

GLOSSARY

Secularisation theory:

The standard argument of ‘secularisation’ contends that modernisation necessarily brings about a decline of religion both in society and in the minds of individuals. Sociologist Peter Berger, one of the foremost advocates of secularisation during the 1960s, thus summarised his argument: ‘[b]y secularisation we mean the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols¹.’

De-secularisation theory:

Advocates of this standard maintain that despite trends of secularisation occurring in all advanced industrial societies, old and new religious beliefs and practices have nevertheless continued on the level of individual consciousness, sometimes taking new institutional forms. Peter Berger himself recanted his earlier view, admitting that the removal of land from religious authority is an index which falls short of the subjective perseverance of religious experiences worldwide².

Either/or paradigm:

The future of religion can no longer be predicted in terms of *either* complete ‘secularisation’ *or* ‘de-secularisation’ of the public square. Just as the secularisation theory fails before a global religious revival (e.g. the Islamic Revolution in Iran, liberation theology in Latin America, the global rise of evangelical Christianity) as well as the spread of new religious movements (Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientology, the Gülen movement in Turkey), so too counter-secularisation movements are unlikely to establish theocracies worldwide (with few exceptions, such as the *mullahs* of Iran). On the contrary, political scientist Olivier Roy noted that a more convincing scenario is for religious subcultures to oppose and distance themselves from the rising modern culture,³ however co-existing with the secular.

Both/and paradigm:

Keeping the categories ‘secular’ and ‘religion’ in play, some scholars assume that a third category ought be introduced to plot a progression beyond the secular/religious modern divide: to wit, that of the ‘post-secularity’. Post-secularism explains indeed the relation between religion and modernity in terms of co-existence *both* of different religions *and* of secular and religious discourses in the public square. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas, whom social sciences often acknowledge as the forerunner of ‘post-secularity’, describes the effects of this co-existence in terms of a complementary learning between secular and religious players, whereby learning from other traditions and viewpoints alters religious as well secular mentalities⁴.

¹ See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Anchor Books 1969) 107.

² Peter Berger (eds), *The Desecularisation of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids 1999).

³ See Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance. When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (Oxford University Press 2013).

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, ‘On the Relation Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion’, in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (eds) *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (Fordham University Press 2006) 258.