Introduction

The crisis of modern Western secularity has prompted analysis of the category of the secular. The presumption that modernity would lead to religious decline and increasing privatization of religion and that this European pattern could serve as a universal template for modernization has given way to an investigation into the variety of secularities, secularizations and secularisms.

Consequently, the focus has shifted to multiple secularities in a variety of national and cultural contexts, both in Europe and elsewhere. Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden are notably under-researched in this respect. In global comparisons, they are often grouped under Europe, but in European debates, they are often omitted or placed in the category of countries with established churches (such as England or Greece).¹

Their distinctively Lutheran brand of Protestantism poses a challenge to our theories of secularization and our conceptions of secularity. A highly secular public (in terms of belief and practice), but a strong religious presence in their legal systems and public institutions is a characteristic of these Nordic countries. From the perspective of Protestant theology, this ambiguity has been characterized as 'a hidden sacrality' in the secular. More interdisciplinary research is needed, however. From the perspective of the social sciences, this ambiguity has not been addressed other than that it reveals a lack of secularity or secularization.

This book raises the question of Scandinavian secularity and explores a variety of explanations or interpretations of this ambiguous reality, a situation that the authors have dubbed 'intertwinement'.²

Combining contributions from the social sciences (law, sociology and political science) with theology and religious studies, the individual contributors to the book explore ways of coming to terms with this ambiguity from within their own disciplines. For example, from a historical, contemporary and political perspective, the book traces the formation of the early Scandinavian states and their laws and public spaces. It shows how the king

¹ Exceptions are the multidisciplinary research programme at Uppsala University: Impact of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy, which explicitly focuses on the Nordic countries. Likewise, the NOREL project (2009-2013) compares religious changes during the past twenty years in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Sweden.
² We borrow the term 'intertwinement' from the legal scholar Lisbet Christoffersen (2006).
aimed to integrate the church into the existing state and (local) public institutions, thereby merging public and churchly functions. From the perspective of Lutheran theology, the contributions to the book see this intertwining through a Lutheran lens, interpreting it as a ‘hidden sacredness’ in the secular, which, historically, was seen as justified, because it is through secular institutions that God’s influence can be exercised.

What this suggests (although some authors disagree) is that, rather than understanding the Scandinavian reality as revealing a lack of secularization, what we might be dealing with here is a different type of secularization or secularity: one in which a certain degree of intertwining is key.

This has implications for the international discussion of secularity. It is now widely acknowledged that the dominant narrative of secularism or secularization is heavily influenced by Protestantism (e.g. Asad, 2003), and it is against this monist notion, a wide range of publications argue, that secularity or the secular must be pluralized. It is much less acknowledged, however, that an important distinction should be drawn within the ‘Protestant category’ (exceptions include Kahl, 2009). As it has helped to shape the Scandinavian countries, Lutheran Protestantism is set apart from Calvinist and/or American Protestant contexts by its fundamental intertwining between religion and secular public spheres, also at the state and political levels.

Consequently, what the Scandinavian cases highlight with respect to the global discussion on secularity is that the dominant narratives of secularity and secularism not only fail to convince outside the West, they miss target ‘at home’, in the core of the Protestant countries. One cause of this misfit, we suggest, is not simply a diverging empirical reality, but a lack of sufficient awareness of this Lutheran variant and the implicit Catholic or American Protestant underpinnings of some of the central scholarly works on secularity and secularisation. This suggests a shifting of the focus of the international debate on the secular and the question of separation and differentiation between religion and the secular to continuing but changing forms of intertwining.

4 Secularization understood as functional differentiation or separation of religion from the public sphere.
6 ‘The secular’ is typically understood as ‘the void’ or absence of religion, or the phase after religion’s overcoming. ‘Secularism’ typically refers to a doctrine of a strict separation between state and church and the required privatization of religion.

Introduction

General objectives

To provide an insight into this Scandinavian reality (and its internal variations) is thus the first aim of this book (limiting the analysis to Norway, Sweden and Denmark). Secondly, the book engages with some of the central scholarly works on secularization and genealogies of the secular (such as Casanova 1994 and Taylor 2007), which reveal traits of an implicitly Catholic underpinning. Might a study of the secular and the sacred as theorized and practiced from a Protestant, Lutheran theological perspective offer alternative accounts? Thirdly, from the perspective of sociology or political science, can we speak of a Scandinavian pattern of secularization and understand this inherent intertwinement between religion and secularity as a different kind of secularization rather than a lack of it? (And if seen as a different kind of secularization how does this affect our conceptual understanding of ‘non-secularization’?)

A contextual and interdisciplinary perspective

Three important scholars of religion and secularity, José Casanova (Georgetown University, USA), Kim Knott (Lancaster University, UK) and John Witte (Emory Law, US), have developed theories and analyses of the intertwinement of the secular and the sacred. Religion (or secularity for that matter) never exists in an abstract form; it is always located within a specific history (Casanova), a designated space (Knott), or within a particular historical and dogmatic context (Witte).

By combining a contextual approach as well as a variety of scholarly approaches, ranging from political science, sociology and law to religious study and theology, the book highlights the presuppositions of the secular and religion that are deeply implicated in the histories of these disciplines (Masaizuwa 2005). Whereas religious studies and theology have traditionally had ‘religion’ as their explicit focus and can provide readings of the secular through the eyes of ‘religion’ (such as, in the case of this book, Protestant Lutheran theology), sociology, political science and law have traditionally been perceived as quintessentially secular disciplines which operate with a strict binary opposition between the secular and religion.

But – as this book shows in the realms of law and human rights, for example – presumptions also prevail about law and human rights as the essence of the secular, and are complicated by the state church histories in which these laws

operate. Law and religion prove to be mutually involved. While all disciplines bear to some extent the imprint of a secular academic tradition, dialogue between different disciplines will help further unsettle standard accounts of the secular.

Approaching the secular and the sacred: Historical and spatial dimensions

Central to modern theories of secularization was an understanding of the secular as a temporal condition: secularity comes ‘after’ religion has disappeared. Moreover, what Taylor has characterized as ‘subtraction theories’ of the secular, couple this temporal dimension, to a spatial one (Taylor: 2007). The secular is not only seen as the stage after the overcoming of religion, but also as the void left by the disappearance of religion. Approaching the secular along the axes of space and time is not new. The Christian category saeculum has always had a dual temporal and spatial dimension. Yet it is increasingly recognized that the particular modern connotations of secularity along these dimensions (as the ‘absence of religion’ or the ‘epoch after its overcoming’) are flawed insofar as they are upheld as the universal standard. Targeting its temporal dimension, scholars point to a ‘post-secular’ situation where religion is ‘back’ and, as Jürgen Habermas (2006) argues, requires a self-reflexive attitude from both secular as well as religious citizens in regard to their participation in the public sphere. Targeting its spatial dimension, scholars have shown that religion ‘fails’ to be absent, or to be relegated to a private sphere but is instead part of the public sphere and the state; even, for example, in a paradigmatic case of enforced secularization like Kemalist Turkey (Parla & Davidson: 2008). Alternatively, a spatial emphasis has led scholars to investigate how the body is implicated in secular formations (cf. Asad: 2003; Jakobsen & Pellegrini: 2008; 22).

Looking at the secular through the category of space, in Kim Knott’s terminology ‘an operational space’, allows for a grounded and original perspective to a variety of situations or locations. Spaces can be seen as both public domains and actual physical spaces. But they can also be conceived metaphorically: the body is a space (topos), as are social relations and connections. This methodology allows one to reach under the surface of what looks like a ‘secular’ space (or ‘religious’ space) and investigate what value positions (religion or post secular) constitute it. What is the location of religion within and beyond it? This approach is particularly appropriate for a Scandinavian context (although certainly not limited to it) where the traces of a Lutheran past or foundation lie often just below the surface. Furthermore, following in the wake of a spatial turn in social and cultural theory (evident in the work of, for example, Foucault, Lefebvre and Certeau) the interest for spatial approaches within religious studies and theology is promising but still of recent date.

Looking at secularity “through a theological lens” (Cady: 2010, 249), we see that the Lutheran narrative of the secular is both historical and dogmatic. Historically, the Lutheran Reformation has aimed to abolish the sacred canon laws and remove legislation from the ecclesiastical body to that of the king, who was considered the only legitimate secular ruler. Dogmatically, the idea of salvation ‘by faith alone’ implied that any kind of legislation connected to the spiritual was thought to be wrong. The only way to relate to the generous God was through belief, not through legislation. Hence, the canon laws were removed and legal regulations were laid down by public authorities, kings and sovereigns, etc. In other words, legal ‘secularity’ was part of the Reformation’s intention and part of a theological plan. The Reformation theologians had their focus on God’s salvation of souls and viewed the ‘secularity’ of the Reformation legislation as God’s will.

There is no doubt that this historical process has taken many different routes and forms in the respective Scandinavian countries. Nonetheless, the basic idea still holds, and makes for a relevant distinction between countries more dominated by Catholic traditions and those more dominated by reformed traditions. This combination of history and dogmatics characterizes the Scandinavian countries and makes them more than just locally interesting. Out of it comes a narrative of what one could call a ‘hidden sacrality’ whereby the sacred is not necessarily explicit but is implicitly present in secular institutions and legislations. The secularity is due to the will of God rather than an absence of religion.

The interdisciplinary challenge: Theology, political science, law and sociology

Exploring the secular and the sacred from the perspective of different academic traditions presents some difficulties. For example, in one reading of the situation we could say that Norway and many other Protestant countries have only secular law, as opposed to Catholic countries, where sacred canon law coexists with secular civil law. In the Protestant context, the abolition of canon law in the wake of the Reformation resulted in a legal system in which both civil law and laws regulating Church affairs (church laws) were approved and – ultimately – regulated by national governments rather than by religion.
itself. From the perspective of Lutheran theology, this 'secularity' makes sense as another way of performing Christentum.

From the perspective of political science or sociology, however, the theologian's secularity here can hardly be called secular; large parts of Norwegian public life are regulated by these church laws, often revealing a strong Lutheran, privileged position. So it is here that the interdisciplinary challenge starts. Do these Norwegian public spaces attest to an incomplete secularity? Religion is partly removed - but not entirely? Or should we rather see it as a different kind of (Lutheran) secularity? But then how does this affect our conceptual understanding of the secular? If secularity is ultimately always reduced to or translated as one of many other theological positions, does that imply that the secular has no independence outside the category of religion? Is it essentially 'all a matter of religion'? Or is the notion of religion/sacred versus secular simply not (always) a useful analytical tool for analysing law and public institutions?

Definition of terms

To redress the problem of different connotations of certain terms within different disciplines, the individual contributors specify their usage of terms as far as possible. To distinguish between the terms 'secularization', 'secularism', and 'secular', most of the contributors to this volume distinguish between 'secularization' as a historical and social process of functional differentiation, 'secularism' as a normative, political doctrine about state-church relations or 'worldview', and the 'secular' as a modern epistemic category (Casanova 2011). Nonetheless, these are far from mutually exclusive categories. When speaking of 'Scandinavian secularities' we refer to different collective and public self-understandings of a country in regard to religion or religious diversity (for example the way a government proclaims an official position in regard to religion in the public sphere) or to the position of a set of actors (such as activists, human rights workers, or religious representatives) in these countries in regard to the role of religion in the public sphere or the understanding of secular law. Rather than provide a fixed definition of the secular - which would defeat the purpose of this anthology - we refer on several occasions to 'the standard picture of the secular' (as 'the absence', 'the opposite', 'the overcoming of religion'), in juxtaposition to which the findings of the individual studies can be analyzed. "Religion' in this anthology encompasses a wide variety of phenomena: organized belief communities, religion as a legal concept, identity or set of practices of a belief-community;

9 Secularisation is typically defined as: a) the inevitable process of decline of religiosity (in belief and practice); b) religion's inevitable privatization; and c) the increasing functional differentiation between spheres.
is not through three examples (including the registration of religious communities). He shows how drawing the line between religion and its opposite is affected by a Lutheran framework of interpretation and political expediency rather than by principled reasoning or international legal concepts.

Section four, ‘Religion and secularity in Scandinavian public spaces or institutions’, encompasses a range of interesting empirical case studies of the presence of religion in various public spaces. Here we see demonstrated the myriad ways of mutual involvement of religion and public space and the often contradictory processes of secularization and the maintenance of the privileged position of the majority faith in society.

Inger Furseth, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Norway, analyzes secular and religious space in the Norwegian penitentiary system. Relying on Knott’s spatial approach, Furseth’s analysis reveals both a process of increasing secularization as well as a privileged role for the Church of Norway in the workings of this institution. She also observes variation between individual prisons in the extent to which they provide for prayer rooms, reflecting an altered conceptions of space of the architects of the older and more modern prison buildings.

Knut W. Ruyter, Adjunct Professor Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Norway, investigates the role of religion in the public Norwegian hospital. Combining a spatial and historical approach that traces the Lutheran underpinning of this Norwegian institution since its inception, he explores several existing contemporary solutions for dealing with religious pluralism in Norwegian hospitals. He argues for a secularity (a way of dealing with religious plurality) that can coexist with religion in one space.

Rosemarie van den Breemer, comparative political scientist and PhD fellow at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Norway explores the Norwegian state’s attitude towards religion and religious diversity in the graveyard. Her analysis reveals a variety of Norwegian secularities that consist of a different interpretation amongst state and non-state actors of how to give form to religious pluralism in the graveyard. The municipal and intertwined dimension of Norwegian state–church relations is shown to be carried weight in important political weight.

Trygve Wyller, Professor of Diaconal Studies and Systematic Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Norway, presents a case study from a humanitarian-based project for undocumented migrants in a Swedish church. The project itself was initiated by a philanthropic group of volunteers not connected to the Lutheran Church, but it cooperates closely with the church and is located in the church building. Wyller discusses the kind of interweaving visible in this project. The cooperation between the church and the project leads, according to Wyller, to an alternative proposal for a secular ‘law’ or a secular approach to the issue of undocumented migrants. It
leads to a Lutheran-implicit redefinition of what the secular should be: normatively providing more space to the undocumented.

Section five, 'Human rights as appropriated within a Scandinavian context', provides a compelling collection of articles that probe the connection between human rights and religion in the Scandinavian countries: Are human rights the new civil religion in Scandinavia? How do human rights language affect interreligious dialogue in Norway?

Johannes Van der Ven, Research Associate in Religion and Human Rights, Faculty of philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands, approaches the relation between 'secular' and 'sacred' from the theory of functional differentiation in modern societies. In that perspective he analyses the development from divine law in the Middle Ages via natural law to positive law in our time. He argues that in today's democratic societies the relation between religion and law is based on contingency rather than on whatever structural connection between throne and altar.

Oddbjørn Leirvik, Professor of Interreligious Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Norway, argues that the starting point for interreligious dialogue is a shared consciousness of a non-hegemonic condition, in which no one religion can control the public sphere. With reference to empirical material drawn from organized interreligious dialogues in Norway, he discusses whether such dialogues systemically pull in the direction of a common secular language. Furthermore, he discusses the influence of human rights discourses on interreligious dialogue in the Scandinavian countries.

Pål Ketil Botvar, researcher at the Centre for Church Research (KIFO), Norway, and Anders Sjöborg, researcher at the Uppsala Religion and Society Research Center, Sweden, examine the impact of religion on the attitudes towards human rights among young people. Comparing data from a survey conducted among youth in Norway and Sweden with data from four other countries in north-western Europe, they explore the relationship between religious affiliation (Muslim, Christian and nonreligious) and support for the first generation of human rights. They suggest that the limited impact of religion on the support for these principles in the Scandinavian context is related to the cohesive function that these rights have in Scandinavian public life. Might they be seen as constituting a new form of 'civil religion'?

Focus for future research

Because this anthology is the result of two conferences in 2010 and a working group on human rights and religion, all of which have an overlapping but slightly different theme, we have to acknowledge some limitations. Does it make sense to speak of a 'Scandinavian' or even a 'Nordic' model of secularity? In terms of representation, the articles in this anthology focus heavily on Norway (and omit Finland and Iceland). Generalising from these Scandinavian findings to an even more general Nordic pattern (following Casanova's typology) is then certainly possible but would require much more comparative research. It would require comparison with other Protestant/Lutheran contexts such as Germany, as well as more Calvinist Protestant contexts such as the USA or the Netherlands. Alternatively, it could compare a Baltic state such as Estonia, where Lutheranism was enforced through Baltic-German and Swedish rule.

Furthermore, the way in which a country (or actors therein) understand themselves as modern and secular is determined by the confessional legacy of the country, but of course also by other 'secular' factors such as the existence of social democracy, welfare state ideology, human rights politics, or (to remain with Estonia) the effect of Soviet occupation. The contributions in this anthology touch on several of these themes, but we would need more extensive comparative studies to 'fill in' more contours of the secular than those provided here.

Finally, we should be careful to reduce the 'Scandinavian model' to a Protestant tradition alone. This would omit the influence of other religious groups which, importantly, have helped shape the nature of the secular, and which are in many ways the reason why we are discussing the secular in the first place. Nonetheless, this book may help set the agenda for further research. It is intended to complement existing research on religion in the Scandinavian countries with: 1) a more specific focus on secularity; 2) with international implications for our theories on secularization and the secular; and 3) explicit engagement between the social sciences and Protestant theology in comprehend (a part of) the Scandinavian reality.

Bibliography


José Casanova

The Two Dimensions, Temporal and Spatial, of the Secular: Comparative Reflections on the Nordic Protestant and Southern Catholic Patterns from a Global Perspective.

Abstract

This paper examines the changing interconnection between the temporal and the spatial dimensions of the secular. It argues that the contemporary crisis of Western secular modernity, and of the secularist philosophy of history that went with it, has opened up the space to study the heterogeneity of the secular and simultaneously forces every form of political secularism, as the doctrine that has the task of defining the proper place of religion in public spaces, to self-redefinition. The analysis is embedded in a comparative analysis of three different patterns of secularization: the Nordic Protestant, the Southern Latin Catholic and the American. The Nordic pattern is characterized by a peculiar integration of the religious and the secular, which is manifest in the fusion between church (ecclesiastical institution), state and nation. The Latin Catholic pattern of laicization is characterized by a rigid separation of the religious and the secular and by civil-ecclesiastical and laic-clerical antagonism. The United States offers a third dynamic of secularization without professionalisation. With laicism France it shares a secular separationist model of disestablishment of ecclesiastical religion at the state level, while radicalising the Protestant model of diffusion of the religious and secular boundaries in society. The key to the American model is the dissolution of the ecclesiastical national church institution and the proliferation of the sectarian model of free voluntary religious associations without any state interference.

Introduction

We would not be discussing the ‘heterogeneity of the secular’ and its spatial dimension in particular if something fundamental had not happened to its temporal dimension as it became crystallized in the concept of Western secular modernity. Theories of modern secularisation were predicated on the notion that the secular is a temporal condition that comes ‘after’ religion. Following Charles Taylor’s formulation, ‘a secular age’ is a stage of historical development that comes after a religious age once the belief in God that was previously held uniformly is no longer taken for granted. (Taylor: 2010) Within