

“RELIGION AND SECULAR”: THE DECOLONIAL PROJECT OF MITSUTOSHI HORII: PRESENTATION, DEBATE AND COMMENTS

Soufyane Badraoui, Imad Charef, Maria Pescaru

University Centre of Maghnia
Echahid Cheikh Larbi Tebessi University
National University of Sciences and Technology Politehnica, University Centre of Pitesti
Algeria, Algeria, Romania

Abstract

This work aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between religion and secular rationality within the framework of Western social consciousness, focusing on Horii's book 'Religion' and 'Secular' Categories in Sociology: Decolonizing the Modern Myth, published in 2021. Hourii seeks to deconstruct standard Western classifications as a way to restore structural criticism of Euro-American modernity. He also proposes refraining from the literal analytical use of these classifications as a way to transcend the limitations of modernity and end the traditional divisions between the religious and secular spheres. Within a historical framework, the book reviews the most prominent social theory frameworks and introduces the concept of "critical religion" as a measure that challenges the traditional distinction between religion and the secular world. The work calls for a rethinking of the assumption that sociology has separated religion and secularism, and advocates a more comprehensive perspective that transcends prevailing distinctions in order to bring about an inevitable break with the discourse of epistemic colonialism in social studies.

Keywords: Religion, Secularism, European-American modernity, Colonial knowledge, Critical religion, Global South perspective.

Introduction

In his book titled “Religion’ and ‘Secular’ Categories in Sociology.” Decolonizing the Modern Myth” (2021), Horii attempts to analyze Euro-American modernity by dismantling established Western classifications such as “religion,” “secular,” “politics,” and “economy”. To overcome the constraints of modernity, he suggests refraining from analytically using these categories. Within its historical framework, the book examines the fundamental social theories of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, and introduces the idea of “critical religion” to challenge the traditional separation between religious and secular spheres. He encourages us to reconsider the notion that sociology is solely secular, urging us to adopt a more encompassing perspective that goes beyond the conventional distinctions of “religion” and “secular” in order to decolonize sociological conversations.

The author’s ideas are revealed and discussed in this paper. Our aim is to offer an all-encompassing examination of the intricate interplay between religion, secularism, and the cognitive system of the Occident in the field of social sciences. Emphasis will be placed on the analysis of Horii’s thesis and the counterarguments it presents. Our analysis, drawing from recent literature and a perspective from the “south”.

1. About the Author

Serving as the Principal of Chaucer College, Mitsutoshi Horii is a Professor of Sociology at Shumei University in Japan, with his main location being in the UK. His latest study concentrates on the role of contemporary Euro-American concepts, like “religion,” and explores how these concepts legitimize and standardize particular norms and requirements in diverse colonial and postcolonial settings, including Japan, alongside social theories and sociology. He is the author of The Category of ‘Religion’ in Contemporary Japan: Shūkyō and Temple Buddhism (2018) and ‘Religion’ and ‘Secular’ Categories in

Sociology: Decolonizing the Modern Myth (2021). He is known for his extensive writing on topics within his field of interest, like “Problems of 'religion' in Japan: Part 1” (2020).

As a social scientist with a background in Japan, Mitsutoshi Hori brings a unique perspective to his research on the topic of “religion.” This enables him to examine the diverse methods through which religious concepts and categories are addressed and utilized in contexts that are foreign to their origins.

2. The Book Subject and Aims

The subject of the book involves a cognitive analysis of the “religion/secularism” phenomenon, approached from a sociological standpoint. The author starts with a distinct theoretical background, focused on the eradication of cognitive colonization.

The topic addressed in this volume by the author reflects his intention to focus on the “religious” subject in modern thought, through the existing cognitive frameworks that distinguish between “religious and secular.” The author aims to question this distinction, shedding light on the numerous similarities between reality and knowledge that are considered “religious” and “secular.”

The book explores other categories of “secularism” such as politics and economics. Nevertheless, the author admits that they do not delve into it extensively, particularly when its meaning is relatively obvious and it is used in a descriptive manner. This is done in order to avoid excessive complexity in the main narrative of the book, which continues to focus on the issue of “distinguishing between religious and secular.” However, its presentation of the mentioned categories is a critical presentation.

“In this process, other related ‘secular’ categories such as ‘politics,’ ‘economy,’ ‘science,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘society’ will be briefly but critically examined”.¹

By prioritizing “classification” issues over delving deeper into the aforementioned categories, the author openly acknowledges the limited understanding in this regard.

“Nevertheless, I admit that this is a limitation of this book, which I would like to overcome in my future works. Thus, this book is a modest and preliminary attempt to study sociologists’ classification practice of ‘religion’ and ‘secularity,’ in similar ways in which anthropologists investigate classification systems of indigenous communities. In spite of its shortcomings, however, I still believe that it is still worth publishing a book which provincializes moderns’ classifications that are utilized by sociologists”.²

The author acknowledges the limitations of their book and expresses a desire to overcome them in their future work. Despite these shortcomings, the author believes that publishing such a book and questioning the modern classifications used by sociologists and placing them in a regional perspective is worth the effort.

An important topic in religious studies and theology is the cognitive boundaries that constitute the category of 'religion'. The purpose of the book is to highlight some fundamental issues related to the application of classification in sociology and deconstruct the concept through a critical analysis of Western modernity and its colonial backgrounds.

The study of Hori is driven by theoretical considerations and poses a challenge not only to the concept of religion but also to the preconceived notions that are claimed to dominate the theory of global knowledge established by Western modernity.

3. The Book Content

The introduction of the book sets out its objective of exploring the intersection between postcolonialism or decolonization, and critical religion.

Next, the book proceeds to the opening chapter, where it addresses the research problem of differentiating between “religion” and “secularism” as key elements of modernity. It clarifies the

¹ Hori, M., “Religion’ and ‘Secular’ Categories in Sociology: Decolonizing the Modern Myth” Springer Nature. 2022. P. viii.

² Ibid, p. viii.

perspective through which the book views the world, a perspective that does not assume the existence of “religion”.

In the second chapter, titled: “Problematizing ‘Religion’ and ‘Secular’ Categories”

After providing a conceptual and documentary overview, the writer concludes that the Western modernity discourse should be examined and conceptualized as a "myth." If a "myth" is what comes before reality or is sometimes its basis, then modernity should not be regarded as an exception.

The author debates that the subject of religious and secular, and the differentiation between them, represents Western modernity, where “secular” is seen as part of the “myth in the Western side of the story,” while what is found in non-Western parts is classified as “religious.”

“Importantly, this is done by modernity’s self-identification of its own myth as ‘secular,’ while classifying myths of others as ‘religion.’³

The duality of the Western perspective on modernity is the essence of the discussion in the book and this chapter and what follows. As a step towards building a historical knowledge, the author aims to trace the history of 'religion' and 'secularism' ideas.

As indicated in the title of the third chapter, “Historicizing ‘Religion’ and ‘the Secular’.

The writer begins by providing a historical overview of the perceptions of human societies in pre-modern Europe regarding religion. Then, there is a historical and analytical presentation of the concept of religion. Next, the idea of religion without affiliation is presented with a historical example from Britain. Finally, the discussion concludes with an exploration of secularism, its formation throughout history, and a critical analysis of related theories.

The author concludes, after providing a narration, presentation, and genealogical analysis of religion and secularism, that modernity can establish dominance by distinguishing between these concepts, and that challenging this dominance requires the application of a critical approach to these constructs.

“Uncritical use of ‘religion’ and ‘the secular’ as categories of analysis functions to sustain and reproduce the hegemony of modernity. In contrast, the deconstruction of the religious-secular distinction subverts the sacred canopy of modernity”.⁴

The discussion in the previous chapter began in a historical and etymological context.

The fourth chapter introduces Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in the discussion, and theorists like Hori believe that they once laid the foundation for the field of sociology.

The argument presented in the “Religion’ in Classical Social Theories: Marx, Weber and Durkheim” Chapter, is that the perspectives of these influential religious thinkers must be understood in specific historical contexts in which they worked, in ages that witnessed significant social disruptions and class conflicts (both in Europe and in the colonial world). The opening four chapters of Hurry's book aim to clarify the standard approach that drives Western modernity.

“The implicit imperialism in classical social theories has been highlighted by many sociologists who have been influenced by postcolonial theories. For example, Raewyn Connell (2007, p. 9) claims that the places where these social theories were created were ‘the urban and cultural centres of the major imperial powers at the high tide of modern imperialism.’⁵

Since Auguste Comte, religion and secularism have been central topics in sociological theory. Classical social science thought, including perspectives from Hori, focused on contextual explanations within a colonial framework of knowledge production, which necessitates a critical examination.

In the fifth chapter titled " ‘Critical Religion’ and Contemporary Sociologists ", the author claim that in:

³ Ibid, p. 49.

⁴ Ibid, p. 86.

⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

“This chapter and the rest of the book do not utilize ‘religion’ as a generic category, but such generic utilization is critically examined within a specific context in which it occurs. It proposes that what we can study critically in a more meaningful way is the collective representation of the generic category of religion.”⁶

The chapter presents a review of sociologists' critical feedback regarding "critical religion," which, overall, faced challenges in integrating this framework into sociology:

“it is better to recognize that a universal definition of ‘religion’ is unattainable. What is meant by ‘religion’ is often contradictory and contentious between different users of the term. Many sociologists acknowledge these difficulties with the category of religion. It seems that they feel the need to find a way to move beyond the problem. However, they still continue to utilize the term as a generic category, as if they know what religion is, or as if they are convinced that any further involvement in critical examinations of the term ‘religion’ would only cause them to get stuck in the quagmire of the category.”⁷

As for the sixth and seventh chapters, they continue examining the distinction between religious and secular through questioning the "secular" category. The sixth chapter discusses the "Problematizing ‘The Secular’ and ‘Non-religion’" by examining contemporary literature on the sociology of secularity. This is done by deconstructing the concepts of secularism, secularity, and related concepts such as secularization and the removal of religious influence.

“This book is an attempt to reimagine the world by assuming no essential distinction between what is generally regarded as ‘religious’ and what is seen as ‘secular.’ This chapter pushes this assumption further to demystify the idea of the secular. ‘The secular’ is reified by the idea of religion as ‘it’ is defined as the opposite of ‘religion.’ Whereas the idea of religion is often associated with the notions of ‘sacred’ and ‘transcendent,’ for example, this chapter argues, what is regarded as ‘secular’ is equally ‘sacred’ and ‘transcendent.’”⁸

Astutely, Horii points out a key idea: the seemingly opposing categories of religion and secularism are both products of “ideology,” specifically “modernity.” Religion was reframed as a foundational reference point of the past, while secularism was presented as a neutral, rational framework for the present. However, in reality, secularism reproduces modernity's power by separating politics, economics, and science from religion, then reassembling them within a “secular” framework that prioritizes “public rationality” at the expense of religion as a private reference. Horii's framework interprets this as a tool for producing meaning, giving the social order a specific interpretive structure. Religion is reduced to a set of values, while secularism is presented as an objective alternative, opposing or at least challenging religion.

Nevertheless, secularism is also a powerful historical product intertwined with political and economic forces. This makes the category of “secularism” multifaceted, not fixed, leading to ambiguities and negotiations about what society considers “rational” and “irrational.” This process, in turn, solidifies modernity and reinforces the distinction between public and private spheres.

“This chapter unmasks the ostensible differences between ‘the secular’ and ‘the religious,’ by deconstructing the idea of the secular. To do this, the first section critically examines the key concepts of the secular, which includes the religious-secular distinction, the categories of secular, secularism, and secularity, as well as the ideas of secularization and non-religion.”⁹

In addition, it discusses how a specific foundation allows us to examine the standards and obligations governing academic practice by differentiating the world into two spheres: secular and religious, in this chapter Horii presents, critically a reading of Charles Taylor's book “A Secular Age,” it also includes a brief and critical evaluation of Jürgen Habermas' idea of “post-secularism.”

The opening of the next chapter, resumes the central idea of the sixth chapter that, according to Horii:

⁶ Ibid, p. 156.

⁷ Ibid, p. 156.

⁸ Ibid, p. 164.

⁹ Ibid, p. 167.

“...has critiqued the discourse on secularity when it assumes the essential differences between ‘the religious’ and ‘the secular.’ The demarcation between the ideas of ‘religion’ and ‘secularity’ is a human construct. The construction of the religious-secular distinction reflects the specific interests of those who draw the line, whereas it appears to be arbitrary for those who do not share the same interests. Importantly, this is not to denounce all the existing academic studies of secularity, but to highlight the importance of having the acute awareness that ‘religion’ and ‘secularity’ are empty categories that are parasitic to each other. Without ‘religion,’ there is no ‘secularity,’ and vice versa. The idea of religion is an invention of modernity in the West. At the same time, ‘the West’ is invented by the projection of ‘religion’ upon modernity’s Others.”¹⁰

The seventh chapter, "Eurocentrism and Anachronism of Multiple Secularities," discusses the application of secularism and laicism concepts to non-Western and pre-modern contexts.

“The concept of religion has been exported to, and indigenized in, many different parts of the world. As the idea ‘religion’ spread across the globe, multiple forms of secularities (in the sense of nonreligion) have been constructed as the binary opposite of ‘religion.’ As ‘religion’ has become institutionalized in many countries, for example, it has enabled these countries to construct the realm of non-religion, which is typically identified as the secular, and which is generally claimed to represent the normal order of things and the public reason, as opposed to the supposed irrationality of private religion.”¹¹

The author presents instances of this phenomenon from contemporary publications and studies about secularism in modern and pre-modern Japan.

“Recent scholarship of ‘multiple secularities’ also seeks ‘secularity’ in premodern times. This includes the search for ‘secularity’ in premodern Japan.”¹²

Furthermore, it briefly and critically examines the concept that "secularism" can be found within an Amazonian tribe, putting important critical review of famous academic studies, and questioning their statements and postulate:

“Having read Everett’s work, I have found Zuckerman et al.’s characterization of the Pirahã people as ‘secular,’ deeply problematic. First, the words such as ‘secular,’ ‘secularity,’ and ‘secularism’ can be found nowhere in Everett’s book. Importantly, examining the ways in which the Pirahã make sense of the world with their own language, Everett employs the terms such as ‘worldview,’ ‘belief,’ and ‘value’ interchangeably. These are often compared against the faith in Christian God and ‘religion’ that he used to have as a Christian missionary. Nevertheless, the cosmology of the Pirahã is not conceptualized as ‘nonreligion’ nor as ‘the secular.’ As an exception, Everett uses the phrase ‘the Pirahãs’ religion’ only once... “¹³

From this review, He suggests that understanding non-modern, non-Western or pre-modern societies does not consist of applying prefabricated notions of religion and secularity specific to the West. Rather, he invites us to analyse how these categories are constructed and indigenised locally, without accepting them as universal truths. Thus, religious-secular identity varies according to political and cultural contexts and cannot be reduced to a comparison with the modern Western model. Epistemologically, he adopts a relativist and contextualising position: knowledge is gained through the study of local processes rather than through the imposition of universal analytical frameworks. According to Horri:

“When we study non-modern, non-Western, or premodern ways of living, it is vital not to project sui generis ideas of religion and secularity upon them. Even when they have the categories of religion and secularity, we must refuse to have sui generis ideas of religion and secularity, but examine the process of the construction and the indigenization of the religious-secular distinction in each locality. They are not the equivalent of the religious-secular distinction of the modern West, but reflect unique norms and imperatives of each statecraft which utilize the category ‘religion’ to domesticate its rival value orientations. Analysing this requires not to utilize ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ as analytical categories.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 203.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 203-204.

¹² Ibid, p. 215.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 229-230.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 233.

Horii's book invites us to rethink the relationship between religion and secularity, not as a simple reproduction of the modern Western model, but as a historically localised and indigenous construct. The author demonstrates that the categories "religion" and "secular" do not have a universal ontology: they diverge according to political and cultural contexts and state imperatives, and serve to domesticate rival value orientations. This epistemological approach favours relativity and contextualism, calling for the denaturalisation of secularity as a homogeneous framework and the deconstruction of the myths underpinning Western modernity.

In other words, the work represents similarity to Southern Epistemology¹⁵, emphasising local knowledge as an essential analytical horizon. It invites us to confront local knowledge with Eurocentric frameworks, showing that access to knowledge requires the historicisation of knowledge specific to each society and a critique of universalising claims.

4. A Debate on Religion, Secularism, and the Cognitive System

In this section, we offer a comprehensive examination of the interplay among religion, secularism, and the cognitive frameworks that underpin Western social sciences, with particular emphasis on analyzing Horii's thesis and the counterarguments it raises. Our analysis builds on recent literature and incorporates perspectives from the Global South

Relationship between religion and secularism is complex and multifaceted, with significant historical and contemporary implications. For Zemmin 'Secularity' denotes a situation in which religious and secular aspects are distinguished, both in terms of structural differentiations and in terms of conceptual distinctions. 'Secularism', by contrast, refers to the political demand for greater separation between religion and the secular¹⁶, Hölscher (2013) and Altikriti (2019) both explore the entangled history of the religious field and the inaccurate assumption of secularization in modernization. which provokes the politicization of sacred to oppose as well as to a strange domination and secularization.¹⁷

Let us begin where Horii mention on his introduction the distinction between modern and non- modern mode or scheme of knowledge. The modern perspective privilege the "secular" as a universal order of thing and a non-modern word as religious and qualified irrational by the first one.

Sociology as a science belonging to modern and European world is secular. Secularism is a western concern threatening the Christianity more than Islam, because that secularization is a peculiar plight of Christianity and its efforts to accommodate to the gestation of modernity in Europe. Despite the historical and political process of evolution, as far this secularism is not a theological concern but a sociological one, because the secularism is a cultural representation.¹⁸

The Enlightenment philosophy was the most influential because it stressed the importance of reason in understanding the world. Furthermore, there is a distinction between religious and political concerns.

The evolution of humans has been associated with some sociological and anthropological theorists with three stages that reflect the level of intellectual awareness and perception of reality. These stages also reflect the references on which humans rely in managing and organizing their lives. According to the anthropologist James Frazer in his book "The Golden Bough" (1890), human thought evolution has gone through three main stages: the magical stage, the religious stage, and finally the rational or scientific stage. On the other hand, Comte identified the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and the positive stage. Similarly, Sorokin in his work " Social and Cultural Mobility " (1937-1941) observed that societies oscillate between three different modes of thinking: sensory, ideational, and idealistic.¹⁹

¹⁵ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, «Épistémologies du Sud », Études rurales [En ligne], 187 | 2011, mis en ligne le 12 septembre 2018, consulté le 22 décembre 2025. <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesrurales/9351> [L.s.2.03.2026].

¹⁶ Zemmin, F., "Secularism, Secularity and Islamic Reformism." Companion to the Study of Secularity, 2019. 1-14. P. 01. www.multiple-secularities.de/publications/companion [L.s.2.03.2026].

¹⁷ Addi, L., „La crise du discours religieux musulman „, Alger: Edition Frantz Fanon. 2020. P. 22.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁹ Ritzer, G., Modern Sociological theory (7th ed). USA: MacGraw-hill. 1988.

The formation of human identity is through perceiving reality and attributing meaning to things, allowing individuals to distinguish themselves from these things and feel their existence. Understanding the surrounding world and natural phenomena depends on an individual's level of thinking, especially when considering the three stages as pathways of development. Humans rely on their senses to perceive physical objects nearby and their imagination to understand certain phenomena at different stages of life, explaining the theological/magical and sensory stages simultaneously. Human anthropology in archaeological studies shows humans resorting to mysteries and crafting gods to interpret the otherworldly, particularly in hunting and gathering societies and horticultural communities. This behavior is attributed to reducing stress and fear by resorting to magic and performing specific rituals in certain circumstances.²⁰

The social function of magic was distinguished in this phase as a backward stage in human intellectual history. The second phase, religious/intellectual, is somewhat advanced in human history where individuals have become more spiritual by transcending material worlds, understanding life through religion, particularly associated with heavenly religions. Despite some linking it to earlier stages and human attempts to create gods, the reality proves otherwise. Even though there are situational religions like Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, they still move towards the dualism of conflict between good and evil for a better life. Notable historical epochs in this phase, particularly in Western thought, include Christianity and the church's dominance over all aspects of life and modes of thinking. Religion was the foundation of beliefs at that time, explaining everything through religion and mysteries, all attributed to divine law. This era was known as the Dark Ages in Europe because of theological thought dominating all interpretations, with individuals being part of it. This continued to the third situational phase that attempted to break away from mysterious interpretations, advocating the dominance of reason and scientific laws, forming the basis of all explanations.

If religion was once considered the foundation of all beliefs, today it is just a personal matter. Separating from church and theology in the third stage is simply an attempt to secularize society and eliminate the symbolism and imagination that have dominated societies for decades. This secularization is an attempt to connect humans more to their material reality than to the spiritual realm and subject them to the laws of nature that they now control and regulate by confining them to a legal code, whereas they used to believe these laws were under the control of the gods they used to resort to in times of weakness in the beginning of life. These laws, laws of science, were believed by positivists to liberate humans from their ignorance and fears, ensuring them equal rights.

However, the history of science proves the bias and injustice of these laws towards humanity in general and towards self-aware individuals in particular, due to the fact that their guardians..., if that expression is correct, continue to impose methodological and epistemological restrictions and conceal fundamental truths aimed at liberating humans from the shackles of doubt and uncertainty.

The legal human is not only at the conceptual political and legislative level, but is also the individual's perception of reality and its interpretation according to the laws of science, after phenomena were interpreted with magic and religion in the Church's age.

The Enlightenment is the imposition of cognitive frameworks and constraints on it. In its early stages, it involved pushing back religious authorities and their control over various aspects of life. As indicated by Azmi Bishara in his work, that people in middle age start to moving up against the clergy dominance rather than the Christian faith²¹

Kamel Tirchi pointed out in his review of the book "History of Secularism" by Graeme Smith how a group of philosophers and scientists were judged by religious authorities for their philosophical and rational interpretations of the universe is the turning point between what is theological and worldly secular²². And yet Jean Paul II in his declaration at the Pontifical Academy of science in 1966, asserts

²⁰ Scupin, R., and DeCorse, C. R., „Anthropology: A Global Perspective“. USA: Edition, Pearson. 2012. P. 286.

²¹ Bishara, A., „On the Use of the Arabic Word Secular Since the Tenth Century“, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. 2020. P. 01. (In Arabic).

²² Tirchi, K., „Book review A Short History of Secularism by Graeme Smith“, Tabayyun, Issue 40 - Volume 10. 2020.

that the theory of evolution is merely a hypothesis and he insists on a trusting dialogue between the Church and science.²³

Otherwise, we find sufficient examples of how temple guardians (scholars) turned into religious figures by trying to conceal truths discovered by scientists that could correct certain historical trajectories, they were judged, persecuted, and killed, and were excluded from the field of science.

The historian Alain invented a word "medieval Schizophrenia" which means that the same individual can believe a thing like philosophy and another thing like Christian.²⁴ Graf asserts 'Protestants were both empathy modernizers and utterly distraught by modernity. Invoking the theologian Mark Noll, Graf suggests they had 'the gift ambiguity', characteristic of Lutheranism in particular, of living in the world with awareness of being different from it.²⁵

Based on this, Taylor accuses cultural relativists of creating a specific kind of "social imaginary" about secularism, from which the end of "the presence of religion or the divine in the public sphere" is understood, not just the end of the divine origin of authority, and there is a difference between the two. If secularism has ended the divine conception of the origin of authority in that they "were deeply enmeshed in the power structures which cannot be understood separately from the divine, or the higher, or what calls for humility."²⁶

The division of the world between the spiritual sacred and the earthly material, the religious and the temporal, the ecclesiastical and the laity, or "the parishioners" – meaning the followers of the church who are not clergy – is fundamentally a ecclesiastical distinction, originating from religious theology.²⁷

Although it is evident from the context that it refers to the "worldly" in contrast to the "spiritual priests." He uses priests and secularists against another group of them, implying the division of the public, excluding the priests, between the two sides.²⁸

The secularism did not mean the end of what Tayler calls "personal religion," the presence of religion in the public sphere, as much as it meant that "faith and unbelief can coexist as alternative."²⁹

For Addi the separation between the two raisons (theological and scientific) is not an antireligious position.³⁰

One can borrow the key phrase from Boudon stating that we can discuss this hypothesis by precisely invoking the notion of trans-subjectivity, which Boudon had used to formulate this evolutionary theory. This concept not only helps us understand how cognitive competition gradually frees individual judgments from their subjective influences throughout history but also encompasses the potential for certain inferential temptations to converge in an unregulated cognitive market, providing plausibility to false or dubious ideas. The question at hand is whether competition always favors the superior product or merely the most satisfying one. While in many markets these two notions are sometimes synonymous, in the cognitive market, they delineate the divide between methodical thinking and gullibility.³¹

Otto suggests that 'the response to the disenchantment of the life-world was an ethical theologization which saw the secularized external life-world as a field to be shaped pragmatically in line with God's law.'³²

²³ Bronner, G., „Apocalypse cognitive“, France: Presse Universitaire de France. 2021.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Flanagan, K., "Secularization and the World Religions edited by Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt, Liverpool University Press, 2009, New Blackfriars 91.1036, 2010. 736-739. P. 737. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43251459> [L.s.2.03.2026].

²⁶ Saleh, R. A., "Why the Return of Identity? Charles Taylor's Critique of Modernity and Secularism." Tabayyun 11.41, 2022. 71-92. P. 83.

²⁷ Bishara, Ibid, p. 03.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 03.

²⁹ Saleh, Ibid, p.83.

³⁰ Addi, Ibid, p.10.

³¹ Bronner, Ibid.

³² Flanagan, Ibid, p. 737.

What matters is that in modernity, non-religious and religious actors both are concerned with the issue of societal order and hence also share in secular premises and arguments, which they either regard as immanently self-sufficient or as in need of being grounded in transcendence.³³

Conclusion

The book examines the concepts of religion and secularism, considered as intuitive, and proposes to dismantle them in order to build a constructive dialogue between different ways of living and knowing. The author offers a critique of the social field, analyzing the way in which social research and textbooks use secular religious concepts. He considers the terms "religion" and "secularism" to be Western imaginary expressions, used in an excessive and awkward manner. The author refutes the idea of a conflict between "religion" and "secularism", stressing that the distinction is a mythical construct of Western modernity that perpetuates the norms and values of colonization.

Horii's decolonial project is directed inward, toward sociology's own need for reflexivity regarding its secular, identity-constructing practices. Its dismantling, he suggests, can nourish openness to non-modern modes of knowledge and the willingness to view the "secular" itself as a historical possibility rather than a teleological necessity. This humble unlearning is presented as a springboard for intercultural dialogue in the service of a shared human future.

The book offers a sharp decolonial critique of the modernist foundations of sociology and an invitation to reimagine its basic conceptual vocabulary in a more pluralistic and emic spirit. It is a timely call for deep epistemic examination and ethical responsibility as antidotes to universalizing discourses.

Horii challenges the concept of "secularism" in sociology and sociologists, as the distinction between religious and secular is deeply rooted in the foundational identity of sociology as a discipline, as well as in the professional identity of sociologists.

The author calls for envisioning a sociology devoid of religion or secularism, which might be bothersome to sociologists, but motivates them to challenge the Western modernity concept by being open to questioning "secular" modernity. They urge them to examine unconventional forms of existence and knowledge (previously categorized as "religion") as viable instruments for analysis rather than mere subjects of study.

This book shows us, as readers or reviewers, that any attempt to understand knowledge that respects the descriptive and guiding importance of local knowledge is vital. This is the key to changing how we view religious and non-religious categories beyond the usual story, and it sets the stage for a critical look at society that is better suited for global variety.

³³ Zemmin, Ibid, p 03.

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