imperative to master and eliminate pain to a highly specific formation of the secular, while Connolly frames the response to suffering as part of the human predicament. We suffer from illness, disease, unemployment, dead-end jobs, bad marriages, the loss of loved ones, social relocation, tyranny, police brutality, street violence, existential anxiety, guilt, envy, resentment, depression, stigmatization, rapid social change, sexual harassment, child abuse, poverty, medical malpractice, alienation, political defeat, toothaches, the loss of self-esteem, identity-panic, torture, and fuzzy categories. Utilitarian or economic calculi take pleasure and pain as the basis for public policy. More examples are possible. This leads me to ask: In what sense are the responses to pain and certain failures to respond to pain "secular" or "secularist," rather than, say, modern, liberal, American, capitalist, technological, medical, biomedical, or simply Kantian? Can something like "the secular" be reliably identified in the absence of a precise relation to "religion," such as in the case of secular attitudes toward pain? A more general way of putting this is to ask: Are there identifiable conceptual and practical limits to the secular? If it is not secularism, is a deep multidimensional pluralism still secular? William Connolly responds to a contemporary crisis of secularism, but its argument is presented as a "cautious reconfiguration," rather than a wholesale rejection. It suggests that authoritative images of public reason be downgraded, along with the fiction of a "post-metaphysical" political discourse and the paradigm of secularism as the strict separation of politics from religion. But to what extent is the openness to engagement with others that characterizes critical responsiveness related to "the secular," and what connections might therefore be made between a possible deep pluralism and a non-Kantian secularism? Asad argues that "what modernity To put this more directly, if we are not secularists, are we still secular? Leaving Kantian secularists aside for the moment, is pluralism nonetheless connected to "the secular" in the sense that Asad gives this term? Is it one distinctive possibility opened by and for the secular? And if secularism is being reconstituted today as a more explicitly and self-consciously Euro-American-Christian formation in the Hegelian, rather than the Kantian, fashion, can this formation still be pressed toward a deep multi-dimensional pluralism? My sixth and final question: What about the relationships among nation, state, capital and secularism? Connolly argues that secularist discourse is insufficient to hold such constituencies in check, and it suggests that an ethos of multi-dimensional pluralism and egalitarianism might fare better against the dangers of nationalism. And while both books remain guarded about the likelihood of establishing such an ethos, they strongly argue for its political necessity. One of the points at which they differ is in their assessment of the power and durability of modern secularism. In short, Asad attributes enormous power to secularism, while Connolly suggests that it is faltering. Part of this variance may be definitional, but part of it is related to the different connections traced between secularism, nationalism, capitalism and the state. What are the most salient connections between secularism, global capital, nationalism and the state today? Is it any more or less possible now to articulate the relations between secularism and these other key world shaping forces than it was when these books were written? Is it important to trace them differently today? In order to contest the forms of violence and injustice particular to modern secularism, is it necessary to place secularism in connection with these other formations? How are we to think about the challenges and possibilities of doing so? He specializes in modern secularism, religion and politics, liberalism, constitutionalism and political theology. Related If it is true that Australia does the secular state in a unique and inclusive manner, then this approach is fatally flawed and has proven to be a miserable failure.

In the first chapter of Rethinking Secularism, entitled "Western Secularity," Taylor revisits central themes from A Secular Age as he charts the historical trajectory that led from the "axial religion" through Latin Christendom to the contemporary conditions of modern secularity.

This can refer to reducing ties between a government and a state religion, replacing laws based on scripture such as Halakha, Dominionism, and Sharia law with civil laws, and eliminating discrimination on the basis of religion. This is said to add to democracy by protecting the rights of religious minorities. He specified two distinct powers: Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, have argued that the separation of church and state is but one possible strategy to be deployed by secular governments. What all secular governments, from the democratic to the authoritarian, share is a concern about the relationship between the church and the state. Each secular government may find its own unique policy prescriptions for dealing with that concern separation being one of those possible policies; French models, in which the state carefully monitors and regulates the church, being another. He argued that government must treat all citizens and all religions equally and that it can restrict actions but not the religious intent behind them. Secular states also existed in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages see Islam and secularism. According to the terminology of Barry Kosmin, described earlier in this article. The most significant forces of religious fundamentalism in the contemporary world are Christian fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, one significant stream of secularism has come from religious minorities who see governmental and political secularism as integral to the preservation of equal rights. Countries with state religion in northern Europe have a high degree of political secularism with systems built upon Protestant and democratic ideology. For example, the monarchy of Denmark has a constitutional right for the freedom of religion, freedom of speech and it is illegal to discriminate individually upon religion, ethnic origins etc. One of the most well-known countries with a religious political system is the Islamic republic of Iran. Secular society[edit] In studies of religion, modern democracies are generally recognized as secular. This is due to the near-complete freedom of religion beliefs on religion generally are not subject to legal or social sanctions, and the lack of authority of religious leaders over political decisions. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that surveys done by Pew Research Center show Americans as generally being more comfortable with religion playing a major role in public life, while in Europe the impact of the church on public life is declining. Abrams, Peter L. Munby, among others. Some societies become increasingly secular as the result of social processes, rather than through the actions of a dedicated secular movement; this process is known as secularization. Berger maintained that the modern world can no longer be described as being secular or becoming increasingly secular, instead it can best be described as being pluralistic. Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good. In this he disagreed with Charles Bradlaugh, and the disagreement split the secularist movement between those who argued that anti-religious movements and activism was not necessary or desirable and those who argued that it was. Contemporary ethical debate in the West is often described as "secular. Commentators on the right and the left routinely equate it with Stalinism, Nazism and Socialism, among other dreaded isms. In the United States, of late, another false equation has emerged. That would be the groundless association of secularism with atheism. The religious right has profitably promulgated this misconception at least since the s. This is a common understanding of what secularism stands for among many of its activists throughout the world. However, many scholars of Christianity and conservative politicians seem to interpret secularism more often than not, as an antithesis of religion and an attempt to push religion out of society and replace it with atheism or a void of values, nihilism. This dual aspect as noted above in "Secular ethics" has created difficulties in political discourse on the subject. In the latter Rawls holds the idea of an overlapping consensus as one of three main ideas of political liberalism. He argues that the term secularism cannot apply; But what is a secular argument? Some think of any argument

that is reflective and critical, publicly intelligible and rational, as a secular argument; [Secular concepts and reasoning of this kind belong to first philosophy and moral doctrine , and fall outside the domain of the political. His work has been highly influential on scholars in political philosophy and his term, overlapping consensus, seems to have for many parts replaced secularism among them. However, there is no shortage of discussion and coverage of the topic it involves. It is just called overlapping consensus, pluralism , multiculturalism or expressed in some other way. It covers secularism in a global context and starts with this sentence: List of secularist organizations Groups such as the National Secular Society United Kingdom and Americans United campaign for secularism are often supported by Humanists. In it raised a petition at the Scottish Parliament to have the Education Scotland Act changed so that parents will have to make a positive choice to opt into Religious Observance. Another secularist organization is the Secular Coalition for America. The Secular Coalition for America lobbies and advocates for separation of church and state as well as the acceptance and inclusion of Secular Americans in American life and public policy. While Secular Coalition for America is linked to many secular humanistic organizations and many secular humanists support it, as with the Secular Society, some non-humanists support it. Local organizations work to raise the profile of secularism in their communities and tend to include secularists, freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, and humanists under their organizational umbrella. Student organizations, such as the Toronto Secular Alliance , try to popularize nontheism and secularism on campus. The Secular Student Alliance is an educational nonprofit that organizes and aids such high school and college secular student groups.

Chapter 8 : secularity | Definition of secularity in English by Oxford Dictionaries

Modern ideas about the separation between church and state go back to before the founding of the United States, and both religious and non-religious people developed and implemented secularity in.

Chapter 9 : Profile : Washington and Lee University

Secularism is an idealized vision of political life that dredges out of public life as much cultural depth as possible in order to secure the authority of public reason and a rational morality.