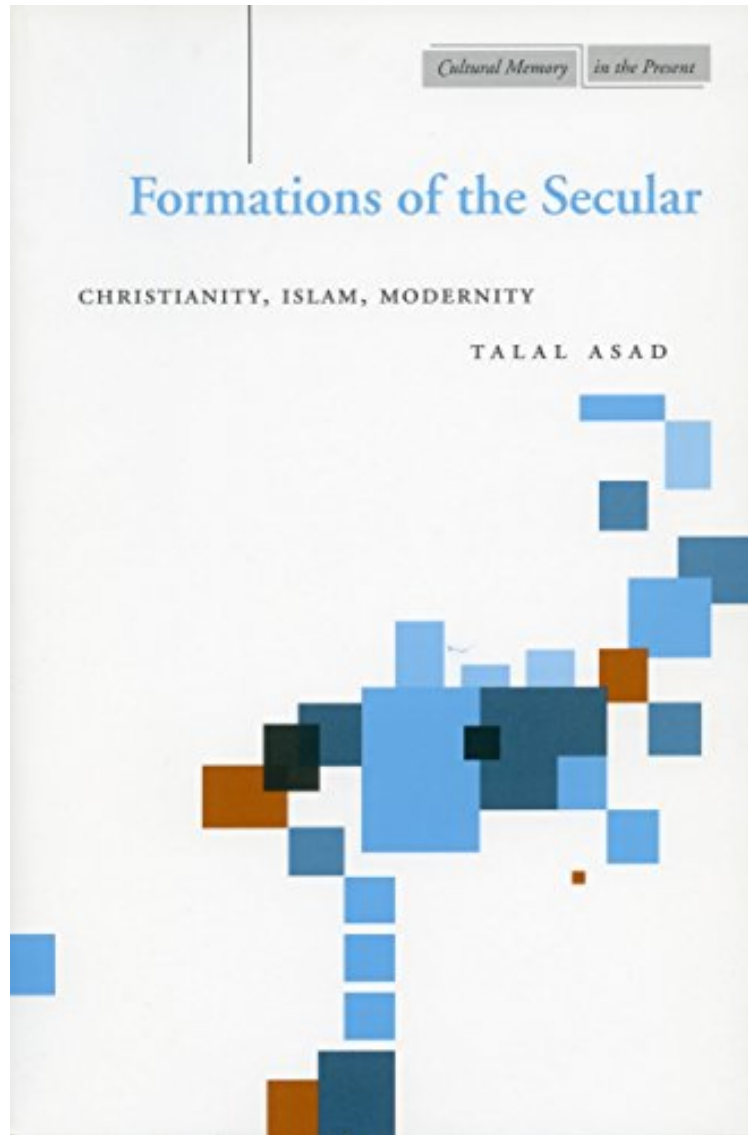


[DOWNLOAD] Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Cultural Memory in the Present)

Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Cultural Memory in the Present)

Talal Asad

ebooks / Download PDF / *ePub / DOC / audiobook



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#151763 in Books Stanford University Press 2003-02-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .80 x 6.00l, .89 #File Name: 0804747687280 pages | File size: 53.Mb

Talal Asad : Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Cultural Memory in the Present)

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity (Cultural Memory in the Present):

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By a rose by any other name Textbook 14 of 17 people found the following review helpful. An erudite and praiseworthy albeit easily misunderstood attempt at unclocking the

Secular disguise. By Omar Chaudhry There is more here than an Anthropology of the Secular and mostly because a full appreciation of the concept can never arise from a direct response to the question "what is the secular?". And so Asad continues throughout to offer examples and elements of alterations in human thought which may have opened up a new space, creating suitable conditions and allowing 'the secular' to mark its territory and flourish. Asad makes clear that he does not equate or associate individual intentions (in the writings analyzed) with wider structural developments, the method preferred in standard historical accounts. In his chapter on the secular transformation of Egypt for example, it is made clear how reformers unwittingly muddle two sets of grammars (classical Islamic and modern secular) and thereby construct an ambiguous third set of concepts with significantly 'secular' significations. That is ultimately the essence of this study. An attempt to trace transformations in the grammar of our language (the genealogy of concepts) And as such there is hardly one single discovery that this book can impress upon us. As readers, we can not be passive receivers but rather engage with Asad's suggestions and appreciate that this multi-faceted concept known to us as the 'secular' takes on different forms in different places as it homogenizes distinct temporalities into one singular history. Our desire for a simple linear solution, a direct "anthropology of the 'secular'" in the vein of so many "anthropologies of 'religion'" is itself an entailment of a secular mindset. Although 'Human Rights', 'agency' and 'pain' may seem like distractions for someone focusing on secularism, they are evidence of the presence of 'modernity' and the 'secular' in our world. They are tools which the secular uses to maintain its neutral stance, and finally they are the site of conflict and contradiction which the insightful scholar can expose. Finally, I must mention that there are sections of this work which do seem a little meandered and complex but these are few and often mulling over these areas or even inquiring into quoted texts should clarify. Some of the negative comments made in other reviews only further highlight misunderstandings or expectations of a traditional anthropological approach. In a sense, Asad's indirect, and for some, vague and incoherent method is ironically the evidence of what he is up against!

91 of 98 people found the following review helpful. Almost an Anthropology of the Secular By Tron Honto Asad, an anthropologist, is one the most interesting minds working on the concept of secularity vis vis modernity and its tendentious universality. The entire work is loosely an examination of the secular as an epistem and secularism as a political doctrine respectively as well as the interrelation between the two. Asking what an anthropology of secularism might look like, he avoids being bold and shuns an attempt to actually construct one. It's a concept that he's flirted with before in GENEALOGIES OF RELIGION, but any attempt to construct a magisterial theory are absent. As a work overall, the end result is a disjointed collection of previously published articles inter-mixed with new ones; however, it is worthy mentioning that even the previously published articles that reappear in this work we significantly revised from the original-at least the ones I was familiar with. Nevertheless, this doesn't detract from the collective value of the book. All the ideas he puts forward are cogent, probing, and provocative. His leading contribution is in the area of how secular discourse is perceived from the periphery of the modernization process-a periphery that 'doesn't fit' into the metanarrative of Amero-European modernity since the Enlightenment. Thus, the concluding essay on the transformation of law and social ethic in colonial Egypt is alone worth the price of admission. His treatments of human rights, agency and pain, cruelty and torture, and Muslims in Europe best demonstrate the feasibility of employing anthropology as a disciplinary lens through which to scrutinize modernity and its 'essential' components [esp. secularism]. Asad crosses the barrier of viewing the secular simply as the mere 'separation between church and state' and enters into territory where questions can be posited such as 'what created the historical moment which made possible the thought of secularism?' As such, he rolls back the shiny veneer of modernity to unravel the threads of its inner fabric. Thus, he facilitates the process whereby we can shed facile questions like: "when will Muslim societies secularize?"-moving on to questions that inquire into the historical processes that formed the secular/human subject of normative modernity in Europe. Localizing European/Western experience in such a way, a more lucid account of the advent modern society, state, religion, etc. in its non-European manifestations becomes increasingly attainable. Though rhetorically convincing, there are parts of the book that remain tendentious at best. In particular, this goes for his arguments for secularism origins lying in the modern cleavage between private morality and public law. Systematic delineation of the two spheres is actually quite old whether one refers to the Christian or Islamic tradition-just to mention a few examples, one could take the ETYMOLOGIES of Isidore of Seville or the various Muslim jurists extrapolations of the principle of "al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar" (i.e., commanding the good and forbidding the wrong). Hopefully, fuller elucidation will more fully distinguish these pre-modern conceptualizations from their distinctly modern (and secular?) configurations.

Opening with the provocative query what might an anthropology of the secular look like? this book explores the concepts, practices, and political formations of secularism, with emphasis on the major historical shifts that have shaped secular sensibilities and attitudes in the modern West and the Middle East. Talal Asad proceeds to dismantle commonly held assumptions about the secular and the terrain it allegedly covers. He argues that while anthropologists have oriented themselves to the study of the strangeness of the non-European world and to what are seen as non-rational dimensions of social life (things like myth, taboo, and religion), the modern and the secular have not been adequately examined. The conclusion is that the secular cannot be viewed as a successor to religion, or be seen as on

the side of the rational. It is a category with a multi-layered history, related to major premises of modernity, democracy, and the concept of human rights. This book will appeal to anthropologists, historians, religious studies scholars, as well as scholars working on modernity.

"A dark but brilliantly original work, *Formations of the Secular* is one of the most important books on religion and the modern in recent years." (H-Net s)"This wonderfully illuminating book should be read alongside the author's *Genealogies of Religion . . .*" (Religion)"Formations of the Secular is also a difficult if stunningly eloquent book, a response both elusive and forthright to the many shelves of 'books on terrorism' which this country's trade publishers are rushing into print." (Bryn Mawr of Comparative Literature)"...one of the most interesting scholars of religious writing today." (Christian Scholar's)"...Asad's brilliant study remains a defining piece of intellectual and scholarly contribution for all of those interested in exploring the religious and the secular in the modern era." (The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences)From the Inside FlapOpening with the provocative query what might an anthropology of the secular look like? this book explores the concepts, practices, and political formations of secularism, with emphasis on the major historical shifts that have shaped secular sensibilities and attitudes in the modern West and the Middle East. Talal Asad proceeds to dismantle commonly held assumptions about the secular and the terrain it allegedly covers. He argues that while anthropologists have oriented themselves to the study of the strangeness of the non-European world and to what are seen as non-rational dimensions of social life (things like myth, taboo, and religion), the modern and the secular have not been adequately examined. The conclusion is that the secular cannot be viewed as a successor to religion, or be seen as on the side of the rational. It is a category with a multi-layered history, related to major premises of modernity, democracy, and the concept of human rights. This book will appeal to anthropologists, historians, religious studies scholars, as well as scholars working on modernity.