Contested Secularities: Religious Minorities and Secular Progressivism in the Netherlands

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Abstract
In this paper, we propose to analyze ideas, practices, institutionalizations, and public controversies related to the religious-secular divide in the Netherlands in terms of contested formations of secularity. We introduce the concept of ‘multiple secularities’ and use it as an interpretive device for an analysis of the historical emergence and transformation of Dutch secularity. After that we show how historically shaped notions of secularity operated within the parliamentary debates on blasphemy, freedom of speech, and religion that unfolded between 2004 and 2009. We argue that long-standing notions of secularity as a means for balancing religious and ideological diversity are challenged by and give way to a new preponderance of secular progressivism. By secular progressivism we mean the idea that within an ‘immanent frame’ in which the secular ontologically embodies the ‘real’ and constitutes the ground for normative universalism, religion turns into a historical vestige whose protection must be subordinated to universalistic notions of civic liberties. However, this development is still contested in the Netherlands.

Keywords
secularity; modernity; Netherlands; religion; Islam
1. Introduction

For two decades the Netherlands have witnessed on-going and very heated debates about immigration and integration policies, the alleged ‘failures of multiculturalism,’ and the complex spectrum of public religious diversity. As in many other European countries, these debates largely focused on Islam. Starting already in the early 1990s, these issues came to a head in the aftermath of the murders of Pim Fortuyn, a decidedly liberal as well as anti-Islamic politician, in 2002 and of the artist and Islam critic Theo van Gogh in 2004. In these discussions multi-culturalist approaches to integration were fundamentally questioned. As within some strands of populist discourse Islam was increasingly constructed as the ‘other’ of Dutch national culture and its paramount value of tolerance, Islam's adaptability to European secular modernity and to its values of individual freedom and equality was put to scrutiny and sometimes fully denied. Controversies over Islam, however, were paralleled by controversies over the inherited rights of other religious minorities, especially orthodox Protestants, resulting in attempts to clarify the relationships between religious rights and other basic liberties. Eventually, this gave rise to and manifested broader concerns with the place of religion in the public sphere, legitimate and desirable scopes of religious expression and authority, and the cultural adequacy of specifically Dutch forms of religious corporatism.

In this article, we situate these developments within broader reconfigurations of the religious-secular divide currently taking place in countries across Europe and examine how in these discourses in the Netherlands notions of the secular are unsettled, contested, and recomposed. We do so by tracing the historical emergence and transformation of a dominant interpretation of Dutch secularity, by analysing how competing ideas of secularity operated and shifted within parliamentary debates on freedom of speech following the murder of van Gogh, and by demonstrating how the new assertiveness of ‘secular progressivism’ becomes tangible in recent conflicts over ritual slaughtering and gay rights. By ‘secular progressivism’

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1) As Theo van Gogh was murdered by a Muslim extremist and Pim Fortuyn by an environmental activist, their contexts of interpretation certainly differ. The two murders however, despite their difference in background, were both incidents in which verbal provokers were subjected to brutal violence. The entanglement of the murder of Fortuyn with the debate on Islam and public speech became clear when Muslims responded with relief to the announcement that the murder was not linked to Islamist extremism.
we mean the idea that within an “immanent frame” in which the secular ontologically embodies the ‘real’ and constitutes the ground for normative universalism, religion turns into a historical vestige whose protection must be subordinated to universalistic notions of civic liberties.

A new wave of social science scholarship on secularism has divorced the notion of the secular from linear narratives of modernity and pointed to the diverse genealogies, historical national trajectories, and changing expressions of secularity. In Europe, these expressions are bound to change as their main point of reference shifts from previously ‘indigenous’ dynamics and power struggles over the social place of Christianity to Islam. Nevertheless, the social role of Christianity is affected by Islam debates inasmuch as historically shaped institutional arrangements specifying the place of religion in public and institutional spheres are under pressure of adaptation. This may happen either in terms of an opening up of institutional arrangements to newcomer religions, or in terms of new legitimizations of its privileged position that depict Christianity as cultural heritage, ‘civil religion,’ or ‘national culture.’

Our analysis of the Dutch case is based on the concept of ‘multiple secularities,’ which we introduce below. The concept entertains multiple relationships with the new literature on secularism while departing from it through an emphasis on the cultural meanings of religious-secular distinctions. Importantly, this implies a focus that differs from two other

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perspectives on similar sets of issues: sociologists of multiculturalism⁶ have addressed political and popular opposition to Islam as a turn to assimilationist models of citizenship and struggles for recognition and inclusion of cultural communities where religion is rendered a subcategory of culture. Theories of secularization,⁷ by contrast, stress the effects that religious decline has amongst native Dutch, the privatization of religion and cultural liberalization have on native perceptions of Islamic religiosity, as well as the resulting polarization and fissures in the cultural landscape. While producing highly important insights, both perspectives have shortcomings when it comes to addressing secularity. Sociologies of multiculturalism pay little attention to the power of institutionalizations of the religious-secular divide in shaping the conditions under which Islam as a religion becomes implicated in the politics of multiculturalism, while theories of secularization sometimes put too little emphasis on the cultural content of secularity, or ignore the cultural specificity and historical contingency of the religious-secular distinction in different settings. We think that the concept of multiple secularities better captures these specificities and contingencies.

The paper proceeds as follows: we begin with a concise summary of recent social science debates on multiculturalism and integration in the Netherlands. After that we introduce the concept of ‘multiple secularities’ as historically and culturally contingent forms of religious-secular distinctions, arguing that Dutch discourses on Islam and religious minorities not only articulate a turn towards assimilationist models of national identity but also a shift in the dominant interpretation of secularity that is in need of historical contextualization. In the main part of the paper, we trace this shift in three steps: starting from the founding of the Dutch Republic in the sixteenth century, we offer a selective reading of Dutch history to describe the emergence of a model of secularity for the sake of accommodating religious diversity.


This model comes under pressure due to two processes: first, the process of secularization after the Second World War and the rise of a native, post-Christian secular majority with a strong focus on individual liberties, especially in the realm of gender relations, sexuality, and abortion; and second, the strengthening of modernist secularism based on the rejection of confessional and ideological divides. From the perspective of ‘multiple secularities’ we interpret this as a shift towards the foregrounding of models of secularity for the sake of individual liberties and secularity for the sake of national integration and development as two parallel fault-lines. Importantly, secularity acquired a more progressivist notion, which created certain tensions with the hitherto dominant model. The developments especially after the murders of Fortuyn and van Gogh indicate an escalation of these tensions, inasmuch as religious minority rights are seen in contradiction with the individual liberties of the secular majority, which comes to engage with Islam and other religious minorities on very different terms. Next, we examine these terms through an analysis of parliamentary debates on issues of religion, immigration, integration, and freedom of speech occurring in the wake of the murder of Theo van Gogh, and demonstrate how contestations over Muslims and Orthodox Christians are entangled in a general dynamic of reassessing Dutch secularity. We show the emerging preponderance of a new type of secularity for the sake of national integration and development, in short: secular progressivism. Finally, we shortly pinpoint how the new assertiveness of secularity plays out in legal debates on gender equality, same-sex marriage, and ritual slaughtering. Both the parliamentary and the legal debates document the contradictions between secular progressivism as a cultural force on the one hand, and the commitment to minority rights on the other.

2. Multiculturalism, Islam, and Integration

The terminologies to describe the Dutch situation vary. Scholars talk about the end of multiculturalism, the rise of a new nationalism, the growth of

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populism, and of the culturalization and virtualization of citizenship.\(^9\) Central to all these notions is the observation of contestations over cultural definitions of national identity that emerged from efforts to integrate immigrants of Muslim background. Muslims account for 5.8% of the Dutch population; about half of them are Dutch citizens.\(^10\) As in other European countries, Muslim presence is mainly the result of government-sponsored labour migration beginning in the 1960s. It is interesting to note that well into the 1980s, when the idea of a return to the first generation’s country of origin was already abandoned, migrants were officially encouraged to preserve their cultural identities as an avenue to integration through ‘emancipation’; shadows here of the Dutch religious corporatism known as the “pillar model.”\(^11\)

In the 1990s, however, integration discourse shifted towards emphasizing individual responsibility for integration.\(^12\) Public demands for migrants to culturally assimilate became more powerful, and critiques (of the alleged failures) of multiculturalism eventually became the hallmark of Pim Fortuyn’s LPF\(^13\) and Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV).\(^14\) Public attention to Islam strongly increased with the publication of Paul Scheffer’s “The Multicultural Drama”\(^15\) in 2000, and peaked with the national elections in 2010 in which the PVV became the third largest parliamentary fraction, and with Wilders’ trial on charges of group defamation and hate speech. Importantly, both Fortuyn and Wilders underpinned their arguments


\(^11\) Ibid, 43.

\(^12\) Ibid, 45; Schinkel, “Virtualization.”

\(^13\) Lijst Pim Fortuyn.

\(^14\) Partij Voor de Vrijheid.

about Islam with temporal progressivist narratives in which the “dominant humanist culture” was associated with Judeo-Christian heritage.16

A number of political theorists have suggested diverse models for reassessing the place of religion in society. Paul Cliteur, for example, promotes a stronger emphasis on secularism as the basis for politics and public morals.17 Afshin Ellian, similarly, sees a lack of shared fundamental values. He views open public debates on multiculturalism in combination with a constitutional patriotism as productive in terms of promoting national integration.18 In contrast to that, Bart Labuschagne and Hans-Martien ten Napel envision a more active role of the state in fostering the emergence of minority elites and emphasize interreligious dialogue as an avenue toward a shared public sphere.19

Han Entzinger et al. on the contrary, analysed the interface of social position and identity of migrants and show that while during the 2000s socioeconomic and also cultural integration has indeed improved, this is not reflected in the subjective views of immigrants.20 In their view the polarized public debate in fact inhibits integration. Authors such as Ruud Koopmans et al. argue that it is less the public debate than the Dutch model of multiculturalism that creates obstacles for integration.21

Jan Willem Duivendak, however, questions the very assumption of the Netherlands as a multicultural society and sees a rising “culturalization” of citizenship, which is reflected in growing political emphasis on the adherence to cultural values at the expense of socioeconomic issues such

20) Han Entzinger & Edith Dourleijn, De lat steeds hoger: de leefwereld van jongeren in een multi-etnische stad (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2008).
as access to labour markets. This culturalization acquired particular public visibility with the recent discursive employment of tolerance against sexual liberalism and homosexuality as markers of cultural membership in the Dutch national community. “The culturalization of citizenship,” Paul Mepschen et al. argue, “denotes the increasing importance attached to culture and morality in shaping citizenship and immigration policy [...] Implicated in this process is a temporal narrative framing European modernity against Muslim tradition, where sexual freedom has come to stand, metonymically, for secularism and rational, liberal subjectivity.”

By and large, the idea of culturalization entails a shift of scholarly perspectives away from Muslims or other immigrant communities and their cultural attributes, towards the cultural landscape of Dutch society itself and its native populations. Friso van Houdt et al. place such trends toward culturalization in the context of ideologies and practices of neo-liberal communitarianism, in which citizenship is turned into an entitlement to be “earned” through moral achievements. We agree that understanding contemporary debates about Islam in the Netherlands requires a shift toward the cultural parameters of Dutch mainstream society. We argue, however, that within these parameters the changing interpretation of secularity, religion and its place in the public sphere are as important as discourses on national culture and citizenship. We suggest that recent scholarship on secularism, and the concept of multiple secularities in particular, are analytically helpful for grasping these changes and their historical sources.

3. Secularisms and ‘Multiple Secularities’

Ongoing religious vitality in many parts of the world, the emergence of new religious movements, and particularly the political and cultural

22) Duyvendak, “Multicultural Model.”
26) Van Houdt, “Citizenship.”
complexities arising from the need to accommodate immigrant or ‘newcomer’ religions, have all led to fundamental critiques of secularization theories and engendered productive debates on secularism. In the European context, the recent literature on secularism has unsettled the dominant equation of Europe as a unified secular political space.\(^{27}\) In many ways building on David Martin’s work,\(^ {28}\) scholars pointed to the specific Christian genealogy and historicity of concepts of the secular\(^ {29}\) and to the inextricable links between specific secular trajectories and histories of state-formation and nation-building within Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox scenarios.\(^ {30}\) European modernity accommodates a host of different models, ranging from French *laïcité*, also termed “radical secularism”\(^ {31}\) or “assertive secularism”\(^ {32}\) to various forms of institutional cooperation (e.g. in the Netherlands and Germany) or state churches (e.g. in Denmark and Greece).

In many studies, however, the usage of the term secularism tends to conflate the *social practices and institutions* whereby religion and secular spheres or spaces are differentiated and the *political ideologies* that serve to legitimate such practices and institutionalizations. For reasons of analytical clarity, in what follows we use the notion of ‘secularity’ to capture the institutionally, culturally, and symbolically anchored forms and arrangements of differentiation between religion and other social spheres. Secularity is therefore more encompassing than secularism in that it also captures the at times latent, taken-for-granted, and implicit forms of demarcating religion. Often, however, secularity is socially legitimized through guiding ideas that set the basic terms for practices of distinction. The idea of culturally grounded distinctions defining the conditions as well as appropriate scopes, spaces and times of religious expression, is obviously associated with sociological theories of differentiation. However,


\(^{30}\) Casanova, “The Secular.”


in contrast to some of these theories we see differentiation and symbolic boundary drawing as inevitably contested, historically and culturally contingent, and reversible. This historical and cultural contingency is expressed in the idea of multiple secularities.\(^{33}\) It seems to us that that similar to how Shmuel Eisenstadt’s concept of “multiple modernities”\(^{34}\) offered a way out of the crisis of modernization theories, the concept of multiple secularities could stimulate new ways of thinking about the relationships between religion and secularity in modernity beyond secularization theories.

We assume that secularities acquire different shapes in different countries or regions; they function according to different cultural logics that document specific social histories of conflict as well as characteristic configurations of competing notions of the secular. Such ambivalent configuration may be consequences of colonial encounters or immigration. We assume further that secularities ‘respond’ to specific societal problems as their reference problems and offer ‘solutions’ to them. Obviously, these problems arise with different degrees of urgency and at different points in time.

Based on both theoretical and empirical considerations, we identify four such reference problems: (1) the problem of individual freedom vis-à-vis dominant social units, be they groups or the state; (2) the problem of religious heterogeneity and the resulting potential or actual conflict; (3) the problem of social or national integration and development; and (4) the problem of the independent development of institutional domains. These four problems constitute motives and provide motifs for institutionalizing distinctions between religious and non-religious social spheres. As latent motives and practices, they can certainly coexist; as overt motives and motifs they may compete with each other. It seems, however, that under specific circumstances one of them can become dominant by being associated with a guiding idea thereby pushing other motifs, at least temporarily, to the background. Undoubtedly, these motifs are often highly contested.

We use the formula “secularity for the sake of ...” to designate such basic types. Articulating the societal problems we distinguish between the following forms: (1) secularity for the sake of individual rights and liberties; (2) secularity for the sake of balancing religious diversity; (3) secularity

\(^{33}\) For a detailed discussion of the concept see Monika Wohlrab-Sahr and Marian Burchardt, “Vielfältige Säkularitäten.”

for the sake of societal integration and national development; and (4) secularity for the sake of the independence of institutional domains. The four forms are associated with different guiding ideas: (1) the ideas of freedom and individuality; (2) of tolerance and respect; (3) of progress and enlightenment; and, finally, (4) of rationality, efficiency, and institutional autonomy.

The distinction between basic types of secularity is an ideal-typical construction in the Weberian sense. This implies that in empirical cases we will often find more than one of these motifs, intermingling with or contesting each other. Only under very specific circumstances will one of them become dominant. It is also not taken for granted that secular-religious divides are associated with strong guiding ideas. It seems likely that during “settled periods” cultural understandings of secularity will remain latent and that they become manifest in periods of conflict. Such conflicts can become “critical junctures” in Ahmed Kuru’s sense and trigger shifts in historical orientations.

In the literature on secularism distinctions are made between passive and assertive, or moderate and radical secularism. When applied to contemporary contestations over the integration of European Muslims, the general impression is one of a shift towards assertive versions of secularism in some European countries, and the Netherlands appear to be a case in point. Beyond identifying variations in secularism’s assertiveness however, we see a need to explore the historically contingent meanings of secularity. The condensed forms of these meanings can be retrieved through the constant comparison of cases and through typological reconstruction. It is clear that this methodological approach cannot substitute detailed historical analysis and is in certain tension with such analysis. When using terms such as ‘models’ however, we do not suggest that the dominant forms are uncontested; we rather assume multiple and constant tensions between different logics of secularity. The intellectual merit of such typological work is to understand in which ways the Netherlands are similar to or different from, say Germany, France, or India.

37) Ibid.
38) Modood, “Moderate Secularism.”
The argument we develop in the following sections is that the Dutch trajectory is marked by a version of *secularity for the sake of accommodating religious diversity* that developed early in Dutch history but remained dominant well into the second half of the twentieth century. Since the 1960s, this understanding has been challenged by the rise of liberal individualism as a part of the “expressive revolution,”\(^{39}\) which is itself a product of Protestant piety. We interpret this as a shift towards a notion of *secularity for the sake of individual liberties*, which was paralleled by modernist concerns over progress through unity. In the recent past, however, we see a clear new emphasis on national integration underpinned by neo-enlightenment, secular progressivist discourses on individual liberty, and equality.\(^{40}\) This shift has been made possible by the hollowing out of the corporatist structures of the pillar system through the secularization process and the post-war expansion of the welfare state. It follows the rise of expressive liberal individualism, which after a transitional period spanning from the 1960s to the early 1990s now increasingly centres secular normativity on liberal individual autonomy as the basic societal ideology.

4. The Historical Emergence of Dutch Secularity

The reference problem that gave rise to Dutch secularity can be traced to the reign of the Spanish crown in the territory that is now the Netherlands, marked by confessional plurality as an early centre of the Protestant Reformation. The power claims of the Spanish monarchs as well as the Catholic inquisition provoked anger amongst urban elites and Dutch nobility as a consequence of which Prince Willem organized a rebellion that led to political independence and the founding of the Dutch Republic. In the wake of the rebellion, bridging confessional divides was seen as imperative, and religious diversity as well as the emergence of new controversial strands of radical philosophy constituted enduring points of conflicts over competing notions of tolerance. Many authors have pointed to the ambivalences in factual tolerance highlighting the gap between legislation and local

\(^{39}\) Lechner, “Netherlands,” 107.

practices as well as regional and group-based differences. Pragmatic dealings with diversity were reflected in theological and intellectual debates on tolerance, for example between Pierre Bayle and Pierre Jurieu. The Dutch concept of toleration arising from there certainly competed with the concept of “libertas” as it was employed by Spinoza and lent currency by dissent groups such as the Collegiants. Early on, however, cultural diversity implied not only the Christian confessions and Judaism, but also various strands of freethinker movements.

From the perspective of secularity two things are important here. First, the construal and codification of religious freedom in terms of individual freedom of conscience, and the ban of religious persecution in the Union of Utrecht in 1579 drew boundaries between church claims to truth and the spaces of the individual. Second, the management of confessional diversity was inextricably bound up with the balancing of group privileges with a view toward maintaining public order. Dutch secularity then meant, first and foremost, individual liberties and the pacification of group conflicts, principles that stood in mutual tension from the beginning. After the victory over the Catholic kings, the Reformed Church acquired a greater public role without the emergence of a secularist ideology as would later happen in France.

Particularly important for the history of secularity were the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which is the period of conflict between liberal elites and anti-revolutionary religious movements that emerged in opposition to tendencies of secularization and liberalization. Dutch liberalism as manifest in the constitution of 1848 was far from anti-religious, but it rejected exclusivist confessional notions, particularly those developed by religious agitators such as Kuyper in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the process, education turned into the major arena of conflict between liberals and orthodox. Despite being granted equal rights for the first time, the Catholic minority decided to side with orthodox Protestants when confronted with liberal education policies. The conflict was eventually contained through the granting of suffrage, for liberals and social

democrats and state-sponsored education for Catholics and Orthodox, giving rise to the much-debated ‘pillarization’ model of Dutch society. It has been questioned to what extent stability in the Netherlands had really been threatened by religious diversity before pillarization, as Arendt Lijphart argued, or whether the formation of ideological blocs has been the consequence of the historic compromise as Hans Daalder suggested, or whether elites even fostered ideological divides in order to dampen social conflict. Importantly, however, the resolution of the conflict between liberals and orthodox pinpoints the insistence on a passive model of secularity in a historical situation that was—on any account—a “critical juncture” and it gave manifest expression to what we call secularity for the sake of accommodating religious-ideological diversity.

Struggles over schooling, however, also point to some analytical problems associated with objectivist descriptive categories of passive and assertive secularism in Kuru’s concept. In his analysis of the pillar system Lijphart shows that liberals were willing to construe schools as a “neutral space” which was not anti-religious but committed to a nationally unified culture. The explicit confessionalization of schooling, however, thwarted these commitments. The liberal project acquired its assertive and secular nature only in confrontation with religious movements with similarly potent ambitions to shape society. Lijphart quotes from the debate:

We build our public schools, also to your benefit, in a way that whenever your religion is not honoured, and you turn to us in order to complain, you can be assured to be granted justice. But we cannot go one step further and allow worldly power to become the servant of the extension of your churchly power.

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45) Kuru, “Secularism.”
46) This interpretation fits with Daalder’s hint at the number of books published from various ideological camps in the 1920s and 1930s that praised pillarization as liberation of their own group (Daalder 1989, 35). This also meant that in contrast to liberal ideas the scope of the secular became smaller.
47) Lijphart “Verzuiling.”
In 1913 the election manifest of the liberal parties’ union stated that confessional parties threatened the principles of freedom and rights essential to Dutch society: “The differences of faith are being sharpened and introduced in every aspect of societal life; the feeling of national unity is lost.” Two points must be noted here: first, the very assertiveness or passiveness of secular orders is not something that genuinely inheres in specific imaginaries of secularity or that can in a descriptive fashion merely be read from the concrete space religion is afforded in public life; it rather emerges and must be explained from the internal dynamics of conflicts. And second, the model of secularity for the sake of balancing religious diversity is expressly perceived as a lack of concern with national integration. Instead of creating a unified nationalism, the liberal project helped to sharpen the divide between liberals and religious groups as well as the confessional divide. On the one hand, Catholics and Protestants were unified during the liberal period against a common enemy. On the other hand, the mobilization of confessional movements fostered the exclusiveness of confessional identities, while the emancipation of Dutch Catholics gave new impetus to old inter-confessional tensions.

Pillarization thus emerged as the characteristic way of dealing with religious and ideological diversity. As a response to nineteenth century liberal secularism, this was not primarily a move towards the creation of a social space shared by all religious groups, but toward narrowing the secular space in order to expand religious spheres of autonomy. Although pillarization did not create parallel structures in a legal sense, it did produce forms of institutional recognition and simultaneous differentiation between religious and secularly oriented factions of society in the domains of education, the press, party politics, and associations. One could argue that pillarization became, in the course of history, an institutional

49) Ibid.
51) Van Dam (2011) has recently criticized the concept of pillarization as a myth that paints an overly static picture of Dutch society. We partially agree but deem it justified using the concept with regard to the dominant mode of organizing diversity. Peter van Dam, Staat van verzuiling: Over een Nederlandse mythe (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2011).
52) This is the case in India whose model of secularity is also considered as one motivated by the need to accommodate and pacify religious differences (Bhargava 2010).
expression of the principle of toleration and is in some way continued within contemporary multiculturalism.\(^53\) Originating in the politics of tolerance, but primarily being justified in terms of the recognition of diversity, pillarization engenders paths of “segmented” integration and in the process simultaneously defines zones of non-interference.\(^54\)

After the Second World War and especially from the 1960s onward the twin processes of depillarization and secularization dramatically changed the role of religion in Dutch society. Both occurred in the context of an expanding welfare state that incorporated pillar organizations but eventually also reduced people’s dependence on confessional support structures. Depillarization was manifest for instance in the realm of electoral politics. While in 1963, the Katholieke Volkspartij (KVP) still obtained 78% of Catholic votes, this number dwindled to 37% within only one decade.\(^55\) In 1977 the main confessional parties (Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, Christelijke Historische Unie, KVP) responded to the new situation by joining the Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA). Even if the CDA remained the strongest party in most elections, after 1981 it never gained more than one third of all votes. Declining support for the segmentation of Dutch society had predated the factual breakdown of the pillars. In the direct aftermath of the Second World War, the Social Democrats (Partij van der Arbeid, PvdA), as part of the former ‘neutral’ pillar fostered a politics of ‘breaking through’ the old confessional divides. The call for overcoming pillarization was also promoted by the liberal Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD), the Reformed Church, and later by small new left parties (e.g. Democrat66 or D66) and political fractions as well.\(^56\) Despite the intermittent strengthening of the confessional pillar organizations in the early post-war years, even among confessional ranks pillarization had been questioned ever

\(^{53}\) This is not to indicate that integration policies aimed at establishing new pillars, but refers to early integration policies’ support of the self organization and cultural identity of ethnic-religious groups as opposed to more recent assertions of individual forms of cultural integration.

\(^{54}\) Van der Veer, “Pim Fortuyn,” 118.

\(^{55}\) Lechner, “Netherlands,” 103–105.

since the 1930s.\textsuperscript{57} In the light of global challenges like economic recessions, German occupation, the Cold War, and the poverty of the ‘Third World,’ the old divides seemed out of date.\textsuperscript{58}

The process of depillarization was reinforced through the decline in church membership and participation, which already began in the early twentieth century. Between 1889 and 1930 the number of unaffiliated people had risen from 1.5\% to 14\%.\textsuperscript{59} It remained stable during the height of the pillar model from the 1930s through the 1960s, but began to accelerate again with the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, rising from 24\% to 36\% between 1958 and 1966\textsuperscript{60} and reaching 61\% in 2006.\textsuperscript{61} Within a few decades the Netherlands transformed from one of the most churched to one of the least churched countries in Europe, while a majority of 62\% still claims to be religious in one way or another.\textsuperscript{62} There is thus an enormous middle ground of people who neither actively reject religion per se nor actively participate in organized religion, but seem to agree on the privatization of religion. As we demonstrate below, this creates tensions not only with Islam, seen as it is within post-Christian liberal European cultural landscapes as a public religion \textit{par excellence}, but also with Christian groups, in particular orthodox Protestant minorities.

Significantly, this process of secularization went hand in hand with an accentuated liberalization in terms of cultural values and lifestyles, most strongly expressed in attitudes toward sexuality, abortion, drugs, and euthanasia. Mepschen et al. note that “after an initial period of cultural polarization, large segments of the Dutch population have distanced themselves from moral traditionalism”;\textsuperscript{63} with regard to homosexuality and Islam they add: “[...] the performative power and scope of the entanglement of gay rights with Orientalist discourse—as well as with Occidentalist responses (Buruma and Margalith 2004)—is remarkably salient in the Netherlands.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{57} Kennedy, “Babylon,” 45–53.
\textsuperscript{62} Bernts, “God,” 52.
\textsuperscript{63} Mepschen, “Sexual politics,” 967.
\textsuperscript{64} Mepschen, “Sexual politics,” 970.
Since in the initial period cultural liberalism was indeed construed and defended, first and foremost, over and against Christian conservatism in the same way as it is now over and against the perceived moral conservatism of a ‘foreign religion,’ it must also be situated within the context of the dynamics of secularity. Ostentatious cultural liberalism seems to express two things. On the one hand, a fusion of the rights-based institutionalization of the individual with expressive cultural individualism, reflected in the fact that in all areas of conflict liberalization is justified in terms of the autonomy and self-determination of individuals (as opposed to traditional authority). On the other hand, a secular progressivism that thrives on the temporal narratives of (radicalized) modernity as a “stadial consciousness” and turns self-confident secularity into a secularist ideology with cultural benchmarks to which all individuals, regardless of their religious convictions, should adhere. It seems to us that secularity for the sake of individual freedom followed on the heels of the pillar system from the 1960s onwards while the insistence on individual freedom, often associated with consumerist hedonism, is now invoked in terms of an ideology of national integration and societal progress.

We thus note specific reconfigurations and shifts in secular positions, which were in fact developed earlier in Dutch history whereby the notion of secularity for the sake of balancing religious diversity has come under tremendous pressure. We agree with Peter van Rooden that the breaking apart of the pillarized structures in the 1960s points to “radical discontinuity.” Yet at once there is a need to conceptualize the longue durée of the history of secularity for understanding the cultural meanings of current religious-secular controversies and reconfigurations.

In order to show how these reconfigurations and shifts have played out in recent debates, we now turn to an analysis of the ways in which views on secularity that emerged from the history of religious-secular struggles,

which we described above, were articulated, contested and negotiated in parliamentary debates following the murder of Theo van Gogh. We contend that these parliamentary debates acquire their cultural meanings against the backdrop of contestations over secularities.

Centred on concerns over freedom of speech and Islam, these debates revived longstanding preoccupations with tolerance but they also revealed the enormous complexities of delineating and organizing equitable access to the public sphere for religious and non-religious citizens within a society, which has developed an expressly secular self-understanding. This implies far-reaching dislocations in the discourse and object of tolerance, which no longer refers to tolerance between people of different religious convictions, but to the, sometimes ritualized, claims that religious minorities must accept liberal credos.


With the killing of Dutch filmmaker and publicist Theo van Gogh in 2004, the debate on religion and free speech that had concerned Dutch public life for years reached another peak. Three dimensions of the relationship between freedom of speech and religion are central to this debate: first, the threat posed by radical Islam to the freedom of speech both as an individual right and a constitutive feature of democratic society; second, the limits of acceptable speech toward Muslims; and third, the question whether or not religious discourses should be curtailed if they violate the liberal principles of Dutch society. In respect of Islam this was discussed for instance when Moroccan Imam Khalil el-Moumni in 2001 declared on national television that homosexuality was a dangerous and contagious disease. A similar argument was deployed by Wilders who demanded the banning of the Qur’an as a “fascist book.”

69) Public concern over the relationship between freedom of expression and other basic rights had already been expressed in the Nota Grondrechten en een pluriforme samenleving (TK 29614 No. 2) before the murder of van Gogh.
The debate on freedom of speech can be seen as the quintessential manifestation of contestations over the meanings of secularity and over the ways in which the cultural majority and religious minorities are able to define the bottom-line of their coexistence in the public sphere. It acquired particular momentum through the ways in which it crystallized and displayed the fault-lines between religious and secular parties.

Interestingly, the Dutch landscape of political parties in many ways reflects the historic shifts and ironies of Dutch secularity. There are three Christian parties: the CDA, as mentioned, resulted from the merger of older confessional parties in response to a loss of voters in times of pillarization and thus remained one of the most important parties in the Netherlands. The two other Christian parties, SGP and ChristenUnie have an Orthodox profile; the former has been subject to criticism for many years on grounds of gender discrimination. The PvdA, D66, and VVD are intimately linked to the history of depillarization. In 2006, prominent party member and former mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen72 initiated a debate about a ‘reversed breakthrough’ that would grant more public space to Islam as an immigrant religion. The populist LPF and Wilders’ PVV are to a large extent not only promoters but also direct expressions of the new preponderance of secular progressivism.

The debate was opened by minister of Justice Piet Donner through a letter to parliament in which he condemned the tyranny of radical Islam as a threat to Dutch traditions of tolerance and spoke out against the violation of rights but also the violence against Muslims occurring after the murder.73 Clearly, Donner’s concern was about social cohesion. Amongst numerous suggestions on how to combat Muslim radicalization he mentioned possible legal action to counter anti-Islamic insulting speech, especially the laws on insult and blasphemy. The fact that he refrained from solely defending free speech but also mentioned its potentially disruptive power resulted in strong criticism by those who argued for a tougher handling of the ‘Islamic threat.’ His suggestion to review the law on blasphemy left secular parliamentarians bewildered and angered. One immediate response was the suggestion to abolish the law on blasphemy for good. While it soon became

obvious that a parliamentary majority clearly opposed any use of the blasphemy law, its immediate abolition was also deemed risky because of tensions between Muslim and non-Muslims after the murder. In another attempt to solve the issue the new Minister of Justice Ernst Hirsch Ballin suggested to include the meaning of blasphemy law in the already existing ban on insulting speech by expanding the ban to cover insult on religious grounds. Again, the claim was rejected and a Second Chamber majority decided for the abolition of the law, although later the ruling liberal party withdrew its support for the decision.

We have analyzed the parliament debates on blasphemy in the aftermath of the van Gogh murder through 2009, the transcripts of which are provided by Dutch parliament. This analysis is part of a broader research project, which—next to research in three other countries—included focus group and expert interviews carried out during two field research periods in the Netherlands. The thematic focus of our interpretation was on implicit and explicit notions of secularity as they are, for example, deployed or negotiated, rejected or defended in the discursive arena of parliament. We have identified three discursive frames: a pluralist frame, a secular frame, and secular progressivist frame. The selection of the documents we analyzed reflects a specific part of the debate on free speech and religion, in which the conflict between secular and pluralist frames was most dominant. Other empirical material such as the focus group interviews, which we do not draw on in this paper, suggests that notions of secular progressivism are even more explicit, variegated, and elaborated than our limited concern with free speech and blasphemy allows us to show. The documents are in Dutch and all quotes are translated by the authors.

5.1. Creating Room for Religion in a Secular Society: The Pluralist Frame

Donner’s letter introduced a pluralist frame, which was later taken over and emphasized by orthodox Christian parliamentarians. Situated in a tradition of tolerance and ‘peaceableness’ (verdraagzaamheid), this perspective views free speech as potentially disruptive and therefore in need of being tamed in a harmonious and respectful dialogue. Consequently, it posits that the arena of public speech requires zones of respect for religious feelings:

An open debate is necessary in order to prevent a ‘we against them confrontation.’ […] Islam is a given in the Netherlands and Muslims ought to be
protected on equal basis with others practicing their belief, enjoying legal protection and the societal respect for their deepest convictions.\textsuperscript{74}

In many ways, this frame resonates with inherited concerns with social harmony and tolerance as they were institutionalized in the pillar system and thus with secularity for the sake of balancing religious diversity. This is reflected in the fact that the value of equality is endorsed through the putting on par of Muslims with other religious groups whose “deepest convictions” are in the first place religious ones—as opposed to secular civic virtues.

This corresponds to invocations of national history that stress the religious and ideological diversity which gave rise to the institutionalized pluralism of the pillar system: “Taboos, norms and common decencies are the dikes through which we in the Netherlands for centuries have built a polder of verdraagzaamheid in a world of turmoil.”\textsuperscript{75} While moderate Christians such as Donner did not connect their call for social harmony with a criticism of van Gogh’s anti-Islamic statements, orthodox Christians from the SGP were more outspoken in this regard: “This has nothing to do with freedom of speech anymore. Quite the opposite, with such an understanding of this right, divides are sharpened and this freedom is put at risk.”\textsuperscript{76}

Orthodox Protestant investment in free speech over the same period was also manifest in the SGP’s request to ban a concert by pop star Madonna on the grounds of blasphemy law, which the government refused. However, it should be noted that the pluralist frame can also articulate multiculturalist perspectives. An example is the claim by Green party member Femke Halsema that restrictions of naturalization policies must be accompanied by the reinforcement of culpability for insult and blasphemy.\textsuperscript{77}

At the same time, however, the stress on respect for religious sensibilities goes along with attempts to redefine the kind of religion that is required for tolerance to flourish, that is, forms of religion that are compatible with the basic modern liberties such as the freedom of speech: “Religious zeal, idealism, and the courage to have an own opinion we consider a virtue, up to that moment that it tries to impose its opinion on others by force and forces

\textsuperscript{74} TK 29854, Nr. 3, 12.
\textsuperscript{75} TK 22 (29854), 1278–1332, “Tweede Kamer, Moord op de heer Th. Van Gogh,” (November 11th 2004), 1299.
\textsuperscript{76} TK 22, 1285.
\textsuperscript{77} TK 22, 1289.
respect for it.” There is perhaps no better illustration of the paradox of religious tolerance than this last quote: Religious tolerance seems to depend on specific limitations of tolerance against those who do not observe such limitations themselves.

5.2. Secularizing the Murder: The Secular Frame

A secular discursive frame is most clearly expressed in the contributions by Wouter Bos (PvdA). Importantly, when describing the incidents and context of the murder he refrained from using any religious references, thus distancing himself from both pluralist and secular-progressivist discourses. For Bos, the murder was a case of “political terrorism,” essentially opposed to the “free world.” The religious factor is not ignored here, but it is treated as a contingent aspect in the quest for power:

Political Islam and the related violent extremism [...] and international, well organized and substantially financed political movement [...] which [...] kills Dutch people in the Netherlands as well as Moroccans in Casablanca [...] which just as easily recruits a straying young man in the Netherlands as it makes young Moroccans change their Armani jeans [...] for beards and jalabias.79

While within this discursive frame freedom of religion is recognized as a right, the secular impetus is manifest in the opposition to a special protection of religion against discrimination, which blasphemy law embodies:

The underlying question of course is why insulting someone with a different skin colour or handicaps should be punished different from insulting a Christian or a Muslim. Do we want a society where believers have more rights and duties than atheists or agnostics? [...] We think it is time to abolish the law on blasphemy.80

The very idea that religion is sufficiently protected through general laws protecting citizens against insult and discrimination reveals a universalistic ethos that is squarely at odds with pluralist positions.

78) TK 29854, Nr. 3, 9.
79) TK 22, 1294–5.
5.3. The Secular Progressivist Frame

What we call the ‘secular progressivist frame’ in some ways overlaps with the liberalist populist discourse promoted by Geert Wilders but it also sustains emancipatory socialist secularisms that are critical of religion. Contrary to other observers,\(^{81}\) we are less interested in the emergence of populist politics per se than in the secular progressivist narrative underpinning it. This focus reveals that—in spite of some differences—both secularist positions depend on the same progressivist narrative. First, there is the defensive secular progressivism expressed by Wilders and representatives of LPF and VVD, which thrives on the Manichean dualism of enlightenment, achieved in a history of progress, on the one side, and the dark realm of religion on the other, and fashions itself as the defender of secularity. Central to this defence is the unconditional support for freedom of speech, in which a possible trespassing of limits by van Gogh, which pluralists were concerned about, was beyond dispute. On the contrary, Jozias van Aartsen (VVD) claimed that “the attack on van Gogh touches the heart of our national identity, the freedom of speech,” which van Gogh used in considerable measure to ridicule religion. By turning van Gogh into an icon of secular Dutchness, the murder was framed as a “religious war” by Muslim extremists,\(^{82}\) with the central idea that this declaration of war was not an aberration of Islam but rather revealed its extremist essence. This framing in fact adopted the spin attached to the murder by the killer himself spawning a performative dynamic in which Wilders would repeatedly depict the killer as representative of Islam. In other instances, however, Wilders argued that there are moderate Muslims while there is no moderate Islam, presumably as a strategy not to collide with hate speech regulations.

Constitutive for this version of the secular progressivist frame is an invocation of history that is entirely different from that of pluralists. While pluralists see a need to restore ‘Dutch values’ of tolerance and verdraagzaamheid, Wilders claims that precisely these values lured the Dutch into their multicultural dream from which they now have woken up. As a consequence, there is a constitutive ambivalence in the recourse to history in the defensive version of this frame: on the one hand it aims to defend and restore Dutch values, while at the same time regarding them as essentially

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\(^{81}\) Van der Veer, “Pim Fortuyn.”

\(^{82}\) TK 22, 1282.
flawed since they allowed for their own extinction. In this vein, Wilders quipped:

Fair is fair: there is also a lot being achieved by this government. For instance, integration goes very well ... At least the integration of the Netherlands into Dar-al-Islam, the Islamic world [...] Good news for the CDA (Christen Democrats Appel, then the prime minister’s party): C-D-A, in the meantime stands for Christians Serve Allah.\(^{83}\)

Second, there is a rationalist version of the secular progressivist frame, which thrives on the same historical narrative without situating Islam, or any other religion for that matter, outside historical progress. In a more or less classical modernist rendition, this version claims that the main problem behind religious fanaticism and violence is irrationality. Exemplifying this view, Jan Marijnissen from the Socialist Party remarked:

In true democracy, freedom goes with responsibility [...] Emotion that is not filtered through ratio is perilous [...] The murderer of van Gogh is an example of what can be caused by hatred in combination with his euphemistic idea of religion.\(^{84}\)

While addressing the problem of Muslim integration in a fundamentally different way, rationalist secularism shares with Wilders’ defensive version the idea that religion and enlightenment are in principle opposed to one another. However, while according to Wilders Islam cannot be integrated into Dutch society, rationalists demand greater efforts to educate Muslims into enlightened citizenship. It should be obvious that these discursive frames express significant levels of controversy over the public role of religion. Much of this controversy centres on questions regarding the “right to


\(^{84}\) TK 22, 1293.
insult,” that is whether religious feelings set limits to acceptable public speech.

In this respect, we note that only the radical (and some of the moderate) pluralists from the Christian parties are ready to attach positive values to religion in any meaningful sense and are thus prepared to defend the vestiges of the former ethos of the pillar system. Over the years, this has become obvious with regard to blasphemy law: while proposals to scrap the law have for complex reasons been halted, a stable majority of parliamentarians are as a matter of fact opposed to it. Again, recourse to history was central to arguments against the law, which was sometimes seen as symbolizing Christianity’s establishment. In his claim for abolishing the law, Jan de Witt (SP) recalled the blasphemy case of Dutch writer Gerard Reve from the 1960s85 who had been put to trial for depicting sexual intercourse with God in the form of a donkey. Reve was eventually acquitted, and his defence speech became iconic in discourses on religious, artistic, and intellectual freedom. The case was also addressed in several group discussions that we conducted as part of our field research, and seems an important marker in the history of secularization.

In the section above we have argued, with focus on parliamentary debates, that we see a shift towards assertive notions of secularity. The secular frame and the secular progressivist frame in both their defensive and rationalist versions insist on a notion of secularity and its conceptual cognates as ontological givens and absolute values, which increasingly centre on a universalistic and unified secular culture in terms of an ideology that is justified with recourse on national integration. Based on our interest in the institutionalization of secular regimes and their historic changes the question at hand is how this shift in public political discourse resonates with legislation. Only some months ago it seemed that legal changes would focus on laws regarding immigration and integration rather than secularity. The recent months though have changed the picture and we could observe how rights of religious self-organizations have been questioned for the sake of universalist renditions of individual freedom and equality.

6. Secularity in Legal Discourse

The Dutch constitution does not explicitly mention the separation of church and state as is the case in the US or France. The idea of state neutrality is derived from article 6 of the Basic Law, which guarantees freedom of religion, and from article 1 on non-discrimination. Together with article 23, which specifies religious rights in education, they formulate the most relevant constitutional principles regarding secularity. Where basic rights are in conflict, room for legal interpretation emerges, and in the recent past there was an increasing endeavour to clarify the interrelation of the principles in question.

Similar to the parliamentary debate, attempts to balance between equality, individual rights, and freedom of religion have spawned conflicts in a number of cases. The most long-standing one is the ban on female candidates by the orthodox SGP. First filed in the 1990s by a Reformed Protestant woman, the case was taken to court in 2005 by the Clara Wichman Fond, a women’s rights organization hoping for a ruling that would place non-discrimination above religious freedom. Claims were made on the basis of article one GR and the UN treaty of women’s rights. In 2010 the Dutch Supreme Court finally ruled that the state is responsible for taking measures that forces the party to provide for the passive voting right for women without infringing the party’s right to self-organization over proportion. The party has now taken the case to the European Court of Human Rights, and with the current minority cabinet’s dependence on this party the state has not yet taken action.

A second central point of conflict is the question of whether marriage registrars may refuse conducting same-sex marriages. In 2008 the

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90) CW 2010, “Clara Wichmannproefprocessenfonds wil procespartij worden in rechtszaak SGP voor Europees Hof voor de Rechten van de Mens,” Proefprocessenfonds Clara Wichmann
Commission on Equal Treatment (CGB) gave a recommendation that the state should provide measures to stop marriage registrars from discriminating against homosexuals.\textsuperscript{91} Interestingly, only six years earlier a similar case has been decided in favour of the “freedom of conscience” of municipal officials. Parliament has asked the Supreme Court for advice and has temporarily postponed action.\textsuperscript{92} Interestingly, comparative research shows that other countries that recognize same-sex marriage such as South Africa for instance, allow for such discrimination. For that matter, we interpret the fact that in the Netherlands non-discrimination tends to be weighed higher than religious freedom or freedom of conscience for that matter, as a sign of the particular assertiveness of Dutch secularity.

Another case at hand is the recent proposal to ban Islamic and Jewish non-stunned slaughtering. The aim to reduce animal suffering was held against traditional special rights of religious groups. The ban was initiated by a small animal rights party but found support of a broad majority of political parties (VVD, PvdA, PVV, SP,\textsuperscript{93} D66, GroenLinks) and deputies (one hundred and sixteen in favour, thirty against) in a vote in Dutch parliament in June 2011. In December 2011, however, the First Chamber rejected the ban in the proposed form\textsuperscript{94} and postponed further debates on reducing animal suffering.\textsuperscript{95} Weighing the potential reduction of animals suffering against the freedom of religion, the senators criticized the focus on slaughtering animals while neglecting farming conditions. Moreover, the senators objected that only religious slaughtering was considered while no mention

\textsuperscript{92) TK 30420 Nr. 159, “Emancipatiebeleid Nr. 159 Brief van de minister van binnenlandse zaken en koninkrijksrelaties en de minister van onderwijs, cultuur en wetenschap aan de voorzitter van de tweede kamer der staten-generaal,” (Den Haag: 8 November 2011).}
\textsuperscript{93) Socialistische Partij.}
of ordinary meat production was made in the proposal. Similar controversies are also reflected in occurrences that gained only minor media coverage. In September 2011, for example, the Dutch newspaper Trouw reported on the Association of Dutch Physicians, which had issued a critique on religious male circumcision, so far a common practice in Dutch hospitals. Here, circumcision was criticized as a serious violation of children rights. In interesting ways, such criticisms resonate with calls by some politicians such as VVD member Jeanine Hennis that rights to freedom of religion might be unnecessary, since religious people were already sufficiently protected by general freedom of speech. Both incidents suggest that the preponderance of secular progressivism reveals itself not only in legal changes and arguments but already in the very questioning of religious rights and the opening of new arenas of contention.

In pointing to these cases we do not want to suggest that religion or religious believers are discriminated in the Netherlands. What we do note, however, is a rising problematization of religion in legal and political discourse, which points to serious changes in the ways in which secularity is imagined and constructed.

7. Conclusions

In many European societies, issues like the social integration of Muslims and of the place of Islam within given institutional arrangements are generally interpreted in terms of the politics of multiculturalism. In many cases, Muslim struggles for recognition have challenged pre-existing arrangements and understandings of the place of religion in society, which has simultaneously affected mainstream religions and other religious minorities. As a consequence, we observe a rising concern with issues of secularism within the European sociology of religion. In general, this literature

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focuses on the relationships between organized religion and the state, especially on issues of state neutrality and equal treatment of religious communities.

In this paper, we have taken a different approach. By drawing on the concept of multiple secularities we do not focus mainly on the separation between state and religion, but rather on the cultural meanings that are attached to issues of secularity and on the divergent historical contexts in which these meanings emerge and are shaped. The decision to use the term secularity instead of secularism mirrors this different focus. While the term secularism refers to the politics of separations between religion and other social spheres, and their accompanying ideology, secularity—as we use it—points to the question of what is at stake in these separations and in the social struggles from which they result. We have approached these stakes by identifying different ideal-types (in the Weberian sense of the term) and have used them to offer a reading of the Dutch case. Our argument is that the primary reference problem from which Dutch secularity emerged was to balance religious diversity, which was intimately related to the confessional situation after the Reformation. This idea, however, coexisted with other, more individually inflected notions of secularity, which is documented in tensions between individual liberties and group or state authority in different moments of history. After the Second World War we see an intermittent period of secular modernity in which motifs of individual liberties that thrived on subjective secularization and cultural emancipation and national unity compete and fluctuate. These models and their key ideas are currently reformulated in terms of secularity for the sake of national integration and development in which secularity and liberty are turned into icons of progress and enlightenment. However, this conceptualization—as we have seen in the parliamentary debate—is not uncontested. There are still lively references to the notion of tolerance, and personal liberties can be upheld without questioning religious liberties.

Our selective reading of Dutch history shows how secularity becomes problematic in the context of immigration into a largely post-Christian society. In an analysis of parliamentary debates, we have distinguished three discursive frames through which secularity is addressed: a pluralist, a secular, and a secular progressivist frame. While differences between them are not carved in stone, and especially the line between the ‘secular’ and the ‘secular progressivist’ frame is somewhat fluid, we have noted a new preponderance of secular progressivism in these debates, not least reflected in the discussion on the blasphemy law, which a large majority of
the parliament wanted to abolish. This majority certainly emerged from different motivations, secular progressivism however, as it seems, was able to take the lead.

It is noteworthy that the last blasphemy cases predating the one discussed here happened during the cultural revolution of the 1960s. It seems that notions of secular progressivism, which gained strength in times of depillarization, remained implicit as long as the taken-for-granted nature of secular liberalism, or *secularity for the sake of individual liberties*, was unchallenged. In the wake of a new visibility of immigrant religion, however, these notions are again made explicit. In the same context, older fissisions between religious and secular groups acquire new strength. While there are substantive shifts in Dutch secular order, it is certainly too early to say conclusively whether they constitute a critical juncture\textsuperscript{100} that will lead into a finally dominant type of progressivist secularity. At the moment, there are still forces, which balance the thrusts of progressive secularism.

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