

WORLDVIEW FOUNDATIONS OF STUDYING SECULARITY

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Abstract: In the modern world, the tendencies of secularization are in a complex interaction with the traditional and new forms of influence of religion on the social and individual consciousness, on the socio-political processes and institutions. In the society, intense public and academic discussions take place on the question of what a secular state should be or should not be. However, the social and humanitarian sciences have not yet developed a generally accepted conceptual and methodological approach to resolving the issues of the relation between the secular and the religious, between faith and knowledge. The decline of religious faith as a worldview and a mental structure, as a disciplinary-upbringing institution of socialization, as a spiritual and moral core of the life of the individual is indubitable. Religiosity is shifting more and more towards an external, largely ostentatious, image-related style of behavior, whereas secularism is becoming the worldview basis of modernity.

The article substantiates the idea that freethinking is the basis for developing a categorical apparatus and an authentic methodology for investigating the problems of secularity.

Keywords: Secularity, (post) secularism, religion, politics, society, worldview.

INTRODUCTION

The processes of globalization are characterized by an intricate intertwining of multidirectional trends. The tendencies of secularization in the modern world are in a complex interaction with the processes of religious revival, with the traditional and new forms of the influence of religion on socio-political processes and institutions. On the one hand, it seems that religion is pushed to the margins of social life by unprecedented scientific and technological achievements and the dominance of liberal democratic values in the activity of key civil and social institutions such as law, politics, culture, science, upbringing, and education. On the other hand, religious ideologies are embedded into the structures of national and cultural identity, into the strategies of political parties and social movements, into constructive dialogue and confrontational opposition between cultures and civilizations, as well as into geopolitical games on the “grand chessboard”. Together with the Western civilizational project oriented towards secular values, there are other alternative types of civilizations in the world that preserve religious axiology.

The marginalization of the spiritual and moral content of profound religious faith allows using religion in its socio-political projections, contributing to the

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political mobilization of religion. In the conditions of the worldview and value crisis experienced by modern civilization, the growing geopolitical instability, and radicalization of political ideologies, the secularization processes give rise to the same effect of the formation of a politically engaged confessional identity as religious fundamentalism.

Obviously, to overcome these destructive trends, the transition to a new model of interaction between liberal-democratic and confessional-religious principles and values is necessary. In this connection, there is an urgent need for an objective scientific analysis of the content and forms of realization of the principle of secularity.

The problems of secularity, the role and place of religion in the post-secular society are among the most discussed topics both in the scientific and expert community and in the wide public space. In the modern world, tense public and academic discussions take place about what a secular state should or should not be. Over the past 30-40 years, there has been a significant increase in research devoted to the study of various patterns of secularity and secularism, (de) secularization processes, and post-secular society. At the same time, the concept of secularism or secularity in the contemporary socio-political discourse is a perfect example of the “conflict of interpretations” (Paul Ricoeur).

SOCIOLOGICAL MODELS OF SECULARIZATION

A sociological model of the process of society’s secularization in the Modern era was created in the classical works of Durkheim (1995) and Weber (2009). It was shown in these works that the contemporary society is undergoing the process of un-spelling and un-enchanting of the world (Max Weber), gradually tearing the threads of dependence of the existence conditions from the transcendental sources, which determined the social order of the pre-modern, traditional society under the total control of the church. Weber considered secularization as a gradual subordination of the value-ideological content of religion to the normative-value complex of the bourgeois business ethos. In the traditional society, religion acted as a central value-symbolic system, projecting confessional-religious world outlook on the entire sphere of human consciousness and behavior, on all forms of life organization.

Secularization implies more or less pronounced separation of the sacred and the secular. In a society of the traditional type, the sacred and the secular are manifested in a wide variety of connections, sometimes merging to being indistinguishable. Eizenshtadt (1999, p. 24) noted: “A strong orientation towards regulation of the secular order without the attempts of ultimate and total realization of transcendent ideas in their original form was formed”.

This orientation was explicitly realized in the reformation movement. It was already Ludwig Feuerbach who pointed to the structural analogies of the

transformation of the absolute monarchy that took place in the Reformation era into a constitutional monarchy and the transformation of the metaphysically-scholastic picture of the universe into a scientific and theological one.

The true religious faith is replaced by what Taylor (2011) calls a “good” or “respectable” religion: such a religion that fits into the rationally substantiated social and moral order of society. The compromise of this idea encounters opposition of more radically-minded researchers. Lilla (2007, p. 5) in “The Stillborn God” brings the aspirations to the separation of religion and political issues to their complete break and absolute mutual autonomy.

As a rule, three main components are distinguished in the secularization phenomenon (Casanova, 2006; Martin, 1978):

1. The religion’s losing the function of the worldview-ideological foundation of integration of all spheres of human activity.
2. Pushing religion from the public to the private space of social world, into the private life of individuals and social groups.
3. The decline of the religiosity of the population of modern countries, liberation of the public and individual consciousness from the influence of religious ideas.

According to Taylor (2007), from the modern era a situation is formed in the Western world, when unbelief becomes a norm. Berger (1996, p. 357) indicates that in the process of secularization the sacred is transferred to the secular; a phenomenon is emerging which is designated by oxymorons such as “profane sacredness”, “secular religion”. Along with non-traditional religious denominations, Protestantism in the modern world is the dominant model of secular religion actively involved in the processes of secularization.

A number of modern sociologists question the universality of both these tendencies and secularization itself as a paradigm of the civilizational development of the modern world. For example, Casanova (1994, 2012) writes about revitalization of religion in the public sphere in the second half of the 20th century. Berger (2008) comes to the conclusion about the fallacy of his former views on the inevitable decline of religion. From these positions, the issue in the concepts of secularization should be not so much the decline of religion, but rather changing the forms of its presence in the social, political, cultural, scientific, educational and other spheres of society.

At the same time, the role of social and political *projections* of religion is growing. Religion is increasingly drawn into politics, *while secularization facilitates the use of religion for political purposes*.

The interaction of politics and religion develops in many directions and in the most diverse forms. In the monograph by Shaukenova, & Dunaev (2013, p. 353),

the main forms (tendencies) of the politicization of religion and the religiousization of politics are listed.

Religiousization of politics is manifested as: taking into account in the politics the state of religiousness of society and the attitude towards religion of various strata of the population;

Politicization of religion is manifested as: participation in political activities of ministers of religion, religious organizations; the functioning of political parties and movements on a religious basis.

In the classical model of the secular state, religion and religious associations are separated from the state, the attitude of which towards all faiths and to the followers of non-confessional worldviews is neutral (equidistant). Taylor (2011, p. 245) notes: “The state may well not be Christian and not Islamic, but in the same way it should not be Marxist, Kantian, or utilitarian”. A modern democratically-pluralistic, secular state must adopt the laws that reflect the values and worldviews of its citizens, including religious and confessional beliefs.

The processes of politicization of religion and religiousization of politics are natural and carry a significant social and constructive meaning. On the one hand, public policy needs a spiritually-moral, value-based legitimation of its actions and decisions; to this end, turning to religious moral postulates becomes the most important source of forming the political rhetoric. On the other hand, religion cannot be indifferent, detached from the social and political conditions of its functioning. “Therefore – as Kazakhstan experts note (Burova, & Kosichenko, 2013, p. 79) – it would be reasonable to give religion the possibility of some influence on society, while demanding from the religion to manifest its positive qualities”.

Taylor (2011) identifies three stages of the formation of secularity: division of church and state, separation of church from state, and finally, removal of religion from the life of state and society. In the modern world, there are a number of types of the state’s attitude towards religion and church.

Also, the principle of secularity itself is characterized by a wide variety of its types, forms, and models: about ten types of secularity are realized in modern states.

Besides, in each individual country there are special features peculiar to this country and the nuances of the relationship between state institutions and religion.

The state of uncertainty, blurring of the boundaries of the sacral and the secular stems from the duality of the role and place of religion in secular states. On the one hand, as noted by Habermas (2008, p. 71), “with the functional isolation of private social systems, the life of religious community is also separated from its social environment”. On the other hand, even in the most secularized states pursuing a policy of “radical secularism”, laicite, the task of a real, substantial,

and not merely formal, legal separation of the state from religious institutions is practically unsolvable. A well-known Kazakh researcher A.G. Kosichenko points to the non-feasibility of the separational model of secularity: “The reason for this is simple: a believer is also a citizen; that is, in him/her, in the person, these two spheres separated by law – religion and state – are combined. A believer brings with him/herself, with his/her system of ideological and behavioral norms, to the public life the requirements of religion, and it is almost impossible to separate one from another” (Kurganskaya *et al.*, 2003, pp. 11-12).

In this regard, one of the most difficult theoretical problems and tasks of the practical policy of a secular state is to find a balance, a level of interaction between the state and religion that is optimal for the given specific conditions of a given country: avoiding both their excessive division fraught with the danger of a conflict-confrontational type of relations and their excessive interpenetration.

WORLDVIEW PARADIGMS OF RESEARCH APPROACHES TO THE PHENOMENON OF SECULARITY

The discourse of secularity is conducted in various disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces and uses a variety of approaches (research perspectives) within the framework of these paradigms. In recent years, the comparative approach is becoming more and more widespread. For example, Eggert, & Hölscher (2013, p. 2) note that in each cultural and social context secularization has not only its own specific features, but also a special meaning. The editors of the collected volume “Religion and Secularity” (2013) proceed from the fact that secularization has been and remains a powerful force in many societies; however, in every cultural and social context, it has a different meaning. The mainstream of contemporary research on the problems of religion and secularism is conducted along these lines.

On the whole, one cannot but agree with the high evaluation of the productivity and prospects of studying the specific features of secularism in individual countries/cultures and the importance of comparative approach to the analysis of the ideology and practice of secularism. At the same time, it should be noted that any analysis of secularism is determined, first of all, by the fundamental worldview paradigms of the researcher.

Within the framework of socio-political approaches, at least seven basic approaches to the problem of secularization can be distinguished (Abramov, 2011, pp. 23-31). In a more fundamental context, in the approach to the analysis of secularism, the authors of the present article distinguish four main types of the worldview paradigms: religious faith; atheism; indifferentism; freethinking.

Religious faith

The “conflict of interpretations” syntagma (Paul Ricoeur) characterizes not only the understanding and assessment of secularization by secular and religious thinkers,

but it is fully applicable to the interpretation of this process by different religious denominations, as well as to different trends within the same denomination.

The model of the development of Western civilization, being dominant since the Reformation, has been structurally and functionally connected with secularization processes that extend not only to the activities of social institutions, but also to the religious sphere itself. The domination of the principles of anthropocentrism, pragmatism, rationalism, and economic efficiency over spiritual and moral imperatives, typologically characterizing the value content of secularization, jeopardizes the very existence of religion. In connection with this, the researchers (Shapoval, 2009) distinguish three strategic answers of traditional religions to these challenges: (1) religious fundamentalism; (2) modernization and liberalization of traditional religions of Revelation (ecumenical project), “new religiosity” of non-traditional denominations; (3) the shift of the vector of sociocultural transformations from the processes of secularization to the movement towards a post-secular society.

1. Religious Fundamentalism

In the system of religious values, there are two dimensions: the essential core (religious experience, dogmas, and cult) and the periphery, the sociocultural content of religious teachings. It is at the level of the peripheral, relative content of confessional-religious ideas that their dialogue with both the secular value systems and the value complexes of other faiths is possible.

Religious fundamentalism, denying the very existence of these levels and demanding the subordination of all spheres of human life and society to religious dogmatics, closes for religion the possibility of dialogue with other worldview systems.

2. Modernization of Traditional Religions, New Religiosity

From the 1960s and 1970s, a period begins of exponential growth of new non-traditional confessions and the number of their adherents. New religions and sects, representing the syncretism of world religions, various kinds of pagan beliefs, mystic-esoteric teachings and practices, emphasize personal self-improvement; they are anthropocentric in contrast to the theocentrism of the organized church religiosity.

Ecumenism, as opposed to religious fundamentalism, accepts the conditions dictated by the secularization process. The modernization and liberalization of the Christian tradition is carried out with the idea of acceptance by the religion of the values of the secular world. In this regard, an indicative example is the comparison of Pope John Paul II's and Cardinal Martini's views on the correlation of religious and secular values.

Standing on the positions of religious fundamentalism, the cardinal is convinced of the truth and absoluteness of the values of religion rooted in the relation of man to God, and the ontological insignificance of secular values suspended in a spiritless space. The gradation of values extends also to the value of life of their subjects. From the point of view of the concept of universal human values, the value of human life is absolute, and this postulate does not need any philosophical, ideological or transcendental justification. The former Head of the Catholic Church, John Paul II (2004, p. 69) defended the non-confessional, universal meaning of the value of life: “The man is above any ideas and world outlooks; human life is an absolute concept, not a relative one”. However, during his discussion with Umberto Eco, Cardinal Martini introduces into this postulate the principle of selectivity and exclusion. He claims: “Many believe ... that for the Catholic, human life is the highest value. This is at least inaccurate and inconsistent with what the Gospel tells us”. For Christians, “the highest value in our world is the man who lives life in the Lord” (Eco, & Martini, 2011, pp. 63, 64). Therefore, according to the Cardinal, it is becoming more and more difficult to preserve the mutual respect of believers and unbelievers, and sooner or later some extreme situation will make them enemies, take them to the different sides of the barricades.

Thus, theistic humanism in its fundamentalist interpretation builds an insurmountable wall of mutual misunderstanding and enmity between those people who “live in the Lord” and all other people.

3. Post-secular Society

Many authors see in the modern world powerful trends of desecularization or advancement towards a post-secular society. The concept of “Post-secular era” is understood as a shift to a new role of religion in public life, which also introduces some changes into the philosophical discourse of the problems of religion and secularism.

Jürgen Habermas is building a normative concept of the spiritual and intellectual space of the post-secular society. In this model, secular and religious thinking interact, but with clear understanding of the limits of their competences outlined by the dividing lines between faith and reason. Slavoi Žižek builds his own, alternative to the one by Habermas, strategy of post-secular philosophy on the principles of overcoming all boundaries between philosophy and religion, the secular and the religious. Thus, for example, setting in his political philosophy the task of rethinking the ideas of communism and drawing out the contours of a new communist culture from dialectical-materialistic positions, Žižek (2011, p. 397) insists that “theology is regenerated as a starting point for a radical policy”, capable of overcoming the deadlocks of liberalism.

Influential political philosophers of the liberal direction John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas criticize the ideology of secularism for the exclusion of religion

from public polemics, from democratic procedures of achieving the overlapping consensus. From the point of view of Habermas, the universal moral and political principles of the deliberative democracy are formed in the communicative practices of public social and political discourse, and do not have a metaphysical or transcendental referent. At the same time, the norms of the liberal political culture of the post-secular state stipulate that religious beliefs receive a certain positive epistemological status in socio-political discussions. Habermas (2008, p. 75) notes: “Non-religious citizens ... should not deny on principle the potential of truth of the religious vision of the world and should not deprive the believing citizens of the right to make some contribution to public discussion through religious concepts”. Connolly (1999) in his book with the characteristic title “Why I Am Not a secularist” insists on the sociopolitical significance of religious metaphysical concepts alternative to secularism.

However, any religion is dogmatic. Dogma is an integral part of it, and any deviations from it are regarded as heretical delusions. Therefore, “religious argumentation” puts an end to any discussion, except for theological disputes as such. Theological arguments can be challenged or accepted only within or on the territory of a theological discourse, where the arguments of the secular mind are not taken into account.

Jaspers (1991, p. 457) wrote: “At the crucial moment, the discussion with theologians is interrupted ... in the end it turns out that all this is, in fact, uninteresting to them. This is because, on the one hand, they feel confident in their truth, frighteningly confident, on the other, it seems to them that it is not worth to engage in us, who seem to them closed in their disbelief”.

Thus, religion is embedded into the post-secular society, as into the secular world, only by means of its peripheral domains, leaving the dogmatic core untouched.

Atheism

The secularization of public consciousness occurs in a number of interrelated forms. The natural-scientific model of the world pushes aside the theological picture of the universe. Social sciences leave political theology out of work. In the field of ethics, the Kantian “Copernican revolution” postulates the categorical imperatives of morality, which are independent of religion. In the works of the three most influential thinkers of the modern age – Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud – religion is qualified as a false consciousness and the earthly sources of sacred meanings, symbols, and institutions are disclosed.

One of the most radical interpretations of secularization from the standpoint of atheism belongs to Karl Marx. Marx (1996) argued that in the “Christian state” religion becomes a means; therefore, this very state is a “*state of hypocrisy*”.

However, in reality, the political functions of religion are paradoxically reproduced even in states that declare “militant atheism” as their state ideology. For example, in the USSR the very “scientific atheistic” worldview was, in fact, sacralized and endowed with a sacred meaning; by means of this worldview, the ideological apparatus of the state tried to form a new collective identity, “the Soviet people”.

Ontologically, secularism is understood as an idea of autonomy and self-sufficiency of the world. In the epistemological terms, secularization means the proclaimed in the Age of Enlightenment transition in solving moral and political questions from the authority of Revelation, religious dogma, and theological categories to reliance on purely rational arguments, reason, science, democratic principles, and humanistic values. Coming from Auguste Comte, superstitious admiration of science, the proclamation of it as a new form of religion, inspired the famous “methodological anarchist” Feyerabend (1986, p. 450) to an outrageous proposal to complement the separation of state from the church by “*separation of the state from science – this most modern, most aggressive and most dogmatic religious institution*”.

Indifferentism

Under the general heading of “indifferentism”, we unite numerous forms of philosophical reflection, taking off the table the question of existence/non-existence of the transcendental plane of being. Accordingly, in the field of political philosophy, the paradigm of ideologically neutral bases of civil law and order and egalitarian public morality authorizes various kinds of postmodern “assemblies”, eclectic syntheses of secular and religious institutions.

This eclectic position is most consistently and purposefully implemented in the policy of multiculturalism as the “flagship project of liberal democracy” (Stirner, 2012) of the post-secular society. For example, in the program document of the British Academy “Minority Legal Orders in the UK: Minorities, Pluralism and the Law” (Malik, 2012), it is noted that the state is, first of all, a sovereign legal system. At the same time, the idea is substantiated that the claims of religious minorities to the legitimacy of their own legal systems and legal regimes do not jeopardize the sovereignty of the state and the unity of the political community. Moreover, the norms of the legal regime of religious minorities can become part of the state legal system.

The leaders of the major European countries (Angela Merkel, David Cameron, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero) have acknowledged the acute crisis and even “failure” of the neoliberal ideology and the policy of multiculturalism, its inability to form an integral set of values and norms of civil-political identity. The source of the failure of the multicultural experiment was not least the excesses

caused by the fragmentation of the cultural and legal space. The adherents of “legal multiculturalism” or “legal pluralism” (Tamanaha, 2009; Richardson, 2011) (“hybrid legal space” (Berman, 2007)) dispute the fairness of the application of laws reflecting the norms of a majority culture to the representatives of ethnic and religious minorities. Also, “today it is considered permissible for minorities to require inclusion into the system of state law of certain cultural and religious customs” (Malik, 2013, p. 303). The “Research Project on Plural Legal Orders and Human Rights” (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2008) states that the state can apply different laws to different people depending on their religious affiliation. However, the incorporation of the category of “crimes conditioned by culture” into the judicial system leads to dismantling of both state sovereignty and the fundamental principle of democratic state and legal system: the equality of all citizens before the law.

The institutionalization of value and worldview indifferentism as the ideological basis of the post-secular society makes utopian and unrealistic any attempts to reform multiculturalism. For example, the leader of the British Liberal Democrats, British Vice-Premier Clegg (2011), in his program “Speech on multiculturalism”, said that the basis for the changed policy of multiculturalism should be the principle “In an open society, values compete but do not conflict”. That is, the hierarchy of values should be built not in accordance with their internal merits, but on the external for the worldview content of these values criterion of their competitiveness, determined by the game of supply and demand in the global market of worldviews and ideologies.

Neo-liberal fundamentalism introduces the principle of indifferentism as the basis of state’s attitude to confessional religions under the slogan of protecting civil liberties, pluralism, tolerance, equality of confessions, etc. Religious indifferentism in its various modifications (skepticism, relativism, eclecticism, nihilism, etc.) morally and ideologically authorizes shameless exploitation of religion for political purposes. After all, if no religious or atheistic worldview system has an intrinsic merit of truth, then the instrumental, utilitarian-pragmatic attitude toward them becomes not only permissible, but also the only rational one.

Worldview indifferentism corresponds to the greatest extent to the postmodern world, which has abandoned metanarratives in favor of language games. However, it leaves unanswered the question of Giddens (2004, p. 66): “Are we able to live in a world where there is nothing sacred?”

Freethinking

Freethinking is a kind of reflexive interval, keeping a distance between a person and his/her own worldview and inner world. Freethinking is the realization by the person of his/her complete responsibility for what he/she puts into the spiritual and

value foundations of his/her being and attitude to the world. This responsibility cannot be transferred from the individual to the principles and doctrines that he/she professes.

Freethinking is a genuine alternative to both secularization and theocracy. However, the contemporary forms of democracy, based on political technologies of manipulating the mass consciousness, replace freethinking with its surrogates and simulacra: religious tolerance, ideological indifferentism, and value eclecticism. Thus, a truly free attitude to religion presupposes a radical transformation of political discourse and praxis; it needs a new political philosophy.

One can agree with Uzlaner (2011, p. 26) when he writes: “When we talk about the post-secular philosophy, we are talking about a completely new configuration of philosophy itself, of thought itself, and not about the fact that philosophy must begin to somehow rethink religion and theology, for example, in a more respectful and less reductionistic manner”. However, we cannot agree with the further opinion of Uzlaner (2011, p. 27): “Theology and religion are what lies at the very basis of philosophy as such, therefore no philosophy can escape the fundamental theological perspective, rethinking every aspect of reality in the light of its relationship to God”.

Philosophy raises the following question: what structures and semantic content of the cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and religious experience form the episteme of the era within which the philosopher himself/herself thinks? However, at the same time, the philosopher critically analyzes the bases of his/her own way of thinking; and this is the difference between philosophy and theology. Therefore, philosophy cannot be scientific, humanistic, religious, atheistic, or post-secular. Philosophy, as Aristotle (1975, p. 69) understood it, is precisely the freedom of thought or “the only free science, because it alone exists for its own sake”, and outside it there is no criterion to which it must correspond. The most prominent representative of neotomism Maritain (1999, pp. 142, 143) asserts: “Philosophy draws its specifics from itself, whether we are talking about the head of a heathen or the head of a Christian”. Philosophy in its essence “does not depend on the Christian faith either in its subject matter, or in principles, or in methods”. In the words of J. Derrida, the coalescence of philosophy with theology as a perspective of post-secular philosophy is only a return to the “shocking Alexandria promiscuity”.

It should be noted that one of the reasons for philosophy’s turning to religious argumentation was the ban on the study of metaphysical problems imposed by philosophy on itself. The philosophy of postmodernism, placing itself on the other side of the distinguishing between good and evil, truth and error, provoked turning to religion as a worldview, which answers the fundamental meaning-of-life and metaphysical questions.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the worldview foundations of the study of secularity, carried out in the article, makes it possible to draw the following main conclusions:

1. The principle of secularity of the state is one of the fundamental principles of the construction and functioning of the modern rule-of-law state in most countries of the world. In the modern democratic rule-of-law state, the structures of the spiritual and socio-civil consolidation of the society are generated by the sphere of legal awareness and the non-confessional content of universal human values and moral imperatives.
2. The modern processes of desecularization, the return of religion to the public space, set complex challenges for the democratic secular states that require rethinking and a new approach to the conceptualization of the problems of secularity and secularism in the post-secular society.
3. The most important, not subject to revision principle of secularism is the idea that faith, be it religious or secular, is a personal matter and the result of free choice of each person. Religious dogmas, as well as the postulates of atheism, cannot be institutionalized in the form of the foundations or components of the political ideology of the secular state.
4. The social and humanitarian sciences still have not developed a generally accepted conceptual and methodological approach to resolving the issues of the relation between the secular and the religious, faith and knowledge. This conceptual and terminological uncertainty creates a nutritious soil for the use of religion for the momentary political purposes.
5. Freethinking is a worldview foundation for developing a categorical apparatus and an authentic methodology for investigating the problems of secularity.

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