SECULARISM:
ITS CONTENT AND CONTEXT

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Abstract

This paper addresses two sets of questions. First, questions about the meaning of secularism and second questions about its justification and implementation. It is argued that Charles Taylor's recent efforts to redefine secularism for a time when we have gone 'beyond toleration' to multiculturalism in liberal politics, are based on plausible (and laudable) political considerations that affect the question of justification and implementation, but leave unaffected the question of the meaning and content of secularism. An alternative conceptualization of secularism is offered, from the one he proposes, while also addressing his deep and understandable concerns about the politics of secularism for our time. In the characterization of secularism offered, it turns out that secularism has its point and meaning, not in some decontextualized philosophical argument, but only in contexts that owe to specific historical trajectories, with specific political goals to be met.

1.

I begin with three fundamental features of the idea of 'secularism.' I will want to make something of them at different stages of the passage of my argument in this paper for the conclusion—among others—that the relevance of secularism is contextual in very specific ways.[1]

If secularism has its relevance only in context, then it is natural and right to think that it will appear in different forms and guises in different contexts. But I write down these opening features of secularism at the outset because they seem to me to be invariant among the different forms that secularism may take in different contexts. It is hard to imagine that one hasn't changed the subject from secularism to something else, something that deserves another name, if one finds oneself denying any of the features that I initially list below. Though I say this is 'hard to imagine,' I don't mean to deny that there is a strong element of stipulation in these initial assertions to come. I can't pretend that these are claims or theses about some independently identified subject matter—as if we all know perfectly well what we are talking about when we speak of secularism—and the question is only about what is true of that agreed upon concept or topic. The point is rather to *fix* the concept or topic. But, on the other hand, such talk of 'fixing' should not give the impression that it is a matter of free choice, either. Once the initial terminological points about 'secularism' are made, the goal of the rest of the paper will be to show why they are *not arbitrary* stipulations. So the reader is urged to be unreactive about these initial topic-setting assertions until the dialectic of the paper is played out.

First, secularism is *a stance to be taken about religion.* At the level of generality with which I have just described this, it does not say anything very specific or precise. The imprecision and generality have two sources. One obvious source is that religion, regarding which it is supposed to take a stance, is itself, notoriously, not a very precise or specifically understood phenomenon. But to the extent that we have a notion of religion in currency— however imprecisely elaborated—'secularism' will have a parasitic meaning partially elaborated as a stance regarding whatever that notion stands for. Should we decide that there is no viability in any notion of religion, and should the notion pass out of conceptual currency, secularism too would lapse as a notion with a point and rationale. The other source of imprecision is that I have said nothing specific or precise about *what sort* of stance secularism takes towards religion. One may think that it has to be in some sense an adversarial stance since surely secularism, in some sense, defines itself against religion. This is true enough, but still the very fact that I find the need to keep using the qualifier 'in some sense' makes clear that nothing much has been said about the kind of opposing stance this amounts to. Part of the point of this essay is to add a little precision to just this question.

Second, for all this generality just noted, 'secularism'—unlike 'secular' and 'secularization'—is quite specific in another regard. It is the name of a *political* doctrine. As a name, it may not always have had this restriction, but that seems to be its predominant

current usage. So, to the extent that it takes a stance vis-à-vis religion, it does so only in the realm of the *polity*. It is not meant—as the terms 'secular' and 'secularization' are—to mark highly general and dispersed social and intellectual and cultural phenomena and processes. Unlike the term 'secularization,' it is not so capacious as to include a stance against religion that requires redirection of either personal belief or, for that matter, any of a range of personal and cultural habits of dress or diet or... Thus it is not a stance against religion of the sort that atheists and agnostics might wish to take or a stance that strikes attitudes (to say nothing of policies) about the hijab. The increase in a society of loss of personal belief in God or the decrease in church- or synagogue- or mosque-going or the surrender of traditional religious habits of dress or prohibitions against pork, may all be signs of increasing 'secular*ization*' but they are irrelevant to the idea of secular*ism*. The reason for this is rather straightforward and obvious. It should be possible to think that a devout Muslim or Christian or Hindu can be committed to keeping some aspects of the reach of his religion out of the polity, without altogether giving up on being a Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. And it seems natural today to express that thought by saying that such a person, for all his devoutness, is committed to secularism. And one can say this while noticing and saying something that it is also natural to think and say: such a devout person, in being devout, is holding out against the tendencies unleashed by the long social and ideational processes of secular*ization*. And we can appreciate the naturalness of this restriction of the term 'secularism' to the polity when we observe that the slogan 'separation of church and state' (which, whatever we think of it, is part of what is conveyed to many by the ordinary usage of the term 'secularism') *allows* one the church, even as it separates it from the *state*, or, more generally, from the polity. If we did not believe that the term was to be restricted in this way, we would either have to collapse secularism with secularization or—if we insisted on some more subtle difference between those two terms—we would have to invent another term altogether (a term that has no cognate relation to this family of terms—secular, secularization, secularism) to capture the aspiration of a polity to seek relative independence from a society's religiosity. I believe that any such neologizing would be a stipulative act of far greater strain and artificiality than reserving one of these terms ('secularism') for this aspiration since, as I said, it is anyway implied by the slogans that accompany the term. What then of the contrast of 'secularism' with 'secular'? Unlike the latter term which is often said to refer innocuously and indiscriminately to all things that are 'worldly' in the sense of being *outside* the reach of religious institutions and concerns (outside the cloister, in the mundiality of the world at large, as it were), 'secular*ism*' aspires to be more concentrated in its concern—to not merely *refer* to anything that is outside of that reach, but to focus on something specific (the polity) and attempt to *keep* it or *steer* it outside of some specified aspects of that reach.

Third, secularism, as a stance regarding religion that is restricted to the polity, is not a good in itself. It seeks what is conceived, by those who favour it, to promote certain other moral and political goods, and these are goods that are intended to counter what are conceived as harms, actual or potential. This third feature may be considered too controversial to be regarded as a defining feature, but its point becomes more plausible when we contrast secularism with a more cognitive (rather than political) stance regarding religion, such as atheism. For atheists, the truth of atheism is sufficient to motivate one to adhere to it and the truth of atheism is not grounded in the claim that it promotes a moral or political good or the claim that it is supported by other moral or political values we have. By contrast, secularists, to the extent that they claim 'truth' for secularism, claim it on grounds that appeal to other values that support the ideal of secularism or other goods that are promoted by it. Secularism as a political doctrine arose to repair what were perceived as damages that flowed from historical harms that were, in turn, perceived as owing, in some broad sense, to religion. Thus, for instance, when it is said that secularism had as its vast cradle the prolonged and internecine religious conflicts in Europe of some centuries ago,

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something like this normative force of serving goods and correcting harms is detectably implied. But if all this is right, then it follows that one would have to equally grant that, should there be contexts in which those goods were not seen necessarily to be goods, or to the extent that those goods were being well served by political arrangements that were not secularist, or to the extent that there were no existing harms, actual or potential, that secularism would be correcting, then one could take the opposing normative stance and fail to see the point and rationale for secularism.

2.

I want to now turn from features that *define* or characterize secularism to features of its *justification and basis of adoption.*

In a paper written in the days immediately following the fatwa pronounced against Salman Rushdie, called "What is a Muslim?,"[2] I had argued that secularism had no justification that did not appeal to substantive values, that is to say, values that some may hold and others may not. It was not justifiable on purely rational grounds that anyone (capable of rationality) would find convincing, no matter what substantive values they held. I had invoked the notion, coined by Bernard Williams as 'internal reasons,' to describe these kinds of grounds on which its justification is given.[3] Internal reasons are reasons that rely on specific motives and values and commitments in the moral psychologies of individuals (or groups, if one takes the view that groups have moral-psychological economies). Internal reasons are contrasted with 'external reasons,' which are reasons that someone is supposed to have quite independent of his or her substantive values and commitments, that is, independent of elements in the psychologies that motivate people. Bernard Williams, recapitulating Humean arguments against Kantian forms of externalist rationality and the universalism that might be expected to emerge from it, had claimed that there are no such things as 'external reasons.' Whether that general claim is true or not, my more specific claim had been that there are no external reasons that would establish the truth of secularism. If secularism were to carry conviction, it would have to be on grounds that persuaded people by appealing to the specific and substantive values that figured in their specific moral psychological economies.[4] Such a view might cause alarm in those who would wish for secularism a more universal basis. Internal reasons, by their nature, do not provide such a basis. As, I said, internal reasons for some conclusion that will persuade some people, may not persuade others of that conclusion, since those others may not hold the particular substantive values to which those reasons appeal and on which those reasons depend. Only external reasons could persuade everyone since all they require is a minimal rationality possessed by all (undamaged, adult) human minds and make no appeal to substantive values

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[2] Akeel Bilgrami, "What is a Muslim? Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (Summer, 1992): 821-842. See also Akeel Bilgrami, "Rushdie and the Reform of Islam," *Grand Street* 8, no. 4 (Spring, 1989): 170-184.

[3] On analysis, this general distinction in Williams does a lot of different work and marks more than one specific distinction. In this essay, I am exploiting just one of the specific distinctions that is marked. See Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons," in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For an analysis of the different things going on in the distinction, see the appendix to my book *Self-Knowledge and Resentment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[4] I am passing from talk of 'truth' of a doctrine to whether there are reasons for believing it that carry conviction. This is not a slip. See footnote 13 for more on this.

that may be variably held by human minds and psychologies. Alarming thought it might seem to some, there is no help for this. There are no more secure universal grounds on which one can base one's argument for secularism.

Charles Taylor has convincingly argued that in a religiously plural society, secularism should be adopted on the basis of what Rawls called an 'overlapping consensus.'[5] An overlapping consensus, in Rawls's understanding of that term, is a consensus on some policy that is arrived at by people with very different moral and religious and political commitments, who sign on to the policy from within their differing points of view, and therefore on possibly very different grounds from each other. It contrasts with the idea that when one converges on a policy one must all do so for the *same* reason.

What is the relation between the idea that secularism should be adopted on the basis of an overlapping consensus and the idea presented in the earlier paragraph about internal reasons being the only reasons available in justifying secularism? A very close one. The latter idea yields (it lies behind) the former. The relation is this. Internal reasons, unlike external reasons, may vary from person to person, group to group. This may give the impression that there simply cannot be a consensus if we were restricted to the resources of internal reasons. But that does not follow. Or at any rate, it only follows if we assume that a consensus requires that all sign onto something (some policy or political position, such as secularism) on the same grounds or for the same reason. In other words, on the basis of an external reason or reasons. But such an assumption is a theoretical tyranny. Without that assumption, one could say this. *If* there is to be a consensus on some political outcome on the basis, not of external but of internal reasons, it will presumably *only* be because different persons or groups subscribe to the policy on their own, different, grounds. This just is the idea of an *overlapping* consensus. If there were external reasons for a policy, one could get a consensus on it of a stronger kind and would not need to hold out hope for a *merely* 'overlapping' consensus.

Perhaps all this is obvious. However, for reasons having to do with Rawls scholarship, I have been a little wary of this use of the notion of overlapping consensus since in Rawls it has always been a notion embedded in the framework of his celebrated idea of the 'original position,' i.e., the idea that one contract into policies to live by without knowledge of one's substantive position in society. I find myself completely baffled by why the idea of the original position is not made entirely redundant by the notion of an overlapping consensus. If one did not know what one's substantive position in society is, one presumably does not know what one's substantive values are. If so, the very idea of internal reasons can have no play in the original position. It follows that if one were to adopt an overlapping consensus on the basis of divergent internal reasons that contractors may have for signing onto a policy, then the original position becomes altogether irrelevant to the contractual scenario. Of course, if one were to completely divorce the idea of an overlapping consensus from Rawls's conceptual apparatus within which it has always been formulated (even in his last published work, *The Law of Peoples*[6]), then it would be exactly right to say, as Taylor does, that secularism should be adopted in pluralistic society on the basis of an overlapping consensus. But now, the only apparatus one has to burden the contractors with is the capacity for internal reasoning, that is, with psychological economies with substantive values that yield internal reasons. Rawls

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[5] See Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava (editor), *Secularism and Its Critics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998). The idea of an overlapping consensus is most fully articulated in John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[6] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

would not be recognizable in this form of contractualist doctrine. Indeed one would be hard pressed to say that one was any longer theorizing within the contractualist tradition at all, which is a tradition in which serious constraints of an 'original position' or a 'state of nature'... were always placed as methodological starting points in the making of a compact. Shorn of all this, one is left with something that is the merest common sense, which it would be bombastic to call 'a social contract.' We now need only say this: assuming no more than our capacity for internal reasoning, i.e., our capacity to invoke some substantive values we hold (whatever they may differentially be in all the different individuals or groups in society), we can proceed to justify on its basis another substantive value or policy—for example, secularism—and so proceed to adopt it for the polity. If this path of adoption by consensus, invoking this internalist notion of justification, works in a religiously pluralist society, it will be just as Taylor presents it, an overlapping consensus, with none of Rawls's theoretical framework.

3.

The last two sections have respectively presented points of definition of secularism and points of its justification and basis of adoption. I think it is important to keep these two things separate on the general ground that one needs to have a more or less clear idea of what we are justifying and adopting before we justify and adopt it.

In a very interesting recent paper, Charles Taylor, has argued that we need to *redefine* 'secularism.'[7] It is a complex paper with highly honourable political and moral motivations that underlie it. But, speaking more theoretically, I don't think it is quite as well motivated.

The paper begins by saying that there have been two aspects to secularism—one, the idea of the *separation of church and state*, and the other that the *state maintain a neutral equidistance from different religions within a plural society*. The paper wishes to correct an overemphasis on the first by stressing the importance of the second aspect and wishes to modify the second too along the following lines.

In modern societies, we seek various goods and the three in particular (echoing the trio of goods expressed in a familiar slogan) that remain relevant to secular aspirations are, the *liberty* of worship, the *equality* of different faiths, and finally, more than just equality, we need to give each faith a voice in determining the shape of the society, so there must be *fraternal* relations within which negotiations, with each voice being equally heard, is crucial. What is more, because the first aspect's stress on separation of church and state was too focused on religion, the second aspect's stress on religious diversity should be modified and expanded to include the fact that in late modernity, the diversity of pluralist societies contains not just a variety of religious people, but non-religious people as well. Their point of view must also be included in the mix. *All* this is now included in the idea and ideal of a redefined secularism.

So, to sum up his explicit motivations for seeking this more capacious definition of secularism: There is the importance of the state maintaining a neutrality and equal distance from each religion. There is the importance of a society allowing the democratic participation of all religious voices in shaping its polity's commitments. And there is the need to turn one's focus away from just religion to acknowledging and respecting wider forms of cultural

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[7] Charles Taylor, "Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism," in Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Eduardo Mendieta (editors), *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011).

diversity and a variety of intellectual positions, including non-religious ones. These are all worthy motivations and a society that pursues them would be measurably better than one that doesn't. The question is how does thinking so make a difference to how we theorize about the meaning or definition of secularism? There is no denying that it makes *a* difference to secularism, but it is not obvious to me that it is just as he presents it.

One of the things that he finds distorted about secularism while defined along the unrevised lines that he is inveighing against is that, so defined, it has been too focused on 'institutional arrangements.' Slogans such as 'separation of church and state' become mantras and as they do, they suggest institutional arrangements that are fixed. Once done, it is hard not only to change the institutions, but also to reconceptualize secularism. What is better in order to maintain both theoretical and institutional flexibility is to allow the ideals in questions (the echoes of liberty, equality and fraternity mentioned above) to determine what is needed rather than these slogans, which point to institutional arrangements and stop or preempt conversations about how to theorize secularism. In keeping with this point, he applauds Rawls for starting with certain ideals such as "human rights, equality, the rule of law, democracy" rather than anti-religious (or for that matter, religious principles), and then proceeding to consider the question of secularism to be in line with them (see p.37).

This is just right, I believe, as are the general moral and political instincts that prompt Taylor's appeal for a redefinition of 'secularism': the desire for greater flexibility, the desire not to tie 'secularism' to the polemical sense of non- or anti-religious,' the desire to establish secularism on the basis of an overlapping consensus of internal reasons. The question is, is it wise or necessary to redefine secularism to pursue these instincts and motivations?

4.

Let me, then, turn to a way of characterizing (I say characterizing because perhaps 'defining' is too constricting a term for what both Taylor and I are interested in, but I will not always avoid talk of 'definition' since it is the word Taylor himself uses) secularism that is, or to put it more cautiously, that may be, at odds with Taylor's. (I add this caution because, despite what it seems to me at present, it may turn out that we are not much at odds and it is really a matter of emphasizing different things.)

I have said that it is a good idea, as Taylor suggests, to *start* with certain ideals that do not mention religion or opposition to religion, and *then* move on to talk of political and institutional arrangements involving the role of the state and its stances towards religion. So, just because it is what is most familiar to us in our tradition of political theory and philosophy, let us start within a liberal framework, let us start with some basic ideals and the fundamental rights and constitutional commitments that enshrine them, just as Rawls and Taylor propose. Starting with them as the basic, though tentative, givens, I suggest we embrace Taylor's account only up to a point and then add something that does not seem to be emphasized by him, indeed something that he may even wish to be de-emphasizing in his redefinition.

I propose, then, something like the following non-arbitrary stipulation as a characterization of secularism that contains all of the three features I had mentioned at the outset.

(S): Should we be living in a religiously plural society, secularism requires that all religions should have the privilege of free exercise and be evenhandedly treated *except when a religion's practices are inconsistent with the ideals that a polity seeks to achieve* (ideals,

often, though not always, enshrined in stated fundamental rights and other constitutional commitments) *in which case there is a lexical ordering in which the political ideals are placed first.*

Much commentary is needed on this minimal and basic characterization.

Here are some miscellaneous points of commentary, in no particular order, that help to situate and motivate (S), thereby showing why, as a stipulation, it is non-arbitrary, and where it may seem to depart in emphasis and implication and significance from Taylor's redefinition.

A)

To begin with, (S) makes explicit mention of the sort of thing that Taylor thinks it is important to stress, the evenhanded, neutral distance between different religions in a religiously plural society. However, the 'qualifier' that (S) opens with, "Should we be living in a religiously plural society…" is there to point out that secularism is a doctrine that may be relevant even in societies where there is no religiously plurality. If there is a mono-religious society, it is not as if secularism becomes irrelevant. In such a society, there may still be point in a lexical ordering of the sort that characterizes secularism in (S). If there are ideals that form the starting point of one's construction of the content of secularism, and one wishes to protect those ideals, then should the single religion of such a society run afoul of them, the lexical ordering will have a point. Thus secularism has a broader relevance and meaning than one which—as in Taylor's redefinition—only ties it to the idea of being neutral and even-handed with a plurality of religions as well as various non-religious points of view. Speaking more generally, though Taylor applauds Rawls for adopting this starting point in which the examples of the ideals are basically the ideals of a liberal polity in a society with plural social interests and concerns, there may be other societies in which there is less plurality and, so the starting point may formulate other ideals. This point may have decreasing significance in modern societies in which there is undeniably much plurality, and especially when religions have themselves become considerably fragmented from within in doctrine as well as practice; but I think it is worth retaining the point for those societies where the reach of modernity is not comprehensive and where there is not much in their root and their locality to which a specifically pluralist starting point for secularism speaks with urgency. Secularism might still speak to their concerns regarding religion without doing so via the goals of pluralism, but via other goals addressing other problems that they find more central.

B)

The more important point of difference between (S) and the sort of redefinition Taylor is seeking is that when characterizing secularism, (S) squares with his urge to be non-phobic and accommodating towards religion as well as with his idea to have the state keep a neutral and equal distance between all religions—but then emphasizes something else as well: the lexical ordering. The point of this latter essential element of the characterization is that (S) is a stance that *can* be *adversarial* against religious practices and laws, but *only* when, from the point of view the ideals one starts with, it needs to be that, i.e., when those practices and laws go against the very thing that Taylor himself thinks we should start with—the ideals and goals (formulated without reference to religious or anti-religious elements) that a society has adopted.

The fact that one's starting point lies in certain ideals helps (S) to avoid the charge that Taylor makes against some contemporary formulations of secularism, viz., that they start with an assertion of certain institutional arrangements with slogans or mantras such 'the separation of church and state.' Rather, in the Rawlsian manner of which Taylor approves, (S) starts with certain ideals and goals that the society wishes to adopt, and the lexical ordering suggests that the institutions should be shaped and distributed in such a way that certain priorities articulated in the lexical ordering get implemented. There is certainly more of a stress than in Taylor on the priority over religion of certain goals and ideals formulated in terms independent of religion. Religion and its practices come second to these, if there is ever a clash between them. But, just as Taylor would have it, it is these goals rather than any institutional arrangements that form the starting point.

C)

I had said that the first basic defining feature of secularism is that it is some sort of a stance regarding religion. What sort of stance is (S)? The point in the previous paragraph brings out how, as a stance, it is more adversarial than Taylor wishes secularism to be, but it is by no means obsessively seeking religion out as a target. It is certainly not trying to polemically remove it root and branch from public life, in all its social, cultural and intellectual aspects, in a way often suggested in recent writings by today's doctrinaire atheists. This is because (S) keeps strict faith with the second elementary feature of secularism mentioned at the outset, viz., that it is only, and precisely, a political stance, a stance regarding religion only as it affects the polity. It is not dismayed by or concerned with the presence of religiosity in the society at large or in the personal beliefs of the individual citizens as so much of the ideological urge for secularity in the modern period does. The lexical ordering merely says that if and when there is an inconsistency that arises between certain goals sought to be achieved in a polity that are formulated independently of religion, and the practices of a religion, the former must be placed first and the latter second.

Quite apart from the fact that it is restricted to political matters, the antecedent in the conditional "if and when there is an inconsistency…' makes it clear that *even within this restricted domain*, there is no harm to be found in the presence of religion, so long as it does not clash with certain fundamental ideals and commitments of the polity.

What sorts of things are clear examples of the political domain and of the priority being proposed within it, by the lexical ordering? The examples are hardly exotic.

Take a society in which the commitment to free speech is a fundamental ideal of its polity. Assume, then, that it is our starting point, in just the way Taylor urges. Let's, then, also assume that there are religions and religious practices in that society, those of Christianity and Islam, say, but not Buddhism, which have strict commitments to censorship of blasphemy. (S) says that it is important to see secularism as requiring the state to be evenhanded towards religions in general, but not in any case when the lexical ordering comes to have application. And this is such a case. In this case, the lexical ordering requires one to spoil the neutrality by favouring Buddhism over Christianity and Islam since the state must place the commitments to blasphemy in these religions second and the commitment to free speech first, in the context, say, of the publication of novels such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *The Satanic Verse*s in a society such as Britain's with a polity defined upon basic liberal commitments. (It is interesting to note that Britain took a non-neutral stance in a quite different sense than the one I am recommending, weighing down only on Islam but, as a result of Mary Whitehouse's campaigns, not on Christianity. It is a question whether this hints at the extent to which established religion is more than merely nominal in Britain.) I will discuss free speech and another example involving gender equality again later, but for

now, I offer this as a rather straightforward example of the occasion on which (S) seems to depart from Taylor's understanding of secularism, by emphasizing the 'lexical ordering' ideal over the 'neutral and equidistant' ideal of secularism that he favours.

I think in late modern societies committed to liberal ideals of this sort, it is a theoretical *loss* rather than gain to allow that a polity has been impeccably secular in *any* case in which it capitulates to the banning of a novel on the grounds that it is blasphemous by the lights of a religion's customs or laws. One may—even in late modern liberal societies— find good moral and political reasons to ban the novel. That is not the theoretical issue I am focusing on. What is theoretically questionable is only that we should describe the ban as falling well within the secular ideal. It may well be that good politics or morals sometimes requires us to put the secularist policy aside. But, it is *secularist* policy that we would be putting aside. If a redefinition of secularism were to deny this, that would be a questionable theoretical outcome of the redefinition. The stress on the neutral equidistance ideal over the lexical ordering ideal in a characterization of secularism may well lead to just such a questionable theoretical outcome in cases such as this. A society whose polity banned *both* the Kazantsakis *and* the Rushdie novel on grounds of their being blasphemous by the lights of two different religions that were being treated neutrally in this twin banning, meets the neutral and equidistant state ideal of secularism, but fails to meet (S).

It cannot really be argued on Taylor's behalf that such a twin and symmetrical banning does *not* satisfy the state neutralist ideal of secularism by pointing out that he has allowed into the groups that the state must be neutral towards, non-religious people as well. What these religions find blasphemous are not just the expression of a point of view described innocuously as 'non-religious,' it is the expression of views that trash and cartoon and satirize their most cherished and deep commitments with contempt as Rushdie or Kazantzakis (or Bunuel or Arrabal…) did. So, a state that decided to keep all these things (evenhandedly for both—indeed all—offended religions) out of circulation in bookshops and cinemas would not be failing to be neutral and fair towards a group under the description 'non-religious' people. It would be failing to be fair towards 'blasphemers,' not exactly a natural or routine category or grouping by any pluralist count of society. So, I assume, that the only protection that *blasphemers* can properly expect to get is from secularists who believe in (S), not secularists who wish to be neutral and equidistant between religious and 'non-religious' people. Those last two or three words of the last sentence are too bland a description in the state neutralist ideal to warrant our saying that such an ideal has the very particular focus needed to count the censorship of something so specific as hurtful and contemptuous writing against a religion, as anti-secular.[8] What is clearly moving Taylor is that a genuine pluralism in many *contemporary* societies has to acknowledge as a natural grouping in the plural mix, not only Hindus, Muslims, Christians, but also non-religious people. Taylor is concerned to respect this development in the pluralism of our time. And what I am saying is that we should certainly grant him that that is a correct way to modify 'the neutral and equidistant ideal of secularism' he favours, but then say, even so, that when

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[8] India is often described as a secular state that fits the neutral, symmetrically equidistant ideal towards India's different *religions*. (I think this is a mistaken conception of secularism as it has come to be central in the Indian context today. This is not a paper on Indian secularism, so I can't discuss why that is so here, though some of what I say at the end of this essay on a well known issue regarding secularism in India has implications for why it is mistaken.) Clearly the point I make above about how a state neutralist ideal of secularism that allows the *symmetrical* banning of books blaspheming against different religions in the society, applies to this view of Indian secularism that I find mistaken. But, unlike this idea of Indian secularism, Taylor wishes to add to the mix of standpoints that the secular state must be neutral towards, *non-religion* as well.

we speak of pluralism and its groupings today, '*blasphemers*' is *not* a natural grouping. As a result, his pluralist motivation here in adding to the mix of things towards which the state must be neutral is not sufficient (not sufficiently particular) to make the case that such censorship would be anti-secular by the lights of a state neutralist ideal of secularism.

If he were to go beyond what are broad and natural groupings to something much more indefinitely detailed in its pluralist count in a society, counting as a group any group (however specifically described, blasphemers being just one example) that could claim that there has been a lapse in neutrality by the state, after the fact of some state action, it is very doubtful that there can be anything at all that a neutralist state secularist ideal would yield by way of policy. That is to say, there would hardly be any policy that would be sanctioned as secular policy when there are an indefinite and limitless number of conflicting groups whose points of view have to be equally respected. Indeed unless there was some *ex ante* specification of the pluralist elements that a state was to be neutral between, the ideal amounts to nothing that can be interestingly specified at all. What I think we must assume such an ideal envisages, if it is to envisage something plausible, is not that 'blasphemers' are ex ante counted as a group who must be protected when devising state policies, but rather something like this: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc as well as 'non-religious' people (*a fragment among whom* will be novelists, filmmakers, etc that satirize, vilify, one or other religion) all must equally have a voice in the policies that a polity will adopt. Whatever policy is adopted once this fraternal deliberation takes place, must count as the policies of a secular state according to this ideal. After all it is the outcome of a state allowing evenhanded voice to all groups. Now, *it may turn out* that non-religious people will want protection for the fragment among them that have offended religions deeply in the novels they write or the films they make. And if they carry the day in the deliberation, then the outcome of this state neutralist ideal process of decision-making will *coincide* with the outcome of a lexical ordering imposed by (S), i.e., they will be co-*extensive*, (not co-intensive) outcomes. But, *it may turn out instead* that the fraternal deliberation with all voices involved yields a policy that evenhandedly bans novels and films considered blasphemous by various religions, and if it does, the policy will *also* count as secular since the criterion of *fraternal* and *equal* participation of *freely* speaking voices will be satisfied. The point is that (S), however, will *never* count such an outcome as secular, so long as free speech is an ideal one begins with. The adoption of the policy will *always* fall afoul of the lexical ordering that is essential to (S)'s formulation of secularism. And, just for that reason, I am saying, (S) has things more theoretically right about what secularism is.

D)

In a clarifying response in personal correspondence to a draft of this paper, Charles Taylor makes a point of real importance and relevance for the present in explaining why he thinks a characterization of secularism should not incorporate the first feature of secularism that I had mentioned at the outset, viz., that it is a stance regarding religion. He expresses the anxiety that the sort of lexical ordering I propose which mentions explicitly the importance of placing one or other ideal or goal of a polity before some *religious* practice or custom or law, might sometimes have the effect of having the secular polity equate some *unrepresentative* element of a religious population with 'the religion' in question. The woeful effects of just this sort of thing are familiar from the present cold war being waged against 'Islam' on the basis of a few acts of atrocity by a small fraction of Muslims. This is what Taylor says:

> "Here's where the hard-line secularist focus on religion alone leads to
> tragic and destructive moves. They attack 'Islam' for instance for female
> genital mutilation, and for honour killings. And they seem to have a

semblance of justification in that the communities who practice these can see them as religiously sanctioned. They tar the whole community with this brush, and drive moderates into the arms of fundamentalists. Whereas, as Anthony Appiah has argued, the most effective way of ending these practices involves making allies with the more orthodox who can effectively convince Islamic societies that they are deviant to the message of the prophet."

As with everything else that prompts him on this matter, this is a humane and politically perceptive concern. But I don't find myself convinced that these considerations, despite their great importance today, are to be diagnosed as flowing from a characterization of secularism that incorporates the lexical ordering in the terms that I have presented it. As I presented it, there is nothing in (S) that constitutes an 'attack' on religion as a generality. In particular, when female genital mutilation or honour killings are identified as practices to be placed second in the lexical ordering, Islam, as a generality, is not 'under attack.' Rather, the claim is entirely conditional: *If* there be a claim by those who practice them that these practices owe to a religion and *if* that claim is correct, then the placing of the practice lower in the lexical ordering than the moral and political ideals they run afoul of, would be properly called a 'secularist' policy on the part of the state. That is all that a characterization of secularism as (S) amounts to. I don't see that, so understood, secularism as a stance regarding religion has the effects that Taylor thinks it does. If it should turn out that nothing in the religion in question sanctions these practices, then the ideals and goals of the polity may supercede these practices in a lexical ordering, but that lexical ordering would not be the lexical ordering characterized in (S) which specifically mentions religion. In that case, secularism, being a stance regarding religion, is not a notion that descriptively applies to such a case.

Moreover, though the anxiety that a whole community is being tarred by the brush of these practices of a fractional group in the community is a genuine and justified anxiety to have, it is not clear how (S) as a characterization of secularism is responsible for its happening. True, as a formulation of secularism, (S) mentions religious practices without distinguishing between the numbers that do and do not practice them. But it is not such a general understanding of secularism that gives rise to the public impression that the religion in question is itself to be identified with the practice. What is really responsible for it is an irresponsible media that doesn't care to distinguish finely enough between the practitioners and the rest of the community. And it is not as if states are completely innocent of responsibility since states, for familiar statist reasons, track whatever the media calls or fails to call attention to. But that a state should be implicated in that sort of thing is independent of whether the state has adopted secular policies as characterized by (S). One of the real sources of difficulty is that states, including liberal states, have no (and, by the nature of the case, cannot have any) political mechanisms by which to introduce *intra*-community democratization that would show the practitioners to be an *unrepresentative* minority within the community. Liberal politics has institutions which, via mechanisms like elections, calibrate representation with numbers of people. This happens, as we know, at the federal, state, regional, and even municipal level, but unlike these levels, religious communities are too dispersed and too imprecisely defined to have such mechanisms. Whether there can be intra-community democratization of a kind that does not depend on such representative institutions, is a subject that needs much more study than it has had in political sociology. Until such democratization, a small fraction within a community, which has the shrillest voice and the most activist presence, may often get to be seen as more representative of the community than it deserves, by its numbers, to be, since the media will typically pay the most attention to the most audible voices, and the state, for typical reasons of state, will do so as well. This, not secularism as formulated in (S) should, at bottom, be the diagnosed source of Taylor's quite proper anxiety.

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Taylor is rightly anxious too that when there is an equation of a religion with a small fragment of its members and its practices, it can sometimes have the effect of driving ordinary devout people, as he puts it, "into the arms of the fundamentalists." But again it is not clear why secularism as (S) elaborates it has any role to play in this. It is a complex question why non-practitioners of the practices in question, do not always distinguish themselves vocally and explicitly from (the far smaller number of) the practitioners. Speaking more generally, it is a complex question why ordinary devout people remain a large but silent majority and don't speak out against the relatively small numbers of extremists and fundamentalists in their community, with whom they share so little by way of ideas and ideology? The answer to such questions would have to invoke a whole range of factors, all of which, I think, are at some distance from (S)—factors that make them feel as if they are letting the side down if they were to be openly critical of anyone in their community, even those whose views and practices they have no sympathy for. In the case of Islam, this defensively uncritical psychology has been bred by years of colonial subjugation, by continuing quasi-colonial economic arrangements with American and European corporate exploitation of energy resources of countries with large Muslim populations, by immoral embargos imposed on these countries that cause untold suffering to ordinary people, by recent invasions of some of these countries by Western powers, and finally by the racialist attitudes towards migrants from these countries in European nations. It is these factors that are responsible for ordinary Muslims, who might have otherwise been more willing to criticize fundamentalists in their community, focusing instead primarily on an enemy that is perceived to be external rather than internal.

One might think that the rhetoric of 'secularism' (like the rhetoric of 'democracy') plays a role in the anti-Islamist drumbeat of propaganda that accompanies these other factors and, therefore, it in turn plays a role in making the vast majority of ordinary Muslims unwilling to be critical of the offending practitioners in their midst. That might sometimes be so. But if and when it is so, the right thing to do is not to ask that secularism be redefined, but to demand that one should *drop* talk of secularism and focus instead on trying to improve matters on what is really at stake: the effects of a colonial past, a commercially exploitative present, unjust wars and embargos, racial discrimination against migrants in Europe, and so on. It is a change in these things, not a redefinition of secularism, that will draw ordinary Muslims out of "the arms of fundamentalists," that will give the vast majority of non-practitioners the confidence to come out of their silence and their defensive psychologies to distinguish themselves from those whom they find to be a small but extreme and unrepresentative minority in their community's midst.

In the quoted passage, Taylor implies that secularism, as for instance defined by (S), would spoil the chances of making alliances with the orthodox in a community whose voices would have the most chance of bringing about an end of the offending practices. It is perfectly possible for a state to sometimes judge that it would be better for it to forge alliances with the orthodox element in a community to get it to speak up for an end to a certain offending practice rather than adopt a policy like (S) that opposes the practice that the orthodox element gives support to. That would be to surrender secularism for a more effective pragmatic strategy. It would not be to adopt a different ideal of secularism. I myself think that what is needed is for a secular state, as defined by (S), to help provide *internal* reasons to the community, including the orthodoxy that supports the practice, to persuade it to change some of its commitments. Such a strategy is perfectly compatible with a secularism defined in terms of (S) and I discuss how that is so at length in sections 5 and 6 (see particularly footnote 16 and the text in the main body of this paper to which it attaches.) What is required in order to make this possible is for secularism, not to give up on its lexical ordering as formulated in (S), but to seek a *conceptual vernacular* within which it can seek to

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provide internal reasons that speak to even the orthodox element in a community. Too often secularism adopts the universalist rhetoric of rights in its efforts at persuasion rather than seek *local* concepts and commitments within the community (including even among the orthodox in the community) that might put pressure on the community's own practices and thereby eventually provide the source of internal reasons for change. This is the entire theme of Sections 5 and 6 below.

E)

Though (S) insists sturdily on the invariance of the lexical ordering in all contexts where there is secularism, it allows for much contextual differential in the form secularism may take because it allows for much variation in the ideals that are placed first in the lexical ordering.

Thus, for instance, the values and rights may vary from constitution to constitution, but one can assume that if it is liberal democracies in late modernity one is concerned with, then there will be substantial overlap of the basic and familiar values—freedom of speech, say, or racial and gender equality, and so on. In other sorts of societies, the ideals may be substantially different and there may be less stress on the basic freedoms and social forms of equality. Thus some socialist societies have stressed economic equality and the right to work more than they have stressed basic freedoms… And there will no doubt be yet other forms of ideals and commitments in yet other societies that the lexical ordering mentioned in the stipulated characterization of secularism will place before the religious practices inconsistent with them. The point is not to lay down very specific ideals that form a definite list. The point rather is to stress the role of the priority such ideals (whatever they may be) will have in *the lexical ordering that forms the heart of the characterization of secularism.*

The last point has wider implications that distinguish between (S) and Taylor's re-definition in a rather sharp way. One should be able to characterize secularism independently of whether a polity is authoritarian or liberal in its fundamental orientation. Taylor, as I said, mentions with approval Rawls's starting point in certain rights and other liberal ideals. This is an approval one may share without actually insisting that there cannot be variation in the form that the ideals take or the ideals themselves. The theoretically important requirement is not that there be this or that ideal but that there be ideals that do not get articulated in terms that mention religion or the opposition to religion. All the opposition to religion that the characterization in (S) demands is in the notion of a lexical ordering that follows the initial starting point in these ideals. Thus, by these theoretical lights, so long as there were such ideals motivating a polity and they played such a role in the minimal demands of a lexical ordering, then (whatever other properties that polity possessed), it meets the necessary and sufficient condition of secularism. So, for instance, on the assumption that there were such ideals that were motivating the political regime that Ataturk imposed on Turkey, and on the assumption that religion and religious practices were always placed second in the lexical ordering as formulated in (S), the authoritarian properties of that regime do nothing to cancel the secularist nature of the regime, whatever else they cancel—for instance, the *liberal* nature of the regime. Not all secularism need be liberal secularism. So also, then, many communist regimes should get counted as secular by this criterion. Someone may find the authoritarian methods by which secularism was imposed in both Ataturk's Turkey and the Soviet Union to be wrong without denying they were committed to secularism. Taylor, who *explicitly* takes it to be an advantage of his re-definition that it rules out Ataturk's Turkey as secular (see p.37), is on this point at least, quite visibly at odds with (S) as a characterization of secularism. There is a further and symmetrically converse point to be made: just as secularism may bypass liberalism, liberalism may outrun secularism when the liberal goals and ideals one might begin with,

such as free speech, say, are concerned to protect those who offend *non*-religious sentiments and concerns, over and above protecting blasphemers. It can't be a reason to redefine secularism that the goals that it begins with (when they are liberal goals) which seek to protect one from the illiberality of some religious demands, would also protect one from illiberality coming from *other* sources than religiou*s* demands. Liberalism is a wider notion than secular liberalism, which qualifies liberalism to a restricted domain, just as liberal secularism qualifies secularism to a restricted set of cases of secularism.

It is true that that Turkey and some other nations did much else besides meet the minimal requirements of the lexical ordering as articulated in (S). They sought to rule out religion not just in the polity, but in a much more general way, intruding into the cultural life and the intellectual and artistic productions of their citizens. In doing so, they went far beyond the requirements of the lexical ordering. And in doing so they were not merely enforcing secularism in authoritarian fashion, they were enforcing secular*ization* as a broader social process. All this too may be acknowledged without it falsifying the observation of a more minimal property of these polities, which is that they were secular*ist*. As I said in c) above, the characterization of secularism on offer in (S) is not by any means committed to rooting out religion in society. The lexical ordering that is the core of the characterization is perfectly compatible with a society that has a great deal of religiosity in its culture and practices. The ideals that are placed first in the lexical ordering could be such as to find acceptable a wide range of religious practices. But, equally, on the other hand, it is not a requirement of secularism, as defined by (S), that secularism should be *in*compatible with determined and authoritarian efforts at imposing secularization in addition to secularism. I had said earlier that because secularism, restricted as it is to the polity, is a narrower notion than secularization, which extends as a process to society at large and its cultural and intellectual life, polities may be secular*ist* with or without the society at large being proportionately secular*ized*. The separateness of these two notions would also have it, of course, that just because there is extreme secularization enforced, as in Ataturk's Turkey, that is not necessarily a sign that secularism must exist. In Turkey, as it happened, secularism did exist, but there can be a society—Tel Aviv society, unlike Jerusalem, I suspect, is one such-- which is highly secularized but is embedded in a national polity that is not secularist. Moreover, the separateness of the two notions guarantees that the existence of secularization via authoritarian methods as in Atarturk's Turkey, is not a sign that secularism does not exist. Authoritarianism, whether it imposes secularism or secularization, is orthogonal to the criterion by which secularism is defined.

Quite apart from Ataturk, even Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens would not get counted as secularists but *anti*-secularists by Taylor's re-definition since they repudiate neutrality between religions and unbelief, the very thing that Taylor demands of secularism, when he says: "Indeed, the point of state neutrality is precisely to avoid favoring or disfavoring not just religious positions but any basic position, religious or nonreligious. We can't favor Christianity over Islam, but also religion over against non-belief in religion *or vice versa*" (p.37, my italics). But I do think something simple yet deep is under theoretical strain, if these are the implications of a semantic stipulation. I—despite being an atheist—hold no brief for Dawkins and Hitchens, who, in my view, represent one of the least appealing and most irrelevant intellectual stances on religion today. Still, the idea that they and, also the idea that Ataturk, should be counted as anti-secularists is too counterintuitive and the redefinition seems to go against our most ordinary understanding and instincts about secularism for reasons that have to do with values that have nothing much to do with secularism at all.

F)

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In the last comment, I have urged that we allow that not all secularism is liberal secularism, implying more generally that secularism is only one value among many and, as a result, it may in some contexts be accompanied by properties that put aside many of the other values that we might cherish. But there is a more radical point to be made: we might, having begun with certain goals and ideals (which make no mention of religion or opposition to religion, just as Rawls, Taylor, and (S) require), find that secularism is a quite unnecessary political doctrine or policy to adopt. We might find that religious practices and customs promote those goals and ideals quite satisfactorily, and that it would be a fetish of modernity to think that secularism nevertheless must be adopted by a polity. This is the scenario whose possibility I wanted to leave space for when I was outlining the third defining feature of secularism.

It is how Gandhi thought of the ideal of secularism for India in the early part of the twentieth century and there was wisdom in that view, then. India, because of its distance from Europe, not merely physical but cultural and political, was a good test case for contemplating both secularism's content and its relation to its own history.

If we step back and look at secularism's history from a distance in order to try and view its larger trajectories and patterns, we notice that much of the consolidations of secularism, that is, much of it coming to be viewed as a *necessity* in modern societies, occurred in the context of slow and long forming features of European societies. One particular trajectory was central.

In the post-Westphalian European context, there emerged a need for states to seek their legitimacy in ways that could no longer appeal to outdated ideas of the divine rights of states as personified in their monarchs. This new form of legitimacy began to be sought by the creation of a new form of political psychology in a new kind of subject, the 'citizen,' of a new kind of entity that had emerged, the 'nation.' It was to be done, that is, by creating in citizens a *feeling* for the nation, which generated a legitimacy for the state because the nation was defined in tandem, in hyphenated conjunction, with a certain kind of increasingly centralized state. This nation-state was to be legitimized by this feeling among its subjects, a political-psychological phenomenon that would somewhat later come to be called 'national*ism*.' In European nations, such a feeling was uniformly created in their citizens by a very standard ploy—by finding an *external* enemy *within*, the outsider in one's midst, 'the other' (the Irish, the Jews…to name just two) to be despised and subjugated. In a later time, with the coming of a more numerical and statistical form of discourse, these would come to be called 'minorities,' and the ploy that I am outlining would be described as 'majoritarianism.' Often *religion* was either central to or was implicated in the way that minorities and majorities were defined, and it was to *repair* the deep and severe damages and scars caused by *this* process, that secularism was consolidated as an indispensable necessity in the political life of nations. It came to be seen as a politically constructed guarantee of toleration in this context, that is to say, in a context of modernity in which a very specific trajectory of nation-state formation was central. It is not that intolerance did not exist in prior times, but the structural necessities set up by new national boundaries and political institutions made the intolerance generated by the self-consciously adopted ploy I have sketched, as something seemingly quite impossible to alleviate in any other way but by the formulation of secularism and the devising of state policies in order to promote it.

Now, it should be possible to say, as Gandhi did, that where such a trajectory had never occurred as it had in Europe, no such repair was needed. It was his view that religions had long pervaded the political life of India but it was within an ethos of quite unself-conscious pluralism, a syncretic religious culture, within which politics was conducted in *scattered* loci of power, with no highly centralized state seeking to legitimate itself by

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creating the wrong basis for unity by a self-consciously constructed feeling among its citizens. A unity which was instead an outgrowth of a rooted and syncretic culture within which diverse religions were, without too much strain, in any case relatively tolerant of each other, required no artificial measure and policies, no doctrinal formulations of modernity, under the name of 'secularism.' Whatever the other shortcomings of such a culture, there was nothing measurably damaging of this specific sort to repair, and to impose secularism on one's people under these circumstances would be a mimicry of its colonial masters, a form of cognitive slavery. So it seemed to Gandhi. And, in fact, his greatest anxiety was that the eager modernizers around him in the Indian freedom movement which he led would fall into a form of thinking in which the post-Westphalian European path to modernity, conceived via this new form of state, was seen as compulsory for India as well. When he wrote first about it in the early part of the twentieth century, he declared explicitly that it was quite *un*compulsory.

Savarkar, who very deliberately and articulately formulated such a European path of politics for India, with majoritarian methods to achieve feelings of unity in his vision of a modern Indian nation of the future, was Gandhi's chief ideological opponent, and it is not surprising that it was one of his followers, who would later assassinate him. Everything Gandhi stood for also stood in the way of such a conception of Indian modernity. As it turned out, Savarkar's thinking had a great deal of influence in India, even within the Congress party that Gandhi led, and the openly vocal and activist form of majoritarian Hindu nationalism that has emerged in the country since the passing of Gandhi, Nehru, and some of the other leaders of the older generation, has made something like secularism seem much more obviously relevant for India than it seemed to Gandhi when he was writing about these matters during the very early period of the freedom movement. The point I am labouring in all this is that there may be many ideals—of pluralism, of toleration—that we start with, just as Taylor asks, but in many societies, there may be no work for the lexical ordering and for secularist doctrine, in general, to do in order to promote those ideals. Secularism is a normative position, which is shaped by these ideals in very specific contexts where the ideals and goals require it. It is not a goal in itself. Were the ideals present in other political forms and arrangements, the need for secularism would not so much as arise. In my view, it is theoretically sounder to say this than to re-define secularism so that it becomes the appropriate doctrine for all contexts and occasions and always serves the ideals we wish to pursue.

Still, I think one can explore these matters a little more by voicing a protest on behalf of Taylor's redefined ideal of secularism. One might do this by saying that what I am suggesting is the wrong lesson to learn from Gandhi's reaction to the situation in early twentieth century India. After all, what Gandhi was pointing out was that there was toleration by each religion of the other and there was equal and free participation of all religions in the syncretic religious culture of the time, and that just *is* secularism in the fraternal as well as the liberty and equality sense that Taylor has outlined. So, if Taylor is right, Gandhi was in favour of, not against, secularism, and his view was that India was always secularist. It may be that once there is a more centralized state than existed in India in that earlier time, then this earlier secularism would have to be recast a bit to be seen as a centralized state being neutral and evenhanded among different religions, trying to steer modern society to replicate the syncretism of past times by keeping all religions to be mutually respectful of each others' freely chosen religious practices. But it would essentially be a secularism that was continuous with the past.

A response on behalf of (S) to such a protest will help to bring out in a little more depth, the history by which (S) has come to seem necessary?

The view voiced in the protest, I think, would be a quite mistaken reading of Gandhi, who was more clear-eyed about how secularism emerged from a certain history in the West and had certain distinct functions of meeting specific goals that needed to be met as a result of certain developments in Europe in the modern period.

The fact is that the goals and ideals that Gandhi articulated were merely those of toleration and pluralism. But toleration and pluralism, though they obviously have some relation with secularism (as they do with any number of other political notions and doctrines) are by no means identical with it. And secularism is not a guarantee for those ideals in all contexts. It is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for toleration and pluralism. Secularism is a doctrine that is also introduced to further goals of a quite different sort that were not in the forefront of Gandhi's mind, and even when toleration and pluralism were at the core of what secularism sought to promote, it was within a context that I have just sketched above, in which this core came to be surrounded by other goals as well. Thus, for instance, it would never occur to Gandhi to be anxious to allow blasphemy to go uncensored. Nor did it particularly worry him that one or other religion, Hinduism or Islam, had personal laws that ran afoul of the ideals of gender-equality in its family laws. These were not goals that were central to what he thought politics should be responding and pursuing in the context in which he lived and wrote.[9] On the matter of religion, his focus was instead on keeping India away from a politics in which Hindu majoritarianism entered as a way of creating nationalist feeling in India, thus giving rise to a trajectory in which secularism would be the natural outcome, introduced to repair the damage in this.

Now, one might think that a state conceived as neutral among different religions, as Taylor envisages it, *is the best method by which to deal with the damage done by this trajectory*. So why am I resisting calling it 'secularism'?

This is a good question and the answer is that once this trajectory takes its course, the damage is so deep and pervasive and so easily and constantly revived and revisited, that minorities are simply not in a position to ensure that the state, even in a democracy, (obviously even less so in more authoritarian regimes) will be able to be even-handed. Political parties will constantly appeal, for electoral gain, to majoritarian tendencies and will not be able to eschew these tendencies after electoral success when they are tenants of the state. This, in turn, gives rise to a *reaction* among minorities to fall into identity politics as a defence since the state is often unable to withstand majoritarianism and remain neutral. When majorities and minorities are defined in terms of religion in this familiar scenario, there inevitably arises a sense that religion (in the political sphere) *itself* is the problem, even though the historical source of the problem lies in majoritarianism. Recent Indian history has increasingly shown this to be true, a victory, as I said, for the forces of Savarkar over Gandhi, even within the Congress party, leave alone the Hindu nationalist party. For this general reason (and not merely in India), something more radical was said to be needed, something that—in crucial ways that are necessary to avoid this entire tendency to domination by a majority and religious identitarian reactive responses by minorities—keeps religion out of the polity, so that the temptation of the appeal to religious majoritarianism is preempted at the outset as a legal or constitutional transgression, something that the courts of an independently constituted judiciary are there to ensure (though as it turns out in some recent decisions, it is not obvious that the courts are willing always to do so.) Thus this entire trajectory that I've been describing at some length gives rise to an ethos in which something

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[9] Despite greatly encouraging the role of women in the freedom movement, his thought and his activist efforts were not much focused on gender inequality. That was not so with caste inequality, in particular untouchability, which was an issue that was constantly in Gandhi's thoughts.

like a lexical ordering of the sort I have mentioned tends to come to the forefront in how a modern polity is conceived. Once conceived this way, the term 'secularism' is and has been the natural name for it. And once the conception comes into place, it begins to seem, in this increasingly and *very specifically* modern political ethos that had its origins in post-Westphalian Europe, that it is not sufficient to be neutral and evenhanded among religions.

Moreover, in such an ethos where religion itself comes to be seen as the source of the problem, whether in its majoritarian exploitation or in its minoritarian reaction to that, new goals (that is goals beyond merely toleration and pluralism) emerge, which though they are defined independently of religion (goals such as free speech, say, and gender equality), one begins to detect that, by the lights of these new goals, there are shortcomings *in religion*. Thus free speech is now seen as free speech (even) in the face of a religious requirement to suppress deliberate and brazen blasphemy, and gender equality is steered towards gender equali*t*y in the face of gender-unjust religious family laws; and so on. Again, as a result, something like (S) alone, therefore, comes to seem like the only policy that could provide the repair and reform of religion, because neutrality and evenhandedness among religions cannot possibly promote these new goals and ideals. It is not enough to neutrally and evenhandedly allow each religion in society its free speech-denying blasphemy laws or its gender-discriminating family laws. These laws are trumped only by the first-placed lexical ordering of free speech and gender equality. Of course, one can still insist that the state neutrally and evenhandedly apply the lexical ordering to each religion, but that still means that the ideal of neutrality and evenhandedness is embedded in (S), it does not constitute a secularism that is independent of (S).

None of this, however, was relevant in Indian politics when Gandhi wrote in the early part of the twentieth century. As, I said, neither issues of blasphemy laws nor of gender inequality were in the forefront of the public agenda surrounding the local, syncretist religious cultures and the politics that surfaced in them. (And this may well be the case in many parts of the world to this day—in many regions of Africa, say, even possibly in parts of the Middle East, though the intense material and therefore cultural gaze on—not to mention interventions in—the latter by Western interests may be comprehensively and decisively changing that.[10]) But they are much more relevant now and, along with the need for the

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[10] There are two useful references I can offer here. First, for a fine essay contextualizing issues of blasphemy, which is illuminating on just this sort of point, see Talal Asad, "Reflections on Blasphemy and Secular Criticism," in Hent de Vries (editor), *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008). Second, Gandhi himself changed the substance and the idiom of his understanding of the issues by the time it came to the 1940s when the majoritarian threat loomed much larger even within the Congress party that he led. That, I think, is the sort of contextual shift we should be tracking in the study of secularism and its relevance. See Section V of Bipin Chandra's article "Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism," *The Social Scientist* 32, no. 1-2 (Jan-Feb 2004) for this shift in Gandhi thinking in the 1940s. Bipin Chandra himself describes this as a shift within Gandhi's secularism, or in other words, in the *meaning* that secularism had for Gandhi, but for reasons I've been sketching at length, I wouldn't follow him on this. In his earlier period, Gandhi is not properly described as a secularist. His essay, even so, is very valuable for noticing the importance of the shift in that late period. And in my remarks on the increasing influence of a majoritarian nationalism or what Bipin Chandra would call 'Hindu Communalism' (even within the Congress party in its Mahasabhite element) we are given the causes of the shift in context that prompted the change in Gandhi's thought on the subject. Gandhi's entire trajectory on the subject can, therefore, be seen as starting with a fear of this aspect of the Westphalian tendency infecting the Indian polity and a great effort on his part to protect India from that path, but ending with a resigned acknowledgement of

reversal of social and political damages of religious majoritarian sources for nationalism, they form part of a trajectory that emerged in India *since* the time Gandhi expressed his qualms against a very specific path in European modernity. To describe Gandhi's position of an earlier time in India than the present as secularist, therefore, is to quite fail to see the relevance of a range of developments in India since the time in which he first wrote (the developments of what I had called a specific post-Westphalian trajectory) regarding which he had very prescient anxieties about what might be visited upon India, if the trajectory was adopted there. If we pay close attention to his anxieties in that period, we can recognize that he was not a proto-secularist but rather that he did not want the conditions to occur in India, in which secularism would seem a necessity at all.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

To sum up, it has, in general, been the burden of these several comments, a) to f), that I have been making on the nature of (S), to say that its stipulated form of secularism in terms of a certain lexical ordering, gives a certain theoretical bite and specificity to secularism, such that it is not all goods in all contexts but only a good in some contexts, and therefore not always to be embraced even in temporal modernity, if the conditions don't require it for the pursuit of other worthy goals. This specificity also allows one to say that secularism can often be accompanied by bad political and institutional arrangements such as in Ataturk's Turkey or in Baathist Iraq or in the aggressively authoritarian secularist policies of some communist regimes. It does not see those bad political arrangements and institutions as a reason and occasion to try and redefine secularism so that they don't count as secularist polities at all. Such redefinitions take the bite out of the concept, in much the same way that the redefinition attempted in the idea of 'people's democracy' to counter 'free democracy' took the bite out of the notion of 'democracy.'[11] The specific formulation of the lexical ordering, moreover, has the strict advantage over the 'neutrality and equidistant state' ideal of secularism in disallowing things that would in our own time if not earlier, intuitively count as anti-secular—for example—censorship of works of art and literature on grounds of 'blasphemy' against a religion, something that the latter ideal would permit in a

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its increasing contagion and therefore shifting to the idiom and substance of secularism to control the damage. That, I believe, should be the right description of the shift that Bipin Chandra is marking in that essay.

[11] I give this example of the term 'democracy' just so as to show that a word can get a 'hurrah' status with all sides wanting it for themselves since there will be seeming merit on the side of those who can claim it, thereby taking away from any precise meaning that it might have. I don't mean to suggest that Taylor has the polemical and propaganda motives that surrounded the cold-war disputes around 'free' versus 'peoples' democracy debates. In fact, in the case of that term, I think, the way to define or characterize it is to see it as a form of government in which ordinary people have a serious input in the important decisions in their material and other central aspect of their lives. Neither cold war exemplifications of 'free' or 'people's' democracy met this criterion. On the one hand, elections in 'free' democracies were not occasions or sites on which important issues that made a difference to the material lives of people were even so much as raised (all crucial decisions being made by the corporate sectors of society at some distance from the electoral field). And, on the other hand, the very idea of 'people's' democracy was not intended (at any rate, not after the soviets and democratic councils in the Soviet Union were dismantled), to give people *input* into decisions on these matters, it was rather a claim to achieve the fulfillment of people's material and other essential needs—thus, even, when this was genuinely achieved, its achievement, however it is described, can't be described as an achievement of *democracy*, by the lights of the criterion, I just mentioned.

given case, on the grounds that it was ready and willing to neutrally permit it in all other cases of blasphemy against all other religion in the society.

I've spent a considerable time on these semantic matters with a view to bringing out the content of secularism, using Taylor's interesting and challenging ideas of a redefinition of secularism as a foil. I had said that though I think Taylor's redefinition has worthy moral and political motivations, it is not as well motivated, theoretically. (S), by contrast, does not make any attempt at redefinition, it merely tries to elaborate along modest, and minimalist lines, the rationale underlying the instincts behind dogmatic sounding metaphors such as 'the separation of church and state.' As such, (S) seems to contain crucial elements that Taylor is trying to redefine secularism *away* from.

I want to turn now from semantic matters, from questions of what is the more plausible and non-arbitrary stipulation by which we define or characterize the content of secularism, to questions of which position is more plausible, no matter how it is defined and what it is called, i.e., whether it is called 'secularism' or not. Thus we might ask: no matter which we think is better described as 'secularism,' is it better to adopt the ideal of a state that is neutral and evenhanded with all religions and non-religious points of view and which takes no adversarial stance against religion (thus repudiating the very first feature of secularism that I had presented in Section 1) or is to better to adopt (S)?

5.

Let me begin by trying to diagnose sympathetically why it might theoretically and philosophically seem to many that Taylor's ideal of a state, neutral and equidistant between religious and non-religious points of view, is a better position to adopt than (S).

In Section 2, I took up the question of what *justified* secularism over and above what defined or characterized it, saying that it was important to distinguish between the two. And while discussing the justification of secularism, I had invoked Bernard Williams's distinction between two types of justification, one which appealed to internal reasons and the other to external reasons, and had claimed that there are only internal reasons for embracing secularism. I have not argued for nor will I argue for this claim in this paper, partly for reasons of space but partly also because I have done so extensively in previous papers.[12] The point of interest in the present paper, as I say in section 2, is that this view is entirely compatible with and indeed lies behind the claim that secularism should only be adopted on the basis of an overlapping consensus. On these issues of justification and adoption (rather than those of definition just discussed in Section 4), there is complete accord between Taylor's views and the ones expressed in this paper.

To political philosophers and theorists, it might seem natural to conclude from these commitments on which there is complete accord between us, that secularism is fated to be mired in a form of *relativism* regarding moral and political values, and such a relativism may well suggest, in turn, that something like a 'neutral state' version of secularism is what we should retreat to, whereas any secularism such as (S) that seeks a somewhat more adversarial stance against religion, should be counted not as secularism but as one non-

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[12] Apart from the papers mentioned in Footnote 1, see "Two Concepts of Secularism: Reason, Modernity and Archimedean Ideal," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1994 and republished in Rajeev Bhargava (editor), *Secularism and its Critics*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), and "Secularism and the Moral Psychology of Identity" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1997 and republished in Amiya Bagchi, Rajeev Bhargava, and R. Sudarshan (editors), *Multiculturalism, Liberalism, and Democracy* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

religious standpoint among other standpoints, including religious standpoints., between which the state is neutral.[13] This approximates Taylor's own favoured understanding of secularism.

So, we must ask, whichever we think is best to call 'secularism,' is the neutralist ideal shown to be better than (S), as a consequence of the relativist implications that seem to follow from the stress on internal reasons in the justification of secularism?

The idea is this. If there are no external reasons which support a moral or political standpoint or value (such as secularism, say, or to keep things even more specific and focused, secular liberalism), if internal reasons are the only reasons one can bring to bear when there is a deep disagreement over values (between, say, such a secular liberalism and one or other religious point of view), then it might seem that something like relativism about these values and points of view is necessarily in the offing. Recall that external reasons are reasons that all will agree on, no matter what their values and substantial commitments may be, and internal reasons appeal only to substantial moral and political commitments of individual citizens. If internal reasons are the only reasons there are for justifications of such values as secularism, the thought that (S) in its secular liberal form will even have the resources to effectively offer such internal reasons to a strongly held religious standpoint, (say, for example a position with strong Muslim identitarian political values) to change its mind, might seem too optimistic; and that, in turn, will make it seem as if some anti-secular Muslim commitments, such as to the value of censorship of blasphemy, may have their own sort of truth *(relativistically* characterized truth*)* on their side.[14] And if that is so, then it

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[13] Of course, it may not always be able to be completely neutral regarding it since such a secularism may sometimes threaten the neutrality.

[14] I am going directly from talk of 'reasons' to talk of 'truth.' This is a deliberate collapsing of epistemological and metaphysical notions, on my part. Some may want to keep epistemological and metaphysical issues apart and say that a principled failure to find *reasons* against a position one is in moral or political disagreement with, does not yet show that position to be *true*. It still might not be true, even though one can't establish that to be so. If someone insists on making this sharp distinction between 'reasons' and 'truth,' the relativism I am discussing is a relativism regarding *the former only*. There would have to be *another* kind of relativism regarding truth, in that case, that someone may wish to argue for. Having expressed this caveat, I will continue to talk of the relativist as saying that various positions in disagreement with one another, each have the 'truth' on their side—and will ask the reader who wishes to make that sharp distinction, to simply read my use of 'truth' in the text differently from the way it is read when keeping epistemology and metaphysics sharply distinct. Two related caveats. First, I myself have distinguished sharply between questions of the meaning of 'secularism' and questions of justifying secularism. But that is a quite different distinction than the one which I am collapsing in this footnote. All I am doing in this footnote is to say that I want to formulate a relativism that is generated by a *principled* failure on one's part to provide internal reasons to another position that one is disagreed in order to get them to change their mind and come around to one's own position. And I am asking the reader's indulgence in allowing me to calibrate the use of 'true' and 'false' along these lines, allowing me, that is, to say of a position against which one in principle cannot provide internal reasons, that it is *true*. The second caveat has to do with the fact that some may think that questions of 'truth' and 'falsity' don't arise when it comes to morals and politics. --they should be restricted only to questions of science and matters approximating science, where value elements are (more or less) missing. I find this view to be quite wrong, but I don't need to argue for that here. I need simply only ask once again for terminological latitude on the part of the reader, i.e., ask the reader, who has a qualm about using 'true' and

would seem only right that a state having to now navigate these different *true* standpoints -- (S) in its secular liberal form as well as various religious standpoints such as Islamists and other strongly held religious views—should be neutral and evenhanded with each of them, since each has the prestige of *truth* on its side. This would reduce (S), even in the eyes of those who subscribe to it, to one among other true points of view, including religious ones. Thus the relativism that seems to emerge as a consequence from the points of philosophical *agreement* between Taylor and me on the primacy of internal reasons and the inefficacy of external reasons, may seem to suggest that the state neutrality ideal is *theoretically* quite well motivated (by this relativism) and (S) less well so, despite all the theoretical points I made in the last section.

Can this be right? Does this specific argument, via a relativism that flows from the primacy of internal reasons, which I make on sympathetic behalf of Taylor's view, give us a reason to adopt the state neutralist ideal he favours over (S)? Or to put it differently, does this specific argument give a state committed to adopting (S) any reason to yield to a more state neutralist ideal?

I think it is arguable that it does not.

Notice, first, what exactly is meant by relativism, as it seems to follow from the denial of external reasons and the claim that only internal reasons will justify secular liberalism? It means something quite strong. What is meant is that when there are no external reasons and two parties are disagreed over some value commitment, *there may in principle be no scope for either party to give even internal reasons to one another*. Internal reasons are dependent on support coming from our substantive values, not something given to us by the very fact of our rationality. Therefore unlike external reasons, there is no guarantee that internal reasons to subscribe to (S) will be available since they are dependent on further values which may not be present—in the case under consideration, present in the values held by Islamists. And, in general, it is prima facie possible that in some sorts of value-disagreement, there will, *in principle*, be no such further values for the parties in the disagreement to appeal to. In that case we will have the kind of impasse mentioned in the formulation, just given, of relativism. The expression 'in principle' is doing some serious work in this formulation of relativism. Relativism is a theoretical or philosophical position; it is not just a practical difficulty about how it is sometimes very hard to persuade someone you disagree with on some evaluative matter. The theoretical position is that each party in the dispute may be utterly unreach*able* by the other. This may indeed be cause for alarm to subscribers to (S), and, to the extent that we are alarmed, a concession and retreat to Taylor's redefinition of secularism shows the appropriate respect for each position that has truth on its side because (S) cannot claim greater truth on its side for the ideals it begins with and, therefore, must drop its claim to a lexical ordering that places those ideals first and religious laws and customs and practices second, when they clash. Thus relativism requires that, not only are there no external reasons for justifying secular ideals, reasons that all can share and find to be reasons, but that there are *no* reasons (not internal ones either) that it can, in principle, find to justify secular ideals to other more religious points of view. Secular liberalism is one truth among many, and not merely one standpoint among many. The latter claim (one standpoint among many) is uncontroversial. But for a secular liberal to allow the former claim (that religious points of view that it often wants to place second in a lexical ordering have the *truth* on their side) would undermine the very priorities asserted in the lexical ordering. A relevantly neutral state of the kind that Taylor recommends is a better form of polity for such a scenario than (S), which has to concede that

'false' for political and moral positions, to substitute some other words for my use of 'true' or 'false' (right or wrong, or just x and y, would be fine).

secular liberalism is just one truth among many. So these considerations of relativism might well motivate the adoption of Taylor's neutralist state rather than a state that adopts the lexical ordering ideal.

But before we concede that this relativism is the fate of (S), given the primacy of internal reasons, some more detailed understanding of what exactly internal reasons are, is required.

What is it to find internal reasons to persuade another? Internal reasons are reasons we give to another that appeal to some of *his own values* in order to try and persuade him to change his mind on some given evaluative issue, such as, say, a commitment to censorship of blasphemy. So if a Muslim does have such a commitment, a secular liberal subscribing to (S) can only appeal to some other value of *his* which is *in tension or in conflict* with his commitment to the censorship of blasphemy. To put it very explicitly, one will have to find that such Muslims are committed a) to censorship of blasphemy and yet that they are also committed b) to various other values which may lend support to the value of free speech. And for (S), to use internal reasons against such Muslims, is to stress b) to them in an effort to bring them around to discarding a). Of course if (S) was justifiable on grounds of external reasons, one couldn't appeal to considerations such as b) which is a substantive value. But, in that case, one would not *need* to appeal to such a consideration. It is only because one takes the view that, both Taylor and I, following Williams, take, that there are no external reasons that one is forced to appeal to considerations such as b).

In general, then, the strategy of internal reasons is a strategy that can only work when those against whom it is brought to work, are *internally conflicted*. (It is important to add that conflicts within values need not always take the form of there being blatant inconsistencies among them. In fact it may seldom be that. Much more likely and much more pervasive are conflicts of a more subtle kind, tensions or dissonances between values.)

We can now pull the strands together. Relativism, as I've defined it for the purposes of this paper's concerns, is a doctrine that holds if there is a certain kind of impasse. It holds if there are, *in principle*, no internal reasons that two parties in a disagreement over values, can give to one another. And if the prospect for giving internal reasons turns on the possibility of there being an internal conflict in at least one of the parties involved in a disagreement over values, then that implies that relativism would hold, only if both parties in such a disagreement are *completely unconflicted*, that is, if they have perfectly and maximally coherent value-economies. In other words, in order for relativism, of the sort we are worrying about to be true, it would have to be the case that someone with whom one disagrees over values is not merely never inconsistent (as I admitted blatant inconsistency might be hard to attribute to political and moral subjects), but they would also have to be *wholly* without any tension or dissonance in their values and desires. That alone makes for a *principled* impasse.

But it is hard to think that ordinary human subjects are so completely without internal conflict in this broad sense. The idea of such a total lack of inner conflict is an extraordinary condition to find in any value-economy. Relativism, conceived on this condition, would find instance, it seems, only when two parties in a dispute over a value were *monsters of coherence*. Perhaps some imagined rational automata are maximally coherent in their value commitments but the idea that ordinary human moral-psychological economies are so, is barely conceivable. Thus, so long as Islamists with commitments to blasphemy laws are susceptible to conflicting relations among their commitments, so long as they are not possessed of maximally coherent value economies, the scope of internal reasons to establish secular liberalism even in the face of identity politics is maintained. Maximal coherence

being a barely conceivable condition, there is no need to despair about the scope for secular liberal politics to succeed without externalist reasons and arguments.

The point cannot be quite left where it is.

Let it even be conceivable that, at a given time, a particular illiberal moral-psychological economy is highly coherent and unconflicted—at any rate, let it be conceivable, as it surely is, that any conflict or tension that it *does* contain among its value commitments is not as a matter of fact helpful in bringing it around to shedding its anti-liberal commitments. It is perfectly possible that even if Islamists are internally conflicted on some matters, these may be matters which are not relevant to (S)'s efforts to give internal reasons to them to get them to change their mind on censorship of blasphemy. This *still* does not hobble the scope of secular liberalism. Why not? The answer to this question, I think, is central to the epistemology of political and moral values. The answer is: *because political philosophy cannot consider moral subjects and political citizens as standing outside of history, in some timeless, unconflicted psychological economy.*

Since citizens are historical subjects, history and the incoming states of information that it provides to these subjects in its course, may well *introduce* conflict in them by introducing tensions and dissonance in the relations between their value commitments. Let me just give one example at some distance from the dispute on issues of blasphemy, to illustrate what I have in mind. It is now fairly well documented that the large increase in pro-choice attitudes among hitherto even relatively conservative women in America in the third quarter of the last century, was a result of their having deliberated their way out of a conflict in their own commitments, a conflict that *emerged* fully only in that period of history, when as a result of the rise of service industries and the relative decline of heavy manufacturing goods industries, the possibility of a more gender-distributed work force was created. A historical change, which provided for greater prospects for employment for women, introduced conflict into the values of even hitherto conservative women, and this in turn gave rise to internal deliberation on their part that resulted in many of them revising their views on the issue of abortion. The point, then, is that even if, at a given time, a value-economy seems relatively unreachable by internal reasons because it is relatively coherent and unconflicted, so long as we think of moral-psychological economies as necessarily being *in history*, internal conflicts may be injected by historical developments into moral-psychological economies.

The point is essentially Hegelian, though in Hegel himself (despite all the recent efforts by scholars to say that Hegel was relatively innocent of this) it is unfortunately marred because it is nested in terms that were more deterministic than is necessary. But it is a point of the utmost importance for those who think both that (S) can only be justified on the basis of internal reasons, and that thinking so entails *no* relativism of the sort we are considering.

This Hegelian idea goes deeper than it might seem. It might seem that all the idea amounts to is that at some later time, we might be able to persuade someone with whom we are disagreed by giving him internal reasons, but *for now* at least, there is an impasse and so relativism about reasons is true. But this deflationary description misses the real theoretical status of the appeal to the subject-*in*-History. That appeal is precisely intended to repudiate the idea that we should think of subjects as being in slabs of time, with relativism about their values holding in one slab, and possibly passing away in the next. Despite the talk of different times, that would *still* be to conceive the subject essentially synchronically at each slab of time. A genuinely diachronically conceived subject (hardly ever the subject that is considered by analytical philosophers and political theorists writing about morals and

politics, or anything else), a subject conceived neither synchronically nor in discreetly periodized times, but rather a subject conceived of as essentially historically open-ended, is exactly intended to replace the subject relativized to a time, when his values may have a 'relative' truth, or his reasons a relative closure. Hence the inclination to say, "Relativism *for now*, but not perhaps *later*!" is to not yet quite to be on board with the depth of the point which Hegel's stress on the importance of history for our conception of human subjectivity, is making. To be fully on board is to see that *no* sort of relativism is sanctioned for subjects conceived essentially diachronically and therefore open to the internal conflicts that history may provide.

I will admit again, however, that my appeal to Hegel here is highly selective since the fact that history should play this kind of role in our understanding of moral subjectivity—paradoxically—opens things up against the very sort of historical determinism that historicism has suggested to many (though, as I said earlier, not all) readers of Hegel. The select element in Hegel which I am applauding is the idea that Reason (what I, following, Williams call 'internal' reason) does its work in a human subject by bringing about changes of value via deliberation on her part to overcome internal conflicts among values (something that popularizing Hegelians—never Hegel himself—describe overly schematically in dialectical terms of the trio of "thesis, antithesis, and synthesis"); and that one does so very often as a result of conflicts (what in the popular Hegelian representation is called "antitheses") that emerge because of incoming states of information provided by specifically historical encounters. Once viewed this way, there is no reason to think that relativism follows upon the loss of external reasons, and so no reason to be pessimistic about the scope of *internal* reasons to be a resource for secular liberal political outcomes. Within this selective Hegelian view of the importance of history and of diachronic subjectivity, the right way to describe what has wrongly been described as this 'pessimism,' is simply to say that there is no Whiggish *guarantee* of a consummation of the historical process in a secular liberal outcome. That is not pessimism, it is just a recoil from a *deterministic* historicism. One can be as optimistic as one wishes and hold out for history to introduce conflict in the points of view that one wishes to offer internal reasons to in order to change their commitments. Thus secular liberalism can remain committed to its ideals with confidence and a secular state need not retreat to neutrality between secularism and other religious points of view, even in the face of the most vexed disagreement with these other points of view.

That we should see the significance of history for subjectivity along these lines is, however, not a merely metaphysical position; it is in a rarefied sense itself an *evaluative* position. This point is crucial. After all someone else may see history as having a rather depressing record in resolving conflict between groups, and resist my repudiation of relativism, a repudiation which has *the default* lie in the view that it is always at least possible that new conflicts *internal* to an individual or group will—via internal reasoning—help resolve conflicts *between* individuals or groups. Such a person will simply not find the record in history sanctioning this default position. The default says that when there is an intractable value-disagreement between two parties, history may always inject in one of the parties, the sort of internal conflict necessary for the other to provide internal reasons to it. The interlocutor here will deny this, saying that the record of history, does not justify this to be the default position. I have no purely philosophical or metaphysical argument against such an interlocutor, who does not agree with me about how to view the significance of history for moral subjects in conflict with one another. To find this interlocutor wrong is, in the end, to assert a value. In fact we cannot find him wrong without asserting a value, we cannot find him wrong by a non-evaluative argument. And to say that is to assert the priority of the evaluative over the metaphysical.

This needs more patient exposition.

The default position says we must see the significance of history for subjectivity to be as follows: that one always see it as at least *possible* that a dispute in values may be resolved by internal reasoning as a result of the requisite *internal* conflict being introduced into one or other of the disputing parties by the incoming states of information that historical changes provide to their psychological and value economies. It is when the significance of history is viewed along these lines (as allowing such a default position) that we are in turn allowed to turn our back on the claim of relativism that the deepest disputes in value might constitute an impasse. That is to say, such a default allows one to make *no* concession to a possible right or truth or correctness on the side of one's opponent, in cases of interesting and deep moral and political dispute. So the hard question, which I raised above, remains: *what gives us the right to view the significance of history for moral subjectivity along these line*s? Why may we not see its significance along quite different lines, see history as providing too much evidence for *disallowing* what I just claim as at least a necessary and permanent *possibility*? The nested modalities are complicated here, but my interlocutor's idea will be that what I am insisting is a possibility, might only be contingently so, there may be no necessity that such a possibility always exists. History is simply not to be viewed in the optimistic way I am viewing it. It is possible that such dispute resolving internal conflicts are introduced into moral subjects by history but it is possible also that they are not. Why, then, am I insisting that history must be viewed in a way that it *necessarily* leaves it as an open possibility that such a conflict is introduced?

As I admitted, there is no answer to this question (and so there is no justification for taking the default position I do on the significance of history) along lines that are *non-*normative or purely metaphysical. There is nothing in history, nothing in the concept of history and our place in it, when that is conceived in purely descriptive and non-normative terms, which could instruct us to view history as offering us the default position I insist on. To take the default position I do, therefore, is *itself* to take a higher-order *evaluative* stance. And it is only by taking such an evaluative stance that a secular liberal can express the confidence that disputes in identitarian contexts with illiberal tendencies need not ever produce the despondency of saying that perhaps both sets of principles (liberal and illiberal) may have their own sort of right on their side.

What do I mean by saying that it is in the end an *evaluative* stance, which gives a secular liberal the confidence to insist on the exclusive rightness of secular liberalism against illiberal opponents, *despite* the loss of externalist reasons and the loss of externalist justifications of liberalism? I mean simply that it reflects a value, a value central to what I think is best conceived as a special and unusual version of *humanism*.

Here is how I have allowed myself to think of it.

When one is in a moral dispute with another, even if it is a bitter and vexed dispute, it is far better to be have an attitude of *inclusiveness* towards one's foe that makes one strive to share the truth as one sees it with him, rather than to adopt an *excluding* attitude and say that he may have his own sort of truth or right on his side. The latter is what the relativist pluralist says, and it will be said by anyone who does not see the philosophical and methodological force and insight of the Hegelian notion of a subject and its significance for morals and politics, as I am seeing it. For someone who does see that force and that significance, the attitude will be quite the opposite, the value of inclusiveness. This is the value which claims that it is far more attractive to say to even one's bitterest foe in a moral or political conflict, "You must be my brother" than it is to say, "You can never be my brother." To insist that he must be your brother, to refuse to allow him his own truth and to

strive to convince him of the truth as you see it and judge it, is to show the requisite attitude of inclusiveness towards him. This may seem paradoxical since one is *refusing* him his own sort of truth for his views in the name of seeing him as *one's brother*. But that is just how it is. Perhaps only a subject as perverse and abstract as Philosophy can see in this, no paradox at all.

I will admit that the rhetoric of 'must' versus 'never' in my last paragraph to express the contrasting values does not present the best options. I did use the flamboyant rhetoric even so and presented the options in their most extreme form, in order to bring out the contrast vividly. To care about the truth, as one sees it and judges it, and to care enough for others who do not see it, to strive to share it with them, need not take on the vocabulary which has it that one thinks that they 'must' be one's brother and embrace the truth we see. But that vocabulary captures something of the caring that I want to stress here against the relativist form of pluralism, which precisely does not care in this way. Opposing such a relativistic form of pluralism, I am saying, involves not merely appealing to the Hegelian notion of subjectivity in the way I do, but also seeing that appeal as an assertion of a value of caring about the truth (as one sees it and judges it), rather than showing an indifference to others who disagree with one, as the relativistic pluralist does when he says that they may have their own sort of moral truth on their side. Such a way of caring for truth therefore itself reflects a caring for *others*, caring enough to want to convince them of the truth. That is the point of the talk of 'brotherhood' as a value, a humanist value, which in this specific sense, is missing in the relativist cast of pluralism.

To many humanists, such talk of brotherhood—flowing as it does from an ideal of caring for something so *abstract* as truth, and wanting to share that abstract thing with others—will seem too intellectualized a way of talking compared either to the down-to-earth ways in which we talk of the humanist values of brotherhood or to the sentimental, literary cast it had taken on ever since the rhetoric of 'sweetness and light.' It is brotherhood based on an epistemological value rather than on the usual sort of moral values of solidarity and support that are articulated in standard versions of humanism. To such traditional humanists, the paradox of denying one's moral foe his own sort of rightful moral view in the name of brotherhood, will seem to undermine the doctrine from within. But, as I said there, is no paradox here. It is a sign of greatly respecting someone, of including him in humanity, that you deeply want him to believe what you believe to be the truth rather than grant him as a truth (*his* truth), what you take to be deeply false. I admit that this is a very abstract way of configuring the ideal of human inclusiveness. But why should humanism not have highly abstract sources? These sources are precisely what might give the doctrine some further muscle and rigour, and therefore make it less dismissible as a musty and pious doctrine.

If I am right, it is, in the end, this abstractly humanistic and evaluative interpretation of the role of History in the constitution of human subjectivity in morals and politics that underlies the repudiation of relativism in the realm of moral and political values.[15] (In the realm of science, the situation is somewhat different. Even if one took a

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[15] It is important to understand two things about this evaluative, quasi-humanist stance. First, one must be clear about its role in the dialectic of this paper. It is *not* something that is being wheeled in against relativism *directly*. It is not a matter of saying "I take an evaluative stance that my position is right and not merely one right position among others." That would be glib and utterly unconvincing, a way of avoiding wrestling seriously with the spectre of relativism created (prima facie) by the stress on internal reasons and the denial of external reasons. Rather the evaluative stance has been wheeled in on the coattails of the Hegelian argument against relativism that invokes the subject-in-history. It props up *that* argument,

cognitivist conception of moral values, as I happen to do, issues regarding relativism in the *more purely* cognitive realm of science, are distinct, and responses to relativism there would need to be constructed along different lines, a complicated form of difference that I cannot possibly take up here.)

What are the implications of this understanding of the Hegelian argument, for our specific subject of secularism in this paper?

6.

The goal has been to show that this repudiation of relativism allows a state that has adopted (S) to remain committed to its idea of a lexical ordering. It was intended to preempt the need for a state to abandon (S) and retreat to a neutrality between non-religious and religious points of view.

If the argument of the last section is convincing, then, though anyone, committed to the idea of an overlapping consensus on some policy such as (S), is committed to a pluralism about *reasons* for subscribing to (S), they are *not* committed to a pluralism about the conclusions and outcomes based on those reasons. This is because the argument allows them to say that they are not committed to merely a relativistic truth for (S), but committed to its truth, *simpliciter*. With right (a right given by the entire Hegelian dialectic, I am presenting), (S) takes its own commitments to be true and holds out for them against opponents, given the possibility that history will inject conflicts in their opponents' thinking so as to make them come around to (S)'s commitments by the internal reasons that those conflicts might introduce into their opponents' moral-psychological economies. It holds out for fully secular outcomes, and in no way wavers in confidence about the truth of (S), even if it grants that (S) might not be implementable until internal reasons, as a result of historical developments, are available to religious points of view that, in the present contain illiberal commitments. So, in the examples we considered earlier, it would insist that something like laws requiring censorship of blasphemy or gender-unjust family laws of a religion must be placed lower in the lexical ordering than free speech and gender equality. It would not grant that these laws

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which is the primary argument against relativism. The evaluative stance is merely a stance taken on the question of how to interpret history and the prospects it holds out for the possibility of the introduction of conflicts into the psychological economies of those with whom one is in political or moral conflict. It is a stance that gives one the right to take a certain default position on that question. It offers no other more direct certification of anti-relativism. The second thing to understand about the evaluative, quasi-humanist stance is this. It is a stance taken towards each other by disputants who are in *conflict* or disagreement. It, therefore, has bearing only when there is a genuine conflict or disagreement between two positions, say between (S) and some position that opposes (S). And a genuine conflict or disagreement occurs only when (S) can, in the first place, claim to have relevance and application, given certain social conditions, and given the ideals that the polity has set out to achieve. When it can rightly claim this, then, if there is some position that opposes (S), that position and (S) are in conflict. But (S) may sometimes be quite irrelevant, given certain social conditions and certain goals adopted by a polity. Thus for instance, if I am right in what I say in the discussion of Gandhi in section 4(f) above, (S) had no conspicuous relevance to India at the time when Gandhi was initially writing. For this reason, Gandhi did not hold a position that was *in conflict* with (S); he was rather saying that (S) had no relevance, no application in the context of Indian society at that time. It, in turn, follows that the evaluative, quasi-humanist stance that gives support to the entire Hegelian argument, is not something that (S) can adopt in that context. There is no genuine disputant to adopt it towards.

possess truth, relativistic truth, from within their own larger religious points of view. The whole point of the stress on a Hegelian framework for understanding the role of internal reasons is to ensure that (S) need not make any such concession or compromise on the *exclusive* truth or rightness of its commitments to free speech and gender-equality, giving it the right to assert the lexical ordering it favours. Thus (S) will not allow secular liberalism to be demoted to just one truthful standpoint amongst others, as was suggested would happen if relativism were true. This makes all the difference to the question whether we should hold fast to (S) or concede the superiority of a state-neutralist ideal that Taylor has proposed as being better.

The issue can be usefully explored by looking at a very well-known and much-discussed example from India as a test case. In the aftermath of Indian independence, Muslims in India, after much fascinating discussion during the constituent assembly debates, were allowed by constitutional provision to live by their own personal and family laws. (I am going to consider this case, ignoring the fact that there *has* been a reform of the Hindu code as it applies to family laws. What this asymmetry between Muslims and Hindus shows is that granting Muslims their own personal laws runs afoul of *both* (S) *and* the state-neutrality ideal that Taylor has advocated, But, I am concerned for now only with the fact that Muslims were granted their own personal laws and how that falls short of (S).)

How exactly that awarded outcome of an exception to Muslims in India is to be interpreted is actually a rather delicate matter, and one may see in it two possible ways of conceiving of what the state intended and therefore two possible ways in which the state conceived of itself.

One way to look at this case is to see it as triumph of the kind of pluralism that is suggested by the relativist position. What pluralism, in the relativist form, allows for is the idea that a liberal democratic state, will, in the name of minority cultural rights, grant to minorities (in the Indian case, to Muslims) their own special personal laws on divorce, marriage, alimony, etc., even if some of these laws are illiberal in various respects. On this reading, the state may grant to a minority Muslim community their own *alternative nomic or customary system*, which is a rival system to liberal law, with its own sort of right or truth on its side, and the pluralism that the constitution was committed to must acknowledge this fact.[16] So interpreted, the state can be viewed as approximating a neutralist position, not favouring secular ideals over Muslim personal laws as a lexical ordering would, but instead granting the Muslim demand in the constituent assembly debates that they be allowed to live by their own personal laws. *Some* of the *Muslim* voices in the debates over the constitutions took this view of how to conceive of this exception to be granted to Muslims to live by their own personal laws, arguing that the very idea of minority rights was to be interpreted as allowing, along these lines, for a minority to be awarded such an exception.

But the Hegelian considerations I have presented, allow another possible reading of the concession to Muslims, which I also think is the more historically accurate one, the one that the *preponderance* among the framers of the constitution actually had in mind. On this reading, it is not that the Muslim community is being granted its demand for living by its own personal and family laws on the grounds that their standpoint, as a minority with rights, like the secular standpoint, has truth on its side, which must be acknowledged by a

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[16] I repeat that as it happens, of course, the exception was granted only to Muslims, so this is not a good example of the neutralist ideal that Taylor favours, but that is just what I am putting aside from consideration for the purposes of giving this relativistic reading to the Muslims being granted an exception. This differential owes partly to minority rights issues attaching to Muslims, who are minority in India.

state conceived of as neutral between these two standpoints. Rather the thinking was this. In the aftermath of independence the Muslims who remained in India and did not migrate to Pakistan lost a great deal—they lost their count in numbers not only due to migration to Pakistan, but due to the killing of Muslims in the pogroms on the Indian side of the newly partitioned borders, they lost jobs, they lost land, in the vital sense of its wide availability in instruction in schools and colleges, they even lost their language, Urdu. In the face of these losses and the demoralization it generated, depriving them of the cultural aspects of their lives that are centred in their family and personal laws would be an inhumane blow for a state to deliver to a minority community. What a secular state, subscribing to something like (S) must, therefore, do, is to wait for history to bring into Muslim thinking the sorts of internal conflict that might give them internal reasons to come around to secular ideals of gender-inequality and put aside their family and personal laws. But until then, the lexical ordering that places those laws second to gender-equality may be put in *abeyance*—which is not at all the same as putting the lexical ordering *aside*. One would put it aside only if one thought that the state thinks that there is *truth* on the side of those laws, equal to the truth of ideals of gender-equality. But one would put it merely in abeyance on quite different grounds --because it would be *coercive* to implement (S) until the necessary internal reasoning takes place among Muslims.

(I should add as an aside that this issue has been excruciatingly complicated at present by the fact that the demand for reform of Muslim personal law usually comes these days—and for some years now—not from anything recognizable as allowing Muslims to reform them as a result of their own internal reasoning, but rather from a kind of harassment of a minority by the Hindu right-wing in the country. That Muslims could be reasonably expected to deliberate their way to allowing a reform of their personal laws in the face of such harassment would be to utterly fail to understand the psychological preconditions for how internal reasons usually work in a historical context. A group's capacity to change via internal reasoning requires a great deal of psychological security and self-confidence, precisely what is undermined by the demoralization caused by such harassment.)

Returning from the details of this example to the general point: this second reading reveals that a Hegelian framework for thinking of justification by internal reasoning and the adoption of political outcomes by an overlapping consensus, preempts any need to think that a state *must* be neutral between secular ideals and religious standpoints. It allows for a full and confident adherence to (S), confident not only about it having the exclusive right on its side on the liberal outcomes at stake, but in the hope that it will provide internal reasons eventually to other opposing illiberal points of view to embrace those outcomes.

How does this point nest with my applause for Taylor's motives for redefining secularism, while resisting the redefinition itself? It does so by echoing the distinction between matters of definition and matters of justification made at the outset, in another closely related distinction: between what is the right *outcome* for a secularist to seek, on the one hand, and, on the other, what is the right way of *implementing* this outcome.

One half of the idea, here, is that certain forms of justification suggest the relevance of certain forms of implementation. If secularism had an externalist justification, i.e., if secularism could assume that those who oppose it are not merely possessed of different substantive values but are failing by the light of a more general and universal rationality, then a secular state could perhaps regard itself as having more right to proceed in the implementation of secularism, without awaiting the consent of those who oppose it. But if secularism is stuck with only the resources of internal reasons for its justification, i.e., if secularism must acknowledge that those who oppose it may be fully rational from within

their own substantive value commitments, then a secular state has greater obligation to exercise more carefully the scruple of seeking first to persuade them with internal reasons before proceeding with its adoption and implementation.

But the other half of the idea is that just as questions of the justification of an ideal are distinct from what the ideal is (from definitions of the ideal), questions of how best to implement an ideal are also distinct from what the ideal is and need not alter our understanding of which is the better or best ideal to adopt. It has been the argument of the first four sections of this paper that questions of justification of the ideal of secularism need not set us on the path of redefining the ideal; and it has been the burden of Sections 5 and 6, that the scruple of awaiting the implementation of secularism till internal reasons are provided to those of oppose it, need not make a difference to what we think is the best ideal of secularism that needs to be implemented. Or to put it the other way round, if (S) is, in the appropriate context, the right ideal for a secularist polity to adopt, that may still leaves open the possibility for us to say that in *implementing* (S), we should do exactly as Taylor suggests. We should involve, in the fraternalist manner he rightly proposes, all the voices in the polity, including the anti-secularist religious voices, just as happened in the constituent assembly debates in India where the Muslims were able to make their demands and argue for them. It may turn out that, in its wisdom, the fraternal collective of those voices concludes that—on the matter of some particular set of religious laws or practices—until some group finds the *internal* reasons to accept the State's implementation of (S), the implementation must be held in abeyance. If so, it should be quite possible to allow—without conceding anything theoretically amiss with (S)—that (S) remain temporarily unimplemented, just as happened with Muslim family laws in post-Independent India, on the *second* reading I gave.[17]

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[17] Two important points must be made here. First, I am not actually taking any firm stand on whether it was or was not right for the Muslims to be allowed to live by their own personal laws in post-independent India. To take such a stand would require a very detailed discussion of the historical context, which would be quite out of place in a paper of this kind. I am only saying that, a non-coercive or 'non-dominating' conception of the politics of secularism (defined as (S)) might well find nothing wrong, from a theoretical point of view, in that particular outcome in India, so long as the outcome was interpreted along the lines of the second reading I gave it, and the second reading was justified by the historical context. Second, and far more important, though I think, in fact, that the concession to Muslim personal laws was exactly such a Hegelian moment in the Indian constitution, I do want to say something to clarify this position since it is poised to be misunderstood in a rather elementary way. In the two papers mentioned in footnote 11, I argue at length—invoking specific examples, for instance one from provincial history in Bengal in the 1920s—how the *state itself* may play a role in helping religious groups and communities to come to see and to formulate these internal reasons and then to play the role of implementing those changes via reform of laws and customs. Therefore, the idea of *internal reasons for reform* is not to be confused with *internal reform* of a religion from within the religion. The point of the latter is that the state has no role to play in changes within a religious standpoint. That is not the point at all of this paper's argument and its stress on internal reasons. Let me be clear, then, about what is and is not the point. The point *is*: a) to view the state as having its own voice in the field of providing reasons, but since these will be *internal* reasons, they will have to be, as I said earlier, articulated in the *conceptual* vernacular of the groups to which the state seeks to provide internal reasons to change, as well as b) for the state to give religious groups a voice in the field of reasons, in the fraternal spirit that Taylor urges, by allowing them to see and articulate their own internal reasons for any change in their position. (A constituent assembly is just one such large and prominent forum where groups can come together for precisely such a fraternal deliberation.) What, then, is *not* the point of the argument about

Why exactly should it be possible to allow this? Because the deepest concern behind Taylor's demand of fraternal involvement of all groups, I believe, is that a state must, as far as it is possible, be *non-coercive* in the adoption and implementation of the policies it views as justifiable. (Jeffrey Stout wisely advises me that since states have sanctions backing the laws they make and implement, they are, by their very nature, going to be coercive no matter what, and so a better term to use to describe Taylor's motivation is that he would like the state to be, as far as is possible, *non-dominating*. I am happy to follow his advice.) Taylor's concern here is a moral one and it speaks for a certain conception of politics. What it properly motivates, indeed what it forces us to do, is to look for the right forms of adoption and implementation of (S). It would be wrong to think that, in doing so, what it motivates and forces are merely things in the practical rather than in the theoretical domain. The entire construction of the role and relevance of the Hegelian notion of subjectivity in the dialectic of this paper was intended to provide a *theoretical* solution to the problem posed by Taylor's search for a non-coercive and overlapping consensus for the secular outcome or, to put it in my own favoured terms, to the problem of implementing a secularism whose justification is based only on internal rather than external reasons. But what the paper has nevertheless insisted is that this theoretical solution requires neither a theoretical re-definition of secularism nor any concession to the superiority of state-neutrality ideals of over (S). It is an avoidable inference that the non-domination in the adoption of secularism that motivates Taylor's arguments makes a difference to what it is we are adopting or should adopt. It does not lead to another *conception* of secularism.[18] Such secularism as is worth believing in is well characterized by (S).

Yet, I have also said that it is not required to believe (S) in all contexts. The relevance of a doctrine of the sort that (S) exemplifies emerged in certain historical contexts when certain political goals could not be pursued without something like the lexical ordering (S) formulates. (S), therefore, is a valuable doctrine to embrace and implement in contexts which approximate those historical conditions and which contain those political goals. It is

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internal reasons? It is not the point to insist that the groups must carry out their own internal changes without any role for the state to play. Of course, if the groups did make their own internal changes (eg. reform of their personal laws), that may be something a subscriber of (S) can applaud. But there is nothing in the idea of seeking internal reasons for (S) that requires that reform of religious laws must take this purely internal form with no role for the state to play. Sumit Sarkar conflates and confuses this distinction between internal reasons for reform and internal reform, in equating my view of these matters with Partha Chatterjee's in his paper, "The Anti-Secularist Critique of Hindutva: Problems of a Shared Discursive Space," *Germinal* I (1994).

[18] I must confess to having written an essay about twenty years ago called "Two Concepts of Secularism" (see reference in footnote 11), in which I had written of how a secularism based on internal reasons is one concept of secularism, and another based on external reasons is a second concept. This is what I am saying in the present paper is a mistake. There is only one concept of secularism and there are two different paths of justification for them. And even in that early essay where I did make a contrast between two concepts of secularism in the title, I was very clear in the details of what I had said that I was not really *defining* secularism differently in each, but merely saying that it makes a big difference to politics, in particular a politics that avoids some of the subtle coercions that secularism can be party to, if we take internal and external reasons as different *justifications* seriously, and stress the former over the latter. If, in that essay, I was not always as careful to be *explicit* about this distinction between issues of definition on the one hand, and justification and basis of implementation on the other, the present essay can be seen as a detailed corrective to such a lapse.

not a doctrine that holds without regard to context, purely on the basis of abstract philosophical arguments or on the basis of glib assertions of the universal reach of a certain familiar form of modernity.

Taylor's own desire to redefine secularism is based –as we saw in Section 3-- on the argument that a context of modernity has now emerged in which his redefinition is needed. This, as he sometimes puts it, is the context of multiculturalism, in which talk of '*toleration*' is no longer appropriate. A state neutral between different religious cultures and also non-religious cultures should constitute the new meaning of secularism in such a multicultural context. I will end with some closing remarks on the relation between (S) and the idiom of 'toleration.'

What is it about the idiom that seems inappropriate in the present multicultural West? The answer is obvious. It is a familiar and repeatedly made observation that the very idea of toleration presupposes *disapproval* of what is tolerated, and a condescending acceptance of what one disapproves. If, in the context of an aspiring multiculturalism, one wants to improve on or replace the attitude of disapproval with some other moral psychological attitude that cultures (including secular cultures) must exhibit towards one another, it might seem that we have two choices. One is to emphasize a different, less hostile, kind of negative attitude: *indifference* rather than disapproval. And his redefined secular ideal of state neutrality towards different religions might be seen as precisely maintaining such an indifference towards them, neither favouring nor disfavouring any of them, allowing each culture, in turn, to thrive in relative autonomy and with indifference rather than hostility towards one another. The other is to stress a more positive attitude: *respect* rather than disapproval.

Now, it must be admitted that it is exactly indifference that is opposed by the humanism underlying the Hegelian ideal of historical subjectivity in the understanding of secularism as defined by (S). When one finds something appealing in the attitude expressed by "You must be my brother" towards someone with whom one is in moral conflict, it is the appeal of *not* being indifferent to his views. Respect is another matter. As I said earlier, it *is* showing respect of this abstract humanist kind to someone with whom one is morally disagreed, when one seeks to change his mind and make him one's brother. But *for just that reason* one is not showing indifference towards him and his views. So, if indifference is the crucial way in which one must (in multicultural societies) supercede the disapproval implicit in 'toleration,' does this repudiation of indifference by (S) mean that (S) is retaining the element of disapproval that is presupposed by the idiom of 'toleration'? And if so, should we conclude that the state neutralist secularist ideal is more apt than (S) for a context in which multiculturalism has taken us beyond the ideal of toleration? I think it would be a mistake to infer that. The moral psychology involved in (S) is more subtle than that conclusion suggests.

First of all, because (S) replaces indifference with a concern to register disagreements and attempt to change the minds of those points of view with which one is in moral and political disagreement, its assumption of disapproval of one point of view for another is never accompanied by any condescension whatever. Even if disapproval of another point of view is present, (S) demands the sort of positive engagement between points of view that leaves no place for condescension. But for the same reason, it is not at all obvious that there really is even an assumption of disapproval that it really makes. The sorts of efforts that are needed to reach others (with whom one is deeply conflicted) by providing them with *internal* reasons and arguments requires one not merely to get past indifference towards their views, but also, in a sense, to get past the disapproval of their views. Now, this idea of "getting past" disapproval could, of course, still be interpreted as meaning that the disapproval of others is a necessary condition, even if not a sufficient condition, when one seeks to change their

minds in situations of moral and political conflict with them. That is, it could be interpreted as saying that the disapproval must throughout be in place, but it must be *supplemented* by some rational engagement with (rather than merely toleration of) those whom one disapproves of. However, such an interpretation of 'getting past' disapproval would not be up for the tasks at hand as I have sketched them in the last many pages. 'Getting past' the disapproval would have to really amount to *overcoming* the disapproval and *replacing* it (rather than merely supplementing it) not just with respect but with further more detailed attitudes towards the other, if one is to engage the other with something as *empathy*-demanding as the search for *internal* arguments in *their conceptual vernacular*, in order to change their minds--since as these last two sections of the paper make clear, nothing less than that are the tasks at hand.

What these further attitudes that are needed exactly are is a searching question in the moral psychology of politics and part of the exercise in these last two sections has been to bring us to the point of raising it. But, however the question gets answered, there is no reason to think that (S) falls afoul of what is needed in a context in which we have gone 'beyond toleration' to multiculturalism. Being based on a very specific form of humanism, (S) does eschew indifference, but it requires both respect and a surpassing of the familiar forms of disapproval of religions that has made the idiom of 'toleration' come to seem so off-beam in the pluralist contexts of contemporary Western modernity. (S) needs, not replacement, but merely proper implementation, in order to get us 'beyond toleration.'