

**Post-Secularism**

and

**Beyond Secularism**

**SECULAR** (ontological category) and **SECULARISM** (cultural values)

- The *secular* prioritizes the material upon the spiritual.
- Modern cultural values encourage social alienation and unrestricted pleasure.

## **SECULAR** (epistemic category) and **SECULARISM** (political doctrine)

- The *secular* denotes a mode of knowing which is **neutral** with respect to religious commitments or “visions of the good” and thus open and common to all.
- The state, emerging out of the conflict of religious wars, finds in the *secular* a kind of “lowest common denominator” and thus establishes “a political ethic independent of religious convictions altogether”

# SECULAR (rationality) and SECULARISM (political values)

- The *secular* is a principle of rationality capable to oppress religious passions and control the danger of intolerance and promote united politics, peace and progress.

# Secularism as

- Epistemological approach
- Political philosophy
- Social theory
- Personal identity

# **The failure of the ‘secularization thesis’**

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE

Is  
God  
Dead?

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION  
IN AMERICA

GOD

IS

ALIVE

AND WELL

FRANK NEWPORT

GLOBAL RISE OF  
CHANGE THE WORLD

GOD  
IS BACK

JOHN MICKLETHWAIT  
AND ADRIAN WOOLDRIDGE

# The elements of the secularization thesis (Jose Casanova):

1. Increasing structural differentiation (including the separation of religion from politics).
2. Privatization of religion
3. Decline of religious belief, commitment and institutions.

# Talal Asad's conceptual criticism:

The secular ... is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it ... nor a simple break from it ... I take the secular to be **a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledge and sensibilities in modern life ...**

I take the view, as others have done, that the “religious” and the “secular” are **not essentially fixed categories.**  
**... the sacred and the secular depend on each other.**

(Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25-6)

# Modernity and Secularization – tautology?

In order for a society to be modern it has to be secular, and for it to be secular it has to relegate religion to nonpolitical spaces because that arrangement is essential to modern society

(Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 182)

# **Israel as a case study**

## **Beyond and Above the Religious-Secular Dichotomy**

# Two trends within contemporary

Post-Secularism - Sacralization of memory, politics, science, social and cultural values etc.

Beyond Secularism – revised attitudes towards tradition

Dear commanders and fighters,

It has been our great privilege to command and serve in the Givati Brigade at this time. History has chosen us to be the sharp edge of the bayonet of fighting the terrorist enemy “from Gaza” which curses, defames and abuses the God of Israel’s battles.

...

I trust you, each and every one of you, to act in that spirit, in the spirit of Israeli fighters who are the pioneers leading the camp. The spirit of Givati. I turn my eyes to the sky and call with you “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.” God, the Lord of Israel, make our path successful, as we are about to fight for Your People, Israel, against an enemy who defames your name. In the name of the IDF fighters and in particular, the fighters and commanders from the Brigade, make the phrase “For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.” come true, and we shall answer: Amen.

Together and only together we will win.

Ofer Winter, Colonel  
Commander of the Givati Brigade

# Beyond the religious-secular dichotomy:

“[P]eople take up a stance of this kind in a field which is polarized by the two extreme perspectives; they define themselves in relation to the polar opposites, whereas the people in the polar opposition don't return the favor, but usually define themselves in relation to each other, ignoring the middle (or abusively assimilating it to the other side). It is in this sense that the two extreme perspectives define the field.”

(Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 431)

# Traditionalism - a hybrid notion

Fewer than 20 percent of Israeli Jews define themselves as either 'religious' (a synonym for "orthodox" or "ultra-orthodox" in the Israeli context).

The remaining Israeli Jews define themselves as 'secular'.

More than a third of Israeli Jews commonly choose the label 'traditionalist' (Heb. *masorti*) when asked to categorize their Jewish identity.

Tradition as **source of authority**

VS.

Tradition as **source of identity and meaning**

# Medieval and Modern meanings of tradition

*naql* – revealed-sacred knowledge.

*'aql* – human acquired knowledge  
based on human reason.





Modernity and Secularization  
Tradition  
Tradition vs. modernity

*Naql* – revealed-sacred knowledge.

*'Aql* – human acquired knowledge  
based on human reason.

# The secularity of Western jurisprudence:

- Nearly all Western modern normative jurisprudence is either secular or explicitly Christian.
- Even those theories that claim universality have proceeded with only tangential reference to, and in almost complete ignorance of, the religious and moral beliefs, values and traditions of the rest of humankind.