

Secularism and Religion-Making

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AND

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Introduction: Modernity, Religion-Making, and the Postsecular

Arvind-Pal S. Mandair and Markus Dressler

The project out of which this volume emerged was initially framed under the title “Politics of Religion-Making.” We conceived of “religion-making” broadly as the way in which certain social phenomena are configured and reconfigured within the matrix of a world-religion(s) discourse. In other words, the notion refers to the reification and institutionalization of certain ideas, social formations, and practices as “religious” in the conventional Western meaning of the term, thereby subordinating them to a particular knowledge regime of religion and its political, cultural, philosophical, and historical interventions.

From the outset the central aim of this project was to examine the consequences of the colonial and postcolonial adoption of Western-style objectifications of religion and its dialectical counterpart, the secular, by non-Western elites. By developing the concept of religion-making in a variety of different geographical, religious, and political contexts, we build on the relatively new field of thought that explores the thoroughly intertwined natures of religion and secularism in the modern period. In doing so we distance ourselves from the opposition between religion and the secular that has been so central for proponents and adherents of the secularization thesis and instead side with those scholars who are interested in exploring the various epistemological and political implications of the formation and codependency of “secular” and “religious” discourses.

The aim of this introduction is to articulate and deepen the methodological concerns and theoretical reflections that have since its inception accompanied this project on the politics of the religio-secular paradigm. The first part of this introduction is dedicated to an epistemological reflection on the major strands of scholarship that have a stake in critically reviewing modern discourses on religion and the secular/secularism. The purpose of this is to work out the limits of the existing paradigm by systematically questioning both religionist and secularist discourses as well as their respective historicizing negations (postreligious and postsecular, respectively). By means of this particular framing we aim at highlighting a set of continuities between these approaches—specifically the circular relationship among historical consciousness, the assumed secularity of critical thinking (or critique, the “critical attitude,” etc.), and Western civilizational identity. Taken together, these continuities embody a historico-philosophical continuum that constitutes the intellectual and political heritage and investment in which projects of

religion-making are grounded. It does so by simply improving or reforming the very structure that remains central to contemporary politics and theory, namely, the oppositional binary of self versus other. We suggest instead a notion of the post-secular that resists both the historico-philosophical continuum and the idea of religion as a historical and/or anthropological constant. Our alternative concept, which might be termed the *post-secular-religious*, tries instead to acknowledge the irresolvable contradiction, or *aporia*, that lies at the heart of the religio-secular paradigm and remains open to the questions raised in light of the experience of our postcolonial democracy. The second part of the introduction will turn to the more concrete work of religion-making, or religion-making politics, and distinguish between different modes of religion-making. The introduction will conclude with brief summaries of the individual chapters of this volume.

■ THREE STRANDS OF POSTSECULAR SCHOLARSHIP

In recent years there has been a rapid expansion of scholarship that has unpacked many of the connections between the secularization thesis and the work of religion-making, thereby offering fresh insights into the relationship between the twinned categories of “religion and the secular.” While a comprehensive overview of this literature is beyond the scope of this introduction, we shall aim, for heuristic purposes, to point out several of the better-known strands of scholarship that continue to influence the debate. These strands are generated by a relatively diverse group of scholars whose insights have contributed to a rethinking of the categories religion and the secular—and by implication the academic study of religion—in such a way that their collective contributions have helped to redraw the map of the religion-secular debate, which, by and large, has tended to gravitate around the narrative of secularization. For the sake of argument, the three most easily identifiable strands include (1) the sociopolitical philosophy of liberal secularism exemplified by Charles Taylor (and to some extent shared by thinkers such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas); (2) the “postmodernist” critiques of ontotheological metaphysics by radical theologians and Continental philosophers that have helped to revive the discourse of “political theology”; and (3) following the work of Michel Foucault and Edward Said, the various forms of discourse analysis focusing on genealogies of power most closely identified with the work of Talal Asad.

All three of these schools of thought have responded in different ways to the challenges posed by the resurgences of religion and religious formations to the dominant framework of modern liberal secularism. Yet what connects the first two schools and thus distinguishes them from the third, apart from a difference in academic discipline, is a specifically *philosophical* investment in the constitution of what might be called the Western imaginary. As we shall argue below, this philosophical investment hinges on the belief that there is an essentially historical difference between the West and the non-West. The term *historical difference*, which we borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty, can be envisaged as the structural basis of a comparative imaginary that links the West to the non-West, an imaginary that in turn depends on the belief in the notion of religion as a universal.¹ Accordingly, because secularism is *historically* associated with the West, it follows

that any movement beyond or after the secular can only be framed from within this comparative imaginary. Taken completely for granted by both of these strands of scholarship, despite certain postliberal and/or postmodern leanings, is that the nature of this imaginary consists in the notion of a divided self-conscious subject—the modern form of critical self-consciousness and associated with this a certain mode of critical thinking—as a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon. We shall return shortly to this link among subjectivity, critical thinking, and the religion–secular debate.

Both the schools of the liberal-secular and the postmodern/postsecular seem to affirm a particular notion of what comes *after* contemporary secularism. This convergence can be detected in the ontological affinity between their understandings of what constitutes history and the historical and what constitutes critique or critical thinking. That is to say, the very manner in which they continue to think about the transitions between religion, the secular, and the postsecular, indeed the possibility of thinking critically about these terms, is constrained by a particular notion of the historical that is forgetful of its own history as a history of foreclosure, if not exclusion, of the other. The question, however, is to what extent this claim might also be made in regard to the third school. Taking its cue from Foucault, the third school focuses on genealogical and discursive deconstruction of what one might call with José Casanova “knowledge regimes of secularism” and their respective religious others.² In doing so, it both challenges liberal secularism and attempts to reevaluate religion through notions of the postsecular and political theology. However, important differences between this third school and the first two notwithstanding, one might ask whether there is not a subtle convergence among all of them in regard to their implicit conceptualization of historical time and the kind of rationality this conceptualization is associated with.

Before further delving into this criticism it will be helpful to more fully expound the differences among the three schools of thought by way of reference to their respective explanations of how the contemporary terrain of religion and the secular came about and how they envisage going beyond this terrain, especially where they employ the notion of the *postsecular*. While fully recognizing the artificiality of grouping strands of scholarship in this particular way, we nevertheless continue to highlight this difference because it impacts the understanding of the notion of religion-making that is the main target of this book.

Critical Investments: (Post)Secularism, Historical Difference, and the Comparative Imaginary

In addition to sharing a similar disciplinary focus (post-Kantian Continental philosophy), philosophers who espouse liberal secularism and postmodernist advocates of political theology further share a common underlying assumption, which its different proponents hold to varying degrees. In its stronger version it consists in the belief that religion is a cultural universal, that all cultures have in varying degrees some understanding of religion. Where these philosophical schools diverge, however, is in their respective assessments of liberal secularism. Charles Taylor, for example, provides in his recent work *A Secular Age* a sophisticated

reinterpretation of the framework of contemporary liberal secularism by distinguishing among three different forms of secularity: “secularity 1” and “secularity 2” corresponding to an older framework that designates the disappearance of religion from public spaces and declining belief and practice, respectively, while “secularity 3” indicates a shift “from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others.” “Secularity 3” designates “a change in the very conditions of belief” and in the process provides more accommodation for religion. Taylor’s “secularity 3” denotes less a reversal of “secularization” than “a time in which the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularization will be more and more challenged.”³ Faced with increasing refutation of the secularization thesis by empirical evidence, Taylor’s defense of the epistemic viability of the secular not only replicates a movement that is already there within the “mainstream master narrative of secularization” but at the same time seems to endorse the way in which secularism shifts from being a descriptive to a normative discourse. By remaining committed to an overall framework of the secular and to the exclusionary narrative of its origins, Taylor seems to be skeptical of labels such as “postsecular.”⁴ Despite this resistance, however, in recent replies to his critics Taylor also “argues for an analysis in which the religious and the secular (or secularist), far from being in exclusive competition, coexist and are subject to both social and ethical cross-pressures”—a formulation that does not seem too distant from the understanding of the “postsecular” that we shall be outlining later in this introduction.⁵

Effective critiques of the conventional understanding of religion and the secular have also been offered by philosophers and theologians who position their thought in the wake of the death of God as the key event that defines the closure of modernity and the opening of what is loosely called the postmodern age. Influenced by the “masters of suspicion” Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, as well as later thinkers such as Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida, the critical interventions of this movement range from the narrowly conservative group that calls itself “Radical Orthodoxy” to the loosely linked group of mainly Continental philosophers who locate their writings at the intersections of modern European philosophy, religion, and cultural critique.⁶ By “unmask[ing] the modernist unmaskers,” by growing “disenchanted with the idea of disenchantment,” or by questioning “modernity’s prejudice against prejudice,” they show a weariness of the Enlightenment critique that does not, at first sight, sit comfortably with Charles Taylor’s attempt to reform the secularization narrative.⁷

Despite their different attitudes toward liberal secularism, however, there is a consensus within the philosophically oriented schools of postsecular thought that religion and secularity are co-emergent and codependent. Indeed, they argue that these processes haunt each other, such that religion, as it has developed in the West, has always been present in all secular phenomena even when it appears to be absent and secularity, in turn, has covertly continued a religious agenda.⁸ However, these oscillations between religion and the secular did not take place in a vacuum. Rather, they are tied to a complex of interrelated events that occurred in the wake of modernity. Such events include the rise of European cultural identity; various theological and philosophical shifts in the conceptual understanding of God, self,

and the natural world; and not least the reformulation of the rules for what counts as proper or critical thinking. While these intricate events cannot be rehearsed here, it is nevertheless necessary to note in passing several of the key triggers within the philosophical imaginary of European modernity that have contributed to the contemporary map of religion and the secular and to the social imaginary that has organized itself around this map. At the very least these triggers would have to include the following:

1. Luther's invention of the divided self, that is, the form of consciousness that separates itself from itself.
2. Kant's discovery of the mechanisms of the human imaginary and his demarcation of critical thinking under the purview of the law of reason. One consequence of this is that any object of thought must separate itself from itself; in the case of religion this imperative to separate itself from itself constitutes its secularization. Through this mode of secularization the sanctity of religion is replaced by the sanctity of critique, which itself becomes inviolable.⁹
3. Hegel's incorporation and development of these ideas into a comprehensive comparative schema for organizing the ever-growing knowledge about other cultures in terms of the historical transition between religion(s), secularity, and the postsecular. It is with Hegel that the notion of historical difference becomes integral to the determination of the other. Hegel's peculiar genius was to integrate the possibility and definition of critique with the notion of historical difference. That is to say, traditions can be defined as critical if from their very beginnings they are able to contest their own origins, separate themselves from themselves (= secularize). The degree to which a culture can make this self-separation at its origins not only defines history (and secularity) but also determines the degree to which it is different from other traditions and cultures.¹⁰

As we argue below, these developments were inherited by the three strands of discourse that define the current map of religion and the secular right up until the work of Foucault and his successors and in a sense also limit the possibilities for thinking otherwise than in terms of the trio of concepts: religion/secular/postsecular.

Luther's Divided Self and Its Trajectories in Religious and Secularist Discourses

Most commentators on the cultural and intellectual history of Europe agree that Luther's Protestant Reformation is a pivotal event that set the currents of modernity into motion. According to Mark C. Taylor, in the process of reformulating Christian doctrines of salvation, "Luther discovered or more accurately invented the modern subject. . . . [B]y privatizing, deregulating and decentering the relationship between believer and God, Luther initiated a revolution that was not confined to religion but extended to politics and economics."¹¹ The subject that Luther invented, however, was fundamentally divided insofar as the "Christian man is both righteous and sinner, holy and profane, an enemy of God and yet a child of

God.”¹² Among the implications of this are that faith is primarily a personal relation between an individual self and an individual God. It does not need to be mediated by a third party—it can be direct. More important, though, this relationship to God is not just individual but also private, that is, subjective or interior. Thus, because the individual is both sinner (through its capacity to act freely) and justified, the self is never simply itself but is something other than what it is. It is therefore possible for the subject of faith to confess: “*I am what I am not*,” signaling that the self who says “I am” is inherently contradictory, since it contains within itself its other (“I am not”).

However, Mark C. Taylor’s assessment that the inward turn of the contradictory, divided, and infinitely restless subject led to the self-legislating subject, without which the political revolutions of the modern era would have been impossible, needs to be tempered by a somewhat different observation.¹³ The route toward the modern era does not run quite so directly from theological speculation to political changes that occurred in Europe. What tends to be conveniently omitted (or repressed) in the recounting of Europe’s intellectual and cultural history is the memory of imperialism as an event that might have influenced the development of critical thinking and cultural identity of the West (Europe and North America). Our argument is that modern intellectual history, the development of its thought process, is inextricably linked to the history of its encounters with non-Christian cultures, which can by no means be limited to the encounter with Islam and the Crusades. A different sort of imperial encounter begins with the colonization and conquest of the New World, inauspiciously marked by the planting of the royal standard of the king of Spain in 1492. Our argument is that this sort of act—which inaugurates the “conquest of America and a history of the West whereby knowledge, ownership, subjectification and subjection become intertwined through incredible violence”—cannot simply be separated from Luther’s discovery of the rupture in human consciousness that is elucidated, significantly, in the decades immediately following 1492.¹⁴ Luther’s divided self entails an epistemological violence that has important consequences for the political and epistemological fate of the other. This link between philosophical speculation and colonial adventure can be illustrated by way of reference to Luther’s *Thesis 95*, which is tied up with the privilege that Luther accords to faith as exemplified by the love of the self for God. *Thesis 95* states:

It is a subtle evil to say that the love of God is, even in intensity, *the same kind of love as that for creatures*.¹⁵

What Luther specifically rejects with this thesis is that the love for God and the love for other beings implied each other. Gone is the idea that in loving God one should also love God’s creatures, including nonbelievers, as the basis of charity. The breakage of this link between the love for the other and love for God is total. By relating the agency of grace and the meaning of charity in the act of loving God for Himself, Luther draws the (Christian) subject further into the solipsistic knot of individualism. As the other recedes from the acts of charity that the Christian was meant to perform as part of the experience of love for God, from there on, Protestantism loosens the responsibility the subject might have felt for the other.

Humanity is disaggregated into singular individuals who must look to themselves and their individual consciences for their salvation. By the time that this new proposition reached the thinkers of the Enlightenment via Calvin, Protestantism had transfigured the *viator* principle in Christianity into a personal journey of redemption involving oneself and an unknowable, transcendent God. According to Couze Venn, by “reconstituting the relationship between faith and reason Protestantism seemed to want faith to be the outcome of rational consideration while ensuring salvation by anchoring faith to a regime dictated by the application of reason.”¹⁶ In short, by simultaneously insisting on devotion to an absolutely transcendent, unknowable God *and* on the absolute interiority of faith, Luther’s divided subject inadvertently prepared the way for the shift from theological foundation to rational (secular) foundations of the modern world.

However, the wider implications of Luther’s self-contradictory subject were not fully articulated until the turn of the nineteenth century, when religion, art, and politics began to intersect through the evolving notion of the autonomous self-representing subject.¹⁷ Between Luther’s Reformation and the nineteenth century, the notion of the autonomous subject is refigured, as philosophers from Descartes to Kant and Hegel reconstructed the idea of “consciousness” and the self-conscious subject, replacing the conflicted devotional self of Luther (and his predecessors such as Augustine) with “a sovereign, self-possessed, dispassionate ‘thinking being,’ fully in charge of its potencies and possibilities, surveying the contents of its mind to sort out which among them represents something objective, out-there in the external world and which should be written off as merely internal and subjective.”¹⁸ Perhaps the most important development in this trajectory was Kant’s transcendental faculty of mind—the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*)—whose operative mechanism he termed “the schematization of the categories.” The purpose of the transcendental schema was to organize the manifold of human experience and to create the world we know, understand, and dwell in it today. In short, Kant’s schema unified diverse objects of understanding through what he labeled as three interrelated ideas of reason—God, self, and world—and in so doing laid the groundwork for the disclosure by his successors of the self-reflexive structure of self-consciousness. A self-conscious subject is one that “turns its back on itself by becoming an object to itself. As a result self-as-subject and self-as-object are reciprocally related in such a way that each becomes itself through the other and neither can be itself apart from the other.”¹⁹ Paradoxically, therefore, the self-conscious subject is noncoincident with itself, and the structure of self-relation proper to this contradictory self presupposes the activity of self-representation.

In his “Age of the World Picture,” Heidegger notes that through this mode of self-relation man places imagination at the center of the world.²⁰ What Heidegger alludes to is that this peculiarly modern form of thinking gradually produces the birth of the West as a self-referential system of thought, universalizing its position and discourse, claiming objectivity about human societies and cultures, on the same basis as the natural sciences. Through the work of this imaginary, which projects itself as a universal structure of human consciousness—the self-representing subject—not only does Europe become West, and thought become Western, but, in the very same process, *religion becomes secularity*. As mentioned above, this is

most evident in the work of Hegel, for whom the representational model of self-conscious subjectivity explains not only the relationship among God, self, and world but equally the relation between religion and secularity (qua history). For Hegel, the field of self-consciousness—that is, the field on which the self represents itself to itself—mirrors exactly the conceptual structure of the Incarnation and the Trinity. To quote Mark C. Taylor once again: “the triadic structure of Father-Son-Spirit is isomorphic with the triadic structure of self-consciousness: Self-as-subject [= Father], self-as-object [= Son] and the inter-relation of the two [= Spirit].”²¹ Moreover, since the figure of the Father (symbolizing transcendence, separation as attributes of secularity) is transfigured into that of the Son (symbolizing incarnation and immanence as attributes of religion), it is possible to see how the oscillation between religion and secularity is mediated through the activity of the spirit. And because spirit is described as that substance that is able to separate itself from itself in the moment of its origin (or what Hegel calls pure elevation, pure movement),²² the work of spirit consists in nothing less than a pure relation, a perfect or “generalized” translation that is able to move between self and other, subject and object, religion and secularity, infinitely and at will.

However pervasive and influential this argument may have been, what philosophers and theologians tend to have forgotten is that the imaginary, which, in constructing the frame of intelligibility of the West, so conveniently universalizes its self-referential mode of subjectivity, was not framed in a cultural vacuum. Consequently it could never have been an imaginary in the singular. Given that its cultural and historical backdrop was the encounter between European and non-European cultures, followed almost immediately by colonization of the latter, *the imaginary was from the outset a comparative imaginary* “that functioned according to a structured-structuring process.”²³ At the very moment that the comparative imaginary was “inscribed in and thereby came to structure the signifying practices that described, classified, annotated, analyzed, represented, prescribed and ordered the cultural and material world of its colonial subjects, in ways that have too often become naturalized,” *in that very moment and through the work of comparison*, the very same imaginary was busy fleshing out the identity of European culture.²⁴ The contours of the West and the non-West were thus codependent and co-emergent, that is, mutually fleshed out (translated) within this model of self-representation. It is possible to suggest that the comparative relation between West and non-West was and continues to be isomorphic with the relation between self-as-subject and self-as-object—the only difference being that the actual movement or translation between West/non-West and self-as-subject/self-as-object was in fact a universalized or “generalized translation” in which the other was either reduced to the same (self-as-object) or cast out of the purview of human consciousness altogether.²⁵ Through this generalized translation that constitutes the comparative relation between self and other (say, Europe and Asia/Africa), “the difference of the other no longer appears as a threat; a hindrance maybe, and a source of resistance to be quelled, certainly a source of evidence and experiences for reflection on the human condition and for forging the policies and the means for the transformation of the world.”²⁶

To briefly summarize the above, the historical co-emergence and codependence of religion and secularity, leading up to the contemporary map of these two

categories, is inextricably bound to the development of the modern Western imaginary, with its constitution of a particular structure of human consciousness that in turn privileges a particular type of critique or critical thinking as universal (the one that grounds itself in self-separation). Our point in the foregoing analysis has been to suggest not simply that the postsecular move as made by prominent philosophers, theologians, and theorists of religion cannot be restricted to its identification of the mutually imbricated natures of religion and the secular but, more importantly, that it continues to bring into play one of the key aspects of the secularization thesis, namely, the concept of religion as a cultural universal—that religion exists everywhere. The problem, therefore, is not Christianity *per se* but the direct linking of structures of Christianity (especially as they are found in classical Christology going back to the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.) with the modern structures of rational self-consciousness and thought itself (critique as self-separation), which of course determine the possibilities of action at individual, social, and political levels.²⁷

In other words, unless it incorporates a move beyond the presumption that religion is a cultural universal, the very idea of a *post-* of secularism appears to be a chimera. It means little more than a return to Christian thought disguised as the postsecular. This has been particularly evident in the strange recent convergences between different strands of the Western political and intellectual spectrum (the global Left, the center, and the global Right) in response to the “threat of Islam” and similarly perceived forms of global religious violence and terrorism. While this might be expected from intellectuals on the Right, and even center-Left liberal secularists, the intellectual response of the global Left has been more surprising.²⁸ Indeed since the retreat of Marxism and the rampancy of neoliberalism that followed the end of the Cold War, leading thinkers of the Left have conspicuously returned to the religious sources of Western culture in their efforts to rethink the nature of politics.²⁹ Faced with the triumphalism of American global power in the 1990s, the massive resurgence of religion into the heart of national and global politics (indeed into the project of democracy itself), and the abject failure of the “traditional” Left, many prominent leftist thinkers have in different ways called for a renewal of Western/European political thought—a “renewal of Left Eurocentrism”—by reconnecting to the wellsprings of its culture, namely, religion and specifically Christianity. For them, the legacy of Western thought is endangered not only by the scourge of cultural relativism, New Age mysticism, and paganism that has afflicted contemporary Western thought and culture but also by a global economic shift associated with the rise of an authoritarian China and the politico-cultural consequences that are feared to come with it. Translated into vernacular languages, the culturalist normativity that comes with this line of thought has also lined up nicely with post-9/11 European fears of Islamization and added to Western Islamophobia. What is endorsed through the implicit juxtaposition of legitimate (= secular) and illegitimate (= fundamentalist) religion is a particularly European/Western/Protestant notion of modernity/civilized culture.

Though not always obvious, calls for a return to and reinheritance of Christian sources remind us of the logic of reform that was embedded within the Protestant Reformation.³⁰ For it is in relation to this logic of reform (specifically the “drive to make over the whole of society to higher standards”³¹) that, on the one hand,

helped to shift Christianity away from corporeal practices toward states of mental interiority and doctrinal propositions and, on the other hand, helped to inaugurate the rise of modern secularism. As Jonathon Sheehan argues, reform can be regarded as the stipulated agent that transforms a prior age centered on religion into the presently secular age.³² It was just such a logic of reform that helped to rupture the intimate connection between society and religious life and in turn forced the kind of rupture in consciousness that then generated the “individuated religion of devotion” (Protestant interiority) that is so integral to our understanding of the secular age. In other words, the recent calls for renewing the heritage of Eurocentrism are best seen as part and parcel of a certain tradition of apologetics that combines a return, reinheritance, and reform of religious sources within a historical frame. Sheehan usefully reminds us that this “historical logic of apologetics works . . . to ensure . . . that Christianity is preserved as a history whose presence the present can ignore only at the price of its own authenticity.”³³

The key here is the historical—the notion of time central to the task of inheriting (i.e., reforming) tradition—that is built into the perceived codependency of religion and the secular.³⁴ As we have noted above, insofar as the idea of history and the historical is tied to a concept of subjectivity as divided, and thus to a *critical* exercise of division and separation from religion (which can be traced within its Greek, Christian, and modern European traditions of thinking), this also adequately describes the work that is performed by secularization and secular critique. Moreover, given that the logic of reform that gives rise to the secular “represents the dynamic of religion’s own unfolding,” it is possible to suggest that the secular is contained within religion *from the very moment* that human consciousness itself emerges as a divided subjectivity. In other words, the relationship between religion and secularity is maintained by a particular notion of history, and this notion of history is nothing other than the moment of emergence of a particular form of self-consciousness as the so-called critical attitude that not only comes to define the very nature of modern Western man as the relational center of the world but also constitutes itself as universal insofar as the codependent and interchangeable notions of religion, the secular, time, and consciousness are then inscribed onto every other culture through the work of imperialism.

Hume, Hegel, and the Universalization of Religion

In this way, even before imperialism became a political reality, all other cultures of the world (indeed the very possibility of pluralism) were mapped within a framework of historical development in such a way that Christianity provided the essential blueprint for the map and the historical evolution of world cultures inscribed within it. Through this emerging narrative arrangement of cultures on a world grid, Christianity came to occupy all of the available sites of intellectual responsibility—“to possess the past . . . as the originary author of the secular age and yet to disavow responsibility for it.”³⁵ The clever part in all of this is the narrative itself. For it is the narrative that, on the one hand, recognizes other cultures as religion(s), and in that very moment of recognition sets them apart in a proper place, and, on the other hand, inasmuch as it coincides with the transparent

movement that is time (or history), ensures the Christian claim (1) to the present (the secular age that we all live in), (2) to its past (the history of the world's religion(s)—or the religious history of the world), and perhaps more importantly, (3) to its postsecular future, which would entail a renewal of the secular by returning to its religious sources.³⁶

Of course, what underpins this narrative of the movement from religion to the secular to the postsecular, connecting the world spatially and temporally, is the concept of *religion as a universal*. Indeed the dependency of the philosophical interpretations of the religion–secular–postsecular relationship on the ability to conceptualize religion as a universal should not surprise us. Its antecedents can be found in the work of major thinkers of the Enlightenment such as David Hume in the mid–eighteenth century and, even more so, G. W. F. Hegel in the early nineteenth century.

One of the key problems for both Hume and Hegel was to find a reliable intellectual solution to the problem of pluralism and cultural difference as it was manifesting itself in the reports of explorers, missionaries, and Orientalists. Although they both worked in different contexts, in different time periods, and with different materials at their disposal, for both Hume and Hegel the only proper solution to the problem presented by the increasing variety of non-Christian cultural beliefs and practices was to assimilate them to a category of religion modeled on a Protestant understanding of religion with “belief and practice at its conceptual center.”³⁷ The closest that Hume comes to entertaining the idea of religion as a universal category can be seen in his *Natural History of Religion*, in which he traces the origin of religion to peculiarly human experiences of hope and fear, arguing that the “first obscure traces of divinity” grow out of “ordinary affections in human life.”³⁸ But even in this influential treatise Hume is very clear to point out that while religion is common (all men potentially have religion), it is not necessarily universal.

While arguments for or against a universally applicable model of religion remain implicit in Hume's accounts, they are far more rigorously theorized by Hegel. In his Berlin lecture courses on the philosophy of history and religion Hegel effectively constructed just such a model in the form of a comparative schema that could frame empirical and explanatory knowledge of other cultures within a historicist vector much the same as the one recounted above. Hegel's main concern in the Berlin lecture courses was to counter the philosophical influences of deism and the debates about natural religion. As Hegel saw it, discourses such as these, especially when deployed by the early Orientalists, provided a potentially safe haven for Asian cultures, a means whereby they could adversely influence the European intellectual mind-set and in so doing could possibly displace or undermine the dominant vantage point of Christian European cultural identity. The problem for Hegel was how to differentiate between Christian religion as properly historical (and therefore capable of self-critique and secularization) and other, especially Asian, *religions* as lacking history. Hegel's answer was to establish a firm theoretical standpoint, the concept of religion-in-general, that could be used as a means for *comparing* Oriental cultures (particular religions) by means of an onto-theological framework. The term *ontotheology* refers to an essential continuity of different moments in the Western philosophical and theological traditions

(specifically the Greek [-*onto*], the medieval-scholastic [*theo-*], and the humanist [*logo-* or *logic*]), a continuity that challenges the dominant secular Enlightenment story in which modernity and humanism constitute a radical break with prior religious tradition.³⁹

Hegel's genius was to incorporate both *religion* (by means of ontological proofs for God's existence) and *secularity* (through the vector of historicism) into the work of *comparing* different cultures. According to the rules of his schema, the degree to which any culture can think coherently and clearly about "the transcendent" corresponds to its ability to emerge into history, that is, to elevate itself from a purely natural existence. This in turn is a measure of that culture's ability to think *critically* as measured by its ability to separate itself from itself—and it also measures its degree of secularity. What becomes clear in any close reading of Hegelian narrative is that the concept of religion-in-general is being fleshed out with the simultaneous inclusion-exclusion of Asian cultures within history (i.e., inclusion within the domain of religions, which is simultaneously exclusion from the domain of history/secularity). Furthermore, the concept of religion as universal is fleshed out in a process that is paralleled by the refinement of a specific mode of thinking, the so-called critical attitude that is characteristic of the modern West, in which the operation of thought becomes indistinguishable from *generalized translation* as the ability to translate infinitely and at will between the universal and the particular.

In short, Hegel's ontotheological schema identifies reason with Christianity and thus closes the circular relationship between historical consciousness, the assumed secularity of critique, and Western civilizational identity more securely than at any point in the history of philosophy. But more important, he can implement this circularity among history, critique, and secularity by identifying tangible others (Asia, Africa, etc.) as "religious," followed by their inclusion-exclusion within the order of knowledge and existence. In other words, by means of the law of history/critique/secularity Hegel is able to constitute a relation between Europe/Christianity and its others, but it is a relation in which the other is excluded through its inclusion within the orders of knowledge and existence. This simultaneous exclusion-inclusion becomes a means for rendering the encounter with non-Western cultures politically harmless. This was achieved by installing these cultures at the lower end of a vertical axis that represents the development (self-elevation) of cultures of the world from religion through secularity and eventually into the postsecular.⁴⁰ The dual purpose of this installation was to give them a comparable and recognizable identity while through that very gesture subverting their potential for contributing in any way to modernity.⁴¹ The results of this new comparative schema were far reaching. Deploying for the first time the terms *pantheism*, *monotheism*, and *polytheism* as "world historical" or comparative categories, the schema provided an intuitive comprehension of the "meaning-value" of each culture that happened to be plotted on the axis.⁴² The insidious aspect of this schema is not simply the representation of diversity, plurality, difference, time, and other(s) through a configuration of the "world" but more accurately, the fleshing out and preservation of the particular constellations "Europe," the "West," "Christianity," and "the secular" through the category of universal religion.⁴³ It is this move that allowed Hegel, and

after Hegel a host of Orientalists, missionaries, philosophers, anthropologists, historians, economists, and religionists, to apply models that recognized the diversity of world cultures in terms of similarity and difference. Non-Western cultures could be recognized as *religions* (and therefore similar to “our own,” i.e., Christianity and as part of a broad human unity) but at the same time served to differentiate between humans/cultures precisely on the basis of their different religious elevation (= incompatibility with secular cultures of Europe). This ambivalent schema that simultaneously *produces religions* of the world as a measure of their *historical* difference from the West even as they are denied the ability to overcome or reform themselves except through a developmental process based on Western patterns, was put to use intellectually and practically during the colonial and postcolonial era.

Obviously, variations of this Eurocentric schema were located within the broader imperialist politics of modernization understood as a civilizing mission when referring to the “Rest.” Intellectually, aspects of it were incorporated into hermeneutic explanations about the essential nature of non-Western cultures that would eventually become seamlessly incorporated into the system of the emerging human sciences. Within an emerging world-religions discourse, the schema provided an intuitive comprehension of the “meaning-value” of cultures through a principle of “generalized translation”—a mechanism for bringing different cultures into a taxonomic system of equivalence, in which the relative meaning-values could be assigned to each culture in order for them to be exchanged/compared. By bringing the meaning-value of different cultures into a system of exchange-comparison, this approach effectively replaced the tangible problem of translation (and hence the anxiety of real encounter) with the work of representation proper to the political economy of the sign. Within the context of cultural exchange and comparison that begins to parallel commodity exchange in the political economy of empire, the system of exchange-comparison that is intrinsic to the comparative cultural imaginary of the West can be seen parallel to the system of global monetary exchange that, as Karl Marx pointed out, developed at roughly the same time.

In practice, the principle of “generalized translation” (which combined the twin assumptions that critique is secular and that religion is a universal category⁴⁴) was transferred almost invisibly from philosophical texts into the work of Orientalists and missionaries as the privileged interpreters/translators of key indigenous texts and cultural practices. From there it passed, again seamlessly, into the policy-making decisions of administrators, lawmakers, and educators during the colonial period and then crucially into the reformist-cum-nationalist (religionizing and secularizing) projects of native elites in various parts of the colonial world.⁴⁵ Of course, as we know only too well today, the work of the schema of generalized translation did not stop with the colonial era but can be seen in the centrality of historicism and secular critique that continues to underpin the contemporary human sciences in such a way that it continues to theoretically exclude non-Western cultures, to “ban them from entering signification (the realm of human intellectual and physical contact and interaction)” and yet at the same time to “retain, rename and elevate them in a benevolent second-order gesture as signification’s spectral other.”⁴⁶

Because it is born out of a particular religion (Christianity), and in order to justify its claim to be a universal discourse that can maintain its promise of peace, the secular-historicist regime has to be able to *produce* religion in other cultural sites. Yet this could be done only by the assumption of religion as a universal. That is, religion has to have a logic that requires the translation of itself, which means that it performs an invisible violence toward every culture it encounters. Only then can it be desired by all and accepted without the imposition of direct colonial violence. Consequently, as Dingwaney and Rajan point out, the normative and dominant diagnosis of a West that is secular (and/or postsecular) versus a non-West that is nonsecular (and/or religious) remains persuasive even when recast in tones of politically correct self-reproach and postmodern interrogation among intellectuals in the Western academy, as, for example, in the following statement issued at a recent major Euro-American conference on “political theologies”:

Imagined to be universal in both relevance and application, the rigid boundaries by which secular social structures divide the public sphere of political processes from private commitments to the values inculcated by religious and spiritual traditions have proved, instead, a source of mounting resistance on the part of cultures in which the superiority of such structures is not self-evident.

The statement continues to insist on the urgency of understanding the “religiously informed resistance to pressures of secularization and cultural-political assimilation implicit in the continuing sources of tension between the ‘secular’ West and the developing societies imagined in the West as the ‘beneficiaries of globalization.’”⁴⁷

What Dingwaney and Rajan usefully draw attention to is the phenomenon of *religion-making*—the fact that “religion is still called on to serve as the distinguishing mark of such minority identity struggles. Even though the globalizing West may be blamed for such a development, it implicitly remains the secular [or post-secular] party in this narrative.”⁴⁸ As we have argued above, this phenomenon of religion-making derives ultimately from the intertwined notions of historical difference, secular critique, and its concomitant, the belief in religion as a cultural universal.

Resisting the Concept of Religion as Universal

This brings us to the third strand of scholarship that has contributed to a rethinking of religion and the secular. This significant group includes scholars with an interest in the history of religious studies as a discipline,⁴⁹ as well as scholars focusing on the colonial history of religions in areas as diverse as Africa and South Asia.⁵⁰ A major impact on this branch of scholarship has been the work of Talal Asad.⁵¹ Hent de Vries has argued that, in a way that clearly separates him (Asad) from those strands of scholarship described above as liberal-secular and postmodern advocates of political theology that insist on the universality of religion, “Asad’s interest is less hermeneutic than that of the anthropologist-grammarian. He follows Wittgenstein’s recommendation to look for ‘use,’ not for ‘meaning,’ steering clear of all attempts to essentialize either ‘religion’ or its supposed counterpart, ‘the secular,’

and insisting instead on seeing both as something ‘processual’ rather than, say, a ‘fixed ideology.’⁵²

Many of the scholars associated with this influential and rapidly growing field have applied Foucault’s genealogical analysis of power and through this have explored ideological uses of the construction of the term *religion* in the Western knowledge system. A major implication of this genealogical approach, and one that links them together, is a strong suspicion of religion as a universal category. What they all agree on is that “religion” as commonly understood today is a modern phenomenon that emerged in the West and which is tied to formations of the “secular.” Consequently, there are no universals of “religion” or the “secular.”⁵³

As discourse analysts have pointed out, there are cultures and societies for whom “religion” has not been part of their native lexicons, at least not until the colonial era, and it is perfectly possible to organize societies without the concept “religion” or religious–secular interventions. Japan, China, and India are perfectly good examples of such cultures. There is increasing empirical evidence that what we today call Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism only became part of the “world religions” group as late as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁴ It is therefore worth asking why “we” continue to speak of Indian, Japanese, or Chinese *religions*. At least one of the answers to this has to do with our institutional and intellectual anchoring within modern academia, which was thoroughly implicated in the theoretical creation of languages of universalism, such as the discourse of “world religions” and their application to colonial policy making and the projects of sociopolitical reform in the colonial and postcolonial era. Indeed, the dependence of scholars of religion, especially those working within religious studies departments, on maintaining a discourse on “religion” as something isolatable and worthy of study in its own right constitutes an important institutional constraint for advancing the epistemological and genealogical deconstruction of religion and the secular-liberal discourses in which it is embedded. Beyond the institutional constraints of academia there are also nonacademic forces that remain heavily invested in maintaining the hegemonic discourse of the religio-secular. We suggest seeing the university’s discourse about religion and religions not simply as a reflection of the discourse of the nation-state (which of course it is) but more importantly as an exercise of coloniality. Coloniality, as Bobby Sayyid argues, cannot simply be equated with colonialism. Rather, coloniality refers to a global “logic of governmentality that not only supports specific forms of historical colonialism but continues to structure a planetary hierarchy in terms of the distinction between West and the Rest.”⁵⁵ Again, the “logic of governmentality” does not refer merely to governance per se but to the existence of a globally secured liberal-secular epistemology that in principle also comprises the sociopolitical imaginary of Charles Taylor’s “secular age.”

In light of the above it may be possible to suggest that the historicization and deconstruction of religion as a universal that is carried out by the genealogical school can also be seen as a contribution to the idea of the *postsecular* in the sense that the *post* is at once a demand that the modern secular-liberal epistemology should account for itself and at the same time suggestive of the possibility of alternative epistemologies. Based as it is on a loss of faith in the myth of political

modernity—namely, that the liberal-secular state is necessary to save us from the violent consequences of religion entering into the public domain, a myth that eventually emerged from the idea of religion as a universal concept applicable to other cultures (Hume, Hegel, etc.)—this particular version of the postsecular questions the role of the modern secular state and its functionaries the modern university and the media as forms of technology that invest in the production of religion and religious subjects in order to maintain the sovereign integrity of the state. In bringing to light the often hidden function of secularism as a religion-making machine, this notion of the postsecular helps to release the space of the political from the grasp of the secularization doctrine. Or as Asad states toward the end of his *Formations of the Secular*: “If the secularization thesis no longer carries the conviction it once did, this is because the categories of politics and religion turn out to implicate each other more profoundly than we thought, a discovery that has accompanied our growing understanding of the powers of the modern nation-state.”⁵⁶

The Aporia of Post-Secular-Religion

Although Asad clearly diagnoses the problems associated with the liberal imaginary by pushing us to understand the “ambiguities” of the moral-political language of our secularism, it would appear that he is unwilling to go beyond just examining these ambiguities. But as Ananda Abeysekera asks, is it enough to go on problematizing and thereby inheriting such ambiguities in the name of secularism?⁵⁷ This question is pertinent since Asad also believes that we can neither simply receive the heritage of secularism nor just abandon its legacy. At this point it would seem that Asad comes tantalizing close to acknowledging the nature of contemporary religio-secular as an aporia, an irresolvable contradiction: “As a value-space, liberalism today provides its advocates with a common political and moral language (whose ambiguities and aporias allow it to evolve) in which to identify problems and with which to dispute.”⁵⁸ So Asad recognizes the aporetic nature of the problem, but this is as far as he goes. He does not go so far as to actually grasp the nettle of aporia. This is partly because Asad’s dominant method of inquiry remains restricted to a genealogical critique in the style of Foucault, and partly because this mode of critique appeals to the notional practice of history. In a way that echoes our critique above of the circular relationship among history, secular critique, and the liberal imaginary, Abeysekera in his *Politics of Postsecular Religion* argues that “both these positions [secularist and those critical of secularist politics] are animated by the belief that answers to the problems of our political present are available within our present. . . . That is, they are available at the end of a defense of the history of secularism or a critique of that history, by way of a defense of a non-secular history in our present itself.”⁵⁹

In this volume we aim for an approach that draws on many of the insights from the three main strands of scholarship on religion and the secular outlined above. In addition, though, we also strive for an approach that is cognizant of the aporia at the heart of the religion/secular problematic by simultaneously inheriting and uninheriting its legacy. Coined by Abeysekera, the notion of un-inheriting suggests

a path of thinking that treats any heritage (e.g., religion, the secular, democracy, etc.) as an irresolvable contradiction, an impossible inheritance, an aporia. Bearing this in mind we therefore retain a certain usage of the term *postsecular*, not as a means to revalorize religious epistemes but as a way of abandoning-embracing religious and secular epistemes as mutually contaminated and contaminating. In other words, we argue for a perspective that is postsecular as well as postreligious and, to the extent that the religious and the secular are epistemologically and semantically linked, for a perspective that is *post-secular-religious*. The focus needs to be shifted away from one that inquires and thus, consciously or not, reifies the dialectic of the religio-secular construct and the politics in which it is embedded. Trying to grasp the aporia outlined above we strive for a metaperspective that scrutinizes the religio-secular construct in all its epistemological and theologico-political facets.

Approaches that subvert and transgress the secular-religious paradigm have helped to foster alternative ways to question the manner in which these apparently universal concepts were translated during the nineteenth and twentieth century into non-Western contexts and indeed continue to be translated in contemporary geopolitics. One of the key contributions of this book is that it brings together (a) perspectives that show how religion is produced discursively rather than objectively found, and how religion is produced in relation to rather than in separation from secularism, with (b) (historicizing) perspectives that work out the extent to which the origins and contemporary forms of modernity/secularity are theological/Christian/metaphysical and so on. The unlikely convergences between these two approaches are rapidly changing the field of religious studies. The combination of discursive and historical perspectives makes visible the way in which the religio-secular emerges as evident episteme in the normalization of cultural sameness and difference. The task that this book undertakes is to explore the claims of the religio-secular paradigm and their implications through specific examples of “world religions” or “world secularisms” in a variety of contexts (India, France, Turkey, Germany, Burma, and the United States). The urgency of such a task is underscored by the fact that varieties of the secularization thesis continue to thrive in public discourses, among indigenous non-Western practitioners and also within certain lines of scholarly analysis. The tension between theoretical analysis and practical reifications of the secularization thesis at the local level remains a challenge for critical scholarship even as the latter points to its limits within global and local political contexts.

In response to this tension the contributors inquire into the theory and politics behind local and transnationally operative reifications of the religious and the secular. Each chapter, in different ways, voices intellectual and political suspicion of the modernist paradigm and particularly secularization theory as an explanatory model interconnected with the various forms of religio-secularism. The dismantling of the different subtheses of secularization theory (the privatization, differentiation, and decline theses, respectively⁶⁰) has been based on historical, epistemological, and normative grounds.⁶¹ Without totally denying the heuristic value of certain elements of secularization theory, the essays in this volume analyze particular historical contexts and compare the various trajectories of the

secularizing processes—specifically their connections to particular knowledge regimes of secularism. Moreover, the contributors all take as their point of departure a need to interrogate the liberal assumption, historically rooted in a particular reading of the European Wars of Religion, that secularization in terms of differentiation between religious (church) and political (state) domains would be a necessity for the establishment and maintenance of religious tolerance and freedom. Taken together, they reflect a major shift in thinking about religion and the secular that has been taking place in recent years.

These reflections evolve, broadly speaking, in a post-secular-religious frame, which understands the public roles of religion not as explainable, and preliminary, phenomena (as the evolutionist paradigm of modernism would hold) or as regrettable aberrations that ought to be fought (as the liberal bias dictates). Rather, the post-secular-religious turn in the study of religion can be described as a scholarly attitude that not only is critically engaged with the assumptions and politics of the religio-secular paradigm but seeks to open up new spaces for the study of religion by self-consciously taking into account the historicity and thus perspectivity that such study necessarily entails. The post-secular-religious stance opens perspectives that allow for new epistemologies and methodologies with regard to the religious and the secular, freed from the monofocal, evolutionist, and Eurocentric assumptions of the modernist framework that links religion and politics as a binary pair and to that extent remains attached to organicist perceptions of division (between the religious and the secular/politics) or integrality (as evidenced in the discourse of the theologico-political). The contributions to this volume reflect such post-secular-religious awareness, point to new directions of inquiry, and hopefully will stimulate further reflection into the dynamics, genealogies, concepts, and sensitivities around the politics of religion and secularism.

■ POLITICS OF RELIGION-MAKING

The realities of global and local early-twenty-first-century politics put scholars critical of the religio-secular paradigm in a challenging position. While most of us engage in theoretical projects that take for granted the failure of secularism—indeed, many of us would question or reject most if not all of the premises of secularization theory—it has to be acknowledged that at the level of everyday politics the religio-secular discourse has, especially in times of a perceived “return of religion,” not lost its pervasiveness (as, for example, Charles Taylor’s designation for our “secular age,” *secularity 3*, indicates). To the contrary, this “return” has reinvigorated secularist forces, which often respond with interpretations of the role of religion in political conflicts invoking pictures of a cultural if not civilizational clash. The political reality forces us, paraphrasing Talal Asad, to think about the conditions in which the dichotomies between “the religious” and “the secular” *do* (still) seem to make sense in so many public discourses.⁶² Such inquiry needs to ask questions about political and epistemological hegemony: “How, when, and by whom are the categories of religion and the secular defined? What assumptions are presupposed in the acts that define them?”⁶³ In different ways, the chapters constituting this volume tackle these programmatic questions. They analyze cases

where religion does seem to make sense and investigate how notions of religion and the secular are reified within specific, local and transnational, competitions for intellectual, material, and political resources.

The key concept or “critical term” that has guided the work of the contributors to this volume is *religion-making*. Broadly conceived the term *religion-making* refers to the ways in which religion(s) is conceptualized and institutionalized within the matrix of a globalized world-religions discourse in which ideas, social formations, and social/cultural practices are discursively reified as “religious” ones. Religion-making works, sometimes more and sometimes less explicitly, by means of normalizing and often functionalist discourses centered around certain taken-for-granted notions, such as the religion/secular binary, as well as binaries subordinated to it (such as sacred/profane, this-worldly/otherworldly, etc.).⁶⁴ We see the notion of religion-making not as a homogeneous analytical concept, but, rather, we see it as a heuristic device that allows us to bring into conversation a wide range of perspectives on practices and discourses that reify religion (as well as its various subcategories and associated others, such as, most prominently, the secular). Religion-making is thus a heuristic tool for analysis and deconstruction, and does not have any aspirations of reinstating notions of authenticity and essence through the backdoor by comparing different religion-making projects. The critical work done by the term *religion-making* is not concerned with the evaluation of authorizing and legitimating claims of any particular religion-making politics in a normative or normalizing sense. Far from aiming to endorse any particular religion-making processes, we rather want to foster perspectives through which these processes are contextualized and historicized within the frameworks of particular epistemes of religion and the secular, respectively.

The chapters of this volume incorporate and combine theoretical (philosophical/theologico-political) with descriptive-analytical (historical/sociological/anthropological) modes of critique. In this way the volume seeks to avoid the impasse between theory and empiricism that continues to be a hallmark of many books with a focus on the politics of religion and secularism. Without losing sight of the theoretical issues that are constitutive of this volume, in regard to the politics that we put under the critical lens, it is useful to distinguish typically among three different levels and discourses of religion-making, as well as the linkages between them: (1) *religion-making from above*, that is, as a strategy from a position of power, where religion becomes an instrument of governmentality, a means to legitimize certain politics and positions of power; (2) *religion-making from below*, that is, as a politics where particular social groups in a subordinate position draw on a religionist discourse to reestablish their identities as legitimate social formations distinguishable from other social formations through tropes of religious difference and/or claims for certain rights; and (3) *religion-making from (a pretended) outside*, that is, scholarly discourses on religion that provide legitimacy to the first two processes of religion-making by systematizing and thus normalizing the religious/secular binary and its derivatives.

What we term *religion-making from above* refers to authoritative discourses and practices that define and confine things (symbols, languages, practices) as “religious” and “secular” through the disciplining means of the modern state and its

institutions (such as lawmaking, the judiciary, state bureaucracies, state media, and the public education system).⁶⁵ While state institutions represent dominant positions of power within public discourse, other nonstate actors in the public sphere might also sometimes assume positions of normative efficacy, be it certain media (mainly print and television, possibly also the Internet), influential public personalities (opposition politicians, public intellectuals, showbiz and media stars), NGOs, or corporate enterprises. The example of neoliberal U.S. pundits arguing for a remaking of Islam may serve as an example to illustrate the often unabashedly political nature of such religion-making, revealing itself in very Foucauldian ways as an act of governmentality aimed at creating liberal-secular subjects. In a 2003 report published by the RAND Corporation, a conservative U.S. think tank, the “Islamic world” is depicted as in a severe crisis of identity posing a major threat to the “rest of the World.”⁶⁶ Islam needed to be brought in line with Western/American interests. It is a difficult operation, as is frankly admitted: “It is no easy matter to transform a major world religion. If ‘nation-building’ is a daunting task, ‘religion-building’ is immeasurably more perilous and complex.”⁶⁷ One of the heralds of neocon U.S. American dreams of civilizing Islam, Daniel Pipes, drove this language one step further.⁶⁸ In 2004 he remarked that the “ultimate goal” of the “war on terrorism” was “religion-building” in the sense of a modernization of Islam.⁶⁹ In his view, “only when Muslims turn to secularism will this terrible era of their history come to an end.”⁷⁰ The imperialist tone of such statements is part of the rhetoric of the “new world order” and the “Middle East Project” envisioned by the conservative U.S. political circles that had been related closely to the Bush administration. To sum up the hardly concealed concern behind the arguments of the cited U.S. neocon pundits, the West/United States has to engage in a remaking of Islam, analogous to nation-building referred to as religion-building, with the goal to create a modern, that is, secular, Islam in line with American interests and a neoliberal, modernist frame for religion as secured by the doctrine of secularism.⁷¹ The examples point not only to imperialist ambitions within U.S. politics, but more broadly exemplify drastically how political religion-making discourses can be. In line with the U.S. American tradition of liberal secularism, U.S. religion-builders are less concerned with keeping religion out of politics than with regulating its political manifestations.⁷²

While scholars of postcolonial studies have discussed the role of religious and secular discourses in the legitimation and administration of the nation-state, less attention has been directed to cases in which marginalized sociocultural communities have adopted the language of religion as a means of empowerment vis-à-vis assimilationist politics directed against them. Such *religion-making from below* forms a dialectical relationship with religion-making from above, implicitly accepting the latter’s hegemony to the language and semantics of which it responds. Whether perceived as acts of emancipation, appropriation, or subversion against hegemonic religious and secular knowledge regimes, religion-making from below has played important roles in local discourses of religion and secularism.⁷³

Religion-making from below operates via processes of cultural translation. Translation here needs to be understood as a two-way relationship. Translation of the language of the religio-secular construct into new territories can be forceful

and violent, as evidenced amply in postcolonial studies. But one should not understand the appropriation of religio-secularist discourses as necessarily resulting from coercion. Credit needs to be given to the more complex dynamics of agency in the adaptation of these discourses in non-Western vernacular languages. Charles Hallisey has discussed this dynamic as “*intercultural mimesis*—a phrase denoting the cultural interchange that occurs between the native and the Orientalist in the construction of Western knowledge about ‘the Orient.’”⁷⁴ In other words, while it is indisputable that the politics of translation of the concept of religion beyond the Christian West were molded by the power imbalance that is characteristic of Orientalist scholarship and its objects of study, analysis of this translation process has to provide sufficient space for the agency of local appropriations of elements of this discourse. We need to think the appropriation of the Western discourses of religion and the secular in a manner that does not reduce local actors to the role of passive objects but instead focuses on “local productions of meaning,” that is, the agency of locals in the encounter with Orientalist knowledge.⁷⁵

Triggered by the emerging field of postcolonial studies following Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), awareness of academia’s complicity in the essentialization of particular others has increased considerably. The work of Said and those who followed in his footsteps has forced those associated with historically “Orientalist” disciplines to reflect on the history of these disciplines and their role within imperialist projects. The multifold implications of scholars in imperialist projects unmasks pretensions of objectivity and reveals that *religion-making from the pretended outside* is often closely linked with more politically motivated religion-making from above.⁷⁶ The academic study of religion in particular has been implicated in imperialist projects and Eurocentric discourses more generally, and it still plays, especially in the United States, where its institutional position is much stronger than in Western Europe and despite an admitted increase in self-critical reflection to this extent, an important role in the objectification of religion(s).⁷⁷ Unraveling such entanglements, as an inquiry into the politics of religion-making brings along, is therefore a challenging project particularly for the discipline of religious studies, since it entails the theoretical and methodological deconstruction of the very concept (“religion”) through which this discipline is legitimated. World-religion courses are flourishing, and classes of this or similar kind belong to the bread-and-butter courses of many religious studies departments. It will be interesting to see in which ways the academic discipline of religious studies can respond to the challenges that it will have to face once it recognizes and positions itself more deliberately toward the historical biases that contributed to its creation, as well as the religion-politics in which it is still involved.⁷⁸ The problem of course is not new, and most of the readers of this volume will be familiar with J. Z. Smith’s controversial dictum “Religion is solely the creation of the scholar’s study.”⁷⁹ Tomoko Masuzawa’s recent work on the *Invention of World Religions* has further increased awareness of the urgency to raise critical self-reflection on the involvement of the academic study of religion in the making and re-making of the concept of religion. Beyond the very existential problem that this constitutes for institutions organized around religious studies an academic discipline, the relationship between this discipline and the genealogy of the religion and world-religion

concepts is itself an interesting and most important field of inquiry. In this context Peterson and Walhof have rightly asked about “what is the proper agenda for religious studies in a context in which the object of study, religion, has been invented or worked over by powerful economic, social, and political forces.”⁸⁰ Such questions need to be addressed in order to understand better the role of both academic and political elites and institutions in the making and remaking of “religion” and the “secular”.

■ CHAPTER OUTLINES

As part of his critique of liberal secularism, Talal Asad has pointed out that the “effort of defining religion converges with the liberal demand in our time that it be kept quite separate from politics, law, and science,” in effect separating religion from power.⁸¹ This volume takes Asad’s criticism seriously and puts the focus exactly on those dynamics of power through which the discourses of religion and the secular have been historically formatted and are being maintained in the context of the hegemony of more and less liberal secularisms and the nationalist, culturalist/civilizationist, imperialist, as well as economic interests with which they have been aligned.

We have organized the chapters into groups according to common themes. The first group of chapters addresses the relationship between modernity and colonialism in the generation of discourses about Hinduism and Buddhism (Richard King), Sikhs and Hindus (Arvind-Pal S. Mandair), and Muslims (Ruth Mas) via the imposition upon indigenous discourses of a category religion duly separated from the secular. In his essay “Imagining Religions in India: Colonialism and the Mapping of South Asian History and Culture” Richard King focuses on the question of how we study and engage with Asian thought, traditions, and culture when their very representation and configuration have been so radically altered by the encounter with European colonialism and the processes of modernity. The colonial domination of the West over “the Rest” in recent centuries has caused many Western paradigms and categories to appear more universal and normative than they might otherwise have seemed. Echoing our earlier discussion of “generalized translation” that is so central to the cognitive mechanism of modern Western comparative imaginary, King argues that “religion” is a key feature in the colonial cartography that serves as a cognitive map for surveying, classifying, and interpreting diverse cultural and historical terrains and allows a distinction to be drawn between secular and religious spheres of life. King asks whether, by inverting the colonial move, new light can be thrown on features of Western culture if they were to be examined afresh in terms of the cartographic imagination of *other* cultures. But rather than doing away with the term *religion*, as some suggest, King argues for a double strategy, a “double move” that contests and interrogates but also actively rereads such taken-for-granted concepts of the Western cartographic imagination in new and imaginative ways.

In his essay entitled “Translations of Violence: Secularism and Religion-Making in the Discourses of Sikh Nationalism,” Arvind-Pal S. Mandair continues to probe the role of generalized translation (or what Richard King has called the

“macropolitics of translation”) in the manufacture of parallel discourses of religious nationalism (in this case Sikh) and discourses of violence by the secular Indian state. Bringing attention to a general reluctance on the part of scholars to move beyond the language of secularism, Mandair shows how the strict opposition between religious nationalist and state secularist discourses has been sustained by a typology of violence that itself emanates from a Westphalian/Enlightenment interdiction against “religion” as a phenomenon that must remain outside the public realm, a gesture that has been repeated in state, mediatic, and academic discourses alike. Through a deconstruction of the conventional typology of violence Mandair points to a third form of violence, namely, “symbolic violence.” This is a violence that is embedded within language (exemplified by the mechanism of “generalized translation”) that had coerced Indian reformist elites during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries into translating their cultural concepts through the category of religion during the colonial era. This translation into the category of religion involved a simultaneous interdiction of indigenous modes of enunciation and temporality and “conversion” into the secular time of empire and modernity (history). Mandair’s essay concludes by asking what implications this unraveling of violence and secularism in the making of religious nationalist discourses might have for conceptually refashioning conventional models of secular democracy.

The “conversion” from indigenous to secular modes of time is also addressed in Ruth Mas’s essay “On the Apocalyptic Tones of Islam in Secular Time.” With the empirical focus on recent debates about the compatibility of Islam and *laïcité* in France, Mas discusses the role of reformist Muslim Franco-Maghrebi intellectuals such as Fethi Benslama and Malek Chebel in the subordination of Islam to liberal-secularist discourse. As she argues, these Muslim intellectuals are deeply entrenched in colonial apologetics, have basically accepted the civilizationist prejudices of French discourse, and have begun to endorse, at the expense of traditional Islamic conceptions of time, homogenizing secular temporalities. Mas shows how they have subscribed to a liberal-secular narrative that, relativizing apologetic renditions of the colonial past while simultaneously homogenizing violent Islamic otherness, semantically links notions of a barbarous Islamic past with secular apocalyptic visions projected onto Islam. Engaging a critical reading of Hardt and Negri’s work on empire, she connects her argument about secular time to the homogenizing imperialist tendencies in the French secularization of Islam and argues, drawing on Asad, for a perspective that does not singularize historical experiences but allows for heterogeneous temporalities and Muslim subjectivities.

The second set of chapters interrogates the relationship between the liberal imaginary and the making of the modern category of religion as reflected in discourses of religious violence (Brian Goldstone), spirituality (Kerry A. Mitchell), and mysticism (Rosemary R. Hicks). In his essay “Secularism, ‘Religious Violence,’ and the Liberal Imaginary” Brian Goldstone interrogates the category of “religious violence” as it has been deployed by terrorism experts who offer causes and remedies for religiously motivated acts of violence. Resonating strongly with Mandair’s earlier discussion of secular violence and religion, Goldstone examines the work of a variety of writers including Bruce Lincoln, Mark Juergensmeyer, Slavoj Žižek,

and Charles Kimball, asking what place the category of religious violence holds in the liberal imaginary. What work does it perform, and what types of ethico-political formations does it necessitate? Following Talal Asad, Goldstone suggests that these questions are directly concerned with the concept of secularism, which in its liberal democratic version indicates a complex relationship to religion that cannot be reduced to an opposition between them. Rather, Goldstone argues, it is the case that “specific kinds of religion” are constantly being valorized and denounced, empowered and made redundant. Thus the demand of liberal democratic society is not so much that religious phenomena be removed from the public sphere but that religious beliefs and practices be calibrated in accordance with transcendent values of a particular way of life. In fact the modern secular state provides a mechanism for ordering and integrating individuals according to new forms and patterns. One of the author’s main concerns is to interrogate not what “religious violence” means or why it happens but to ask what it does and, perhaps most urgently, what it stands for. For Goldstone there are distinct resonances between the discourses of religious violence and political formations such as secularism. These resonances include a concept of religion based on the opposition between a terrifying figure of the premodern past, on the one hand, and an Enlightened believer at home in the world, on the other. While the latter is rendered normative, the former has to be subject to correction or made extinct. The discourse of religion is what makes this project work.

One of the aims of Kerry Mitchell’s essay “The Politics of Spirituality: Liberalizing the Definition of Religion” is to deconstruct liberal assumptions behind dominant strands in the North American scholarship on religion. Analyzing the writings on spirituality by writers such as Robert Wuthnow, Wade C. Roof, and Leigh E. Schmidt, Mitchell shows how they read liberal agendas into spirituality and thusly obscure the importance of the social practices in which discourses of spirituality are imbedded. He points to the methodological and theoretical problems posed by implicit concepts of freedom, self, and subjectivity in this literature. Alternatively, he argues for an approach that, informed by the work of Michel Foucault and Niklas Luhmann, would make explicit the social and political work of spirituality. In other words, Mitchell advocates a historically informed perspective that prevents a subjectivism that does not take into account the social relations in which notions of self are created (Luhmann) and takes seriously the power dynamics by which particular notions of the subject or the self, which form the subtext of the concept of spirituality, are evidenced (Foucault).

Rosemary R. Hicks’s chapter “Comparative Religion and the Cold War Transformation of Indo-Persian ‘Mysticism’ into Liberal Islamic Modernity” aims at disentangling the complex connections between Cold War politics and academic institution-building as it unfolds in North American conceptualizations of Islamic mysticism. Historicizing the intellectual trajectories of a group of leading Western Islamicists, with a focus on Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hicks traces their intellectual and political networks and their role in the evolution of a Sufism-biased school of Islamic studies in North America. Characteristic of these formulations of Islamic mysticism is their conceptual framework centered on notions of rationality, freedom, and individual faith with clear Protestant

leanings. These notions are implicated in a differentiation between kinds of religion/Islam and are used in political projects of religion-making in line with Western/American interests. Hicks's analysis of the work and legacy of Smith in particular shows how his belief in the prevalence and necessity of faith made him uphold against believers of secularism a positive and prevailing notion of universal religion, that is, mysticism. Her contribution illustrates in an exemplary way the work of religious/Islamic studies in the (re)making of its subject and the way this reification is influenced by religious and political preferences.

The final set of chapters, by Greg Johnson, Markus Dressler, Mark Elmore, Alicia Turner, and Michael Nijhawan discusses contestations of the content and boundaries of religion between state institutions and particular communities. From different perspectives they address the role of state institutions such as the judiciary (Johnson and Dressler) and governmental administrations (Elmore and Turner), as well as the role of public discourse (Nijhawan) in the normalization of definitions of "religion" against potentially subversive local practices. The chapter by Greg Johnson, titled "Apache Revelation: Making Indigenous Religion in the Legal Sphere," discusses Apache claims regarding the religious quality of objects traditionally used in ritual contexts. Within a legal dispute with U.S. museums about the repatriation of these objects, Apache representatives invoked the theme of revelation and argue that the disputed objects constitute cultural patrimony, would therefore be inalienable, and could not be subject to property rights. Insinuating that the choice of language on the part of the Apache reflects a conscious appropriation of hegemonic tropes of religion, Johnson remarks that the "native representatives know more about how the category 'religion' works than many scholars of religion." As he describes, the Apache representatives were successfully drawing on both *majority-inclusive* and *minority-specific* discourses to strengthen their case. In their majority-inclusive discourse they employed an analogy to Jewish and Christian tropes, especially the finality of revelation, thusly creating a sympathetic audience for their claims. As Johnson stresses, the rhetoric of the Apache is successful not because of its content but because of its form, which "announces nonfalsifiable claims to authority" in line with the majority-inclusive discourse and metaphorically invokes Christian examples.

Markus Dressler's essay "Making Religion through Secularist Legal Discourse: The Case of Turkish Alevism" investigates into the dynamic relationship between knowledge regimes of secularism and notions of legitimate religion. Using the example of Turkish Alevis, he shows how laicist discourse can encourage the casting of communal identities in religious language. Dressler is particularly interested in how Alevi claims of difference from the mainstream Sunni community are negotiated in judicial contestations. While the Turkish courts are generally considered one of the strongholds of secularism, Turkish legal discourse is—and this becomes clearest when it defines and normalizes the boundaries of legitimate religion in the public—also drawing on notions of religion clearly shaped by Islam. Dressler's discussion of legal debates on the nature and legitimacy of Alevi symbols and practices provides both a window into the dynamics between conflicting trajectories of Turkish secularism and insights into the semantics of the concept of religion hegemonic in the Turkish public sphere. He points to the role of legal

discourse in the institutionalization of particular knowledge regimes of secularism and shows how Alevi have learned to use the legal arena as a medium to advance their cause for recognition. The contributions by Johnson and Dressler exemplify the role of legal discourse in the normalization and contestation of the religio-secular. Additionally, the comparison between the ways in which concepts of religion are legally contested in the two countries points to interesting differences in the respective forms of secularism. While the evidentiary parameters of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act expressively acknowledge the validity of religious claims next to secular claims, in Turkish law and judiciary practice religious claims have no formal validity, and religious semantics enter secularist rhetoric in more indirect ways.

Similar to Dressler's, Mark Elmore's contribution, titled "Bloody Boundaries: Animal Sacrifice and the Labor of Religion," points to mechanisms by which the nation-state redefines legitimate religious practices and tries to endorse meanings of "religion" that help bolster agendas of "national unity" against regional or communalist particularisms. Elmore examines the debate over the legitimacy of animal sacrifice in the northwestern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh. This debate has come to redefine the meaning and function of religion in the region as it reflexively shapes Himachali self-understanding. The concern over the legitimacy of animal sacrifice hinges on the competition between alternative definitions of religion and how these definitions come to be inscribed within a particular configuration of human life. As a regime of truth this configuration provides the horizons of intelligibility against which religion becomes an object to be saved, reformed, or simply eradicated. Arguing that many of the recent conflicts over public religion and the definition of religion are simply misplaced, Elmore suggests that debates over the disappearance or return of religion deploy conceptualizations of religion that are not sufficiently nuanced. In contradistinction, Elmore adopts a different starting point. He assumes that the task of defining the boundaries between religion and its others—what he calls the "labor of religion"—is both historically conditioned and unstable and develops, moreover, in relation to specific regimes of truth and intellectual horizons. Indeed the conceptual and practical structures that make religion legible are themselves shifting. Elmore's task in this essay is not to recover essences around which formations of religion develop but to identify and analyze the regimes of truth, their strategic operations, and the politics that they legitimize. From this perspective, not only does the debate over animal sacrifice challenge the very foundations upon which discussions of secularism, modernity, and European hegemony are based, it also destabilizes the frames used to separate religion and the secular.

While much of contemporary scholarship in the field of religion and colonialism points to the rather successful production of secular and religious formations as universal categories of experience in former European colonies, Alicia Turner's chapter "Religion Making and Its Failures: Turning Monasteries into Schools and Buddhism into a Religion in Colonial Burma" investigates an example of the failures of the colonial category of religion. Focusing on Burmese Buddhism under British rule during the second half of the nineteenth century, Turner's essay brings attention to the British administration's unsuccessful attempts to transform

Buddhist pedagogy in monasteries. Burmese Buddhism presents an interesting anomaly, as Buddhism was central to the emergence of the concept of “world religions” in European discourse. Turner’s essay explores how, in this instance, the colonial categories of religion failed to constrain Buddhist practices even when there were clear parallels to the European conceptualization of religion. Unlike Anglo-vernacular schools in India, which are considered the paradigmatic location in which new pedagogies were instrumental in replacing the indigenous forms of conceptuality (see Mandair’s chapter), “religion” did not always succeed as a colonial ordering mechanism. In fact Burmese Buddhist monks rejected the colonial blueprint for primary education, which would have conflicted with Buddhist universal categories by facilitating the transfer and appropriation of religion and secular as universal categories. This chapter provides a interesting case demonstrating local resistance to European universals.

The final chapter by Michael Nijhawan, entitled “Precarious Presences, Hallucinatory Times: Configurations of Religious Otherness in German Leitkulturalist Discourse,” investigates German “leitkulturalism” as a discursive mode of culturalist argumentation that links progressive-leftist and mainstream populist positions in reiterated gestures of identifying the religiously “weird” as the ultimate other(s). Focusing on the anti-mosque movement in Europe, Nijhawan charts out how especially within German civil society religious otherness becomes the locus not so much of a simple juxtaposition of the West and Islam(ism), but of a more contracted and refracted Orientalism that is nonetheless forcefully stigmatizing and exclusivist in its implications for specific immigrant subjects; in Nijhawan’s case these are Ahmadi and Sikh subjects. Nijhawan illustrates how doctrinal forms and embodied practices of Sikh and Ahmadi subjects are translated as “abject” beings, a move which, particularly in the case of the Ahmadis, is produced through translations of a colonial language of heretic sectarianism. In his chapter, Nijhawan not only complicates how the religion-secular dichotomy is reconfigured in the European context (German having been pointed at as a counter-model to France in respect to the notion of laicism), he also traces out the internal fault lines and discursive ruptures in public framings of these dichotomies such as those of “moderate/fundamentalist” religion; as well as the modalities through which notions of taboo, blasphemy and transgression (see Asad) are negotiated both in distinction from and resonance with a more global configuration of such themes in Europe and North-America.

With this introduction we hope to have accomplished the following things. First, we have developed a framework for placing the historical and contemporary debate on religion and secularism within its epistemological and political contexts in a way that highlights the dependency of modern religio-secular discourses on a particular conceptualization of the historical and the way it is related to a particular kind of rationality. Second, we have made, as a reflection of this critique of the rationality of secular Western historicizing, a point for a reframing of the notion “postsecular” in a way that includes the religious in its conceptual criticism, adding up to a post-secular-religious perspective and thusly helping to shake the religio-secular paradigm. Third, we have provided an overview on the concrete politics of religion-making, or, in other words, the work of liberal-secular

contestations and reifications of the religious and its various others. Finally, we hope to have shown—and this argument will be strengthened by the individual contributions of this volume—not only that important theoretical work has been done toward a debunking of conventional ways of conceptualizing religion and the secular within modernist frameworks but that this theorizing is based on and reflects new and ambitious empirical work on the formation of religio-secular discourses and practices.

■ NOTES

We owe thanks to Ted Vial and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd for their critical comments on an earlier version of this introduction.

1. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

2. Casanova uses the expression “to point to the power of secularism as a historical idea that turned, at least in the case of Western Europe, into a self-fulfilling prophecy.” He argues that “the secularization of Western European societies can be explained better in terms of the triumph of the knowledge regime of secularism, than in terms of structural processes of socio-economic development such as urbanization, education, rationalization, etc.” José Casanova, “Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: A EU/US Comparison,” paper presented at the conference “New Religious Pluralism and Democracy,” Georgetown University, April 21–22, 2005, 7, http://www.ipri.pt/eventos/pdf/Paper_Casanova.pdf (accessed: March 14, 2010).

3. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 534.

4. We see the persistence of this approach throughout the book. This is evident, for example, in one of the first claims advanced, where Taylor suggests that “we” who live in a secular age have reached a consensus about its secular nature: “Almost everyone would agree that in some sense we do [live in a secular age]: I mean the ‘we’ who live in the West, or perhaps Northwest, or otherwise put, the North Atlantic world—although secularity extends also partially, and in different ways, beyond this world” (ibid., 1).

5. Michael Warner, Jonathon VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, “Editors’ Introduction,” in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, eds. Michael Warner, Jonathon VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 23.

6. Some of the most prominent names associated with this school that has deployed the revived idiom of post-Kantian Continental thought in relation to the study of religion include John Milbank, John Caputo, Mark C. Taylor, Gianni Vattimo, Kevin Hart, Richard Kearney, Hent de Vries, and Slavoj Žižek.

7. John D. Caputo, *On Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001), 37.

8. A version of this can be seen in Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 132.

9. A particularly useful source here is Ananda Abeysekara’s recent paper “The Im-Possibility of Secular Critique. The Future of Religion’s Memory,” *Culture and Religion* 11, no.3 (2010): 213–246.

10. A more detailed version of this argument can be found in chapter 2 of Arvind Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

11. Taylor, *After God*, 55.

12. Ibid., 62.

13. Ibid., 64.

14. Couze Venn, *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 109.

15. *Ibid.*, 130; emphasis added.

16. *Ibid.*, 131.

17. For a wider treatment of this topic, see, for example, Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); also Mark C. Taylor, *Dis-Figuring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

18. Caputo, *On Religion*, 42–44.

19. Taylor, *After God*, 111.

20. Martin Heidegger, “Age of the World Picture,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1982), 128.

21. Taylor, *After God*, 159.

22. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 21.

23. Venn, *Occidentalism*, 147.

24. *Ibid.*, 147.

25. The term *generalized translation* is borrowed from Jacques Derrida (see “Theology of Translation,” in *Eyes of the University: The Right to Philosophy II* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004], 65).

26. Venn, *Occidentalism*, 147.

27. Although he does not refer to Hegel specifically, a similar point is made by Gil Anidjar in his recent book *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Anidjar argues that the secularization that is inherent within Christianity can be seen as a history in which “Christianity turned against itself in a complex and ambivalent series of parallel movements, continuous gestures and rituals, reformist and counterreformist, or revolutionary and not-so-revolutionary upheavals and reversals while slowly coming to name that which it came to ultimately oppose itself: Religion” (45). Christianity, Anidjar writes, “judged and named itself, re-incarnated itself, as ‘secular.’” In so doing, Christianity became the “religion” in relation/opposition to its others, *religions*. The name religion is its secularized garb: “Secularism is a name Christianity gave itself when it invented ‘religion,’ named its other or others as ‘religions’” (48). While agreeing with this assessment, we additionally point out the role of critique and critical thinking (the comparative imaginary) as essential to the production of religion and religions, that is, to the production of a universal concept of religion, all of which is worked out painstakingly in the writings of Hegel.

28. Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis are well-known examples on the Right. Representative of the center-Left position would be John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, and, as for the study of Islam scholars such as Olivier Roy. In earlier publications Habermas tried to address the tensions between Western secularization and the Judeo-Christian ethico-religious heritage from which it arises, particularly in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union and the rise in religious and ethnic nationalisms throughout Europe and other parts of the world. In essays such as “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe” (*Praxis International* 12, no. 1 [April 1992]: 1–19), Habermas has indirectly drawn on John Rawls’s recent work *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press 2005), in which the latter outlines the idea of an “overlapping consensus” between different ethical-cultural perspectives, backed by “comprehensive” moral doctrines that can in turn give rise to a public space governed by a political culture, without any overt involvement of religion. More recently, though, Habermas has shifted his position to highlight the inescapable connection of Western political structures to the legacies and heritage of Western Christianity and Judaism. Indeed Habermas stresses that the role of “structures of consciousness,” the “semantic potentials,” and the “substance” of the Judeo-Christian

legacy must not be forgotten in contemporary secular political life. Underlying all of this is the influence of Max Weber's religious sociology as expounded in his classic study *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (originally published in German in 1904-05). The central question for Weber was the historical influence of "world religions" on such "structures of consciousness" and whether certain religious worldviews hindered or enabled the rationalization of capitalist economics. While the influence of Kantian epistemology (especially his account of the imaginary) is evident in Habermas and Rawls, the key in understanding Weber's position is Hegel's notion of history and specifically the notion of *historical difference* that is so central to his understanding of the different capacities and motivations between world religions. See below.

29. Probably the best example is Slavoj Žižek, as well as Gianni Vattimo.

30. As Charles Taylor usefully reminds us, secularity in its modern Western sense can be considered the outcome of a "long history of reform movements within Christianity." While these reform movements began with efforts to purify Christianity of folk beliefs and practices, the reform effort was also responsible for the emergence of (1) an impersonal natural order in which God's intervention in nature became less frequent, (2) a purely natural science, (3) a transformation of the self as distanced from everything outside the mind, and perhaps most importantly, (4) a purification of the process of thinking as critique, that is, to a critical thinking that would become linked after the Enlightenment to atheism. But ironically, the reform movement started out by trying to improve Christianity. It is this effort to elevate and improve self, society, and thought that we term the "logic of reform." See Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 61-88.

31. *Ibid.*, 63.

32. Jonathon Sheehan, "When Was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age," in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*, ed. Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 226.

33. *Ibid.*, 238.

34. Ananda Abeyssekara, *The Politics of Postsecular Religion. Mourning Secular Futures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

35. Sheehan, "When Was Disenchantment?" 240.

36. For similar arguments, see, for example, Sheehan, "When Was Disenchantment?"; see also Gil Anidjar's chapter "Secularism" in his *Semites*.

37. Robert Baird, "Late Secularism," in *Secularisms*, ed. Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 165-66.

38. David Hume, *Natural History of Religion*, ed. A. Wayne Clover (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 33.

39. See Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*.

40. This axis is, of course, entirely virtual, an imagined function of the narrative itself.

41. In one sense the comparative schema (underpinned by the religio-secular/postsecular) can be seen as part of a broader anxiety felt by European intellectuals about an ordinary diremption, a crisis of identity, at the heart of the intrinsically linked concepts of Europe, modernity, and Christianity. In other words, Hegel's response to this anxiety was not just epistemological but deeply political, a point that is echoed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their influential work *Empire*. According to Hardt and Negri, modernity was never a unitary concept but, rather, appeared in two ways. The first mode was a radical revolutionary process that broke with the past and declared the immanence of world and life, positing human desire at the center of history. For Hardt and Negri, the philosophy of Spinoza provides a good example of this tendency toward immanence. But it could also be discerned in the supposedly "pantheistic" philosophies of Oriental cultures, particularly those of India and China. Opposed to this, however, was a second mode of modernity,

which deployed a transcendental apparatus to suppress the potential for liberating the multitude. In the struggle for hegemony between these two modes, victory went to the second and hence to the forces of order that sought to neutralize the revolutionary effects of modernity. This internal conflict at the heart of European modernity was simultaneously reflected on a global scale in the form of external conflict. The same counterrevolutionary power that sought to control the potentially subversive forces within Europe also began to realize the possibility and necessity of subordinating other cultures to European domination. Eurocentrism was born as a reaction to the potentiality of a newfound human equality. See Antonio Negri and Michael D. Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 74–77.

In many ways Hegel's reworking of the comparative imaginary of the West epitomizes this second mode of modernity. As Hardt and Negri point out, intellectual projects such as Hegel's "could not but take place against the historical backdrop of European expansion . . . [linked to] the very real violence of European conquest and colonialism." (*ibid.*, 82.) However, the real threat for Hegel was not physical but intellectual—a threat to the very design of the *concept*. Hence the ontotheological schema can be considered a diagram of power that at the same time provided a mechanism of power for controlling the constituent and subversive forces within Europe that championed a revolutionary plane of immanence, as well as a "negation of non-European desire." During Hegel's tenure, the thought of his rivals, such as Schelling and later Schopenhauer, must be considered good examples of "non-European desire." For further details, see Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*, 154–55.

42. The term 'meaning-value' is borrowed from Lydia Liu, "The Question of Meaning-Value in the Political Economy of the Sign," in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed. Lydia H. Liu (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 13–44.

43. See, for example, Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions. Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). A detailed explanation of Hegel's epistemo-political schema can be found in Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*, 147–60.

44. For a particularly helpful probing of the relationship between secularity and critique, see Talal Asad's recent essays in Wendy Brown, Talal Asad, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, eds., *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, Townsend Papers in the Humanities, no. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

45. We are by no means suggesting that Hegel's schema (or Hegelian ideology) was uncontested during the last two centuries. Far from it. All we suggest is that when one looks for a convergence of the key ciphers that constitute Western civilizational identity—as rooted in a convergence of Christianity, the "critical attitude," historicism, secularism, liberalism, democracy, freedom, etc.—it is Hegel more than any other thinker who brings them all together in a way that others were not able to do. And despite the fact that Hegelian thought was contested so vigorously, his basic schema, far from disappearing, seems to have morphed into what might be called the global/Western "social imaginary," partly through the more palatable and sophisticated renderings of his comparative schema, for example, by Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ernest Troeltsch, and any number of religionists during the twentieth century. Even today, if one looks closely at many of the postmodern and postsecular defenses of Western civilizational identity (e.g., Slavoj Žižek, Mark C. Taylor, and Charles Taylor, among others), Hegel is still a primary point of reference.

46. Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory and Comparative Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For a fuller discussion on this, see also Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West* p. 40.

47. Anuradha Dingwaney and Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan, *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 3.

48. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

49. One would have to include scholars such as Jonathon Z. Smith, Russell McCutcheon, Daniel Dubuisson, Timothy Fitzgerald, and Tomoko Masuzawa. See, for example, Jonathon Z. Smith, *Relating Religion. Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion. The Discourse on Sui Genesis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*.

50. Prominent names include David Chidester, Richard King, Harjot Oberoi, Vasudha Dalmia, Saba Mahmood, and Peter van der Veer. See, for example, David Chidester, *Savage Systems. Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “the Mystic East”* (London: Routledge, 1999); Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety. The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters. Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For additional recent critical literature on the concept of religion, see Richard King in this volume, pp. 54–55, n. 5.

51. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

52. Hent de Vries, “Introduction: Before, Around, and Beyond the Theologico-Political,” in *Political Theologies. Public Religions in a Post-secular World*, ed. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 69.

53. There are, however, also voices from within this group of scholarship that argue that the trajectory of religion needs to be traced back into premodern times. An example is the work of late-antiquity scholar Daniel Boyarin, who locates the beginnings of the formation of the new kind of identity that we call religion in the differentiation of Christianity from Judaism in the fourth century. Daniel Boyarin, “Semantic Differences; or, ‘Judaism’/‘Christianity,’” in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 65–85; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 7–19.

54. See, for example, Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West*; King, *Orientalism and Religion*; van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*.

55. Bobby Sayyid, “Contemporary Politics of Secularism,” in *Secularism, Religion, and Multicultural Citizenship*, ed. Geoff Brahm Levey and Tariq Madood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 193.

56. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 201.

57. Ananda Abeysekara, *The Politics of Postsecular Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 17–18.

58. Talal Asad, “Response,” in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 210.

59. Abeysekara, *Politics of Postsecular Religion*, 46–47.

60. See José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially chap. 1.

61. The literature on this topic is abundant. For exemplary critiques of secularization theory and its subtheses from discursive-genealogical, historical-empirical, philosophical, and political perspectives, see Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999): 11–39; Caputo, *On Religion*; William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Dubuisson, *Western Construction of Religion*.

62. David Scott, "Appendix: The Trouble of Thinking: An Interview with Talal Asad," in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, ed. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 298.

63. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 201.

64. Cf. Russell T. McCutcheon, "'They Licked the Platter Clean': On the Co-dependency of the Religious and the Secular," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 19 (2007): 173–99. For a critique of binary concepts in the study of religion, see also Markus Dressler, "How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference: 'Heterodoxy' and 'Syncretism' in the Writings of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890-1966)," *British Journal for Middle Eastern Studies* 37.3 (2010): 241–60.

65. As Peterson and Walhof have argued, "[m]aking and remaking religion is a political enterprise, intimately linked to the imagination of new social and intellectual communities" (Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof "Rethinking Religion", in *The Invention of Religion. Rethinking Belief in Politics and History*, ed. Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2002), 6). For interesting contributions to the debate on religion-making, mainly from the kind we qualify as "from above", see also the contributions in Peterson and Walhof, *Invention of Religion*. In this volume variations of religion-making from above are addressed in the chapters by Arvind Mandair, Alicia Turner, Markus Dressler, Michael Nijhawan, and Mark Elmore.

66. Cheryl Bernard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003), III.

67. *Ibid.*, 3.

68. Pipes is the director of Campus Watch and one of the most notorious Islam critics in the United States. In 2003, President Bush nominated Pipes to the board of the federally sponsored U.S. Institute of Peace, where he served for two consecutive years.

69. Jim Lobe, "US: From Nation-Building to Religion-Building," *Asia Times*, April 9, 2004, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FD09Ak04.html (accessed: March 14, 2010).

70. Daniel Pipes, "Fixing Islam," *New York Sun*, April 6, 2004, <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1704> (accessed: March 14, 2010).

71. For a sharp criticism of the liberal biases underlying the secularist rhetoric with explicit references to Bernard's report and the State Department's concurrent efforts in creating a "modern Islam," see Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 323–47. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd has extended this line of critique to the recent report of the Chicago Council titled "Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for U.S. Foreign Policy." She argues that the report, which tries to establish principles for legitimate U.S. government engagement of religious groups abroad, amounts to what she qualifies as a "securitization of religion." Hurd points out that "in tacitly sanctioning a protestant understanding of religion as the (only) legitimate way to be religious and modern, it forecloses upon a range of understandings of religion and arrogates to the NSC [National Security Council] the authority to decide who is 'civil' enough to be allowed into the public sphere, and who isn't." Elizabeth

Shakman Hurd, "The Global Securitization of Religion," *Immanent Frame*, March 23, 2010, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/03/23/global-securitization/> (accessed: April 17, 2010). For further critical discussion of the cited Chicago Council report, see *Immanent Frame*, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/category/religious-freedom/> (accessed: April 17, 2010).

72. It has to be acknowledged that reformist politics directed toward Islam with the aim to make it "compatible" to Western notions of secular-liberal modernity are not particular to U.S. neocons. The European debates on Islam as a problem of secularity, be it of the liberal or the laicist kind, show this very clearly. See Ruth Mas, "Compelling the Muslim Subject: Memory as Post-colonial Violence and the Public Performativity of 'Secular and Cultural Islam,'" *Muslim World* 96, no. 4 (2006): 585–616; see also the chapters by Dressler and Nijhawan in this volume.

73. Chapters in this volume that discuss cases of religion-making from below are especially those by Mas, Greg Johnson, and Dressler.

74. Charles Hallisey, as paraphrased in King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 148. On the force of translation in colonial and postcolonial contexts, but also the opportunities it offers for local resistance, see Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

75. King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 149–50; see also King's chapter in this volume.

76. Chapters in this volume investigating cases of religion-making from the pretended outside are those by Kerry Mitchell, Rosemary R. Hicks, and King.

77. See King, *Orientalism and Religion*; McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*.

78. There are certainly more and more steps in this direction. See, for example, Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "Comparative Secularisms and the Politics of Modernity: An Introduction," in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, ed. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd and Linell Cady (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2010), 3–24.

79. Jonathon Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), XI.

80. Peterson and Walhof, *Rethinking Religion*, 14.

81. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 28.