

# Rethinking Secularism

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## Smash Temples, Burn Books: Comparing Secularist Projects in India and China

Peter van der Veer

Much sociological attention and imagination have gone into, first, the development of the secularization thesis and, more recently, its dismantling. José Casanova has been in the forefront of this dismantling with his important book *Public Religions in the Modern World*.<sup>1</sup> He has argued that the three propositions of the secularization thesis—namely, the decline of religious beliefs, the privatization of religion, and the differentiation of secular spheres and their emancipation from religion—should be looked at separately in a comparative analysis. He comes to the conclusion that comparative historical analysis allows one to get away from the dominant stereotypes about the United States and Europe and to open a space for further sociological inquiry into multiple patterns of fusion and differentiation of the religious and the secular across societies and religions. This means moving away from teleological understandings of modernization. Or perhaps better, it means questioning that telos by recognizing its multiplicity and its contradictions. Casanova's intervention can be understood as building on the Weberian project of comparative and historical sociology but going beyond it by avoiding the reduction of civilizations to essences that can be compared and by avoiding a Hegelian evaluation in terms of "lack" or "deficit" in the world-historical process of modernization and rationalization. Eisenstadt's proposal to speak about multiple modernities similarly creates space for such a post-Weberian project, but it has to be asked what the role of secularity and secularism is in the production of these multiple modernities.<sup>2</sup>

My attempt here to examine secularism in India and China in a comparative historical analysis accepts this post-Weberian perspective, but I want to make a few introductory observations. The first is that the project of European modernity should be understood as part of what I have called "interactional history."<sup>3</sup> That is to say that the project of modernity, with all of its revolutionary ideas of nation, equality, citizenship, democracy, and rights, is

developed not only in Atlantic interactions between the United States and Europe but also in interactions with Asian and African societies that are coming within the orbit of imperial expansion. Instead of the oft-assumed *universalism* of the Enlightenment, I would propose to look at the *universalization* of ideas that emerge from a history of interactions. Enlightened notions of rationality and progress are not simply invented in Europe and accepted elsewhere but are both produced and universally spread in the expansion of European power. This entails a close attention to the pathways of imperial universalization. Examining secularism in India and China uncovers some of the peculiarities of this universalization by showing how it is inserted into different historical trajectories in these societies.

The second observation is that with all of the attention to secularization as a historical *process*, there is not enough attention to secularism as a historical *project*. Casanova has in his recent writings rightly drawn attention to the importance in Europe of secularism as an ideological critique of religion, carried out by a number of social movements.<sup>4</sup> Secularism as an ideology offers a teleology of religions decline and can function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is important to examine the role of intellectuals in furthering this understanding of history but also their relation to sources of power: state apparatuses and social movements. Secularism is a forceful ideology when carried by political movements that capture both the imagination and the means to mobilize social energies. It is important to attend to the utopian and, indeed, religious elements in secularist projects in order to understand why many of these movements seem to tap into traditional and modern sources of witchcraft, millenarianism, and charisma. Much of this remains outside the framework of discussions of secularization, but the cases of India and China show us how essential this is for understanding the dynamics of religion and the secular.

Third, I would like to point out that the religious and the secular are produced simultaneously and in mutual interaction. As many scholars have been arguing, religion as a universal category is a modern construction with a genealogy in universalist Deism and in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European expansion.<sup>5</sup> One needs, therefore, to analyze how the categories of "religion," "magic," and "world religion" are universalized. This is also true for the category of the secular that has a genealogy in church-world relations in European history but is transformed in modernity both in Europe and elsewhere.

To analyze Indian and Chinese secularism, one has to start not with the interactions between India and China, which are very few and relatively insignificant in the modern period, but with their interactions with Europe and especially Britain. It is imperialism that forces Indians and Chinese to interpret their traditions in terms of the category of "religion" and its opposition to "the secular." While there are multiple histories involved here, it is the imperial context that produces a remarkably similar trajectory which essentializes Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Daoism, and even Confucianism into comparable

entities, subjects of the new, secular discipline of comparative religion or science of religion, which attempts to emancipate itself from Christian theology. One also has to look carefully at ways in which European notions of science and its opposite, of progress and backwardness, capture the imagination of Indian and Chinese intellectuals and how this relates to the creation of the modern state. I will first deal with secularism in China, then with secularism in India, in order to show what kinds of problems secularist projects attempt to address and what kinds of violence their interventions entail.

### Secularism in China

"Smash temples, build schools" (毁庙办学 *huimiao, banxue*) is a particularly telling slogan that was used in a campaign against temple cults and religions specialists during reforms in late Ching at the end of the nineteenth century. According to the reformists, led by Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and to an extent supported by the emperor, China had to modernize quickly, and this had to be done by promoting education and getting rid of religious superstition. These two elements belonged together, since education should train people in modern, rational thought, while superstition and magical thought should be discouraged. Before the Communist victory in 1949, a number of campaigns, first in late Imperial China and afterward in the Republic, destroyed or "secularized," according to one estimate, half a million existing temples.<sup>6</sup> What the Communists did after 1949 was, to a very great extent, a continuation of these campaigns. While one might have expected that the nationalists in Taiwan, with their Confucian nationalism, would have had a fundamentally different policy toward religion from that of the Communists, the opposite is, in fact, the case. Until the late 1960s, the nationalists kept religious activities under very tight control. All of these campaigns against religion should have produced a secular China, but the contrary is true. In Taiwan, religious activities are all over the place, and with the loosening of the tight controls over religion in the PRC, we see religious activity flourishing everywhere. This paradox can be understood by closely examining the nature of these secularist campaigns.

Secularism as an ideology and as a practice in China is in the first place an anticlericalism. Anticlericalism has deep roots in Chinese history, but at the end of the nineteenth century, it gains the attention both of the popular media and of intellectuals who grapple with modern, Western ideas. Intellectuals, such as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao (1873–1929), Chang Ping-lin (1869–1936), and Ch'en Yin-k'o (1890–1969), separated Buddhism and Taoism from their clerical roots and made them into national moralities that could serve the modernization of China. Buddhist leaders such as Taixu (1890–1947) and Daoist modernists such as Chen Yingning (1890–1969) made great efforts to bring their religious under the rubric of secular nationalism. The popular press also was opposed

not to religion as such but to Buddhist and Daoist clerics, who were described not only as ignorant buffoons but also as criminals, drunks, gluttons, and, foremost, sexually debauched. Temples and monasteries were described in the emergent press in the late Qing period as dungeons for sexual debauchery, places of great pornographic potential. Clerics are portrayed in stories as visiting houses of pleasure. The main theme here is, in fact, that monastic celibacy and techniques of self-improvement are a *disguise* for a lawless, unbridled sexuality.<sup>7</sup> This theme of sexual scandal is certainly crucial in the emergence of the popular press in the nineteenth century everywhere, but the Chinese focus on clerics recalls especially the pornography that was printed in the Netherlands but distributed in revolutionary circles in France in the decades before the French Revolution. Here we see a genealogy of *laïcité* in the underbelly of the Enlightenment that connects religion with sexuality in ways that are never made explicit but that are, in my view, also behind the social energy in anti-Islamic gestures today in France.

Clerics in China were also seen as dangerously violent, since their ascetic disciplines and martial arts that inflicted violence on their own bodies could be turned against others for criminal or rebellious purposes. Obviously, this theme gained prominence in the late nineteenth century during the failed Boxer Rebellion. Clerics were able to connect to secret societies that threatened the state monopoly of violence. They combined fighting techniques with magic that made the believers think they were invincible and thus extremely dangerous. The failure of the Boxer Rebellion, however, showed Chinese intellectuals that there was no future in using magical means to defeat the imperial powers. Again, the theme of *delusion* and *disguise* comes up here with the notion that the illiterate masses are led into meaningless and ultimately fruitless violence by cunning clerics.

Besides a form of anticlericalism, Chinese secularism is a form of scientism and rationalism. From a nineteenth-century enlightened and evolutionary perspective, it pitches scientific rationality against magical superstition. Secularism is thus a battle against the misconceptions of natural processes that keeps the illiterate masses in the dark and in the clutches of feudal rulers and clerics. The term for superstition (迷信 *mixin*) comes from Japanese, as do many other terms that are employed in the discourse of modernity, such as the term "religion" (宗教 *zongjiao*) itself. Using these neologisms makes a distinction between religion, which contributes to the morality of the state and superstition, which is detrimental to modern progress. These views are shared by intellectuals of all persuasions, including the nationalists and the Communists, but also by many reformist religious thinkers. This is both a discursive and an institutional shift as an aspect of the transition from the ancient regime of the Qing empire to the modern Republic. The traditional system of three teachings (*sanjiao*)—Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist—in which Confucian state ritual defined the framework for the other two, was transformed in the Republic by

the notion that there were five acceptable world religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Confucianism was kept outside of this arrangement, because it was considered to be both national instead of global and in essence secular rather than religious. Confucian intellectuals did try to turn it into a secular civil religion, but this met with little success outside of the nationalist elite. These religions, which are officially recognized today, are being organized along the models of Christianity in nationwide associations that are ultimately controlled by the state. What remains outside of this is what is often called popular belief (民间信仰 *minjian xinyang*), namely, all of those cults that are, in fact, closely connected to Buddhist and Daoist ideas and practices but are not controlled by the traditional Buddhist or Daoist orders or by the modern state-engineered associations. Moreover, many of the Buddhist and Daoist local cults are hard to transform into nationwide associations. Especially Daoism had been deeply intertwined with local cults, or, as is sometimes said, Daoism is "the written tradition of local cults."<sup>8</sup> The opposition between officially approved religion and local forms of superstition gives authorities a great space for controlling and repressing all kinds of religious expressions.

Anticlericalism and scientism together were deeply connected to Western, enlightened ideas about progress, in which magic had to be replaced by scientific rationality and by moral religion as a basis of national identity. Major currents of Western thought, such as social Darwinism, neo-Kantianism, and Marxism, were absorbed in China. Not only did prescriptive thought about society come to stand in the light of rationality, but also descriptive social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, lost their ability to describe the effects of these ideologies on society, since they could not distance themselves from them. Intellectuals played an important role in the secularist projects of nationalizing and rationalizing religion, and, crucially, they were part and parcel of large-scale state interventions to produce a modern, national identity. While Buddhism and Taoism were to some extent sources for the creation of national religion, Confucianism was itself being considered as already both national and rational. The attempts to transform Confucian traditions into a civil, national religion were extremely interesting as a form of social engineering, but they ultimately failed, largely because Confucian teachings could encompass Daoist and Buddhist teachings but not the social energy that local Daoist and Buddhist cults could mobilize.

I do not want to detail the sordid history of state persecution of clerics and destruction of temples both before and during Communist rule. I only want to draw attention to the fact that under communism, the antisuperstition and anticlerical campaigns were combined with antifederalism campaigns. The 1950s saw not only the brutal elimination of millenarian movements such as Yiguandao (一贯道) but also the destruction of feudalism and thus the redistribution of temple land and temple property, secularization in its original sense. Mao, as a good Marxist, predicted the decline of religion as part of the creation

of a socialist China in the following words: "The gods were erected by peasants. When the right time comes, the peasants themselves will throw away these gods with their own hands."<sup>9</sup> But as matter of fact, Mao and the party did everything to destroy the gods, but the peasants did everything to rescue them.

One of the great puzzles of China today is not that it proves the secularization thesis wrong but that despite a century of secularism, religion has not been destroyed. In fact, we see everywhere in China a more open performance of religious rituals. This raises a number of issues. First of all, if the secular and the religious are produced simultaneously, what has happened to the religious under secularist attack? What is the nature of Chinese religion today? Has it been hiding, and does it now come out of the closet, and what does that mean? Second, how can we explain that secularism has not been able to fulfill its world-historical task? Third, what may be the future of secularism in China under the current conditions of religious expansion?

First, then, what is the nature of Chinese religion and secularity today? On the one hand, we find a general acceptance in China of the idea that religion is not important to the Chinese, that the Chinese have always been rational and secular and with modernization are even more so. This view is not only prevalent among intellectuals but is also more generally held. And on the other hand, there is a widespread interest in religious practices, in visiting shrines during tourist trips, in religious forms of healing. Both in cities and in the countryside, communities are rebuilding their temples and have started awkward negotiations with the authorities to be allowed to perform their ceremonies again. Religious activity seems to be embedded in a fully secular life, in which job insecurities, health, and desire for success and profit create a demand for divine support. With the decline of the iron rice bowl of the state, this demand has only increased. The same intellectuals who deny the importance of religion pray for their families' welfare wherever they can. The chain of memory, to use Hervieu-Leger's term, however, seems to have been brokeo and needs to be patched up.<sup>10</sup> In general, people who engage in rituals (rather than theology or philosophy) are not very knowledgeable about them, but in China this is quite extreme. This is enhanced by the fact that the clergy has been largely exterminated or so much brought under control of the party that they have lost their liturgical bearings. This situation in itself gives a lot of space for new religious movements in which laypeople play an important role, such as the many *qigong* movements.

Second, how do we explain the failure of a century of systematic destruction of Chinese religious life? One answer lies in the millenarian nature of Maoism itself. The party absorbed quite a lot of the social energy that is available in religious movements. Yiguandao was a huge movement with millions of followers at the moment of the Communist take-over, but it was destroyed quickly after the killing and torturing of its leadership without inciting huge rebellions. One of the reasons was that the Communists, like the Yiguandao, also promised

paradise on earth and seemed to have a better go at it. Mass mobilization (群众运动 *qunzhong yundong*) for the transformation of self and society has a central place both in Chinese religion and in Maoism. Studying and especially reciting Mao's writings again recall religious chanting. The finding and expelling of class enemies and traitors follow quite precisely the trappings of Chinese witchcraft beliefs and exorcism, even in the giving of black hoods as symbols of evil to the accused.<sup>11</sup> The practice of public confession likewise continues religious practice.

Third, what is the future of secularism in China? As I already indicated, secularism is well established in China in daily life, as well as in people's self-understanding. Secularism as repression of religion is also widely accepted by the general public if a movement, such as the Falun Gong, is shown in government propaganda to threaten the social and political order. It is much less tolerated as such when local authorities try to intervene with manifestations of popular religion. In fact, in many cases today, the authorities are pleased with religious activities that draw outside money. Secularism is also certainly still the frame in which clerics have to operate. The Buddhist and Daoist associations are still largely controlled by the state.

### Secularism in India

At first sight, it may look as if Chinese and Indian secularisms are totally different, since in China secularism is antireligious, while in India secularism is a form of state noninterference in religion. Such a view is not untrue, but it is instructive to compare Chinese and Indian secularisms. Secularism in India has a number of elements in common with Chinese secularism, although the meanings of these elements are structurally altered by the nature of the caste system and of interethnic and intercommunal relations. In Hinduism, Brahmins are the most important clerics, but anticlericalism has deep roots in Brahmanical thought. Priests who perform a religious service to the community and are paid for that in gifts are looked down upon by Brahmins who devote themselves to studying the Vedas. This strand of anticlericalism fuels many of the reforms of the large temples in South India, in which powerful middle-class laymen demand that ignorant priests are reeducated to learn Sanskrit and ritual performances. More generally, the Brahmin caste as a whole came under attack in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the rise of explicitly secularist movements, especially in South and West India. Jyotirao Phule (1827–1890) began a movement in Maharashtra against the alleged exploitation of low castes by Brahmins. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (1879–1973), also known as Periyar, founded a social respect movement in Tamil Nadu that became the basis of an anti-Brahmin Tamil nationalism. He connected his anticlericalism with a theatrical atheism that was expressed in publicly burning sacred books, such as

the Sanskrit Ramayana. The sources of this anticlericalism that evolved in the case of Periyar in atheism were twofold: Christian missionaries had for a long time vilified Brahmin priests and their rapacity and ignorance in their project to convert especially tribals and low castes away from Hinduism. This rhetoric is taken over by the anti-Brahmin movements. It is combined with racial and linguistic theories, developed by Orientalist scholars such as Friedrich Max Müller, which distinguish the Aryan invaders from the indigenous low castes. Brahmins are then shown to be really different from, say, the (South Indian) Dravidians and are portrayed as exploiting the indigenous peoples. We can already see that Indian anticlericalism is decidedly different from Chinese anticlericalism because of the connection between caste and religion. It is the Brahmin caste that comes under attack, and Brahmin priests are taken to be the symbols of that caste. On the other hand, both in China and in India, the main issue is the introduction of modern egalitarianism in a hierarchical society and thus the connection between feudalism and religion.

We also find scientism and rationalism in India as an element of secularism, as we did in the Chinese case. However, already in the nineteenth century, Indian intellectuals did not emphasize the opposition between science and religion but instead emphasized the scientific nature of indigenous traditions. Secularist attacks on traditional religion were rare, although attempts to purify religion from so-called superstition and to show the scientific foundations of religion were taken up by reformers in a number of proto-nationalist and nationalist movements. Rational religion, as a major current in these reform movements, offered a home to intellectuals who wanted to reflect on developments in science from Hindu traditions. A good example is J. C. Bose (1853–1937), a renowned physicist and plant physiologist, whose work on electrical waves and plant consciousness was animated by attempts to understand the unity of nature from the perspective of the Hindu philosophical school of Advaita Vedanta, in which Bengali intellectuals had been trained.<sup>12</sup> The social network formed by such scientists and Hindu reformers such as Swami Vivekananda shows how the development of scientific and religious thought was interwoven. Philosophers such as Henri Bergson and Aurobindo embraced Bose's vitalistic science eagerly. While Chinese intellectuals also found rationality and science in some religious traditions, especially in the field of medicine, there is a much stronger sense than in India that progress can only be made by separating science from magic and by destroying magic.

Secularism in India emerges in the context of a secular colonial state that is professedly neutral toward religious divisions in society. The British in India are deeply concerned with projecting an image of transcendent neutrality. They were at least partially successful in doing this, since Indians today often see *dharma-nirapeksata*, the indigenous term indicating the neutrality of the state as a distinctive character of Indian civilization, rather than a colonial invention. Sometimes, for example, by Gandhi, this neutrality is more positively interpreted

as *dharma-samabhava*, the equal flourishing of religion under the state's neutrality. After the Mutiny of 1857, the British were afraid to be seen interfering with the religious activities and sensibilities of their Indian subjects. This implies that the colonial state had to hide its modernizing and secularizing interventions in society under rhetoric of neutrality because it derived its legitimacy not from India but from a democratic process in Britain. This neutrality, however, is interpreted by Indian nationalists as forms of divide-and-rule, especially in the area of Hindu-Muslim relations. The state is thus condemned as pseudo-secular, an argument that is later revived by Hindu nationalists against the postcolonial government. The postcolonial state derives its legitimacy from democratic elections in India and is thus even less able than its predecessor, the colonial state, to hide its interventions in society and religion, such as the Temple Entry Acts and the abolition of untouchability, under the cloak of neutrality.

Since the colonial state is secular in the sense of being neutral toward religion, this gives wide scope for connecting religion with anticolonial nationalism. Anticolonial nationalism in India draws deeply from religious sources, both ideologically and organizationally. In earlier work, I have made a distinction between a moderate, pluralist vision of the Indian nation and a radical vision that wants to promote a singular religion as the core of national identity.<sup>13</sup> The pluralist vision is the ideological foundation of India as a secular state, as distinguished from the radical vision of Muslims separatists that was the foundation of Pakistan as a "homeland for Muslims," as well as from the radical vision of Hindu nationalists who fight for a Hindu India. The moderate vision has always been part of the secular ideology of the Congress Party, a party which ruled India for most of postindependence history.

Congress found itself confronted with two major problems. First of all, Hindu-Muslim antagonism was a major threat to the creation of an Indian nation. This problem became increasingly crucial in the struggle for independence, and secularism was conceived as the answer to it. Second, Indian society was marked by one of the most pervasive systems of inequality in the world, which was religiously sanctioned by Hindu traditions. Again, secularism was conceived as an answer to this. While state interventions were recognized as crucial to the transformation of Indian society into a modern nation, Congress leaders agreed that large-scale violence should be avoided. A major argument in developing Indian secularism was made by Gandhi when he pleaded for non-violence and tolerance. However, except for a brief period, Gandhi was not officially a member of Congress leadership but a moral exemplar outside of party politics. Gandhi's moral example could be an element in producing secular tolerance, but such an example is not enough for the daily business of regulating social life. After independence, the modern state could not refrain from intervening in society.

Critics of Congress secularism today, such as T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy, have understood the rise of communalism in India as a backlash against a

long-term campaign of an interventionist state to impose secularism on a fundamentally religious society.<sup>14</sup> While their emphasis on state power is correct, their criticism of Nehru's Congress seems fundamentally mistaken. Nehru's position was that the state should not attempt to make India a monocultural society in which the minorities would feel alienated. Pragmatically, Congress adopted the role of neutral arbiter of religious difference, just as colonial administrators had done. Separate civil codes for Hindus and Muslims, which had developed in the colonial period were continued in secular India. Potential sources of violent conflict, such as the disputed site of Babar's Mosque in Ayodhya, had to be controlled and managed, rather than fundamentally solved. In fact, it is this policy to which the BJP, a Hindu nationalist party, today objects. It does not claim that an antireligious secularism has dominated Indian society but that it has been a pseudo-secularism that has given religious minorities special benefits in order to get their votes. So, it argues not that secularists had launched an attack on the religious traditions of Indian society but that it had left minority traditions intact for electoral reasons. The BJP claims to be secular, but it has launched campaigns to destroy mosques that had been built on Hindu sites and rebuilt Hindu temples, arguing that the majority religion on which the nation is built is Hinduism and that the only traditions that had to be dealt with by the secular state were those of the (Muslim and Christian) minorities. Nehru's cautious but sometimes ambivalent policies toward multiculturalism and the ways they came to be challenged in the 1970s and 1990s show the importance of the definition of state secularism.

The limitations of Congress secularism that tries to avoid violence in its interventions in society are clear from the failure to get rid of untouchability and caste hierarchies. Ambedkar, one of the great untouchable leaders of Congress and architect of India's secular constitution, came to the conclusion that the secular, liberal state could not solve the problems of untouchability that were deeply embedded in codes of honor and respect. Early in his career, he demonstrated his stance against Hinduism by burning Hindu law books in public; at the end of his life, he decided to convert to Buddhism in order to escape from the Hindu caste system.<sup>15</sup> In a very original manner, he came to grips with the dualism of redistribution (class) and recognition (caste). His conversion shows that religious conversion can address these issues sometimes better than conversion to secular ideologies such as socialism or liberalism.

## Conclusion

Secularisms in India and China are a product of the imperial encounter. Certainly, there are precolonial traditions of anticlericalism and antisuperstition in India and China. These do not disappear, but they are transformed by the imperial encounter. That encounter itself is crucial, and it is fundamentally

different in India and China. In India, the colonial state has to perform a certain secular neutrality toward religion because of its colonial nature. It avoids an outright attack on the beliefs and customs of the natives, while masking its fundamental interventions in society by cloaking it them neutrality. In China, reformers within the Qing dynasty and later in the Republic do not have to perform this neutrality while introducing Western notions and enforcing them in society. Chinese reformers can therefore call for the destruction of temples, whereas Indian reformers call for open access to temples for untouchables in temple-entry agitation and burn books to challenge Brahman hegemony. In India, religion becomes the basis of resistance to the colonial state, and it has to be reformed and modernized in order to make it part of the morality of the modern state. The Indian discussion, then, is primarily about reforming Indian traditions, not about destroying them. The Indian reformers who want to destroy Hinduism as a form of oppression are certainly important, but they do not dominate the nationalist movement. In fact, their political position derives precisely from their social marginality as untouchables, as in the case of Ambedkar, or from their regional marginality, as in the case of the Tamil leader Periyar. They may burn sacred texts but certainly not temples.

The secularisms found in India and China are emancipatory projects, and by their very nature, they are violent. The transition to modernity is obviously violent, it does violence to traditional arrangements, and therefore the relation of secularism to violence is crucial. The secular mobilization of social energies in China is incredibly violent, discursively and practically. The Chinese secular utopia is strikingly millenarian and magical and thus reintroduces the traditional elements that it wants to eradicate but in another configuration. The mobilization of social energies in India is also violent, but it is not secularism that produces antireligious violence. On the contrary, Indian secularism tries to stem the violence between religious communities. The secular utopia, as is clearest in Gandhi's campaigns, is thus one of the peaceful coexistence of equal religions within a neutral state. Nonviolence is therefore the center of Gandhi's attempts to create a secular India. It is not only the emancipation from the colonial oppressor that has to be nonviolent but, even more, the emancipation from inequality and communal opposition that has to be nonviolent.

The Chinese and Indian cases show us that secularism is not simply antireligious in these societies, although there are antireligious elements in it, but that it simultaneously attempts to transform religions into moral sources of citizenship and national belonging. The masses have to be reeducated to realize their emancipatory potential, and religions can be used as state apparatuses to perform this reeducation. One does not have to smash temples to build schools; one can also use temples to educate the people. In the regime of secularism, religions are nationalized and modernized. While religion is an important element in the production of these imaginaries, it can never be entirely contained by the secularist frame. It may produce linkages outside of the nation-state as

world religions do; it may produce alternative visions of the moral state and thus become dangerous for secularist control, as in millenarian movements that have emerged in China after the demise of Maoism. Precisely because secularism is a project and not a process, it is bound to be incomplete and is bound to produce contradictions that it itself cannot explain.

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