

GLOBAL RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DYNAMICS. JOSÉ CASANOVA'S PUBLIC LECTURE

March 29, 2021.

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José Casanova's public lecture was held on March 29th, concerning the topic of global and religious dynamics in different nations. The event was organized by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the University of Szeged Convivence Research Group, and the CEU Center for Religious Studies. The collaboration of these three institutes brought a unique and inspiring course to the homes of the audience. Besides the amazing work of the organizers, I have to mention the kind and exciting elocution with which Professor Casanova conferred with the attendance. He answered all the questions so keenly that the section for the discussion almost lasted as long as the lecture itself. The technical background was also well ensured both on the interface of Zoom and on Facebook. Also, it was an open session so everyone was able to join up on one of the sites, hence the atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.¹ I would like to thank Professor José Casanova for all the efforts he made by holding this fascinating lecture for us all.

As a brief introductory Prof. András Máté-Tóth expounded the work and the professional line of his good friend José Casanova. Casanova is one of the most noted authorities in the sociology of religion. He is a senior fellow member of the Berkley Center and professor emeritus at Georgetown University, where he used to teach in the Department of Sociology and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Casanova's work focuses on globalization, religions and secularization, just like his most recent research. His interests include the conjunction of globalization and religion, the dynamics of transnational religion, migration, and the increasing ethno-religious and cultural diversity. For those who wish to read about these topics at first hand, I would highly recommend Casanova's book *Islam, Gender and Democracy*. Professor Casanova himself shared it with the group dur-

¹ Special thanks to Esther Holbrook, the Coordinator of Center for Religious Studies at CEU, who was the main person behind this event.

ing his lecture. It can be found on the Facebook page of the Convivence Research Group alongside with the recorded video of the lecture.²

The main focus of the lecture was on secular and religious dynamics in a global perspective. To understand Casanova's thesis one must go through a story, which has three parts. The first part starts with a question. What does Casanova call global dynamics, and what are the global characters of this global dynamics? He believes that the formation of the world system of religions can be related to globalization according to the pattern of how one single capitalistic world system has been formed, and how the system of the nation states in the world has been formed. All these three processes or global dynamics are interrelated, and yet, they all have their own autonomy and can be differentiated.

The second part is a comparative analysis of the two roots of global religious transformation and the formation of the world system of religions, which is constructed through dual differentiations. The global differentiation of the religious and secular is present almost everywhere. There can be deviations in the way of how these differentiations are constructed or in the boundaries which separate the religious from the secular but the whole global system is constructed by these. With his thesis Casanova goes against the traditional theory of modernization and secularization.

The third part is an illustration of these different dynamics through the post-Soviet religious transformations. In my opinion, the interesting part for Hungarian society lay in the third part of this lecture. As a Hungarian I was eagerly listening to Casanova's idea that a religious renewal can be observed in some of the post-Soviet countries. This corresponds to my own experience about the Hungarian society, not only when we talk about the historical religions, but also when we take the new religious movements into consideration.

The argument of prof. Casanova affirms that we should understand the differences in the conditions of the several religions, even in Europe, and that we should not insist so hard on viewing this phenomenon from the aspect of modernization, but from the viewpoint of the interrelation of the church, the state, and the nation. For me, it was very inspiring to see how Casanova introduced new points of view into the discussion of modernization, secularization and religious pluralization.

As I mentioned above, at the end of the lecture everyone was free to ask prof. Casanova questions. It was interesting to see how people carried on the thesis and took it into consideration from the aspect of other topics, which included the confessionalisation and deconfessionalisation in the United States, the role of France in this global world system, and also the pluralization in the Middle East. The most

² J. Cesari – J. Casanova (eds.): *Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017.

interesting phase of the discussion section was Casanova's assessment of such actual topics as the ban of abortion in Poland and the gender question.

To tell the truth, I am mainly interested in the philosophical side of religious studies, but after this discourse I have become more curious for religious sociology than I was before. For those interested in the topic it is worth following the Facebook page of the Convivence Research Group, where you can get to know about the latest events similar to this lecture.