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Pleidooi voor een lekenrenaissance: een ideeënhistorische verkenning van de oorzaken en de gevolgen van de constitutionele verankering van de prerogatieven van de levensbeschouwingen in België met bijzondere aandacht voor het onderwijs

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Summary

The case for a layman's renaissance: exploring the history of ideas behind the causes and effects of the constitutional enshrinement of philosophical prerogatives in Belgium, with a particular focus on education.

This study is dedicated to the Belgian constitutional organization regarding the question of the separation of church and state. The principle of separation, also known as secularism, is one that was predominantly developed in France, but has also had an influence on other countries in Europe (and outside of Europe, in the United States of America).

Secularism is on the one hand seen as a leading idea of modern state theory, on the other hand it is also open to a great deal of criticism. Proponents aim to further shape this aspiration in the domain of education, and in the organization of state institutions, others seek to moderate the principle, or even curtail it.

Belgium itself has always given a wide berth to radical secularism, and this owing to the system of the officially recognized religions that relied on state support.

The key question behind this study is how these developments should be appreciated. What was the actual intention of the framers of the constitution? How did it all come to be? Is this system still something to be maintained, or do the drawbacks outweigh the benefits in modern times? Should secularism be bolstered or weakened? What are the challenges?

Unlike a political and philosophical discourse that normatively defends secularism against competing models, this study chiefly aims to help, through historical exploration, recall the reasons for the development of Belgian constitutional philosophical thinking.

The author feels that this historic quest, this history of ideas, is essential in tracking down the factors at play, to capture the impact thereof on the definitive form of the Belgian Constitution, and to assess the strength and sustainability of the commitments made. This exploration is also a prerequisite for suggesting possible alternatives.

The conclusion of this study will be dedicated to these alternatives, whereby the author makes the case for finding such an alternative in the guise of an assertive secularism.