Secularism or Democracy?
Or: Why I am not a Secularist

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1. Secularism: a contested meta-narrative

- A family of concepts: secular, secularity, secularism, secularization
- ‘Secularism’, together with ‘strict separation’ and ‘neutrality’ are quasi-sacred second-order principles, defended by most liberals, republicans, feminists, socialists in politics and in political theory
- Three different perspectives: of religions, of social sciences, of liberal-democratic politics and political theory
2. Societal Secularization

- ‘Decline’ of religious beliefs and practices?
- ‘Religious Change’: Individualization, Subjectivization, Privatization?
- Differentiation or Strict Separation of State/Politics and Religion?
- ‘Two autonomies’ of state from religions, of religions from the state
3. Perspective of Normative Political Theory

- A morally defensible state has to be a relationally neutral state, neither a ‘secular’ nor a ‘religious state’ (‘liberal’ and/or ‘democratic’ ≠ secular)
- Institutional and political ‘priority of liberal democracy’: political theory can be sociologically agnostic. (i) Whether ‘European’ societies further ‘secularize’ (sociologically speaking) or, more probably, don’t, or whether highly religious societies (e.g. the US) don’t, is normatively irrelevant. (ii) If religions would lack or loose the capacity to organize or raise their voices in public (’individualize’, ‘privatize’), so be it.
4. Contextualizing Secularism

- **First: Historical contextualization**
  
  (a) In the 16th and 17th Century against absolutist/totalistic religions: emerging absolutist ‘secular state’ ≠ liberal, let alone democratic state. Domestication of ‘sovereignty’ by rule of law, separation of powers and basic rights against the state.

  (b) In the 19th and 20th Century against ‘secular’ states/politics (racist, nationalist, fascist and totalitarian ‘socialist’ regimes and ideologies).

  (c) Against recent religious fundamentalism in politics.
Second: Structural Contextualization
(a) Against old and new absolutist/totalist religions
(b) Against secularist totalitarian politics/ regimes and ideologies
(c) Against radical, aggressive secularist ‘Enlightenment’ philosophers
(d) Against expertocracy (scientism, professionalism, bureaucratism), inherent in ‘modern’ societies
• Third: Strategic contextualization

(a) Predominant knowledge-regimes in U.S. and Western Europe
(b) In (post-)imperialist and (post-) colonialist contexts (e.g. ‘post-islamism’)
(c) In established ‘Western’ liberal-democracies
(d) In France, in Turkey
5. Justifying a minimally decent or a minimally liberal-democratic state

(1) First-Order Justifications

(a) Ethical Secularism?
(b) Political or Second-Order Secularism?
(c) Minimal Morality
(d) Minimal Liberal-Democratic Morality
(2) Second-Order Justifications

(a) A secular, independent political Ethics?
(b) A common ground strategy?
(c) An overlapping consensus?
(d) Moderately agonistic democracy
6. Priority for Liberal Democracy

• Freedoms of Political Communication vs. exclusivist secularism and Rawlsian ‘reason-restrains’

• Anti-Paternalist Decision Making
Conclusion

Three main reasons why I am not a Secularist and why this is important not only conceptually and theoretically but practically.

The ‘power of words’ and ‘politics of symbolic action.’