Ideological Distance or Public Interaction:

Non-Normative Postsecularity of Individual Worldviews in Contemporary Turkey

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Abstract: Entanglement of individual worldview construction processes with the exposure to the digital flow of information and polarization/transition among different ideological positions have been a focal point in the digital interaction setting. This research has noted that no comparative empirical analysis has been done regarding how religious and secular people form their worldviews with the interactional background. Non-normative Habermasian postsecular criteria as the initial theoretical framework have been employed in the comparative analysis while his criteria are ignored in the studies of empirical postsecularity such as; looking into individuals' 1."Ability to be self/reflexive", 2."Ideological decline/rise" in their worldviews and 3."Mutual learning/dislearning" between religious and secular people. Thus, postsecularity cannot be defined just through politics, institutions or public sphere debates; rather, it is crucial to investigate the change shaping individual worldviews on a social basis with a micro scale. The primary study sample specified as a particular online group -Grey Zone- (Twitter) which is formed to combat polarization and to discuss the religious, the secular etc. 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews still being processed with Grounded Theory method. Research findings confirm the initial hypothesis suggesting that the boundaries between the religious and the secular within individual worldviews are more ambivalent than the explicit political polarization that presents only a clear distinction between the religious and the secular. Digging the question how individuals interpret the religious, the secular, the reason and perceptions of each other reveal the dynamics of religious-secular interaction. Participants apply a kind of SWOT analysis on the religious and the secular spheres through their lived experiences, thus they form their worldviews through identifying the strengths and weaknesses of both spheres. As a result of this two-way interaction, individuals are located on a spectrum between positive values and problematic aspects of the two spheres. Thus they form an alternative worldview in which they synthesize "positive" aspects of two spheres. Their lived experiences forming the SWOT analyses function as a form of power. This alternative sphere is purified from "negative" aspects of the both spheres; more perfectionist, and where the distinction of the religious and the secular is reconstructed; their act of synthesis does not mean that they eliminate the distinction between the religious and the secular. Participants' definition of one sphere depends on their definition of the other sphere. This dependency establishes the distinction which figures out that interaction between the religious and the secular is circular and the distinction is characterized with the circle. The circular relationship mostly manifests itself in the participants' justification for why they question both the religious and the secular, why they are critical to the existing perceptions of religion and secularism. Belonging to only religious or secular sphere was easier in the upper generations, however, young people form a different mode of distinction. This relatively new form of interaction portray how the idealized religiosity and secularity hold a mirror to the experienced religiosity and secularity. Participants' problematizing of their paradoxes points to the contradiction between the theory and practice of religion and secularism: 1. Witnessing to religious heterogeneity and secular heterogeneity in both spheres (seeing both hegemonic and liberal people in both spheres), 2. Dissatisfaction with religious hegemony and secular hegemony, 3. Observation on differences in lived religiosity and lived secularity. Based on three problematics, individuals legitimize their own "normal" form of living the religious or living the secular.

Keywords: postsecularity, digital, religious, secular, interaction, heterogeneity, hegemony, lived.