



VALTIOTIETEELLINEN YHDISTYS  
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## 8. Rethinking religious and secular violence

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**Työryhmän kuvaus:** We are being told that religious violence is a threat of our time. France, barely standing after Paris blows, retaliates by bombing Islamic State bases in Syria (with Germany's support). This summer David Cameron warned Britain of Islamist extremists who seek to destroy nation-states and make a "barbaric realm" of Britain. Barack Obama visited the UN in October and launched a "global war on ideologies" with "planetary efforts".

Finland looks like joining this war effort as Ministry of the Interior introduced its action plan against violent extremism three years ago. Purpose of this policy is to prevent the political promotion of "anti-democratic ideas and doctrines" that aim at "radical social change" and, in some cases, become acts of terrorism.

While media keeps telling us about the threat of religious violence almost exclusively, there is very little talk about what comes the other way around: secular violence? What is secular violence? This is a very good question seldom asked. If religious violence is something that especially seems to bother the secular realm, it stands to reason that anti-religious violence does the opposite. Most typical case of secular violence is likely one where the secular state harasses religious people in some way.

It is safe to say that secular violence has been a persistent problem in the modern era. Even so: literature discussing it and this is nearly non-existent. William T. Cavanaugh argues that in Western societies the attempt to create a transhistorical and transcultural concept of religion which is essentially prone to violence is a myth that helped to conceive the national state. Familiar story about Wars of Religion and their successful Westphalian settlement set the stage for temporal power to begin manage politically communities with potentially radical beliefs, and this goes on today. In present concerns the myth represents secular West as rational and peacemaking, while Muslim world appears as a horde of religious fanatics coming this way.

We are concerned about the current conversation concerning extremism in Finland, Europe and the world. The issue at hand is that this conversation provokes conflict between religious people and the state. These conflicts will hurt religious people first, but they will inevitably come back to hurt the state.

Rethinking religious and secular violence welcomes papers that discuss, in some way, the growing body of literature exploring, empirically and/or theoretically, how "religious" and "secular" categories are used in political discourse for violent purposes.

## **Abstraktit:**

### **Struggle over Health: Fundamentalist Healthism and the erosion of Nordic Medical Authority**

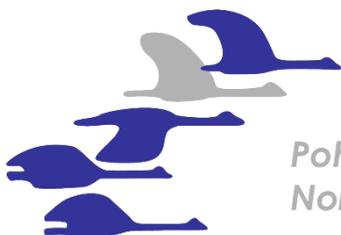
The Anti-vaccination movement has been gaining momentum since the 1998 suggested link between the MMR-vaccination and autism (which has since been discredited) and most recently due to the cases of Narcolepsy in the Nordic region, which were caused by the Swine Flu Pandremix vaccine. A recent Measles outbreak in Lohja, Finland in 2014 was due solely to the fact that parents had not vaccinated their children. The Raw Milk movement is globally active causing governments to intervene in order to protect national health. Finland has suffered from bacterial infection outbreaks due to raw milk. These movements are dangerous to the state as they have the possibility of endangering the security of national health with the decline of people willing to take vaccinations we have the possibility of fatal diseases returning, diseases which similarly were spread by raw milk leading it to be the main cause of infant mortality in the late 19th and early 20th century. Should the state have the power to intervene using authoritative power to decide what is best for national health or by doing so is the state illustrating a form of secular violence by stopping individuals from doing what they believe is best for their health?

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### **Struggle over Women: Negotiating Laestadian womanhood in a secular age**

There seems to be a prevalent secular understanding of what womanhood is and different religious groups - in this particular case study Conservative Laestadianism - challenge this understanding in many ways. We witness this struggle going on in the media, where the movement is accused of suppressing women into childbearing objects lacking their full and free womanhood. Meanwhile we hear some Laestadian women protesting against these highly personal secular interventions. Recurring talk about ban of contraception and cases of child abuse within the movement can also become invasions of privacy into normal Laestadian family life. I want to study this from Jonathan Fox's secular-religious competition perspective, which is basically a universal attempt to explain the relationship between religion and politics. In Fox's competition perspective political secularists seek to reduce religions' role in public life on the one hand, and political religionists struggle to increase that role on the other. Fox's hypothesis is that no matter how strongly a state supports a religion there will be people who think it does not support it enough; and no matter how secular we identify a state there will also be people who think that is not secular enough.

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