



*Journal of
Religion & Society*
Supplement Series

The Kripke Center

Supplement 17 (2018)

Religion and Secularism

Edited by Patrick Murray and Ronald A. Simkins

2. Does Secularization Matter?

Douglas V. Porpora, Drexel University

Abstract

Does it matter whether the world – or a portion of the world – secularizes? That is the question this paper addresses. The answer depends in part on what secularization means. The paper begins by summarizing the different meanings attached to the notion of secularization and focusing on the presence of religion in the public sphere and in the hearts of individuals. The paper goes on to challenge the views of the new atheists, who tend to align religion with fundamentalism. From there it proceeds to examine how religion engenders a sense of moral purpose that can show up in the public sphere as pursuit of justice. Without some metaphysical grounding for social justice, the paper argues, there is a danger of a macro-moral disconnect that leaves morality resident solely in the private sphere.

Keywords: secularization; privatization of religion; religion and public sphere; new atheism; social justice

Introduction

I write both as a sociologist and as a practicing Catholic – well a Catholic of sorts. Both qualities contextualize what I will have to say. In sociology, the secularization thesis has long been what has been described as a master narrative. The thesis is that modernization inevitably produces secularization.

Recently, however, the secularization thesis has been subject to substantial critique. Some critics allege that whereas religious America was long regarded as the exception to the trend, it actually is an exceptionally secularized Europe that has misled us about the tendency (Berger; Stark and Finke). It has even been maintained by various commentators that we are on the contrary entering a period of post-secularism (Habermas), although that thesis too has come under substantial criticism (Beckford; Gorski et al.).

In any case, what secularization and religion even mean is now in doubt. By secularization do we mean a decline in religion generally or just de-Christianization? Actually, it is not just Christianity that is declining among certain populations but observant Judaism as well. But it may just be a decline in organized monotheism we are witnessing at least among certain segments of the world's population – although as José Casanova has pointed out, it is actually on the upswing elsewhere.

If we speak, however, of a worldwide cosmopolitan culture, based in urban areas and characterized by possession of four-year college degrees, that culture at least seems staunchly secular. Aside from the few evangelical holdouts one finds even in northern, East-coast universities, I struggle to find students who describe themselves as religious. My students and even colleagues instead largely consider me charmingly quaint.

Does it matter that the world or even just certain segments of the world secularize? As indicated by my title, that is the topic of my paper. I mentioned that I am Catholic to indicate that for me the question is not purely an academic one. I have a personal stake in it and pursue the question from what feminist scholars would call a standpoint. I hasten to clarify that I am a Charles Taylor-type Catholic, along the lines that David McPherson delineates in his excellent contribution to this issue, i.e., left-leaning both politically and theologically. I do not think the pope is infallible. I do not think abortion is murder, and I strongly support gay marriage. I am kind of a liberal Protestant Catholic.

But because I remain a Catholic in a broad sense, I think religion is of value. I think the monotheistic religions are of value. And I think Christianity is of value. So it concerns me that in some sense, some sort of secularization is going on among certain populations, particularly populations that encompass me. The question is whether I should be concerned. Because I always harbor doubts about whatever I believe, I do not know for sure. I am hoping that by expressing my concerns and receiving any feedback, I will think better about this matter.

What Is Secularization?

As Edgell notes, “secularization theory was inextricably intertwined with sociology’s founding metanarrative of modernization” (248). In fact, sociology traces its origins back to the social physics of Auguste Comte, who as part of that enterprise coined his famous law of three stages. The law of three stages was a putative theory of history, according to which

religious ways of knowing were eventually displaced by negative or critical philosophy, which in turn was eventually displaced by the new positive way of knowing embodied by empirical science.

Comte may have gotten right the historical progression, but there were a number of elements of his formulation that have bedeviled sociology ever since. Most fundamentally was the entire conceptualization of what had transpired as some kind of law. And, indeed, it was part and parcel of the positivist philosophy of science that Comte helped inaugurate that causality was conceptualized as involving universal event regularities of an “if then” form. The concern to uncover social laws corresponding to the natural laws of physics is what has pushed for so long the quantitative direction of sociology, not the least the sociological study of religion (Beckford).

Because the lawful or nomothetic understanding of causality ineluctably contains some element of determinism, even if stochastic, the law of three stages has always conveyed a sense of inevitability. As Casanova (1994, 2006) and Taylor observe, this sense of inevitability has, moreover, always been reinforced by an accompanying normative suggestion that religious knowledge is inferior to philosophical knowledge, which is inferior to scientific knowledge. The resulting understanding is that with modernity, religion is fated to fade away. That is the secularization thesis in a nutshell.

However faulty it may be in any case, there are a number of confusions associated with the thesis that need to be dissolved. One confusion is between modernity understood as a time and as a stage. Understood as a time, modernity just means the chronological present. So if religion currently shows an upsurge somewhere – say in China, Africa, or the Middle East, it seems to count against the secularization thesis. It is this contemporary counter-trend that has led some, like Stark and Finke and even Berger to consider the secularization thesis refuted, to regard Europe rather than the United States as the truly exceptional case. There has even been some tendency, especially after the attack of September 11, 2001, to make too much of Habermas’s talk of a post-secular age.

A related confusion likewise prompting an overly quick dismissal of the thesis follows from its nomothetic formulation. If the relation between modernity and secularization is a universal law, then it must hold universally. If there are counter-instances, then the relation is not universal and hence not law-like. If laws are the only way to understand causality, then there is in fact no causality there.

Against the first confusion above, it must be said first of all that Europe – or more specifically Western Europe – is not the world’s only secular case. There is also Australia and arguably also Japan. Aside from the small but powerful Orthodox segment of Israel, much of that country is also very secular. Now, even East European countries, like Poland, are also undergoing secularization. Evidence had also been accumulating that even the United States, the vaunted exceptional case, has also been undergoing its own pattern of secularization (Voas and Chaves). Recently, with the dramatic rise in the U.S. of the so-called “nones,” it is clearer than ever that this is so.

The larger confusion, however, is to equate the modernity of the secularization thesis with a chronological time rather than a stage of development. On the contrary, it is the latter that

was clearly meant. Implicit to the secularization thesis is modernity understood as a certain, historically emerging consciousness, a *gesellschaftlich* structure of association, and a certain corresponding way of life. Throughout the world, that formation emerges only unevenly. So it is not necessarily counter to the secularization thesis if religion resurges in less modernized parts of the world.

Indeed, if modernization is a spotty affair, even a single country may be too large a unit of analysis. For the thesis to hold, it need be only the avant-garde segment of the country, the cosmopolitan, educated elite, who exhibit the secularized worldview. As long, that is, as there is reason to believe this avant-garde represents sooner or later inevitably our collective future. And of course, the reason to believe so is the normative edge of the secularization thesis, the accompanying assumption that as religious belief is at best unwarranted epistemically, it is sooner or later bound to be abandoned by all subject to the forces of enlightened reason.

Actually, my own worry is that something of the secularization thesis might hold even if, as I believe, the accompanying assumption is partially wrong. That is, I consider it quite possible that the secular mindset of the cosmopolitan elite could represent our collective future, even if it is wrong about the epistemic merit of religious belief. In any case, I do not believe the secularization thesis to be fully countered by renewed religious activity outside the modern sectors of the world. Not even Habermas's post-secularity implied any great change within the modern sector. It did not imply a new upsurge of religion there but only an admission, like Connolly's, that for the time being, religious voices must be allowed their due in the public sphere.

If it is a mistake to equate the modernity of the secularization thesis with a time rather than a putative stage of history, it is also a mistake, I believe, to think of the thesis as embodying some kind of universal law. Actually, it is the mistake of positivism overall to conceptualize causality in terms of lawful event-regularities. From the perspective of the post-positivist critical realism I embrace (Cartwright; Gorski 2004; Bhaskar; Porpora 2015), there are, outside the laboratory, no universal event-regularities even in physics. Instead, outside the laboratory, causality involves forces, mechanisms, and other causal powers that can be and usually are counteracted by other forces, mechanisms, and causal powers.

Thus, instead of regarding the secularization thesis as postulating some kind of inviolable law, we should regard it as indexing a putative mechanism or set of mechanisms associated with modernity that could nevertheless always be counteracted. Thus, it again, does not necessarily count against the thesis that even in places among the avant-garde, secularization is counteracted. At the same time, if we are no longer dealing with an inviolable law, then, as Casanova, Taylor, and Gorski (2003) all counsel, we should expect the forces of modernity to play out in historically specific ways that, depending on the conjuncture of causes in play, may even end up running counter to secularization.

Once, however, we begin to think of the secularization thesis not as an inviolable law but as indexing a mechanism or set of mechanisms, those mechanisms need to be specified. Thus, one further confusion about the secularization thesis is that it indexes one big mechanism or process about which we are all clear. Against that confusion is Casanova's (1994, 2006) well-known distinctions among three different processes that might be signified by the modernization associated with the secularization thesis. There is first of all a functional

differentiation of societal sectors – that is, state, economics, and society, and with that differentiation a decoupling of religion from domains where it had formerly been found.

Although I am not entirely sure how it is to be fully distinguished from the above first category, Casanova also speaks of the privatization of religion as a second process that might be observed. The privatization of religion refers to the withdrawal of religion from the public sphere to the sphere of life that is entirely private or micro-interactional. A third process finally that Casanova suggests is distinct from the other two is a putative decline in individual religious belief and practice.

I say I do not fully understand the difference between Casanova's first and second categories because insofar as religion is not privatized, i.e., is present in the public sphere, it must *ipso facto* have some bearing on both the state and the economy. Papal encyclicals on social justice, for example, certainly concern how the market is to be governed politically. Of course, as Casanova (2006) himself says, religion can have a bearing on state and economy without fully eradicating all separation in principle between the religious and profane spheres.

In any case, given the absence of debate over the first form of secularization that Casanova distinguishes, I will not concern myself with it. Everyone seems to admit that functional differentiation has happened, in some ways initiated by religion itself, and should not be in itself troublesome to those who care about religion.

It is rather with the presence of religion in the public sphere and in the hearts of individuals that I will be concerned. I speak of the hearts of individuals, and there I will seek to shift some direction in current debate. Much of the debate over individuals has concerned religious belief and practice. Thus, there is talk of implicit or latent religion or what in a well-known formulation, Davie described as "believing without belonging." Without disputing such religious latency, I propose that more fundamental than religious belief is religious emotion. It is less, I will suggest, that at the individual level, people have stopped believing in religious realities as that emotionally, they have ceased caring much about them.

In terms of the public sphere, I will suggest, we need to distinguish between right-wing and left-wing religion. By right and left religion, I am speaking both theologically and politically. While there is no intrinsic connection, at least in the United States, those who are theologically conservative – Evangelicals and staunch Catholics – tend to vote Republican; they turned out disproportionately for Donald Trump (Pew 2016). Theological liberals in contrast tend toward the Democratic party, which is otherwise mostly aligned with a secular worldview.

In the U.S. at the individual level, both right-wing and left-wing religion are in decline. The decline has been more serious on the left wing, especially in mainline Protestantism. In fact, a recent commentary in the *Washington Post* suggests that mainline Protestantism may have only 23 Easters left to its existence (Stetzer).

In terms of the public sphere, at least in the United States, the right is more of a visible presence than the left, so much so that the political face of religion has come to be associated exclusively with a ban on all abortions; opposition to gay marriage and transgender rights; denial of climate change; and now, at the extreme, white supremacy. Aside from the surprising but only occasional pronouncements from the pope, a left-wing religious sensibility is much

less present in the American public sphere. Against the current American grain, the American Catholic Church defends immigrants and ethnic diversity, but not too loudly. There is a religiously based New Sanctuary movement, but beyond that little left-wing religious pressure in the American public sphere for peace and justice.

It is, attendant on secularization, the political enervation of a religious left that predominantly concerns me. I attribute it, as I say, to its eclipse by the more secular sensibility of an emergent cosmopolitan culture. That culture and the globalized world it reflects seem to be a source of resentment worldwide by its more parochial opposite, giving rise to *Brexit*, Trump, and Le Pen. That parochial opposite is not everywhere religious, but it does tend to be so in the United States, which is what helps foster an oppositional anti-religious orientation, particularly among the young, increasing the ranks of the cosmopolitans.

My foregoing remarks seem to align me with what Gorski and Altinordu disparagingly label a pastoral bias with regard to secularization, that is a bias toward a pastor's view. Gorski and Altinordu describe this pastoralism thus:

Pastoralism refers to the tendency to make priestly standards of good or true religion into sociological standards of religious vitality. Do people go to church regularly? Do they have their children baptized? Do they believe in a personal God? Do they believe in life after death? These are the kinds of questions a concerned church leader asks. The answers may be useful to the social scientist. But they are not necessarily answers to our questions, which concern religious change, not religious vitality (65).

I plead guilty to the pastoral bias and offer the following defense. First, although my work often deals with religion, I am not actually a sociologist of religion and am not particularly known among them. Thus, whereas in their last sentence above, Gorski and Altinordu distinguish the questions of the pastors from the questions of the social scientists, I confess to greater interest in the questions of the pastors. I am not interested in religious change in the abstract but precisely in terms of religious vitality. Further, I am specifically interested in the religious vitality of Christianity and of the Judaism from which it sprang. Thus, whereas I acknowledge that religion itself may not be disappearing even in the West but only taking a more individualistic, non-theistic form, I am less sure about Christianity and theistic Judaism. And if they decline into inconsequentiality, I think something important is lost.

Are We Better Off Without Religion?

In one of his famous songs, John Lennon asks us to “imagine there is no heaven . . . above us only sky.” We are further to imagine there are no countries or religion too. The result, the song suggests, would be a world without anything to live or die for and thus people living only for today.

Thus, the song's implication is that commitment to God and country have been harmful, that in living for them, in a willingness even to die for them, people have needlessly been divided from each other. From this perspective, the question of this paper – Does secularization matter? – receives a positive response: secularization does matter and is all to the good; we are better off without religion.

As the song has been enormously popular, according to *Wikipedia* the best-selling single of Lennon's solo career, it seems that many people agree with its sentiment. Indeed, after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center of September 11, many people have concluded that religion is intrinsically harmful. Emblematic of this mindset are the so-called "four horsemen of the new atheism" (Harris 2004; Dawkins; Dennett; Hitchens 2007), who have likewise proven very popular. The way Hitchens puts it below is typical.

By the early part of this century I became convinced that religion was back in a big way with the Parties of God – as they dare call themselves – not just in Iran and among Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah, but with Messianic Jewish settlers trying to steal other people's land in the name of God to try and bring on Armageddon with help from Christian forces in the United States. These forces overlap with the same Christians who try to want (*sic*) pseudo-science taught to American children with taxpayers money and with the Vatican saying that, "Well AIDS in Africa may be bad, but condoms would be worse" (2009).

Whether we are speaking of Al-Qaeda; Israel's religiously motivated destruction of a two-state solution; or the evident complaisance of many U.S. Christians with the oppression of strangers in their midst, there is no denying the kind of egregious religious initiatives Hitchens identifies. The problem with such blanket dismissal of religion is its essentialism, its failure to draw any distinction between positive and negative instances of religion. What about the historical formation of the International Red Cross, the American civil rights movement, or the U.S. sanctuary and neo-sanctuary movements? What about Jewish Voice for Peace? All have religious roots. Dismissing religion wholesale without distinction is like dismissing socialism tout court because of Stalin, Pol Pot, or the Shining Path. To be willing to live or die for something is not the problem. The problem, when there is one, is the nature of the cause that so calls us or the means employed to serve it.

Richard Dawkins is similarly off-base to accuse religious moderates of lending cover to harmful religious extremists (see Hallowell). Perhaps they do, but, again, something similar might be said of democratic socialists. Something similar might even be said of evolutionary biologists – that they lend cover to eugenicists and scientific racists. That a viewpoint can be deleteriously distorted or carried to a harmful extreme is not a valid argument against the undistorted or moderate version of the same. In philosophical argument, we are taught to extend the principle of charity, to attack not the weakest but the strongest version of a position. It is a standard of argument the "four horsemen" almost intentionally abuse.

It is instead the ambition of the "four horsemen" to equate religion with fundamentalism. Thus, in another "monster-barring" maneuver, they try to portray religious moderates as not even fully or consistently religious. Thus, Sam Harris:

Another problem with religious moderation is that it is not only intellectually bankrupt. It is theologically bankrupt. Because the fundamentalists have actually read the books. And they are right about them. These books are every bit as intolerant, every bit as divisive as the Osama bin Ladens of the world or the Jerry Fallwells of the world suggest . . . Once we dignify the claim that the Bible or the Koran conspicuously is a communication that is fundamentally different from any other book we are really hostage to their contents. I mean

. . . the creator of the universe really “does” hate homosexuals; if you read the Bible, at the very least homosexual men, gay sex, is an abomination (2017).

As a neuroscientist, Harris is evidently unfamiliar with hermeneutics – or at least pretending to be. Simply put, reverence for sacred texts is not exhausted by regarding them as inerrant dictations from God. In fact, many of us who revere those texts do not even regard them as the word of God but instead only as fallible, fumbling, culturally conditioned and historically evolving records of human encounter with God. To dismiss this more sophisticated understanding as intellectually and theologically impoverished is itself either an indication of intellectual impoverishment or, more likely, a cynical rhetorical maneuver. The mistake is to correlate religion with orthodoxy.

Dawkins, at least, advances one argument against religious moderates with which I can agree. He accuses even moderate religious people of privileging faith, which means, he says, “to believe something without evidence and without the need for justifying it,” that the faithful feel “entitled simply to say ‘oh that’s my faith, I believe it, you’re not allowed to question it and you’re not allowed to ask me why I hold it’” (cited in Hallowell).

I think it fair to say that a lot of even religiously moderate people interpret faith this way, and I join Dawkins in repudiating it. Belief without epistemic warrant – particularly belief in a doctrine – is actually not what the Bible means by faith. The Bible commends Abraham for his faith in God, and Jesus generally calls for faith in his healing power. In both cases, faith means trust and in both cases there is implicit epistemic warrant for that trust. Both God and Jesus are presumed to be perceptibly trustworthy. In neither case are we talking about warrantless faith in a doctrine like the infallibility of the pope or justification by faith.

So I join Dawkins in considering faith as ordinarily understood to be irrational. On the contrary, I think religious belief can be and, indeed should be, quite rational. This stance often takes non-believers by surprise. And in fact, their surprise often belies their own atheistic counter-faith.

At a recent conference, for example, a colleague asks me how I can reconcile being both religious and a critical realist. When I ask my friend what he thinks is the incompatibility, he rejoins with the usual, “Well, believing something without evidence.” He is quite surprised when I say I think there is evidence for my religious beliefs. Of course, my friend asks me to go on. I try to begin with the public evidence – i.e., the evidence distinct from private religious experience of which I will speak in the next section. I do not even try to introduce the great metaphysical question – Why is there something rather than nothing? – which even honest physicists (Geraint and Barnes) allow to be a perfectly legitimate question that science in principle cannot answer.

Instead of the question about something rather than nothing, I go straight to why this particular something. I ask my friend whether he is familiar with the so-called “anthropic coincidences of cosmology.” He is not. I explain how physicists themselves have discovered that if this is the only universe there is, it damn well looks like it was designed – “fine-tuned” is the term physicists use – to insure the emergence, not necessarily of humans but of intelligent life. As Freeman Dyson puts it, “The more I examine the universe and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known

we were coming.” Or Stephen Hawking: “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.”

With my friend, I cannot even get as far as Dyson or Hawking. I cannot even begin to speak of the ways – via, for example, the postulation of multiple other, unseen and un-seeable universes – through which physicists seek answers alternative to God. Instead, my friend just dismisses the question physicists themselves raise with a wave of his hand. He gives me the response I hear from many atheists. “That is just the way it is.”

That is just the way it is?! No need for explanation? That would be like saying the profusion of biological species is just the way it is. No need for Darwin to explain it. What is remarkable about that response is that even Hitchens credits fine-tuning as an issue.

At some point, certainly, we are all asked which is the best argument you come up against from the other side. I think every one of us picks the fine-tuning one as the most intriguing . . . that even though it doesn’t prove design, doesn’t prove a Designer, [the fine-tuning] could have all happened without [God] – You have to spend time thinking about it, working on it. It’s not a trivial [argument]. We all say that (2017).

Hitchens talks of proof, which is a standard typically raised in arguments about God but utterly inappropriate. Not even Darwinian natural selection has been *proven* – not in the mathematical sense that the Pythagorean Theorem has been proven, and even that only holds in Euclidean spaces.

Nothing empirical can be proven in a mathematical sense. All empirical claims, including the existence or non-existence of God can at most claim only a preponderance of evidence. At this stage of debate, a belief in an unseen, un-seeable God is every bit as rational as belief in multiple unseen, un-seeable universes.

As I conclude this section, there are three things I want to say about my friend’s response. First, my friend’s dismissal of the fine-tuning issue reflects his own faith in naturalist materialism. Presumably, there would likewise be no sense discussing with him the equally public evidence surrounding near-death experiences. My friend, like many staunch atheists, simply has faith that, contrary to Nagel’s recent statement, there is nothing to challenge naturalistic materialism, nothing requiring time spent in examination.

Second, I actually do not think my friend’s faith is irrational or epistemically unwarranted. I think rather that the publicly available evidence remains by itself inconclusive. But we do not have just the publicly available evidence. We also have the evidence of our own personal experience. Which brings us to a standpoint epistemology I have defended elsewhere (Archer et al.): If you experience some transcendental reality – or at least think you do, then you have good reason to see the public evidence as confirmation of that experience. If you have no such experience – or at least think you do not, then the public evidence is understandably insufficient to convince you of any such reality. Both positions are epistemically rational as long as adherents remain open to doubt and further evidence.

The third thing I want to say returns us directly to the question whether secularization matters. Life’s ultimate questions – Who are we? Why are we here? Where are we going? –

elude science, which directs itself to how things happen, that is to their mechanics, rather than why in the sense of the existential questions. Yet, however elusive to science, the existential questions are the perennial questions, the fundamental questions that have been asked by people everywhere throughout time. Thus, to dismiss them only because they are extra-scientific would be like refusing all carpentry work that requires something other than a saw.

As with my friend, however, life's ultimate questions seem to hold decidedly less interest for those who consider themselves without religious experience. If it is true what astronomer Allan Sandage was finally led to say, that "We can't understand the universe in any clear way without the supernatural" (Heeren), then it seems we will not move in that direction without motivation from religious experience. Sandage, whose work provided the first accurate measurements of the Hubble constant, himself arrived at his conclusion through late-life experience of God. It thus may be as Sandage suggests that without proper recognition and interpretation of religious experience, we also will be without proper understanding of ourselves. If so, it matters then that organized religion cannot atrophy without the atrophy along with it of proper recognition and interpretation of religious experience. That issue takes us to the next section of this paper.

The Meaning of Life, Religious Experience, and Secularization

According to Hans Kung, underlying the question of God is the more fundamental question of meaning, to which God is only one possible answer. Is our existence, objectively speaking, just a fortunate but ultimately pointless accident – or, actually, one improbable accident upon another? This question is again at issue as well in McPherson's paper.

Stephen J. Gould suggests that from a secular perspective, we are indeed the result of a chain of accidents. If, he says, we re-ran the story of evolution a zillion times, odds are we would not show up again. Alternately, if like all good scientists we reject the operation of chance alone when it yields an infinitesimal probability, we could conclude, as does Dyson, that the eventual appearance of intelligent life has been built into the universe, that, if not us, then at least something like us was meant to be here.

On this second view, the meaning of our existence is not just something we humans project onto the universe to get us through the day. It is not just that different cultures – or even humanity as a whole -- construct meaning *ex nihilo*. According to the second view, we and our existence are objectively part of some cosmic plan or purpose that we are meant to discover and fulfill.

So which view of our existence is correct? Is there some deep meaning or purpose to our existence or is it just some sort of fluke? In both my personal experience and in my scholarly research, I find that people react to this question of meaning in different ways that seem correlated with religiosity. I include here two tables from my prior research, which few scholars besides me have seemed motivated to undertake. From Table 1, it seems that few people *never* ask themselves about the meaning of life. The great majority think about the question at least sometimes. It is only, however, among those who identify as very religious that we see a large percentage saying they always think about the meaning of life.

Clearly, in one sense, one cannot be thinking about life's meaning literally always, like even while one is completing one's tax returns. Offering respondents the choice to answer

always was a way of enabling them to affirm the importance of life’s meaning, the way it can inform all that we do and thereby lend coherence to our lives as a whole. And clearly for a third of those who consider themselves very religious, life’s meaning does hold that importance.

Table 1. Religiosity and Reflection on the Meaning of Life*

How Often Respondents Think About Meaning of Life	How Religious Respondents Are:			
	Not Very	Somewhat	Very	Total
Rarely	15.3%	18.6%	13.2%	N = 46
Sometimes	76.3%	69.0%	52.9%	N = 178
Always	8.5%	12.4%	33.8%	N = 47
Total	100% N = 59	100% N = 123	100% N = 68	N = 271

$\chi^2 = 19.948$ $\alpha = .0005$

*For results of multiple regression analysis, controlling for demographic variables, see Porpora 2001: 327 n. 13.

Of course, even if there is such meaning, life’s purpose can have importance in our lives only if we can identify it. As Table 2 shows, almost half of the very religious think they can. And the very religious are pretty much the only ones.

In in-depth interviews (Porpora 2001), those somewhat religious tell me what Table 2 indicates in quantitative terms, that they do consider life’s meaning to be important but do not really know what it is. “Everything,” they frequently tell me, “happens for a reason.” As I say, that impression seems important to them. But when I ask what the reason is, they cannot say. The belief functions more as a comforting cipher.

For many who consider themselves somewhat religious, even God functions as a cipher. In America, self-identified atheists are still hard to come by, even on the coasts (Cox). That is why I said earlier that when it comes to secularization in America, more important than disbelief is emotional disconnection. Thus, one person I interviewed on the supposition that he was an atheist tells me he is not, that he believes in God.

“Oh,” I say. “You believe in God. Do you think God put us here for a purpose?”

“Well,” he says, “If he put us here, he must have had a purpose.”

When I ask what that purpose is, my respondent tells me, “I am not God, so I don’t know.” The respondent in other words believes in God but is so emotionally disconnected from God or from any tradition about God as to know little about God or God’s purpose for us. God instead functions as a placeholder for an absent meaning, that, even in its absence, retains importance.

Table 2. Religiosity and Attitude Toward Meaning of Life *

Respondents Attitudes Toward the Meaning of Life	How Religious Respondents Are			Total
	Not Very	Somewhat	Very	
No Meaning or other attitude	27.2%	8.5%	10.5%	73
Don't know meaning	33.0%	27.4%	11.8%	161
Some sense of life's purpose	33.0%	46.2%	36.8%	242
Know the purpose of life	6.6%	14.2%	40.7%	117
Total	100% N=152	100% N=281	100% N=121	N=593

$\chi^2 = 84.8$ $\alpha < .001$

*For results of multiple regression analysis, controlling for demographic variables, see Porpora 2001: 327 n. 14.

What in Table 2 makes the non-religious distinct is the uniquely high percentage of them, almost a third, who, like my conference friend, are quite content to say that objectively speaking, life has no meaning. Nor is the meaning of life anything that greatly interests them. For people like me, who counts himself among the very religious, such attitude is neigh unfathomable. How can one not ask about life's meaning?

Although very religious, I am not among those who think they know the meaning of life. I certainly do not believe it is to get into heaven. As a sociologist, my presumption is that we are meant to do something here together, something along the lines of Hegel's material realization of the absolute spirit or the Judeo-Christian reign of God, both in my mind amounting to the achievement of good and just sociality.

In any case, what accounts for this fundamental difference between people like my conference friend who seem quite uninterested in any objective meaning of life, who are quite content to disbelieve there is anything such and people like me for whom the question is ever present? Presumably, there is more than one factor, among them, judging from myself, a degree of obsessiveness. But the quantitative data of my tables also suggest that religiosity plays a role.

From my qualitative, interview data, I also think that the religious difference is more a matter of emotion than belief. It is less that the very religious believe something fundamentally different from those not so religious but that they are more engaged by it emotionally. It is not that Americans, at least, are coming to believe less in God than they care less.

And I think that the emotional difference originates in religious experience. The very religious, in some way or ways, experience – or think they do – a transcendental reality that calls for response from the whole of their lives. In their worldviews and practices, religions, I think, are like epistemic communities that foster and interpret such experiences of transcendence (see Joas for a similar perspective).

Thus, if religions atrophy, so will recognition and interpretation of such experiences of transcendence. With that atrophy, what also atrophies as a result is any emotional engagement with larger or higher meaning that can lift us beyond the instrumentalist orientation of modernity on which the Frankfurt School focused so much critique (Jay).

The Privatization of Religion and Morality

Is religion being privatized? Casanova (2006) and Riesebrodt both respond yes and no, and I think that assessment is correct. Again, in relation to this question, I think we need to take the political spectrum into account. Certainly, the religious right has forcibly intruded itself within the public sphere, championing, among other things, opposition to abortion and gay marriage. Abortion and marriage, however, are issues that arguably belong to private life, which is where many liberals believe they should be confined. On larger public issues relating to peace and justice, the conservative religious base is largely silent.

There is a militant religious left – I consider myself a part of it – that does stand for peace and justice issues, but it encompasses only a very small portion of the American public. Only 12% of us over 66 years of age fit that category (Merritt). It may be that youth will expand our numbers, but that remains to be seen.

For the most part, the liberal Christianity that encompasses some 40% of Americans is more liberal about where it believes religion belongs, that is, exclusively within the private sphere. Very telling is the motto of the *National Religious Campaign Against Torture* (NRCAT). The motto is that “torture is a moral issue.” What is remarkable about this motto is what it does not say. It does not say that torture is immoral, although NRCAT clearly believes so. But for something to be immoral, it must first be moralized, that is placed within the moral category for judgment on moral grounds. The point of the NRCAT motto is that for much of the American public, whether torture is a moral matter is not so certain.

How can torture not be a moral issue? It is not a moral issue if, like religion, morality too becomes privatized. In fact, such privatization of morality seems one accompaniment of a privatization of religion. Morality becomes a micro-moral matter, confined to interpersonal relations at the level of friends and family.

In such a case, individuals feel disconnected from and hence not responsible for matters of macro-morality. It is a condition I have called the *macro-moral disconnect* (Porpora et al.). It expresses itself not just at the individual level but also at the level of discourse in the public sphere. There, the macro-moral disconnect takes the form of a public refusal to debate macro-moral matters in moral terms, either by deemphasizing moral aspects or reframing moral issues as matters of national prudence.

In addition to debate over the 2003 attack on Iraq, some collaborators and I studied the macro-moral disconnect in relation to torture as that issue surfaced after the revelations from Abu Ghraib. We specifically examined the debate about torture in the opinion pieces of American newspapers and magazines. What we found was a dramatic difference in discussion between the major secular outlets like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and even the *Christian Science Monitor* and the religious outlets like *Commentary* and *Christianity Today* on the right and *Tikkun*, *Commonweal*, and *The Christian Century* on the left.

The secular press did register moral outrage over the abuse of prisoners. There was mention of American values and international law, but in the secular press, these were seldom the main focus of either newspaper editorials or op-ed pieces. More often than not, the problem of torture was reframed in prudential terms as a practice threatening America's moral authority; encouraging the torture of our own captured soldiers; or delivering a gratuitous propaganda victory to the other side. Sometimes the moral question was completely evaded by a focus on whether torture works.

Totally absent from the secular press was any discussion of what, like water-boarding, constitutes torture and what does not. Nor was there any attention to the so-called "ticking bomb" scenario. In that scenario, frequent at the time on the American television show, *Twenty-four*, a terrorist has planted a bomb ticking away in some city but is in our custody. To find out where the bomb is and thus save thousands of lives, is it appropriate to torture him or her?

Now one immediate reaction is to question why the secular press should carry such a discussion. That very reaction serves only to prove the point. Why would the secular press not explore the morality of a collective matter that clearly is moral in nature? Without such discussion, some 60% of Americans were left to conclude on moral utilitarian grounds that in such circumstances, torture was sometimes or often justified (Associated Press). Only 25% thought it never so.

What made the religious press – both left and right -- different was not that it discussed the matter in particularly religious terms. Generally, it did not. What distinguished the religious press is that it discussed the matter at all – and not just at all but extensively and sophisticatedly. An extract from the *Christian Century* provides some measure of that sophistication.

So is it permissible to do such harm on the way to doing good? Suddenly we are back in sophomore ethics class. Those in the "deontological" or absolute-command tradition of ethics, from Augustine to Kant, would say that it is never permissible to do evil in pursuit of some greater good. Those in the consequentialist or utilitarian camp would approve of doing some amount of evil for the sake of a greater good . . . But the weighing of those two alternatives is perhaps not the best way to approach ethics or policy.

Although the diction above is certainly sophisticated philosophically, it is not at all distinctly religious. Even in such non-religious terms, the religious press managed to counter effectively the moral utilitarian argument for torture. The utilitarian argument weighs the torture of one against the lives of thousands. In those terms, the decision seems a no-brainer. But the religious press goes on to ask whether, following that same calculus, it would be appropriate as well to torture the terrorist's innocent children and maybe even next-door neighbors? If it is just a matter of numbers and aggregate well-being, then clearly we should torture the terrorists' children as a pure utilitarian calculation would commend. Yet when it comes to torturing innocent children, then like Dostoyevsky's Ivan in *The Brothers Karamosov*, most people balk, even those who initially supported the moral utilitarian argument.

The question though is why such a moral discussion in the public sphere should be reserved for a religious audience. The pattern suggests that part of what attends secularization is a privatization not just of religion but also of morality. And that consequence is troubling.

It is important to note here that the privatization of morality pertains in the first place to the religious themselves, whose own religious sense has itself been privatized. In fact, those renouncing religion entirely were actually less supportive of torture than practicing Catholics and Evangelicals (Pew 2009). Again, there are no laws and always counteracting effects. And what we are speaking of here is not just individual behavior but public discourse. What is disturbing is how absent moral examination is from secular discussion in the opinion pages of the secular press. If nothing else, the contrasting discussion in the religious press demonstrates what could be present but is not. Can we as a nation behave morally if we do not discuss macro-moral matters in moral terms? That macro-moral discussion of macro-moral matters already seems confined to sophisticated religious circles is another disturbing accompaniment of secularization.

Moral Grounding

I have been informed that some people interpret my previous work as suggesting that one need be religious to be moral. Possibly I somewhere provocatively made a query to that effect after reviewing the kind of data I just described in the previous section. In truth, I believe no such thing. In fact, I realize that non-religious people are frequently more moral than we who are religious. As I indicated above, that is frequently so when it comes to torture and other macro-moral matters.

What I do believe and have previously written is that without religion or something like it, our morals are left philosophically groundless. By groundless I mean without foundational warrant. Why should we be moral or adhere to our particular standards of morality? It cannot be because they just happen to be the standards of our own society. Morality is supposed to originate in something higher, from which perspective even our own society and its standards can come under critical judgment. Our societal customs may condone slavery or sexism or whatever without any of those custom's being moral.

I do find that however moral or even morally superior they may be, non-religious people very often cannot grasp what I am saying about foundations. As one atheistic student tells me with exasperation, morality – what is right or wrong, good or bad – is all just common sense. One of the most moral people I know, a former communist and continued political activist, asks me what I mean by foundations. Do I, he asks, want something from the sky?

Well, yes, I do want something from the sky – or from the ground. In the same way as we saw in a previous section that the non-religious frequently experience no need for any ultimate or objective meaning to our existence, they seem as frequently without professed need for metaphysical grounding of the morality they so well exemplify. That need for grounding can seem rather a peculiarity of those Eliade called *homo religiosi*.

But actually, I do not think the need for foundations is just an inexplicable peculiarity of *homo religiosus*. Even Dawkins sees the need for some kind of moral grounding. He finds it in evolution. He quite sensibly says that as social animals, we have evolved to be altruistic and

moral. That sounds right, and there thus is, as my student avers, some kind of universal common sense to morality.

The problem is that how we happened to have evolved does not on its own confer any moral significance. Often quite the contrary. Thus, evolutionary psychologists also tell us that human males evolved to be promiscuous and that we all evolved to disfavor out-groups. If true, these are evolutionary tendencies a higher morality enjoins us to resist. From whence proceeds that higher morality?

Dawkins is correct in my opinion to complain of many religious people that on their account, the only reason to be good is to gain God's approval and to avoid his punishment. "That's not morality," retorts Dawkins, "that's just sucking up, apple-polishing, looking over your shoulder at the great surveillance camera in the sky" (259). I quite agree. But however much philosophers of ethics focus on it, *divine command theory* is not the only or, I would argue, the most apt way in which religion grounds ethics.

To see how religious grounding might otherwise ground ethics, consider the issue with human rights. Political theorist Jack Donnelly says that human rights rest on a social decision to act as if they exist. Certainly, at this point in time, the world is acting as if human rights exist. We observe now, worldwide, a full-fledged human rights culture or even what some have called a regime (Rabossi; Dunn and Wheeler).

But are human rights a fact or simply a reification? Within secular liberal discourse, there is much contentment to leave them the latter. For some, like Michael Ignatieff, ignoring the question of foundations is a pragmatic decision. It is enough for Ignatieff that we agree on what is right or good; no need to reach agreement on why we agree. For others, like Eduardo Rabossi or Richard Rorty, the search for foundations is positively misconceived. Even someone as sympathetic to moral foundations as Bikhu Parekh is prepared to concede that rights "have no objective basis" (cited by Dunne and Wheeler: 11)

But at its origin, human rights talk did have an objective basis, a metaphysical basis. It was religious. Thus, as Thomas Jefferson writes in the *American Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men were created equal, that they were endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable Rights." Clearly, with references to creation and a Creator, Jefferson's warrant for rights is religious. Of course, it is precisely part of secularization that the putative religious truths Jefferson premises are now no longer self-evident. The point though is that Jefferson's religious argument grounding rights is cosmogonic in form. Jefferson grounds human rights ontologically in who we are in the cosmos: The equal creations of God, who specifically endowed us with those rights.

Rights are a moral category. They are moral claims on others that we are entitled to make and all are morally obliged to respect. Putatively grounded in the cosmos itself, rights are more fundamental than the observances of any particular society, and societies that fail to observe them are accordingly criticized for that failure. Hence the more secular term, natural law, which is itself grounded ultimately in, if not religion, some metaphysical view like that of the Stoics.

Despite what religious people may tell Dawkins, Jefferson's religious, cosmogonic argument for rights is independent of divine commandments and surveillance. Indeed, Jefferson was a deist who believed that after resting from creation, God lost all further interest

in us. Jefferson's invocation of God is instead a way of establishing cosmological meaning or significance. Tracing rights to our divine origin endows rights with a significance not forthcoming from an analogous, secular observation that we have all descended from the same small band of African primates. As a purely secular fact, our familial tie remains something contingent, not endowed with any cosmic significance.

To endow something like rights with cosmic significance requires the elevated language of mythology. Significance-endowment is precisely what mythology accomplishes. Although in popular parlance, a myth is something false, it does not necessarily mean that in the study of religion. Instead, myth is concerned with what a society considers "existentially true," whether or not it is historically true. Of course, there is no reason why myth may not also be historically true. The opening passages of Genesis are myth, but the whole may still in some sense be historically true – the larger truth, that is, if not the details, that the big bang or what came before originated with God.

The point here is that as exemplified in the *American Declaration of Independence*, rights historically were metaphysically grounded by religion or some alternate metaphysical view. Take away the religion or metaphysics and fail to replace it, the whole notion of rights is left metaphysically ungrounded. Does that matter? I think so, but it may be because I am among those Eliade categorizes as *homo religiosi*.

Does Any of this Matter?

My point in this paper has been that secularization matters, and that it matters in ways that are not all good. Yes, if we imagine no religion, we imagine ourselves rid of at least one thing that divides us. And that is good. But there are also, I argued, some results that seem – at least to me – not so good. In the first place, religion is just what we arrive at when we ask ourselves about the cosmic significance of our existence. To say that our significance is whatever we individually or collectively choose to make of it is not a proper answer. It is first of all like saying that the meaning of a gun or a volcano is whatever we choose to make of it. To say so of these things is to say they have no meaning apart from that with which we choose to endow them. We may then be very surprised when the gun goes off in our hands or the volcano erupts. The best meanings we choose to give things match what those things intrinsically are. What we intrinsically are is evaded by this secular answer.

The secular answer appears a way of just shutting down the question, of denying its legitimacy. Is the question illegitimate? It does not seem so to me. Nor to peoples everywhere throughout time who all seem to have asked the question and in doing so provided religious answers. Why the question seems perennial at least needs to be asked. Is the human need for meaning itself just some meaningless biological craving? It could be, but I do not think so.

And of course, implicit in the secular answer is that ontologically, from a cosmological point of view, human existence is meaningless. If so, we could assign whatever meaning to our existence we choose, but the clear-eyed answer is the one some of the existentialists gave: Objectively, our existence is meaningless, an accident that we should just make of as we will. I would have more respect for the original secular answer if it just came out and made this existentialist claim.

Although the existentialist claim may be true, I have trouble believing it. Why is there something rather than nothing? And why this something that so fortunately made our own emergence possible? However beyond the methods of science the answers may be, to me, the answers seem important. If there is a cosmic meaning to our existence, then there is something we are supposed to be about here, in which case, part of the meaning of our existence must be to realize it. If it is only *homo religiosi* who retain the need for that answer, then they cannot pass away without our missing some human vocation.

I have also made the argument that in the end ethics are not grounded in abstract reason. Not even Kant so grounded ethics. Even Kant's categorical imperative was grounded in cosmic regard for the voluntary will exemplified by human beings. Even for Kant, therefore, ethics were grounded cosmogonically in who or what we are. And Kant, as Nietzsche observed, was offering a secularized version of Christianity.

Without religion or a religion substitute, I also argued, morality is ungrounded. That, too, I think matters, especially as our moral sensibilities differ. Part of moral action is moral debate, and, as a realist, I would maintain that for there to be proper debate, there must be something ontologically objective to debate about. It is likely that such debate would surface even in the absence of *homo religiosi*, but then, I think, when it does, the debate would then push toward reinventing the *homo religiosi* who had disappeared.

I am struck finally from my own data on torture and the Iraq war that moral inquiry on these matters is confined so rigorously to religious outlets. Again, I do not think one need be religious to be moral, but I do wonder whether a society that privatizes religion privatizes morality as well. And that I think is troubling.

Bibliography

Archer, Margaret, Andrew Collier, and Douglas Porpora

2004 *Transcendence: Critical Realism and God*. New York: Routledge

Associated Press

2011 AP-Gfk Poll, May, 2011. Retrieved Jun-27-2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu>.

Beckford, James

2012 "SSSR Presidential Address Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, 1: 1-19.

Berger, Peter

1999 "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview." Pp. 1-18 in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Edited by D. Weigel, D. Martin, J. Sacks, G. Davie, and T. Weiming. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Bhaskar, Roy

2008 *A Realist Theory of Science*. New York: Routledge.

- Cartwright, Nancy
1983 *How the Laws of Physics Lie*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Casanova J.
1994 *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2006 "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective." *Hedgehog Review* 8: 7-22.
- Christian Century* Editors
2006 "Tortured." *Christian Century* (January 24): 5.
- Connolly, William
1999 *Why I Am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cox, Daniel
2017 "Way More Americans May Be Atheists Than We Thought." *FiveThirtyEight* (May 18). <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/way-more-americans-may-be-atheists-than-we-thought>.
- Davie Grace
1994 *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dawkins Richard
2006 *The God Delusion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Dennett Daniel
2006 *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Allen Lane.
- Donnelly, Jack
2002 *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Dunne, Tim, and Nicholas Wheeler
1999 *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dyson, Freeman
2017 "Energy in the Universe." Available online at <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/Nave-html/Faithpathh/dyson.html>.
- Edgell, Penny
2012 "A Cultural Sociology of Religion: New Directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 247-65.
- Eliade, Mircea
1987 *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Geraint, F. Lewis, and Luke A. Barnes
2016 *A Fortunate Universe: Life in a Finely Tuned Cosmos*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gorski, Philip

- 2003 "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: An Agenda for Research." Pp. 110-22 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Edited by Michee Dillon. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 2004 "The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation" *Sociological Methodology* 34, 1: 1-33.

Gorski, Philip, and Ates Altinordu

- 2008 "After Secularization?" *The Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 55-85.

Gorski, Philip, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen

- 2012 *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*. New York: New York University.

Gould, Stephen J.

- 1992 *Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections on Natural History*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Habermas Jurgen

- 2008 "Notes on a Post-Secular Society." *Sign and Sight* (June 18). <http://print.signandsight.com/features/1714.html>.

Hallowell, Billy

- 2014 "Atheist Richard Dawkins' Controversial Claim About How 'Moderate Religious People' Might Be Empowering Religious Extremists." *The Blaze* (August 15). Available online at <http://www.theblaze.com/news/2014/08/15/atheist-richard-dawkins-controversial-claim-about-what-nice-christians-and-nice-muslims-are-doing-for-religious-extremists>.

Harris Sam

- 2004 *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- 2017 "Sam Harris, Brief Speech of the Ideas Expressed in His Book, 'The End of Faith.'" *The Venus Project Foundation*. Available online at <http://venusproject.org/reason/end-of-faith.html>.

Hawking, Stephen

- 2017 "A Brief History of Time." Available online at <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/Nave-html/Faithpathh/hawking.html>.

Heeren, Fed

- 2002 "Home Alone in the Universe?" *First Things* (March). Available online at <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2002/03/home-alone-in-the-universe-36>.

Hitchens, Christopher

- 2007 *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve.

- 2009 "The Hitchens Transcript" *The Monthly Portland* (December 17).. Available online at <https://www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2009/12/17/christopher-hitchens>.
- 2017 "Christopher Hitchens Makes a Startling Admission." *The Truth Will Make You Mad*. Available online at <https://thetruthwillmakeyoumad.wordpress.com/2012/06/09/151>.
- Ignatieff, Michael
- 2003 "Human Rights Idolatry." Pp. 53-100 in *Human Rights as Politics and Identity*. Edited by Michael Ignatieff and Amy Gutman. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jay, Martin
- 1996 *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Joas, Hans
- 2008 *Do We Need Religion? On the Experience of Self-Transcendence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Kung, Hans
- 1980 *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*. New York: Doubleday.
- Lewis, Greeraint, and Luke Barnes
- 2016 *A Fortunate Universe: Life in a Finely Tuned Cosmos*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Merritt, Jonathan
- 2013 "The Rise of the Christian Left in America" *The Atlantic* (July 25). Available online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/07/the-rise-of-the-christian-left-in-america/278086>.
- Mumford, Stephen
- 2008 "Powers, Dispositions, Properties or a Causal Manifesto." Pp. 139-151 in *Revitalizing Causality*. Edited by Ruth Groff. New York: Routledge.
- Nagel, Thomas
- 2012 *Mind & Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pew Research Center
- 2009 "The Religious Dimensions of the Torture Debate." *Pew Forum* (April 29). Available online at <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/04/29/the-religious-dimensions-of-the-torture-debate>.
- 2016 "How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis." *Pew Research Center* (November 9). Available online at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis>.

Porpora, Douglas V.

- 2001 *Landscapes of the Soul: The Loss of Moral Meaning in American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 2015 *Reconstructing Sociology: The Critical Realist Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Porpora, Douglas V., Alexander Nikolaev, Julia Hagemann, and Alexander Jenkens

- 2013 *Post-Ethical Society: The Iraq War, Abu Ghraib, and the Moral Failure of the Secular*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rabossi, Eduardo

- 1990 "La Theoria de la Derechos Humanos Naturalizado." *Revista del Centro del Estudios Constitucionales* 5: 159-75.

Riesebrodt, Martin

- 2014 "Religion in the Modern World: Between Secularization and Resurgence." *Max Weber Programme*. Available online at http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/29698/MWP_LS_2014_01_Riesebrodt.pdf.

Rorty, Richard

- 1993 "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality." In *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Christian, editor

- 2003 *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stark Rodney

- 1999 "Secularization RIP." *Sociology of Religion* 60: 249-73.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke

- 2000 *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stetzer, Ed

- 2017 "If it doesn't stem its decline, mainline Protestantism has just 23 Easters Left." *Washington Post*. Available online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/04/28/if-it-doesnt-stem-its-decline-mainline-protestantism-has-just-23-easters-left/?utm_term=.4293c4dfff31.

Taylor, Charles

- 2007 *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Belknap.

Voas, David, and Mark Chaves

- 2016 "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis?" *American Journal of Sociology* 21, 5: 1517-56.