



# Is Secularism Too Western? Disputes Around Offending Pictures of Muhammad and the Virgin Mary

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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]u[ubiquity press

## ABSTRACT

This paper aims at exhibiting a convergence between particular ‘religious sensibilities’ that would require, according to prominent anthropologists, a transformation of the way in which freedom of speech is usually understood under Western secular-liberal law. In particular, Saba Mahmood’s anthropology gains from revealing its potential, but also its limitations, in the Eastern-European context that could require an effort of ‘cultural translation’. Could some Muslims’ relation to images of Muhammad be founded not only on representation, but also on attachment and cohabitation with Muhammad himself? Probably, but then it is necessary to underline that it is also the case, for instance, of Polish Catholics in their relationship to (images of) the Virgin Mary. This parallel is all the more interesting to explore in the case of the dominant political current in Poland, supported by several pro-government intellectuals, which perceives the European law on freedom of speech as too ‘Western’.

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KEYWORDS:

blasphemy; freedom of speech; liberalism; Saba Mahmood; Catholicism; Poland

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Urbanski, S. 2022. Is Secularism Too Western? Disputes Around Offending Pictures of Muhammad and the Virgin Mary. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 11: 2, pp. 1–14. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.148>



























