

Abstract

The semantics of Laïcité

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From the 19th up to the first half of the 20th century there was a strong semantic connection in public political discussions in between the concept of Laïcité, used as a political slogan, and the processes of secularization. The boost of political secularization through the reorganization of the western European democracies since the 1950's led to a stabilization of the freedom of worship and the principle of equality as well as to a deprivatization of religion, which also involved a more differentiated use of the term "Laïcité".

Today Laïcité in its political, socio-scientific, theological and common use contains various meanings with sometimes conflicting functions. This is partly due to the political (progressive, liberal, democratic, liberal socialist etc.), partly the cultural, confessional and linguistic context in which the term is being used.

This anthology, combining the work of Italian, French and German scholars, aims at investigating the postmodern global and local changes in the semantics of the concept of "Laïcité". What does Laïcité in the secularized democracies of the second half of the 20th century mean? How is the connection in between "religion" and "freedom of worship" (as a basis of Laïcité) being interpreted? Who defines Laïcité in this context? In how far does the meaning and the status of Laïcité change from the perspective of the *corpus fidelium* or the *corpus civium*? Does Laïcité become a new basic religious notion in the second modern age? Are concepts of the secular and the plural found to be integrated in the term "Laïcité"? If yes, does this anticipate a new postmodern or postsecular concept of the term "Laïcité"? Is this a specific characteristic of catholic contexts?

The book will consist of 10 essays. Seven of those should be written by Italian and French experts coming from different disciplines such as politics, theology, sociology, law and history. The other three are supposed to be comments of German scholars, reflecting the preceding articles of their colleagues. The focus of the anthology is set not only on the changes and the differentiation of the term "Laïcité", but also on its interconnection with processes of religious privatization as well as the revision of such in the second half of the 20th century. The problems connected with Laïcité (such as modernization, secularization, godlessness, atheism, moral relativism and rationalism) also play an important role.

The book's goal is to understand in how far the semantic changes of the term "Laïcité" are a result of the postmodern thought. However, it also aims at enriching the German debate on Laïcité with international perspectives and hence at serving as a tool to deal with current and future challenges of Laïcité.

If you are interested in the project and would like to receive further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

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