

Education and Social change Secularisation

Mr. Rangrej Vishnu Gopalsa

Principal, KLE Society's D.T.Ed college Akkalkot, Dist. Solapur, Maharashtra, India.

Abstract

Secularization is the transformation of a society from close identification with religious values and institutions toward non-religious (or "irreligious") values and secular institutions. Secularization thesis refers to the belief that as societies "progress", particularly through modernization and rationalization, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance. The term secularization is also used in the context of the lifting of the monastic restrictions from a member of the clergy. Secularization has many levels of meaning, both as a theory and a historical process. Social theorists such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, postulated that the modernization of society would include a decline in levels of religiosity.

KEYWORDS: Secularization, macro social structures, Partial Secularization, Complete Secularization, Secular ethics

Introduction:

The role of education as an agent or instrument of social change and social development is widely recognized today. Social change may take place – when humans need change. When the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs and when new materials suggest better ways of meeting human needs.

Secularization (or secularization)

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Secularization has many levels of meaning, both as a theory and a historical process. Social theorists such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, postulated that the modernization of society would include a decline in levels of religiosity. Study of this process seeks to determine the manner in which, or extent to which religious creeds, practices and institutions are losing social significance. Some theorists argue that the secularization of modern civilization partly results from our inability to adapt broad ethical and spiritual needs of mankind to the increasingly fast advance of the physical sciences.

The term also has additional meanings, primarily historical and religious. Applied to church property, historically it refers to the seizure of monastic lands and buildings by anti-clerical European governments during the 18th and 19th centuries, which resulted in the expulsion and suppression of the religious communities which occupied them (see Kulturkampf). Otherwise, secularization involves the abandonment of goods by the Church where it is sold to purchasers after the government seizes the property, which most commonly happens after reasonable negotiations and arrangements are made. In Catholic canon law, the term can also denote the permission or authorization given for a member of a religious Order to live outside his or her religious community or monastery, either for a fixed or permanent period.

1. When discussing **macro social structures**, secularization can refer to differentiation: a process in which the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal, and moral, become increasingly specialized and distinct from one another.
2. When discussing **individual institutions**, secularization can denote the transformation of a religious into a secular institution. Examples would be the evolution of institutions such as Harvard University from a predominantly religious institution into a secular institution (with a divinity school now housing the religious element illustrating differentiation).
3. When discussing **activities**, secularization refers to the transfer of activities from religious to secular institutions, such as a shift in provision of social services from churches to the government.
4. When discussing **mentalities**, secularization refers to the transition from ultimate concerns to proximate concerns. E.g., individuals in the West are now more likely to moderate their behavior in response to more immediately applicable consequences rather than out of concern for post-mortem consequences. This is a personal religious decline or movement toward a secular lifestyle.

Opposition

Abdel WahabElmessiri (2002) outlined two meanings of the secularization term:

1. **Partial Secularization:** which is the common meaning of the word, and expresses "The separation between religion and state".
2. **Complete Secularization:** this definition is not limited to the partial definition, but exceeds it to "The separation between all (religion, moral, and human) values, and (not just the state) but also to (the human nature in its public and private sides), so that the holiness is removed from the world, and this world is transformed into a usable matter that can be employed for the sake of the strong".

Secularization Theory

Secularization theory explains that as modern society advances it will become increasingly secular, and religion will become increasingly hollow. Since the rise of

science in the 17th Century, sociological commentators have realized that religion may be in a permanent decline, and some have proposed the science and intelligence, both rooted in the Enlightenment, are anathema to religious faith. Karl Marx (1818-1883), Durkheim (1857-1917), Max Weber (1864-1920), the founders of sociology, and William James (lectures from 1901-1902) are four eminent men who all noted this decline. My page Religion in the United Kingdom: Diversity, Trends and Decline page show examples and charts of what this long-term decline looks like, in terms of memberships, attendance and beliefs, etc.

“The three 'classical' sociological theorists, Marx, Durkheim and Weber [all] thought that the significance of religion would decrease in modern times. Each believed that religion is in a fundamental sense an illusion. The advocates of different faiths may be wholly persuaded of the validity of the beliefs they hold and the rituals in which they participate, yet the very diversity of religions and their obvious connections to different types of society, the three thinkers held, make these claims inherently implausible.”

"Sociology" by Anthony Giddens (1997)

Secular society:

In studies of religion, modern Western societies are generally recognized as secular. This is due to the near-complete freedom of religion (beliefs on religion generally are not subject to legal or social sanctions), and the lack of authority of religious leaders over political decisions. Nevertheless, religious beliefs are widely considered a relevant part of the political discourse in many of these countries. This contrasts with other Western countries where religious references are generally considered out-of-place in mainstream politics.

The nature of a secular society could characterize a secular society as one which:

1. Refuses to commit itself as a whole to any one view of the nature of the universe and the role of man in it.
2. Is not homogenous, but is pluralistic.
3. Is tolerant. It widens the sphere of private decision-making.
4. While every society must have some common aims, which implies there must be agreed on methods of problem-solving, and a common framework of law; in a secular society these are as limited as possible.
5. Problem solving is approached rationally, through examination of the facts. While the secular society does not set any overall aim, it helps its members realize their aims.
6. Is a society without any official images. Nor is there a common ideal type of behavior with universal application.

Positive Ideals behind the secular society

1. Deep respect for individuals and the small groups of which they are a part.
2. Equality of all people.
3. Each person should be helped to realize their particular excellence.
4. Breaking down of the barriers of class and caste.

Modern sociology has, since Max Weber, often been preoccupied with the problem of authority in secularized societies and with secularization as a sociological or historical process.

Twentieth-century scholars whose work has contributed to the understanding of these matters include Carl L. Becker, Karl Löwith, Hans Blumenberg, M.H. Abrams, Peter L. Berger, Paul Bénichou and D. L. Munby, among others.

Some societies become increasingly secular as the result of social processes, rather than through the actions of a dedicated secular movement; this process is known as secularization.

Secular ethics

Main articles: Secular ethics and Secular religion

George Holyoake's 1896 publication English Secularism defines secularism as:

Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) The improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good.

Holyoake held that secularism and secular ethics should take no interest at all in religious questions (as they were irrelevant), and was thus to be distinguished from strong freethought and atheism. In this he disagreed with Charles Bradlaugh, and the disagreement split the secularist movement between those who argued that anti-religious movements and activism was not necessary or desirable and those who argued that it was.

Contemporary ethical debate is often described as "secular", with the work of Derek Parfit and Peter Singer, and even the whole field of contemporary bioethics, having been described or self-described as explicitly secular or non-religious.

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