
REVIEW

Secularism? & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives. Edited by Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar. Hartford, CT: Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture, 2002. iv + 168 pages. \$10 paperback.

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The Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture is housed at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. *Secularism & Secularity* is the first major publication produced under the institute's sponsorship. By studying religion's presumable negative image and exploring attitudes and practices sometimes identified as spiritual though without institutional constraints, the institute gives prominence to secularism as a social force to be studied in its own right. Secularism possesses its own positive dynamic and exhibits variations both within and among countries. Studies in this edited work explore aspects of secularization in countries as diverse as the United States, Iran, Canada, Denmark, France, Israel, Australia, and Great Britain.

In the book's introduction, Barry Kosmin presents a typology of secularism and secularity that is unfortunately not carefully utilized by most of the authors of the various chapters. His model contrasts hard and soft versions of secularity, the term designating individual modes of secular consciousness (Dawkins is a hard secularist, Locke a soft one) and hard and soft versions of secularism, which refers to institutional and legal structures (China exhibits a hard version of secularism, the United Kingdom a soft version). Hard secularists are convinced atheists, whereas most soft secularists are liberal religionists who favor tolerance for a range of beliefs. Kosmin's model could have been systematically evaluated by the often considerably rich demographic data provided in the other chapters, but unfortunately the reader must infer from these chapters how well the model fares in such radically different countries as Iran and Denmark.

Part of the difficulty in applying Kosmin's useful model is finding equivalent terms or trends in other cultures. As Nathalie Caron points out, whereas the United States frames its religious freedom in the negative ("The government shall pass no law. . ."), France has officially adopted a secular worldview that puts forward a civic and moral ideal that unifies the community and legitimates sovereignty. *Lâïcité* is the French term for this institutional system, and neither *secular* nor any other English word is equivalent to it. Similarly, Nastaran Moossavi notes that discussing secularism in Iran is hampered by the fact that most of the English terms coined to discuss secularism have no equivalent in Persian.

Kosmin's model is addressed indirectly by many chapters in this volume. It is most illuminated in chapters that offer survey data indicating the percentage of individuals in a culture who might be termed secular and then identify the demographic correlates of such views. In the opening chapter, the editors report that, in response to the question, "What is your religion, if any?" on the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey, 14% of the some 50,000 respondents answered "no religion." Another 5% declined to answer the question. Inferring no religious identification in such cases, Keysar and Kosmin conclude that 19% of Americans are secularists. Although one may dispute the inclusion of the 5% who did not respond—some may simply have preferred not to reveal their religious identity—it is clear that a large minority of Americans reject religious identification, a much larger proportion than the percentage of professed agnostics and atheists: 5% if one counts those who somewhat disagree that God exists or just 1% if one counts only convinced atheists, those who definitely disagree that God exists, figures reported in Keysar's separate chapter on American atheists and agnostics.

By means of open-ended interviews with "the nonreligious" in the Northwest (Oregon and Washington), Frank Pasquale adds empirical weight to Kosmin's model. Pasquale emphasizes that secularists, who are more likely than the religious to self-identify as humanists, scientists, or naturalists, are not simply reacting against religion but eschew theistic and transcendental worldviews on the grounds that an "ultimate" metaphysical stance is unnecessary and that one may be comfortable with worldviews that lack a transcendent dimension. Pasquale's study features these neglected individuals who, more than simply Nones in terms of religious identification, are substantially or affirmatively nonreligious, or "Nots."

Pasquale's data from the American Northwest are paralleled with comparable data from Canada, Australia, and Great Britain and offered by scholars who had access to at least some relevant survey data from their respective countries. More conceptual pieces discuss secularism in Israel, India, and Iran. Still, even the more conceptual essays use some relevant empirical data.

The importance of this work should be obvious. Secularization is a positive social force in its own right, paradoxically encouraged by what postmodern philosophers feared was coming: a renaissance of religion, by which they meant fundamentalist religions. Associated in virtually all countries with single, young, and well-educated persons who are also geographically mobile, even if only via the Internet, secularization presents a new field of study for psychologists of religion. Thanks to Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, pioneers in this uncharted territory, we now have the first sketch of a map. Available in print directly from the institute, this book may also be downloaded free of charge at its Web site, <http://www.trincoll.edu/secularisminstitute>.