religion and democracy in contemporary europe

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The Network of European Foundations (NEF) is an operational platform primarily committed to strengthening the potential for cooperation in the form of joint ventures between foundations at the European level. NEF provides its members with the capacity to identify common goals and, as an open structure, to join forces with other foundations in Europe which may share similar concerns and objectives. NEF is also open to collaboration with the public and private sectors in developing its initiatives. Its areas of intervention to promote systemic social change include: migration, European citizenship, support to the European integration process, youth empowerment and global European projects. NEF is based in Brussels.

NEF has launched a special initiative on ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ based on a partnership with several foundations, including: Van Leer Group Foundation (Chair), Arcadia Trust, Barrow-Cadbury Trust, Bernheim Foundation, Compagnia di San Paolo, Ford Foundation, Freudenberg Stiftung, King Baudouin Foundation, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Stefan Batory Foundation and Volkswagen Stiftung.

This initiative focuses on the relation between religion and democracy in European societies, covering both religion and the public domain and religion and the state. The aim is to contribute to a better-informed debate on the topic through seminars and research on related issues.

In this context, a roundtable with prominent journalists was organized in January 2007 at the European Institute of the London School of Economics and a series of ‘Youth Debates’ was held in Brussels, involving young profession-
al from different backgrounds including politics, research, media and NGOs. In addition, a mapping of foundations working on religion has been produced through collaboration with the European Foundation Centre (EFC).

The first year of work culminated in September 2007 in an international conference held in Jerusalem on ‘Religion and Democracy in Contemporary Europe’, where a series of research papers was presented and discussed by distinguished scholars, together with journalists and youth leaders. The present publication, produced jointly by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and NEF, is a compilation of all the material presented at the Jerusalem symposium.

The second phase of the ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ initiative focuses on developing a series of ‘Thematic Dossiers’ addressing specific aspects of the interaction between the state and religion as well as religion and society. After consultation with the foundations supporting the initiative, the following questions will be developed by acknowledged experts with a view to producing a publication:

- The regulation of the health sector under conditions of religious diversity
- Religion and the European school systems
- The controversy surrounding the building of mosques and minarets
- Religion and discrimination
- Religion and the media

Thematic dossiers are intended to be an intelligent mapping exercise of existing practices and various approaches to specific issues, set in the broader context of the religion and democracy debate. The aim is not to give prescriptive solutions on each topic but to provide better knowledge, identify problems, indicate possible solutions, and give access to a range of strategies and relevant experience. The thematic dossiers target practitioners, policy makers and civil society actors. The outputs of each thematic dossier will be presented and discussed in an international seminar.

Through these and other activities, the ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ initiative looks forward to opening up and contributing to the public debate on issues of strategic importance for the future of our societies.
Many people invested much time and effort in making possible this publication and the conference that preceded it. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.

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Introduction

As the European Union has expanded and its powers have grown, the need has emerged for a constitutional regime. From 2001 onwards great effort was invested in consolidating and adopting a common constitutional treaty. One of the first polemics regarding this treaty concerned the reference to God in the constitutional preamble. Given the symbolic weight attached to the formulation of such declarations, the discussion was contentious as many assumed that the constitution was intended to express the concepts and values on which the new political body would be based. While the preamble of the draft constitution did mention God, as well as the Christian values of Europe, the final version that was adopted omitted both and offered instead a compromise formulation: ‘inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanistic inheritance of Europe.’

The intensity of this polemic and the fact that both proponents and opponents of the inclusion of God and Christian values in the text could not simply be divided into ‘religious’ or ‘secularist’ states or organizations testify to the central place of religion in contemporary Europe.

Until 20 years ago, most scholars in various disciplines adhered to a variety of ‘secularization theses’ that stressed the gradual ‘victory’ of secularism over the old religious past. The experience of recent decades has shown that religion is not about to disappear from the European or national public or private sphere. On the contrary, the last decades have witnessed the re-entry of religions into the public arena, which has involved the emergence of new religions with novel features as well as significant changes in the old religions. These processes of religious resurgence and religious transformation have accelerated and intensified
on account of the rapid growth of immigration and the creation of new diasporic communities that are globally networked. In contrast to the idea of a one-track 'secularization process', religion is now playing an important role in constituting collective identities and in shaping both national and international cultural characteristics and boundaries.

The changing place of religion in contemporary European culture challenges older notions of the meanings of the 'secular' and 'secular democratic' state. These newer ideas are not always accorded the careful consideration they deserve. While the frequency of tensions and conflicts apparently related to religion has sharply increased in Europe, their motives may also reflect other cultural, political and socio-economic dissatisfactions. Yet many policy-oriented initiatives and research projects focusing on religious resurgence in Europe have failed to assess the resurgence of religion in the context of other social and political processes.

This volume sets out to fill this scholarly lacuna by offering a conceptual, historical and empirical examination of religion and democracy in contemporary Europe; its aim is to reframe the basic issues of secularization and religion in such a way that their complex reality will be visible in its European context.

The papers in this volume were first presented at an international conference at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (VLJI) between 1 and 3 September 2007. The conference was a joint venture between VLJI and Bochum University and was part of the Religion and Democracy Initiative of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). The conference concluded the first year of this initiative. It brought together experts from a wide range of disciplines – sociology, philosophy, history, Islamic studies, economics and law – as well as participants from other forums supported by the NEF initiative.

A broad perspective on the place of religion in the contemporary era is drawn by Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt. He addresses the themes of the meaning of the return of religion to the public arena and the reformation of the religious components that have become salient. Eisenstadt analyses the development of new collective identities by contextualizing them in the processes of religious globalization and counter-globalization that reveal a new framework of intercivilizational influences and the emergence of ‘trans-states’. The themes that Eisenstadt raises are elaborated in many of the other papers in this volume.

The studies contained in the first section of this volume demonstrate that the theoretical, philosophical and historical significations of religion and secularity, and hence the nature of their links to democracy, are not static but evolutionary and dynamic. Five papers address questions related to these historical, epistemological and theoretical aspects of the meaning of secularization in
order to query the nature of the relations between religion and democracy. Some of them also examine empirical findings in order to analyse methodological and theoretical assumptions.

Gabriel Motzkin traces the sources of secularization which he views as rooted in Pauline Christianity. He proposes a theory of secularization that considers emotional autonomy to be a precondition for cognitive autonomy and the shaping of secular subjectivity. The first form of secularization was that of the law, not of faith, and began with the Friday of the crucifixion and ended with the Sunday of the resurrection. It was Paul’s sanctification of both the individual and the defining emotion of love that provided a basis for the secularization of the emotion of love in pre-modern Europe, and subsequently laid the foundation for individual autonomy and emotional freedom. A secular conception of emotional autonomy was a precondition for the subsequent conception of the autonomy of the self.

This transition from the love of God to earthly love and subsequently to self-love and to subjectivization was associated with the development of a sense of transgression against both the divine and the social order. However, such transgression characterizes only the first generation of secularization. In a subsequent cultural context that has already become secular, opposition to and transgression against that order based on a notion of an autonomous self can consist in moving towards variant forms of religion. From the second generation of a secularized society onwards, the problem of secularism and religiosity is manifested as the issue of how to commit transgressions that facilitate emotional autonomy in a situation in which the idea of a rebellious self has no meaning.

The variable and fluid epistemological and theological meanings of the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ are dealt with from a different perspective in Lucian Hölscher’s paper. Hölscher discusses contemporary conceptions of the relations between religion and politics, especially in Germany, and the way in which these affect religion’s attitudes to ‘secularity’. In a world of changing political systems, religion may help secure a certain continuity and identity. It can constitute a point of orientation for civil societies, not necessarily by establishing a kind of ‘civil religion’, but rather by applying a notion of ‘secular religion’. Theological, institutional and political changes both in contemporary Germany and in Europe as a whole justify using the concept of ‘secular religion’.

The varying historical meanings of religion in its relation to democracy are emphasized by José Casanova. He presents the mythical ‘secularization narratives’ and examines their genealogies and their social and historical functions. European societies tell themselves that in a progressive historical development they successfully separated state from religion, leaving the public political
sphere ‘undefiled’ by religions. This narrative is in fact a contemporary historical myth. In reality, most European democracies demonstrate a variety of ‘unsecular’ patterns of church–state relations. Hence the return of religion to the European public sphere does not constitute a serious threat to European democracy, but rather a challenge to European secularism and to European secular identities.

Not only was religion always present in the political ‘secular’ states, but as Peter van der Veer demonstrates from a historical perspective, most modern democratic states have found their legitimation in societies where religion played an important private as well as public role. As such religion actually created the conditions for democracy. In that sense religion and religious immigrants do not pose ‘new’ threats for democracies.

The place of the ‘new’ or ‘renewed’ religions in contemporary Europe is considered from both theoretical and empirical points of view by Detlef Pollack. He presents an empirical overview of religious commitment, religious practice and religious belief systems in Europe on the basis of selected variables in a comparison of countries over time. Directing attention to social phenomena ignored by the secularization thesis, he offers an overview of alternative explanations for contemporary processes of religious change. He nonetheless concludes, on the basis of his empirical assessment, that some aspects of the secularization thesis still possess a great deal of explanatory power.

In the second section of this volume, contemporary challenges and responses within the framework constituted by the relations between democracy, state and religion in Europe are examined from various perspectives. Silvio Ferrari traces the decline of the ‘old pattern’ of state regulation of religion in Europe. Europe is in the midst of a process of transformation that can be conceived as the passage from religious pluralism to a cultural and ethical pluralism that is still often characterized by a strong religious foundation. Despite the differences between the various national systems with respect to church–state relations, some common features can be discerned: the acceptance of the public standing of religious communities, a recognition of their particular features, a certain degree of state control over them, and selective and graded cooperation of public institutions with religious communities.

The fact that the ‘old pattern’ is changing is not, according to Luca Diotallevi, due to the ‘return of religion’, even though this phenomenon is allegedly responsible for the crisis of laïcité regimes. In fact the laïcité crisis is more radical than is usually supposed: while it is a product of the impact of a simultaneous functional differentiation of the main societal subsystems (such as religion, economy and science), it is also a symptom of the fundamental contemporary crisis of absolute state sovereignty.
One of the prominent areas in which polemics regarding religion and state developed in Europe is the education system. In contemporary Europe, the continued emphasis on secularity as a feature of the education process can be seen in the renewed controversy surrounding Roman Catholic crosses both in Italian schools and in German classrooms, as well as in the French, German and Turkish controversies about wearing the hijab in schools. As Alessandro Ferrari asserts, the fact that schools are centres of disagreement is not surprising, given that ever since the creation of the modern state, schools have served as one of the most important governmental tools for shaping and maintaining social cohesion and creating a ‘common citizenship’. Ferrari presents a panoramic view of the history of the relationship between school and religion in Europe and points to its different models or paradigms; from an apparently strong antagonism between religion and state schools to a pluralistic paradigm that reflects deep changes of attitude both in states and in religions. School systems today have to take into account that contemporary societies need people to be educated about religion and, if they wish, to be free to have a religious education. These two methods are not mutually exclusive. Recognition of the interpenetration between a religious education and the secular study of religion can help European states to integrate religious schools into a common system of instruction; at the same time, opening state schools to religious identities can help to recreate, both in religious schools and in state schools, the social cohesion that many feel they have lost.

A different, perhaps even contradictory, approach to the relationship between the secular democratic state and religion as analysed by Casanova, Silvio Ferrari and Alessandro Ferrari can be found in the paper by Michael Stathopoulos, former Greek minister of justice. Drawing on Greek examples, Stathopoulos argues that the state must abstain from favouring any religion in society at the expense of others. Clear limits for both religion and state are necessary; every religion must acknowledge that in the context of the international community there can be no exclusivity for its particular truth. Safeguarding pluralism requires the religious neutrality of the state, and that can be guaranteed only by a secular state. In contrast to other opinions in this volume, Stathopoulos stresses that the secular nature of the state can only be ensured by a system of separation of state and church.

The links between new religious communities, Islamic immigration and local/global identities are examined by Jocelyne Cesari. She demonstrates that cultural globalization provides many possibilities for religion besides fundamentalism. Neither religion in general, nor Islam in particular, can be considered merely as causes of international conflict or as reactions to modernity. She points to the ignorance caused by an essentialist discourse on Islam and presents
certain overlooked forms found in the globalization of the Islamic message and its encounter with the secular and democratic contexts of western Europe.

The two papers in the third section of this volume, written by young scholars who took part in the NEF initiative, also concentrate on the issue of Islamic integration in European societies and on the multidimensional faces of Islamic communities in Europe. By focusing on the role of public opinion-makers and of the media in influencing integration processes, Siddik Bakir and Konrad Pedziwiatr reveal some of the new generation’s perceptions and hopes for Europe, notably the need for a redefinition of European identity that can also include Islam.

A retrospective analysis of the issues, questions and conclusions arising from the five events that comprised the NEF Religion and Democracy Initiative is offered in the epilogue by Simon Glendinning, who was the moderator of the NEF’s Youth Debates and the Roundtable with Journalists. Rien van Gendt, chairman of the Religion and Democracy in Europe Initiative and executive director of the Van Leer Group Foundation until 2007, shares with the reader his closing remarks at the Jerusalem conference in which he looks forward and highlights the future challenges for Europe.

The questions posed in this volume touch upon the roots of European identities and political agreements. Who are ‘we’? Is there a neutral or secular state? What are the limits that the state can impose on religions? What is the function of education with respect to religion? The variety of answers proposed in this volume gives only a hint of the problems and challenges to be faced in the coming decades.
Historical and contemporary context
A far-reaching resurgence or reconstruction of religions is taking place in the contemporary world. This resurgence is manifest in many ways, including the rise of new religious (especially fundamentalist and communal-national) movements; the crystallization of new diasporas with strong religious identities; profound transformations within the major religions; and the growing importance of religious components in the constitution of contemporary public arenas and in the constitution of collective identities. All these developments have far-reaching implications for the place of religion in the contemporary era, calling into question a basic assumption of public discourse which assumed the weakening and ‘privatization’ of religions as concomitant with modernization.1

Indeed, in the early stages of the crystallization of the post-World War II social and political scene, it seemed as if several aspects of the development of religious organizations and behaviour in modern societies had become predominant, attesting indeed to the continual secularization of modern societies. The most important of these aspects were: first, the growing specialization of the religious sphere in the modern world and its differentiation from other institutional arenas – the religious sphere having become just one institutional and semantic sphere, among many others; second, the weakening or loss of the predominant place of religion in the modern world-view as compared to earlier periods; and third, the growing deritualization both of the central public sphere and of many components of private life, and the weakening of official religious institutions.
Yet, in fact, the picture was much more complex and became even more so during the last quarter of the 20th century. All these developments did not necessarily mean the disappearance of strong transcendental orientations from the cultural and political panorama. Rather, there developed a multiplicity of orientations to the transcendental realm, as well as a very important shift in the focus of the transcendental and utopian orientations predominant in these societies from the constitution of modern centres to more heterogeneous or dispersed arenas, often in various ‘multicultural’ and ‘post-modern’ directions.

Nor did religion disappear from the public arenas of their respective societies or from the constitution of collective identities. In fact, religion started to re-enter these arenas – very forcibly. Indeed, one of the most important aspects of the contemporary scene was that of religions, which, relegated or confined in the classical model of the nation-state and revolutionary state to private or secondary public spheres, re-entered the major political and cultural arenas and the central frameworks of collective identities of many societies.

Indeed, one of the most important developments in the constitution of the political arenas and collective identities on the contemporary scene, attendant on the weakening or transformation of the nation and revolutionary states, has been the ‘resurgence’ of the religious national-ethnic components – their move as it were into the constitution of collective identities and into the centres of national and international political activities.

This resurgence of religion does not involve a simple return of some traditional forms of religion, but rather a far-reaching reconstitution of the religious components which transcends the vision of the ‘classical’ cultural and political programme of modernity, as well as far-reaching civilizational transformation. This new religious constellation that crystallized during the last two decades of the 20th century was characterized by the paradoxical combination of, first, growing multiplication and privatization of religious orientations and sensibilities; the concomitant enhancement of possibilities of choice, for individuals and groups, between such visions, with utopian orientations becoming focused on the search for some creativity or authenticity within multiple dispersed social settings, connected with a growing trend to much more diversified, ‘multicultural’ orientations. Second, these new religious constellations were characterized by the weakening of institutionalized religion and of the major official religious institutions and organizations and by the decline in their membership. Third, it was characterized by the resurgence of religious sensibilities and their transformation and transposition into the centres of national and international political activity, and in the constitution of collective identities. Religious identity and practices, which in the classical model of the nation-state were relegated or confined in theory (although
transposed into the public political and cultural arenas, in some cases acquiring central roles in the contemporary national and international public arenas.

These changes in the religious arena were closely connected with far-reaching developments within all the major religions, in all of which the relations between different dimensions or components of religion – the cosmological-transcendental, the institutional-organizational, the structure of religious authority and that of the individual religious sensibility and orientations – have been radically reformulated, as were also their relations to the major political formations, social arenas and the constitution of collective identities. Concomitantly, there developed within most religions a growing emphasis on their inherent authentic universalisms as being independent of or distinct from (even if interwoven with) the universalistic orientations of the cultural programmes of modernity, as promulgated above all in the programme of the Enlightenment and as embodied in the nation- or revolutionary state.

II

One of the most important changes in the contemporary global scene has been the development of transnational, mostly, but not exclusively, religious and/or ethnic virtual associations, communities and networks, among which diasporic communities and networks are most important. The most significant among such diasporic communities and networks are the Muslim one, or ones, especially in Europe and in the USA. Also – though with significant differences – there are the Chinese and possibly Indian and Korean diasporas in East Asia, in the USA and in Europe, as well as Jewish communities, especially in Europe. It is true that diasporic communities such as ‘overseas’ Chinese or Indian ones have existed for long periods of history – as did, of course, transnational or trans-imperial religions such as the Catholic, ‘Orthodox’ Christian and Buddhist ones, not to mention the Jewish religious ones. But in the contemporary scene, under the impact of extensive migratory movements accompanying the processes of globalization, a large number of such diasporic networks, communities and organizations – many of them new – have developed. These have also brought about a far-reaching transformation in the constitution of religious communities and their participation in public spheres and in the constitution of collective identities.

In most of these communities orientations to some ‘home base’ developed, but basically they all went beyond them. There developed within them a strong tendency to deny various local traditions in favour of the new universalistic translocal identities promulgated by them, carried above all by numerous translocal networks. These networks, without the mediation of the ‘home’ centres or
indeed of any single territorial centre or regulative principle, directly connected similar ‘ideological’ religions and ethnic communities, and entailed new patterns of participation and new decentralized patterns of authority and accountability.2

Concomitantly, a resurgence of trans-state religious organizations and encounters occurred, accompanied by a far-reaching shift in the relations and confrontations between religious groups and institutions and the major political and cultural secular institutions.

These developments were closely related to growing contestations between different religious organizations, movements and leaders about the proper interpretation of their basic principles and of their relation to the modern world and about the loci of authority within them.

All these new trans-world communities and networks constituted not only a new organizational or structural element on the contemporary scene, but also important foci for the reconstitution of collective identities and of new civilizational visions and contours. It was these new virtual communities and networks that produced such a fertile ground for processes within the changing intercivilizational scene, above all for highly extensive and intensified ‘reactions’ to the processes of globalization. Chief amongst these was the reaction to the claims of different major centres of globalization, a reaction that gave rise to multiple and paradoxical ‘global’ anti-globalization movements and demands. These demands challenge some of the basic premises of the tendency towards global hegemony and attempt to create alternative patterns of modernity and of globalization.3

III
Within all these settings new movements appeared, making powerful demands for greater cultural autonomy for the newly emerging local, regional and transnational cultural spaces and conceptions of collective identity. The common denominator of many of these demands has been that they do not see themselves as bound by the strong homogenizing cultural premises of the classical model of the nation and revolutionary state, especially by the places allotted to the religious dimension in the public spheres. These movements make far-reaching claims to redefine citizenship and the rights and entitlements connected with it; to construct new public spaces and to reconstitute the symbols of collective identity promulgated in their respective states. It is not that these movements or sectors do not want to be ‘domiciled’ in their respective countries. Indeed, part of their struggle is precisely to become domiciled, but on new terms that are far removed from classical models of assimilation. They aim to be recognized in domestic public spheres, and not to be confined only to the private sphere, as culturally distinct groups in the constitution of civil society in relation to the state.
Indeed, even in the period of the presumed hegemony of the pristine model of the modern state, there existed (though often in subdued and subterranean ways) a much greater variety and heterogeneity of collective identities than was presumed in the homogenizing models of the nation-state. Religious (as well as ‘cultural’ and linguistic) identities and cultural space did not disappear – although they were of course stronger in those societies such as England, where multifaceted patterns of collective identity prevailed, than in societies such as France and the Scandinavian countries with their strong secular homogenizing premises. In other societies, such as imperial Germany, such identities could become foci of political dispute. Moreover, contrary to many implicit liberal assumptions, citizenship was never ‘culture-blind’ or culturally neutral. Citizenship usually entailed participation in a distinct community or ‘nation’ and acceptance of at least some of its ways of life and collective identities.

Nevertheless, however strong these identities and ways of life may have been, in the heyday of the nation- and revolutionary states, most of them (with the partial exception of religious identities, especially the Catholic ones and to a lesser extent the Jewish) were effectively marginalized and kept apart from the central public domain or arena. They were relegated to the private domain and at most accepted semi-publicly and in a very limited way. They did not form major components of the central cultural and political programme as it was promulgated by the central socializing agencies of the nation or revolutionary state, such as the educational system, the army and the various mass media (newspapers and popular books, and later radio and television). Above all, these identities did not form the central pivot of the membership that formally defined the nation-state, namely citizenship, and of the various entitlements that depended on it. Similarly, in this period the ideological, cultural and institutional relations between various immigrant communities and their mother countries were, to a very large extent, mediated by the images of the new nation-state and by its model of citizenship that was supposedly based on universalistic homogeneous criteria.

The situation with respect to the place of religion in the constitution of collective identities has indeed greatly changed in the contemporary era. The demands of new movements and new settings went far beyond the ‘original’ premises of the nation- and revolutionary state. These demands called for far-reaching changes in the constitution of collective identities and of political arenas and activities. They entailed the transposition of most of these hitherto ‘subdued’ identities – albeit, of course, in a highly reconstructed way – into the centres of their respective societies and into international arenas. Here they would contest the hegemony of the older homogenizing programmes of modernity and claim their own autonomous places in the central symbolic and
institutional spaces of their respective societies, whether in educational programmes, in public communications or in the media. Very often they also made far-reaching claims with respect to the redefinition of citizenship and of the rights and entitlements connected with it, all of which indeed went far beyond the classical models of the nation- and revolutionary states.4

All these developments gave rise to strong tendencies to redefine boundaries of collectivities and to devise new ways of combining ‘local’, transnational or trans-state orientations, global and cosmopolitan. In many of these movements, as well as among many of the new diasporas or new minorities, the local and the transnational orientations, often combined in universalistic themes, were frequently brought together in new ways. Thus while many of these new collective identities emphasized local or particularistic themes rather than the homogenizing universalistic premises of the nation- and revolutionary states, at the same time many of them also promulgated broader transnational or trans-state identities. These were often couched in universalistic terms rooted in the great religions – Islam, Buddhism, even various branches of Christianity – and reconstructed in modern ways, or in new broader visions of Europe. At the same time, far-reaching changes took place in relations between overall, historical grand narratives of modernity and social visions that were more localized, either in space or in time.

IV
These changes in the place of religious movements and revolutionary states and their far-reaching civilizational implications developed in a specific historical context. The most important characteristic of this was the combination of, first, changes in the international systems and shifts of hegemonies within them; second, development of new processes of globalization; third, processes of internal ideological changes in western societies; and fourth, far-reaching processes of democratization and growing demands of various social sectors for access to the centres of their respective societies, as well as to international arenas.5

The most important changes in the international arena were, first, the continual weakening and ultimately the disintegration of the ‘Westfalian’ international order; second, the disappearance of the bipolar order of the Cold War; third, continuous shifts in the relative hegemonic standing of different centres of modernity, moving from Europe and the US to East Asia, then back to the US, and then (possibly) back to China and India; fourth, simultaneous growth in competition and conflict between such centres about their presumed hegemonic standing; fifth, the simultaneous intensification of the conflicts between different social sectors and societies about their place in the international order; and sixth, the increasing destabilization of many state structures, above all but not
exclusively in the different peripheral societies. All of these factors contributed greatly to the development of ‘New World Disorder’. New actors became prominent on the international scene – first of all, the various international agencies of the UN, then the agencies of the European Union and a plethora of new legal institutions such as the International Court of Justice. At the same time, these developed multiple new international regulatory arenas and networks – juridical, legal, economic, as well as a multitude of new international NGOs, associations and movements – among which an important role was played by religious, national and transnational associations, which acted beyond the scope of any single nation-state and even beyond the more formal international agencies. All these agencies focused on the constitution of new institutional spaces; on access to international agencies and arenas; and on influencing their policies and those of the various states. Many of these agencies and actors often competed with one another for the right to shape the new rules of the game in international arenas. Moreover, they espoused new premises of legitimation, above all those of human rights couched in different and distinct religious persuasions, such as Christian, Islamic or Buddhist, which transcend any national boundaries. In the name of these they called the different states to accountability. These developments have been presented by some of the actors promulgating them as constituting arenas of new international civil society, which transcends existing political boundaries. While the power of all these agencies was limited and the implementation of their recommendations depended to a large extent on the agreement of and cooperation between the respective states, particularly but not solely the stronger or hegemonic ones; and while many of the older actors, especially the states, continued to play a very important role in the international arenas – and some of them, indeed, as Michael Mann has shown, increased their power – the new actors became very important.

V

These changes in the international arenas were closely interwoven with processes of contemporary globalization. The most distinctive characteristic of these processes in comparison with the ‘earlier’ processes of globalization have not been confined to the extent of the global flow of various, especially economic, resources. Indeed, such flows of economic resources that developed in this period were not necessarily greater in comparison to some periods in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rather, the specific characteristics of contemporary globalization have been the predominance of new forms of international capitalism, which have displaced other, older ones based to a large extent on ‘Fordist’ assumptions; a shift from industries to service, financial and professional sectors; worldwide
processes of migration; continual movements of hitherto non-hegemonic, secondary or peripheral societies and social sectors into the centres of their respective national and international systems, often bypassing existing national institutions as well as trans-state ones; continual growth in the discrepancies and inequalities between various central and peripheral sectors within and between societies. Of special importance in this context has been the combination of discrepancies between, on the one hand, those social sectors which were incorporated into the hegemonic financial and ‘high tech’ economic frameworks and, on the other hand, those which were left out and became dislocated sectors, which saw a decline in their standards of living and suffered acute feelings of dislocation and dispossession. Most visible among such dislocated or dispossessed groups were not necessarily – and certainly not only – those from the lowest economic echelons: poor peasants or the urban lumpenproletariat, important though they were in these situations. Rather, most prominent among such dispossessed sectors were, first, groups from the middle or lower echelons of more traditional sectors, hitherto embedded in relatively stable (if not very affluent) social, economic and cultural frameworks or niches, which were transposed into generally lower, insecure sectors of the new global economies; and second, various highly mobile, ‘modern’, educated groups – professionals, graduates of modern universities and the like, who were denied autonomous access to or participation in the new political centres – very much in contradiction to their own premises.

Of special importance in this context was the fact that many of the inequalities, discrepancies and dislocations that developed as a consequence of these processes of globalization, both within states and between them, coalesced with religious, ethnic or cultural divisions and with that continually growing mutual impingement throughout the world of social sectors of ‘peripheral’ societies and sectors on different centres of globalization.

All these developments were perhaps most clearly visible in the various new diasporas and virtual communities and networks. It was indeed within these communities and networks that there developed extensive and intensified highly transformed ‘reactions’ to the processes of globalization, especially to the hegemonic claims of the different, often competing, centres of globalization, attesting, to follow Arjun Appadurai’s felicitous expression, to ‘the power of small numbers’, and constituting one of the most volatile and highly inflammatory components on the global scene; as well as an important factor in the transformation of intercivilizational relations in the contemporary scene, often promulgating visions of clashes of civilizations.
VI
These various anti-global movements became closely interwoven with the new ones which, as we have seen, developed from about the mid-1960s. This process occurred first in the west – for example, the famous movements of 1968 and the various postmodern, post-materialist ones such as the women’s ecological and anti-globalization movements; and then expanded throughout the rest of the world, where orientations and themes of protest and the revolutionary imaginaries became radically transformed. These transformations have often been presented or perceived as the harbingers of far-reaching changes in the contemporary cultural and institutional scene and possibly also as indications of the exhaustion of the entire programme of modernity.

The basic orientations of the earlier, ‘classical’ social movements had focused above all on the constitution and possible transformations of the socio-political centre, of the centres of the nation or state, or of the boundaries of major macro-collectivities. In contrast to this, the new movements of protest were oriented to what one scholar has defined as the extension of the systemic range of social life and participation, manifest in demands for growing participation in work, diverse communal orientations, citizen movements, and the like. In Habermas’s words, these movements moved from focusing on problems of distribution to emphasis on the ‘grammar of life’. One central aspect of these movements was the growing emphasis, especially among sectors dispossessed by processes of globalization, on the politics of identity and on the constitution of new religious, ethnic and local collectivities promulgating narrow exclusivist, particularist themes, often formulated in highly aggressive terms.

VII
All the new multiple changes analysed, especially those resulting from the re-entry of religion into both the national and the international public spheres, culminated in the crystallization of new intercivilizational orientations and relations.

In most historical cases of globalization, intercivilizational, ‘anti-globalization’ or anti-hegemonic tendencies combined with an ambivalent attitude to the cosmopolitan centres of globalization. So it was in the Hellenistic, Roman, Chinese Confucian and Hinduistic cases, in the case of ‘classical’ Islam, and in early modern cases. Yet on the contemporary scene such tendencies have been transformed. First, they have become widespread throughout the world, especially by means of the media. Second, they have entailed a continual reconstitution, in a new global context, of collective identities and oppositions between them. Third, they have become highly politicized, interwoven with fierce oppositions between them and the hegemonic conflict between political and ideological terms. Fourth,
they have given rise to new intercivilizational orientations. The central focus of these orientations has been the attempt to radically decouple modernity from westernization; to take away from the west—from the original western Enlightenment and even Romantic programmes—the monopoly of modernity; and then to appropriate modernity and to define it in their own terms or visions. They have espoused new civilizational visions—highly reformulated images and symbols of civilizational and religious identity, very often formulated in terms of the universalistic premises of their respective religions or civilizations and grounded in their respective Axial religions. It was in terms of such visions that they attempted to transform the global scene.

A central component of this discourse was a highly ambivalent attitude to the west, above all to the US, its predominance and its hegemony. This attitude was most fully manifest in this period in powerful anti-American movements that burgeoned throughout the world, including many European countries.

These developments signalled far-reaching changes from the earlier reformist and traditional religious movements that had developed throughout non-western societies from the 19th century onwards. Within the recent anti-global movements, confrontation with the west has not taken the form of a quest to become incorporated in the modern hegemonic civilization on its terms, but rather to appropriate for themselves the new international global scene and modernity and to define them in terms of their own traditions.

These visions become fraught with increasing contestations, very often couched in civilizational terms which may endow them with highly ideological absolutizing dimensions, in many societies, in local and global scenes and arenas alike. These contestations take place between, on the one hand, the original western conceptions of modernity as embodied in the modern nation-state or revolutionary state and promulgated by the different centres of western hegemony; and, on the other hand, the newly emerging local, regional and above all transnational civilizational ones. At the same time, however, the vistas grounded in these traditions have been continually reconstituted under the impact of ‘modern’ programmes. Indeed, these discourses and the discussions around them resemble in many ways the discourse of modernity as it developed from its very beginning in the centres of modernity in Europe, including far-reaching criticisms of the predominant Enlightenment programme of modernity which has developed in the framework of this discourse. Thus, for instance, many of the criticisms of the Enlightenment project made by Qutub, possibly the most eminent fundamentalist theologian, are in many ways very similar and often also related to the major religious and ‘secular’ critics of the Enlightenment from its very beginning: from de Maistre and the romantics; to the many populists (Slavophiles and the like) in
central and eastern Europe, especially in Russia; to those who have in general emphasized, in Charles Taylor’s words, the expressivist dimension of human experience; and then, of course, to Nietzsche and Heidegger.

Such attempts at the reformulation of civilizational premises have been taking place not only in these movements, but also in new institutional formations such as the European Union and in various local and regional frameworks. The process is also to be seen in the diverse attempts by the different ‘peripheries’ – as, for instance, in the discourse on Asian values – to contest the western, especially American, hegemony, and to forge their own constitutive modernities.

The debates and confrontations in which these movements and actors engage and oppose each other may be formulated in ‘civilizational’ terms, but these very terms – indeed, the very term ‘civilization’ as construed in such a discourse – are already couched in the language of modernity, in totalistic, essentialistic and absolutizing terms derived from the basic premises of the discourse of modernity (even if it can often draw on older religious traditions). When such clashes and oppositions are combined with political, military or economic struggles and conflicts, they can indeed become very violent. In contrast to the symmetric wars between nation-states in the framework of the Westfalian order, they may give rise to what H Münkler has defined as non-symmetric wars, which have become a continual component of the international order. Of special importance have been the multiplication, extension and intensification of aggressive terrorist movements and intercivilizational conflicts and encounters, which have become a seemingly permanent component of the new international intercivilizational scene.

10 See note 5 above.
Section I
Secularization, religion and democracy: historical, philosophical and theoretical perspectives
In this paper I will first deal with the basis for secularization in Christian consciousness. I will be concerned with the issue of whether Christianity already contains within it the seeds of secularization. This thesis (and not Blumenberg’s) is the opposite of that thesis according to which secular culture is just a remake of Christian culture. Instead, here the question is whether Christianity can be viewed as anticipating secular culture. I will first discuss St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. Then I will discuss the emotional basis for secularization. Finally, I will consider the difference between secularization and an already existing secular culture.

My point about Paul’s ideas about salvation is epistemological: most people believe that verification and falsification coincide; if you know what is false, then you are closer to the truth, or if you know what is true, you also know what is false. Thus if you know that Jesus Christ is the saviour, you also know that other religions are false, including Judaism. In that case, however, why include Jewish texts in the Bible? Why not, like Islam, get rid of previous holy texts? Is the reason for including the Old Testament only historical? One reason given for including the Old Testament is that its prophecies anticipate Christ’s incarnation; they provide prospective evidence for the truth of Christianity. Yet why then include the Old Testament texts once Christ has come? Should not Christ’s incarnation be self-sufficient proof of his truth such that one could dispense with the Old Testament?
Paul thinks that the Old Testament is religiously necessary for a Christian because he distinguishes between falsification and verification, between the consciousness that something is not true and the subsequent consciousness that something is true. Unlike Karl Popper, Paul does not think that one leads to the other – that the consciousness of what is false will lead to the consciousness of what is true. However, the consciousness of what is true cannot exist unless there is a previous consciousness of what is false: the gentile will not understand Christ’s message unless he has read the Old Testament, because he will not have the consciousness of what is false as a disjunctive context for understanding what is true.

Judaism is necessary for Paul because without Judaism there can be no consciousness of sin, ie of what is false. That is because Judaism is a religion of law, and as a religion of law, it tells us what is wrong. Telling us what is wrong, however, does not tell us what is right. On the other hand, unless we know what is wrong, we will never understand why what is right is right. Christianity can only eventuate after the death of Judaism, as its successor religion, after the law has been voided, ie after the law itself is no longer true. What has made us conscious of what is false now turns out itself to be false, without, however, the things that once were false now becoming true.

When did the old order end? When did Judaism lose its validity? Judaism lost its validity the day that Christ died. When does Christianity obtain its validity? Christianity only obtains its validity on the day that Christ is reborn, on Sunday. For three days, the world is without any God, for neither is there law nor is the new order of faith complete. But after God’s death, the pagan gods do not return. For three days, it could seem as if the world had been secularized, located in between an old order of truth that is no longer true, and a new order of truth that has not yet eventuated. Thus there is a gap between falsification and verification, a gap between the consciousness of sin and the consciousness of salvation. The consciousness of sin cannot be derived from the consciousness of salvation, and the consciousness of salvation cannot be derived from the consciousness of sin. For those three days, the truth is in question. For St Paul, a world without God would be a world without truth.

One might conclude that the world for those three days was like our secular world, but that conclusion would be hasty. Here is why: Christ performed two major actions before his crucifixion. The first was his statement to Peter that Peter is the rock upon which Christ will build. The second was the Last Supper, in which Christ and his disciples took the first communion. Thus when Christ dies, first, his church already exists; second, the act of communion is not an act in memory of the resurrection because the resurrection has not yet occurred. Hence for the
three days of God’s absence, the church is the church of the absent god. Second, the act of communion can only be understood as an anticipatory act, not as a commemorative one. Christ has transformed the commemorative re-enactment of the Seder into the anticipation of both his crucifixion and his resurrection. Consequently, for three days there exist both an institution and a religion that live in anticipation of the truth of its faith, an anticipation that is validated but not created by the resurrection.

There is a contradiction between what St Paul has to say and our reading of the Gospel. St Paul bases his universal church in the resurrected Christ, who is the founder of the new order. In Romans, St Paul does not address the situation of the Christian faith before the resurrection. Christ, however, was concerned with founding the Christian faith in anticipation of the resurrection. Even if we assume that Christ already knew about his future resurrection, the place of the resurrection in his emplotment is much like the standard Jewish anticipation of the Messiah: in other words, before the resurrection, Christianity, like Judaism, is a religion of anticipation, not a religion of fulfilment. That, however, means that before Christ is crucified, the religion of faith coexists alongside the religion of law. Between Friday and Sunday, while the law died on Friday, the faith did not die. It is then in the secular gap between Friday and Sunday that one could conclude that faith can exist without law – that for a truly believing Christian the fact of living in a world of secular institutions, as St Paul rightly saw, should pose no problem at all.

What happens on Sunday? First, the faith changes, since it is a faith that has been confirmed, and as such it is not faith in something anticipated but rather faith in an external reality. That faith is based no longer on the falsification that is presupposed in determining something as sin, but rather on the knowledge of what must be true. Second, a new order is established: the order of faith. From Friday to Sunday, there is an unverified faith: it is only on Sunday that this faith obtains the idea that it can be fully substituted for the old order. The old order was not superseded when it died; it was only superseded when something else could be confirmed not only as belief but also as evidence.

Between Friday and Sunday there was faith but no law. Since God had left the world, the consciousness of sin was problematic. After Sunday, the newly verified faith makes it possible once again to have the consciousness of sin as an anticipatory step to the truth of faith. God’s absence did not mean the end of faith; rather, it signified the existence of a purely messianic community, a church perched between memory and anticipation. The resurrection signifies the possibility of the church being something other than a purely messianic community. Between Friday and Sunday the church’s messianic message is only comprehensible in
terms of Judaism in a way that is not true after the resurrection. After the resurrection, the Old Testament is necessary for the consciousness of sin; before the resurrection, the Old Testament is necessary for understanding the truth of Christ, since for those three days there is no possible validation of the truth of Christ except in terms of the Old Testament.

We thus see four phases: 1. Judaism’s rule of law, which inculcates in us the consciousness of what is immoral. 2. Christ’s presence on earth, which is the anticipation of the cancellation of the law. 3. The three days of absence, which are both the fulfilment of the cancellation of the law and also the anticipation of the resurrection in the absence of the law. 4. The fact of the resurrection, which installs the order of faith as the fulfilment of the previous anticipation of the resurrection. Faith does not cancel law. It is the absence of God that cancels the law. What has been ‘secularized’ is not faith, but rather the law. This first secularization is not the secularization of faith, but rather the secularization of the law. In this way Judaism is historicized, since a gap opens up between the past and the present which is marked not by an event, but rather by a hiatus.

The possibility of a faith-based church is actually the possibility of those three days. In other words, what happens during the three days is a gap between faith and the world – what later scholars have called a cognitive dissonance. In this situation, one can either be a nihilist, for the law has been empirically cancelled by the death of God, or one can have the kind of faith that one has in an event that has not yet happened. That is not at all what happens after the resurrection, when one develops the kind of faith that one has in an empirical reality, ie the faith that there exists an external world. The resurrected Christ does not demand belief in a future so much as belief in the facticity of his resurrection. Thus one could also argue that the resurrection is the beginning of the secularization of faith, for what has been secularized is faith in what has not yet happened. Yes, that faith has been verified, but the emotional state of belief in what has not yet happened is no longer recoverable, and so the exalted state of a pure messianic consciousness has been transcended. The crucifixion makes it possible for the world to transcend the law; the resurrection makes it possible for the world to transcend pure messianic anticipation. In this way both the praxis and the emotional state of Judaism, which is disjunctive to its praxis, have been transcended. One no longer has to live in the tension between the law and messianic anticipation that has characterized most of Jewish history.

Paul devotes considerable attention to the internal emotional geometry required by the new faith. The reason is that the religion of faith is an internal religion. It requires a new conception of self. That self does not have the same kinds of feeling as did the old self. He terms this situation ‘the circumcision of the heart’,
ie the emotional acceptance of internal discipline, a discipline that is necessary because external authority cannot reach into the new self. External obedience to the temporal ruler is possible because the heart is impermeable. It is in the heart that one accepts or rejects salvation.

Paul believes that, just as God has become visible for a moment in time, the man who believes in that God is an invisible man. It is not God but the soul that is invisible. What is that invisible soul's internal discipline? How can a moral consciousness survive the abrogation of the law? The answer is through its metaphysical universalization. The path to salvation lies in the universalization of morality. That universalization is possible because God became man. If man lives in sin and error, and God became man, God in his man-being accepted the possibility of his own errancy and consequent depravity. His death is the death of his own sin. The idea that Christ died for our sins contains the idea that it is immorality, not physical being, that brings death. Hence God's death makes it possible for us to transcend our immorality. Refraining from sin, Paul concludes, is not the same as transcending immorality. Transcending immorality — our becoming more than merely human — is only possible if God, our dialectical opposite, has accepted the limitation of his being possibly human; that God is not in the world, but has rather been in the world for a moment. For that moment, he confronted the possibility that he was not a god. For three days, it was conceivable that God had ceased to be God. By purging himself of his human being after having taken it on, he opened up the possibility of metaphysics without the law. Christ died so that the sin in him would die.

Paul does not think that because God became man, then man can become God. What then is our relation to God's death? Paul's conclusion is that we are God's heirs, heirs of the death of God. We would call that consciousness of being the heirs of a dead god an historical consciousness, ie a consciousness of a rupture in life from which we begin again in a new way. We distinguish between the crucifixion and the resurrection: we are the heirs of the crucifixion and live in the world created by the resurrection.

How does the combination of the memory of death and the consciousness of having been already saved affect man's internal emotional constitution? First, it places the important events of salvation in the past. Second, it segments the past into three eras: the law, which is now prehistory; the crucifixion, which, together with the life of Christ, is both the revolution and the historical moment; and the resurrection, which fixes salvation as a past event but a past event that continues into the present. We are the heirs of history and live in salvation. That means that our emotional constitution is based on a combination of inheritance and election, ie the consciousness of having been chosen in relation to an old
world. It is because everything is now in the past that I am not ruled by a sense of obligation which is the context for a praxis of the consciousness of sin. Hence an emotional vacuum is opened, since I cannot have the same emotional structure that I did when the self was conceived in terms of its relation to authority, whether or not that authority was internal or external.

God did not have to save us. His act of redeeming us through his death was contingent. Because his contingency is not like ours, we do not have the same emotional geometry that he does. What is the difference? While the Jews were commanded to love God, all they hoped for was that he would not treat them as badly as he treated other sinners. Accepting God’s authority served the purpose of encouraging God’s forbearance. Paul universalizes and transforms God’s forbearance into God’s mercy. According to Paul, mercy is God’s freedom. Paul’s emotional God is one for whom that mercy is a feeling, not merely an act.

Paul has thus transferred the emotions from the moral realm to a metaphysical realm. Feelings are no longer, as for Adam, a consequence of the consciousness of sin, but rather a consequence of the consciousness of salvation. That consciousness of salvation is verified through our love of God. In order for us to be able to love God, our emotions must be organized in such a way that we can transcend ourselves. That transcendence is internal: it takes place in the heart. While that transcendence is internal, it is not a self-transcendence. In Paul’s conception of love, love does not mean the abrogation of identity, but rather the affirmation of identity. It is not a self-denying emotion, but rather a self-defining emotion.

Love has yet another quality. It shows that the law has not quite been abolished. Rather, Paul writes that love fulfils the law. What does he mean by this idea of fulfilment? Fulfilment in this discourse signifies, first, the fulfilment of prophecy, and second, the performance of a legal obligation. The point for Paul is that love is the consciousness of law without performance of the law. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the law is fulfilled through the emotions. The emotions themselves are not anticipations, but rather fulfilments, and in this way reflect salvation.

Yet this notion of fulfilment is peculiar in that one can now fulfil a moral command through achieving an emotional state. Whereas the Pharisees were close to this idea, they thought that emotional sincerity was a precondition for correct fulfilment of the law, but not that consciousness itself could replace performance. Paul’s answer to the issue of the difference between man and God was that a transcendentally structured emotional life confronts an internal representation of the divine.
So far I have made two points. First, faith is a precondition for the possibility of verification; no consciousness can be based on falsification alone. Second, for Paul the difference between the old paradigm and the new one is visible in the transformed emotions of faith, love and hope. These emotions now become much more important than other emotions one might have. Hence the self is an emotional self, rather than an intellectual or political or social self. For that self, knowledge of the world is knowledge of the genesis of the new order; the connection is one between an internal emotional life and an external historical existence.

II

One consequence of our materialistic world-view is that we believe that our emotions are influenced by our biological constitution and our social context. If, however, we believe that emotions are also influenced by beliefs, then we could also believe that a change in emotional structure consequent on a change in belief system could itself lead to social or political change. Yet the social and political change that follows a change in belief often takes place in a different historical context from the context in which the paradigm change occurred. For example, while the western history of the emotion of love reflects its Christian ancestry, the history of its transformations is marked by large gaps in time. Novel Christian ideas about the self were immediately appealing, but their application to profane relations occurred much later, just as the full force of the Pauline text was first realized in the Protestant Reformation.

My argument is that an important secularization that occurred in pre-modern Europe was the secularization of religious love. This secularization took two different forms: the attempt to read profane love as a kind of sacred and romantic love, and the subsequent attempt to read romantic love as an emotion opposed to religion. My subsidiary argument is that this secularization of love created the emotional context for the subsequent process of emancipation from religious authority. Moreover, as a result of the Pauline idea of love as the central religious emotion, gender relations are the basis both for rejection of the social authority of religion and for the idea of a secular culture that relegates religion to a secondary role. If we look at the Islamic world today, we easily perceive that the problem of secularization is conceived as the problem of women’s freedom, and what is meant by that is women’s emotional freedom. But female freedom is not a new challenge for religion. The theology of love made this problem a central issue for Christianity. It is rather the lack of a theology of love in Islam that makes gender equality seem so explosive to traditionalists. One could object that many women have sought emancipation without placing emotional freedom at the centre of their aspirations; I would respond that they could do so because, like
19th-century feminists, they already assumed the reality of emotional freedom, which they sought to augment through social and political autonomy. The possibility of a logic that justifies emotional freedom is a possibility that was universalized by the Pauline text.

In only one western culture could emotional experience be invested with paramount importance as a path to salvation. In one major sense Christianity was different from both Judaism and Islam: Christianity universalized mystical experience. It brought this about not only by making mystical experience available to everyone, and not just to the mystic, through the act of communion; but also, and especially, by conceiving of emotional experience as a kind of universally available mystical experience. Christianity both dispensed with religious law as the regulator of everyday life and deliberately conflated emotional and mystical experience, setting both along the same continuum of experience in a way that the other monotheisms would find strange. In order for first love and then hope to be secularized, they first had to be sacralized.

Paul’s achievement could be read as marking the inception of secularization because he drew such a border between what belongs to God and what belongs to the world. I would argue that his achievement was quite different: Paul sacralized individual experience. He invested individual emotional life with the evidence of divine revelation. Paul was not interested in collective ecstasy because he was concerned with enduring emotional experience. Love and hope are, for Paul, not emotions of the moment, but rather durable emotions that one can have over a whole lifetime. Such temporally extended emotions could only be conceived as being individual. The consequence of basing religion on emotional experience was to make religion into an individual experience. While Judaism appealed to historical group identity, Paul universalized Judaism by transforming it into an individual religion.

Consequently, the struggle between the sacred and the profane would henceforth take place within the individual soul. It would be an invisible struggle, one for which outward conduct could only be a dependent sign of inner state of mind. The individual thus became both invisible and ineffable. This focus on emotional individuality was one source of the eventual development of a concept of personal autonomy. Why then did it take so long for such an intuition of personal autonomy to develop fully? My speculation is that personal autonomy could only develop in a social context within which transgressing social boundaries was viewed with ambiguity rather than unreservedly condemned.

The western concept of freedom developed in dialogue with a concept of transgressive behaviour. Within this context, emancipation meant removing the stigma of transgression from such behaviour. In that sense, all notions of libera-
tion have hewed to the idea that freedom implies redrawing the moral boundary between permitted and forbidden behaviour.

Why was a notion of transgression so important for the development of a concept of autonomy? Perhaps the Christian contempt for the world could only be rectified through a sacralization of the mundane that could take place only through transgressing the boundaries of the sacred in the direction of the world. For this argument, transgression of the sacred sacralizes the world and thus allows for the sacralization of the earthly individual. However, I believe that the issue of transgression is one of sorting emotions. Paul had argued that a concept of the law was necessary for a concept of sin. But a concept of sin is impossible without a conception of transgression: the sin must at least be imagined. For that imagination of sin to have social consequences, there must exist a context in which the transgression itself is ambiguous. A sense of transgression is critical because autonomy entails choosing the location of the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden. When the difference between sacred and profane love is conceived as a boundary, that boundary is both sacred and profane. In the same way, the difference between sacred and profane hope becomes a boundary, and that boundary is experienced all the more strongly since it is sacred and profane. The consequent emotions of success in the world and nationalism cannot be grasped without the secularization of religious hope. Within the individual, the conflict between sacred and profane did not take place in terms of hope. While sacred and profane hope could coexist alongside each other, sacred love and profane love were more exclusive.

I want to draw your attention to another facet of this transformation that is essential for understanding secularization. My argument is that secularization depends on the presupposition of female autonomy. Where did this autonomy originate? It originated in the notion that women have a choice of love object no less than men, and that idea could only stem from the idea that women have an immortal soul which must be educated to love God. It is because women can choose to love God that they can be permitted to choose to love men. Perhaps the development of democratic conceptions of authority is a long-range consequence of the presupposition of the emotional autonomy of women.

Here are three elements: women as individuals, the idea of transgression as a combination of the Jewish idea of sin and the Christian idea of grace, and the idea of autonomy as expressed in both belief and action. Women are essential to this story because of the need for a distinction between men as acting or loving and individuals as loving. The process of de-gendering autonomy took place in the context of the gendered relation of love.
Autonomous love was first conceived in terms of adultery; it was assumed that romantic love was possible only for married women who have no further marriage interest and whose emotions are therefore disinterested. A truly disinterested love must be a love without purpose: autonomy is possible only to the degree that love has been made transcendental. The transgression here is a double transgression: breaking the moral bonds of marriage and thinking about committing adultery with a human being rather than with God. This last statement points out the transgression implicit in Paul’s original formulation: namely, in the idea of loving God lies the idea of loving God more than one loves one’s children or one’s spouse. Adultery is already implicit in being married both to a human being and to God.

The secularization of the possibility of essentially romantic relations to other human beings takes place in two stages: first, the emotional object shifts from the divine object to the human object; then the emotional relation to the human object is transformed into the liberation of the loving subject. Instead of rescuing the imprisoned damsel, the modern subject rescues himself.

How and why could this relation be conceived as a relation that expresses freedom? One explanation is the distinction between Spinoza’s dictum that subjugation to passion is human bondage and the Romantic idea of passion as signifying freedom. Spinoza thought of the emotions as enslaving because he conceived of reason in terms of autonomy. My argument is that this kind of rational freedom has little to do with political freedom. Rather, political freedom should be conceived in terms of emotional freedom, ie the freedom to determine one’s place in the emotional dimension of the social order. But that raises the possibility that the essence of freedom lies in transgression. In turn, such a statement is inherently self-contradictory, because once behaviour is absolutely free, there can be nothing that is transgressive.

The question for us concerns the relation between secularization and transgression as constitutive of the possibility of redefining authority.

It seems as if transgression is already embedded in the shift from the divine love object to the human love object (unless loving God is itself transgressive). In other words, the transgression precedes the formulation of human freedom; the secularization of the love object is a necessary precondition for such an idea of freedom.

The question then arises whether the second shift, from the human object to the human subject, also embodies a transgression. If the transgression involved in adulterous love is a transgression against both the divine order and the social order, the transgression involved in the shift from adulterous love as the love of
the purely other to the love of self, which is constitutive of modern subjectivity, is a transgression against the social order by its attribution of divinity to the ego.

The modern conception of the subject is rooted in a conception of the subject’s relation to itself. This relation is self-love, and it forms the basis for the modern idea of self-interest. Its roots lie in the attempt to refashion the love of another as the love of self, as if one could love oneself as a love object. The rationality of the subject is not the cause of this self-love; it is rather this self-love that makes it possible for the subject to seek its rationality.

But is this self-love a desecularization, in that the shift from the other to the self divinizes what was previously transgressive? In the transgressive love of the other, there were two elements: the secularization of the love for the divine and the divinization of the other as the new love object. In the turn to the self, the secularized love for the divine is redivinized, while the self, as the new love object, replaces the divine subject. This ego, however, is a secular ego, in the sense of being other than God. What is now missing is the transgressive element: from the modern point of view, there is nothing transgressive in loving oneself and loving one’s love of oneself. Paul neglected to anticipate that the subjectification of the relation to the divine could lead to the sense that the human is divine. It is for such a divinely human ego that there is no distinction between verification and falsification.

The passion of modern romance lies in the difficulties that self-love creates for the possibility of romantic love. It is in that tension that the problems that love of another create for a conception of self first surface, and thus make the boundary of the self as the boundary of contrast between the self and the other first visible. The emotions now turn into the arena in which the issues of individual freedom and social obligation are contested. The issue of freedom is now an emotional issue, while religion now only signifies a possibility of retreat from society. Only the conflict between social obligations and emotional obligations remains. Culturally, that conflict was resolved in favour of the primacy of emotional obligations over social obligations, i.e., the obligations of the emotional self to itself. In our time, the conflict over secularization is a conflict not about knowledge, nor about belief, nor about society, but rather about the validity of different genres of emotional experience.

III

In *Natural Supernaturalism* M H Abrams characterized what we call emotional secularization as a reaction to epistemological secularization. He views the change in self-conception as a consequence of a change in the conception of knowledge. The modern conception of the self developed in contrast to modern
science and politics. My disagreement with this line of argument will be spelled out here.

First, texts in which people characterize their own position as being secular begin to appear in 17th-century France, and then spread throughout western Europe in the 18th century. Their emblematic figure is Voltaire. These texts are self-consciously transgressive; they assume that the essence of secularization lies in the questioning of authority. They also believe that such questioning of authority must be emotionally driven. My exemplary text is *De l’usage de l’histoire*, which was written by the Abbé de Saint-Réal and appeared in 1671. Saint-Réal’s argument is the following: it is useless to write history as the history of politics, since most people will never have the experience of power and therefore have no capacity to understand the past in terms of the issues and the decisions confronting rulers. Instead, he suggested writing history as the history of love affairs, since everybody has had experience of love affairs and so will be able to enjoy reading about the past. This idea of history as being what I call emotional history is not so far from the opening of La Rochefoucauld’s memoirs, in which he contrives to relate the history of the French monarchy as the history of love complications. The tension implicit in both these works is the tension between love and politics or love and religion. Love replaces both politics and religion. My argument is that this is not the sign of a new conception of love, but rather of a new political redeployment of love as an argument against the existing social and political order.

It is interesting that this treatment of love is a central theme for the centrepiece of a perhaps new historical consciousness. In *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, Amos Funkenstein correctly perceived that such a new historical consciousness is subversive, but he thought that it was subversive only with respect to the church, while I am arguing that it is essentially subversive irrespective of the object of its subversion.

I am arguing that the modern self needs to be emotionally autonomous rather than intellectually autonomous. Yet can one be emotionally autonomous without being transgressive? In a secular world order, being secular cannot be transgressive, and therefore one could not be truly autonomous within the context of such a secular order. In a secular context, affirming the secular self is merely a refined strategy of conformity to secular authority, since there is no rebellion inherent in secularism within a secular context. In such a context, it is religion that becomes transgressive.

For two of the leading sociological theories of secularization, the supply-side theory of religion, as formulated by Finke and Stark, and the theory of secularization as meaning religious indifference, as formulated by Steve Bruce, autonomy is perceived as the basis of the social order, and not as a phenomenon
that denies it. A third theory, that of Norris and Inglehart, views the lack of social autonomy as a basis for continued religious belief.

For Finke and Stark, the basis for religion is earthly desire; for Steve Bruce, the basis for secularization is indifference and leisure; and for Pippa Norris, the basis for religion is fear and anxiety. Norris argues that American religiosity is a consequence of the lack of a welfare state in America. The reason that people turn to religion is anxiety. In a situation without health insurance people are anxious and consequently turn to religion for consolation. Since the reason that people are religious is fear and anxiety, remove fear and anxiety and you will remove the basis for religious belief.

For Finke and Stark, religion is like a market in which different religions compete. Successful religions provide a better and more diversified range of services, and thus believers are more attracted to them. A monolithic state church cannot compete in the pluralistic free market of ideas that is a consequence of secularization. A plurality of religious offerings creates a virtual religious supermarket. Religious goods obtain the same fetishistic attraction as do the offerings in a supermarket. By being set against other religious offerings they gain in attractiveness.

The supply-side theory affirms the autonomy of consumers. Religions, beliefs and organizations are preferred because they somehow benefit consumers. Consumers seek to maximize their welfare, and they compare offerings in order to do so. In contrast, in a monopolistic situation, the choice is between buying a good that is offered and not buying it. Societies with little religious pluralism almost impel people to be secular when they are not forced to be religious, i.e., when religion is a monopoly but not necessary, in contrast to (say) water.

Clearly, this argument assumes that individuals function in ways that are economically rational. It is not clear whether Finke and Stark understand the difference between rationality and economic rationality: economic rationality rejects the distinction between a self and an economic self. However, Christianity does not think that the self is an economic self. In all such models, autonomy is reduced to choice: if I can choose between different things, then I am autonomous. But autonomy can also mean breaking the rules. Breaking the rules does not have to be secular. I can break the rules by articulating a religion that is inherently antinomian. The key issue relating to autonomy in the west was for a very long time the issue of whether rules could be broken: this was the situation Paul faced in confronting the law and that lovers faced in confronting society. Finke and Stark’s model is too limited to explain either secularism or religious revival historically. Such a model neutralizes the revolutionary force inherent in any
idea of autonomy. It is therefore beneficial for a liberal democracy that seeks to neutralize the revolutionary force of its own presuppositions.

Steve Bruce and his acolytes believe that secularization is an irreversible process. The reason that it is irreversible is located in the interplay between emotional life and the social structure. If the kind of society in which we are living continues to exist, religion will cease to have any significance. Underlying Bruce’s work is the assumption that people did not traditionally turn to religion for knowledge about the world. Therefore the scientific revolution and progress in knowledge have had little to do with secularization.

Rather, Bruce believes that the motive for religion lies in the interplay between social structure and leisure time. Religion succeeds in a religiously structured society because, according to Bruce, there is no other way for most people to fill their leisure time. Thus church-going on Sunday in Protestant countries was the only way to enjoy one’s break from work. As soon as other ways of filling leisure time developed, mainly in the second half of the 19th century, large parts of the populace, especially its male half, ceased to attend church.

In turn, that development created the possibility of a non-religious emotional life, one centred around free time more than around the interplay between family and religion. Similarly, the churches entered terminal decline once women could also avail themselves of an autonomous, individual structuring of leisure, a process that developed in the mid-20th century and which achieved maturity in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then the churches have been empty because women no longer attend church.

For this theory, religion can never return because the conditions for creating demand for religion no longer exist. What does demand for religion mean in this context? It is not a demand either for social cohesion or for meaning. Rather, it is a demand for emotional fulfilment, and Bruce’s unstated point is that no religion can be emotionally satisfying for someone who lives under modern conditions.

Bruce also subscribes to the idea that secularization is linked to autonomy. He views the process of secularization as an individual process. While it can be characterized as affecting large collectivities, the decision to be secular is not a decision that is made at the group level. For Bruce, this decision is reached on an individual level. Each individual makes up his or her own mind, however affected they may be by others, and therefore they all experience secularization as affirming their individual autonomy.

My problem with this theory is that it does not allow for a distinction between different generations of secularized people. Secularization affects first-generation secular people quite differently from the way it affects subsequent generations who grow up in secular culture. For the first generation, ie
those who grew up in religious homes, secularization was not, as Bruce implies, a quest for more leisure. On the contrary, for figures such as Emile Combes or Durkheim, secularization involved if anything a greater asceticism, an even more stringent moral discipline, since that moral discipline was now constituted by the self and not by an outer agency. Since they were acutely aware of the transgressive element in secularization, they articulated a rhetoric of emancipation that provided its own discipline.

For the second and subsequent generations of people living in secular culture, there is nothing transgressive or emancipatory about living in such cultures. The advent of the new-age religions can be seen as the quest for retaining the link between transgression and emancipation.

It is in this context that something quite new arises, something that can already be found in that first-generation secular Jew, Gershom Scholem, and also in Michel Foucault. I call this the nostalgia for transgression. In an emancipated society, transgression is no longer transgressive, and therefore transgression is no longer the expression of autonomy. It is in that situation that one can either deny the secular basis of the social order or adopt a romantic attitude towards transgression, i.e., a celebration of transgression in the past. History is no longer a history of exploitation or repression; it is now a history of transgression. In a way this is a return to the history of progress and Enlightenment, but with reversed signs: the history of transgression is at the same time the history of anti-Enlightenment.

The modern autonomy of the self required two elements: the transformation of transgression into emancipation and the self-transparency of the self. The self has to know itself and be able to act on that knowledge. The usual history of secularization is the history of the self's progressive self-knowledge. I would like to contest that history.

We just observed that secularization necessarily has at least two phases: the phase of emergence from religion into a secular context and the phase of secular society as an established context. For secularization to work, the authority relations that are established in the first phase must be able to work in the second phase. Otherwise one would have to conceive of secular society as always recreating itself—something that might possibly work for the emotional life but is difficult to conceive as a stable political and social order.

In one sense, then, the decisive transition is made in the first generation of secularization. What are the perceived advantages of leaving religion and secularizing? I believe that there are substantive advantages to secularization, but they only hold for the first generation. I discern three such advantages. The first advantage is the transparency of the world, the idea that the world is more
legible in a secular framework than in a religious one. The second advantage is the transparency of the self, the idea that the self can better understand itself and act on that understanding in a secular framework than in a religious one. The third advantage is the changed relations to authority that flow from the ideal of harmony between a transparent self and a transparent world.

But the monotheistic religions also claimed this transparency. Christianity’s doubled-edged advantage was that it claimed to provide self-transparency more articulately than the other monotheisms. But all these faiths made the world transparent by disenchanting it.

The difference between religious and secular transparency lies in the significance of this transparency. Whereas religion could tolerate the notion that something remained hidden, for secular culture everything has to be potentially transparent. If something can never be made transparent, then the world-view of secular culture is endangered.

Already in the 19th century, challenges to the notion of potential transparency developed by locating transparency in an eventual future. Marx argued that socio-economic relations were normally concealed but would be revealed in the future. Freud maintained that the psychological constitution of the self was normally hidden, but he also claimed that a period of long discipleship in analysis could reveal the self’s psychological structures.

However, it was Darwin who mounted a challenge to the basic assumptions of secular culture from which secular culture is unable to recover. At the time, Darwin was conceived as challenging religion and not secular culture. The reason was that contemporaries confused knowing how something works with the ability to use it. What one should infer from Darwinist theory is, first, that it is impossible to prepare for the future, since we do not really know what the environment will do; and second, that not only is most of the constitution of the self opaque, but that it is of no advantage to know it.

The neo-Darwinist and biologist Nazis sought to solve this dilemma by manipulating evolution, while Martin Heidegger drew the pessimistic conclusion that the biologically caused self-concealment of the self is inescapable. From his point of view, the Nazis were insufficiently radical, since they still subscribed to the Enlightenment idea that knowledge of the laws of nature could be used to ‘improve’ the human condition.

Heidegger argued that the Enlightenment idea of a self-constituting subject is mistaken. Religions also believed that human existence is not self-constituting, but Heidegger’s point is that I cannot know phenomenally, i.e., as part of my experience, how I have come to be. I therefore cannot understand myself rationally. He analysed the self’s lies to itself in order to show that while the self
can and does know the world, it cannot ever really know itself. Heidegger thought that he was dispersing the cloud of ignorance by pointing out that the world is no mystery. But the price he paid for access to the world was ignorance both of the creation of the self and of any truth about it.

Let us now compare the subject of late secularization with the subject of early secularization. The subject of late secularization neither makes the world nor discovers himself. His only possible transgression is necessarily meaningless: his pornography is constant self-constitution in a situation where no experience of the self is possible. A return to enlightenment would only be possible if the subject could either constitute himself or at least know his own truth. It follows that no basis for secularity exists. But the erosion of the ideological basis for secular existence does not mean that a return to religion is possible. The end of metaphysics must also entail the end of metaphysical emotions, such as romantic love.

Paul believed that resolving transgression was not a matter for the law, which provides the consciousness of sin, but rather an issue for the emotional acceptance of inner discipline. On the question of the self, his position was ambiguous, which is why he believed both in free will and in predestination. He thought that the self was indeed invisible, but that even though it was invisible, it could be emotionally transformed. The self is ‘knowable’ through its emotions, not through its knowledge of the world. Thus man is emotionally autonomous, but he is not autonomous in the world. Man has not constituted himself, but he nonetheless has the free will to be able to love God. It is because man is emotionally free that he can fulfil the law, which he has not constituted, through his emotional self-discipline, which is the correlate to his capacity to love God. Emotional self-transformation is the evidence of the fulfilment of salvation.

We have seen how this idea of love was both preserved and secularized in the ideal of romantic love as the possibility of simultaneous moral transgression and metaphysical fulfilment. Emotional autonomy, I have claimed, is the basis for cognitive autonomy. In the Enlightenment, this sequence was reversed, which turned out to be both productive and destructive. It was productive in that the power of the emotions was harnessed to the creation of a new social order based on the advancement of knowledge. Institutionally, we still live in a world in which the emotions are evaluated in terms of their contribution to the advancement of both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. However, this reversal of sequence was destructive in that an ideal of cognitive autonomy requires the possibility of cognitive transparency. As a consequence of the late 19th-century reversal, and especially as a consequence of Darwin’s effect on our self-understanding, the ideal of cognitive transparency was abandoned. The power of
transgression was trivialized as a temporary compensation for the consequent loss of autonomy. However, transgression can only function as a basis for autonomy if it is experienced by the self as a creative force. Productive transgression can only be effective as self-discovery. If there is no self to discover, then there is no meaning to transgression. Even Sade knew that.

If religion returns, it will not be the same old religion; it may not even be the same kind of religion. The recent sociological debate has been about the conditions for the survival of religion in a secular world, which is quite a different issue. I believe that a social order cannot endure without providing a meaningful structure for the emotional life. That was the attraction of fascism, which accurately intuited the emotional void inherent in a free society that is unable to believe in the autonomy of the self. Fascism sought to identify repression and transgression by making the whole social order transgressive. The lack of capacity for meaningful transgression in individual life was compensated by the internally contradictory idea of group transgression, which is found in many self-styled liberation movements. In the long run, the movement, religious or secular, that will succeed will be the one that provides an adequate justification for the autonomous constitution of the emotional self. What remains an open question is how that emotional self will be linked to the structures of authority that depend for their legitimacy on the perception of the support they provide for such emotional self-constitution.

As Eva Illouz has pointed out, unconsciously following St Paul, emotional self-discipline is the only meaningful way to provide for autonomy. I have tried to argue that the tense relation between freedom and transgression is neither a moral nor an epistemological issue, but rather a metaphysical issue in the sense that both religion and secularity fail to the extent that they are unable to provide a basis for emotional meaning.11

This reading of secularization is post-secular and post-postmodernist. It is post-secular because the ideal of epistemological autonomy has been vitiated by the very scientific process which it stimulated. It is post-postmodernist because I do not think that the emotional nihilism consequent on Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida is a viable option. The death of metaphysics could have meant either the triumph of secularism or the return of religion. My intuition is that the issue of freedom is intimately bound up with the possibility of metaphysics, because in a system in which all possibility of belief in anything is vitiated, there can be no articulation of the emotional life of the self.
10 Bruce, op cit (note 8 above), p 37.
Scientific truth is said to be one and the same in all places and at any time. However, in religion as in all human affairs, it is very important to be aware of the situation and the circumstances in which a truth is declared. I would like to start with a reference to the old and well-known story of the three rings. The first version of this story is to be found in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, but the one which I refer to is the adaptation by Lessing in his play *Nathan the Wise*. As a present to be given after his death, a father bequeaths three rings to his three sons, declaring to each of them separately that his is the only true ring. Only after his death do the sons discover, on coming together, that it is uncertain which one of the rings is the real one—the one with the special properties. So having been deceived, they become deceivers themselves when referring to theirs as the one true ring.

The rings stand for the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the story tells us something about how they belong together and how they should behave to one another when confronted with the claim that each of them is the only true religion. To make matters even more complicated, there are two versions or interpretations of the story. One version says that the real ring could not be distinguished from the others, making it a question of evidence or competition between the sons for each to demonstrate that his was the true one. The other version says that the real ring was lost and that it was none of the three rings. Again, this may either be interpreted as giving place to the idea of a religion in general, meaning that every religion holds its own truth in itself; or it may be interpreted as giving agnosticism a legitimate place in the discussion of religion, arguing that, if a true religion is to be found at all, nobody can tell us which one it is.
In Lessing’s parable of the late 18th century, it is left open which version is being espoused, leaving the reader to grapple with the twofold conundrum about which religion is the true one and whether religion may be considered true at all.

Religion and constitution in the liberal perspective

In modern western societies this is a decisive ambiguity: it makes atheism and secularity simultaneously players in the competition of religions and counterparts to all religions. In terms of politics, this ambiguity is to be seen in the double-bind relation of religion and state.

On the one hand, liberal constitutions seem to be independent of any religious legitimization. This essential feature of modern constitutional law also implies that it is not necessary, indeed not permitted, for the state to determine which religion is the true one. The constitution may privilege one religion over others, but it is not possible to de-legitimate the rest by defining the public religion as the only true one. Modern liberal societies are bound to accommodate many religions, and a constitution is mainly judged by its capacity to reduce animosity and hostility between them.

On the other hand, in most modern societies we in fact find one religion determining the basic outlook of the leading sector of citizens. It is this religion that establishes something like a general religious background for the political culture of the community. In Germany a prominent modern term was coined for this, *Leitkultur* (‘leading culture’), which claims that the Christian tradition is the leading facet in political decisions. In political debates this concept is very much disputed, but there is a conservative element in this idea, which today is widely accepted. In 1959 Wolfgang Böckenförde, the former justice of the German High Court and professor of constitutional law, coined a principle which has been cited very often in recent years: ‘The liberal state is based on preconditions which the state by itself cannot guarantee.’ This indeed is the challenge to which we have to respond: in what sense can religion be called necessary for establishing a civil society, and what does this mean for the existence of other religions?

Looking at the three world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it would be difficult to argue that any one of them would find its proper expression only in modern democracy. Rather, it would be more convincing to say that, for historical reasons, they first found their realization in some kind of monarchy. But this is only a superficial impression. Looking more closely at the tradition of each religion, we have learned that each of them is compatible with aristocratic and democratic systems as well. Religion and political constitution do not have a simple linear relation indicating that they are uniquely and exclusively committed to one another. There is no unique and exclusive political interpretation of
religion in terms of politics. This neutrality or openness is important in maintaining devoutness to religion in times of rapid political change. Today religion may even help to demonstrate a certain continuity and identity in a world of changing political systems.

Civil religion and political religion

But in what sense can religion be called a precondition or a point of orientation for civil societies? The most familiar answer to this question in western societies is that religion can be so described as it establishes a kind of ‘civil religion’ which is suited to the political system.

The term ‘civil religion’ is today very much associated with liberal constitutions in the western world, especially in France and the United States. In these countries civil religion is said to be the core and the spirit of the political constitution, but in a very different sense in each country. In France, at the time of the French Revolution, civil religion was defined more or less in opposition to, if not in actual antagonism with, the established Catholic church, emphasizing certain civic virtues such as the idea of a volonté générale or the ideas of liberté, égalité and fraternité, founded in early modern republicanism. In France civil religion was a very radical solution to the problem of how to reconcile the necessary independence of civil and public affairs from religion with the need to define a common bond whereby citizens could agree about the basic principles of the constitution. In the United States we find the same roots in the republican tradition, but the role of religion has a more Christian solution, rooted in 18th-century deism and the theology of a holy covenant with God. In the American constitutional system, just as in France, religious denominations were viewed as private circles of citizens without any public, constitutional influence on state affairs, while much space was allowed for all citizens to subscribe to the common Christian beliefs (for instance, the idea that the people of the United States are God’s ‘chosen people’).

In Germany up to World War II there was no such concept—a fact which, to many observers, is one of the main problems of public law in Germany. But I would like to argue that the lack of such a concept might also be seen as another model of how to manage the contradictions of religion and politics—a model with its own advantages and disadvantages. The arguments for the disadvantages are well known. Many efforts, it has often been stated, were made in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, and even at the beginning of the 19th, to overcome the basic dogmatic differences and hostilities between the three Christian confessions, ie Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism—not to mention Judaism, as an ever-present but publicly less acknowledged religion. That such a reconciliation never occurred
was a decisive factor in the Thirty Years' War, with the result that the power of the Holy Roman Empire was weakened. But the same was still true in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the unresolved situation produced disastrous hostility between Catholicism and Protestantism and left space for even more ideological hostilities such as anti-socialism and anti-Semitism as well.

Because there was no proper fundamental religious principle for society, people such as the Austrian professor Eric Voegelin argued, on the basis of his strong Catholic background, that from the late 1930s onwards it was easy for National Socialism to establish an extreme anti-Christian version of political religion. After the war, liberals in the United States took up the argument. It was the lack of civil religion, they argued, that was responsible for the rise of totalitarian political religions. In the period of the Cold War this indeed seemed to be true as much of Russian communism as of Nazism. Today, in western political philosophy, the term 'political religion' is often used in the sense of the totalitarian counterpart to the more liberal concept of 'civil religion'. 'Civil religion', the positive concept, is declared to be a prerequisite of democratic societies all over the world.

This is why in recent decades a growing number of politicians and scientists in the Federal Republic of Germany have begun to look for something comparable to the tradition of civil religion in France and the USA. Many observers were inclined to call the spirit of the constitution a civil religion; others referred to the common Christian heritage of Germany, later of Europe, as civil religion, sometimes combining this heritage with the humanist tradition of ancient Greek philosophy and Roman law. Civil religion became a focus of intensive political discussion. Should we adhere to a kind of 'constitutional patriotism', as the liberal philosopher Jürgen Habermas demanded? Or should civil religion rather be defined in negative terms as anti-Nazism, bound together by a strong regimen of political correctness?

It is not my aim to define 'civil religion' in German terms, because it is, in my view, an arbitrary concept in the political context of Germany. Rather, I would like to point out the advantages implicit in the lack of a civil religion in modern German history. Reflecting on the disadvantages of the concept of civil religion may be of some interest in an international discussion, because in recent years we have become increasingly aware of the problems implicit in the concept. Confronted with the aggressive politics of western countries in the Near East, for instance, I am inclined to ask: does the appeal to any civil religion prevent politicians and governments from erroneous political decisions in certain situations? Is civil religion suited to serve as a universal concept for all people in the world? Can civil virtue be bound to one civil religion only?
Today's clash of civilizations shows many features similar to the German situation in the 19th century, including an increasing economic and cultural collaboration of countries whose populations are deeply divided in terms of religion; a drive towards political unity in terms of a federal government; and, not least, the counterbalance of traditional religious denominations and groups of modernists and traditionalists in all of them. What does the German model of the 19th century tell us? First, we find a dominant religious tradition, Prussian liberal Protestantism, which is trying to take on the role of providing a platform for all Christian and non-Christian confessions. It is the idea of the *Kulturkampf* in Prussia in the 1870s: liberal Protestantism claiming to be accessible to all religious denominations as far as civic virtues were concerned. Those who were not willing to surrender traditional Protestant religiosity such as the exclusive claim of the Catholic church for political power were defined as being 'confessionalists' – by this time a specific German term for those fighting against political aspirations in both Catholic and Protestant churches.

All this seems to be very modern and constitutes much of what might be called a civil religion in Germany. But, as we all know, it did not work. Neither the conservative wings of the churches nor the socialist party agreed to the concept of liberal Protestantism serving as a common platform for the German empire, leaving it to Jewish intellectuals, ironically, to support the idea with a vigour linked to their striving for emancipation. So, what we find in Germany from about 1900 to the Third Reich is a careful counterbalance of religious groups which, in terms of political programmes, dispute one another's beliefs but agree on religious neutrality in actual political decisions. It is this lack of a positive religious platform for political collaboration that makes the German situation differ from countries with a civil religion such as France and the USA.

I am aware of the optimistic perspective on German history which is implied in this interpretation. But while conceding the fact that religious hostilities are at the bottom of the German empire as much as of the Weimar Republic, it is worth pointing to the German liberal idea that proposes another solution to the question of how to balance the political implications of religion with the necessity of religious neutrality in politics. It is a model based on liberal practice rather than liberal doctrines, and it was practised by parts of the Prussian bureaucracy throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. How did this model survive after World War II? In the last part of my paper I would like to argue that it was the programmatic sense of secularity that took up the idea.
Secular society and secular religion
In religious discourse the term ‘secular’ is usually used, especially in English, in a very negative sense, implying a lack of religion in society. However, in German religious discourse we also have a positive understanding of ‘secularity’, which goes back to its original use by prominent Protestant theologians such as Ernst Troeltsch and Friedrich Gogarten. This use turns on the ambivalent meaning of the term ‘world’ in religious writings, where the world is as much the stage on which God realizes his programme of salvation as it is the counterpart to God, the home of the devil. From this, secularization could be defined as the materialization of God in Jesus Christ, or to put it in more historical terms, the process of God’s realization in the world, with the realm of God as its transcendent goal and end.

In postwar Germany secularization has come to be a key concept in understanding the transformation of religion in the modern world. Again, this could only be defined as an ambiguous process. On the one hand, churches lost membership and attendance at services was in continuous decline; on the other hand, churches did indeed play an important part in defining Germany’s political identity from the very beginning in 1945 up to the present. The German population never lost contact with its religious heritage. This can be demonstrated by the fact that today people within and outside the churches agree with more than one religious denomination. This is true in many political questions with a strong moral component, such as the death penalty, birth control, gender policy and protection of the environment. In contrast to the 19th and early 20th centuries, today secular society in Germany is certainly not hostile to religion and the churches.

This is because secularity has become an integrative feature of religion itself. Soon after the war the big Christian churches began to reconstruct their relationship with civil society. Instead of defining themselves as a counterpart to ‘the world’, they acted as an integrative part of society. Instead of ‘mission’, they aimed at participation and ‘responsibility’ in all social and political affairs. So the relationship between church and society was defined as being more inclusive than exclusive. Indeed, what we have in Germany today are churches appropriate for secular society – appropriate in the sense of corresponding to the self-understanding of a secular society, tolerant, peace-oriented, pluralistic, etc.

But also in terms of theology a remarkable change of discourse has taken place, and it is this that makes me speak of a secular religion. The concept may be circumscribed by three basic principles. It is based on:

- The theological conviction that God and the world are two concepts that mutually relate to one another. God may be found as much in the world
and only there as the world may be found in God. Secularity in this sense defines a theological problem, the problem of God becoming a human being, as much as a scientific problem, the problem of the reality of the world.

- The political conviction that for church and religion the world is, as noted above, the place where they exist, not where they are in conflict. Secularity in this sense may be defined as the conviction that a Christian church is but one religious institution among others that has an influence on public opinion.

- The ethical conviction that religion has to make clear decisions on fundamental issues of private and public, political and social orientation. Secularity in this sense may be described as a peaceful culture of ethical dissent.

For my generation secularity was one of the most important utopias for future realization. We thought that all over the world, in all religious cultures, secularity would one day be a common platform for enlightened people, supplanting religious dissent and peculiarities. But today I am no longer sure that this is realistic. Many intellectuals and engaged politicians in non-Christian countries declare secularization to be one of the main instruments for westernization, ie Christianization. And Christian theology supports the idea that secularization, far from being a neutral concept, is deeply influenced by the Christian idea of God becoming a human being. I believe that this is true. So what should we do? How do we come together? Maybe it is wrong to strive for a common platform beyond religion; maybe we should only seek a way of living together peacefully, with each religion following its own rules.

But even when religions regard one another in such a distant way, we may recognize features of our own understanding of the world in other religions. What secularity tells us is the story of a deep ambiguity within religion itself. The secular is something that denies religion and is at the same time religion itself: it denies religion in establishing the world as a human and natural order, but it is religion, too, in that it is involved in the competition between all religious systems everywhere. So returning to the story of the rings, we find that the problem formulated there is unchanged. We can only try to avoid returning to the complex interactions between Muslims, Jews and Christians as they unfolded long ago in the Middle Ages.
The title of my paper already suggests that the problem of religion in relation to democracy may not be a real problem intrinsic to religion itself, but rather a problem linked to widespread secularist assumptions about religion, democracy and their relationships. At least in Europe, there is not much evidence today that it is religion per se which is problematic for European democracy, but rather it is the fact that it is taken for granted that a democracy must be secular that is, in my view, problematic and it is this that tends to turn religion into a problem.

In this article I would like to elaborate this argument in three steps. First, I will offer a schematic presentation of those assumptions or prejudices about the proper functioning of modern secular European democracy which I consider to be problematic. Second, I will contrast these mainly normative secularist assumptions with the empirical reality of European democracies, past and present. Finally, a look at contemporary debates in Europe in which religion has once again become a contentious issue reveals, in my view, that religion becomes problematic or is assumed to be a threat to democracy not so much because of the undemocratic character of particular religious practices and/or beliefs, but rather because of secularist assumptions about the proper place of religion in modern secular democratic societies.

Common secular narratives about religion and democracy in European history
The most frequently heard narrative, offered both as a genealogical explanation and as a normative justification for the secular character of European democracy,
has the following schematic structure. Once upon a time in medieval Europe there was, as is typical of pre-modern societies, a fusion of religion and politics. But this fusion, under the new conditions of religious diversity, extreme sectarianism and conflict created by the Protestant Reformation, led to the nasty, brutish and long-lasting religious wars of the early modern era that left European societies in ruin. The secularization of the state was the felicitous response to this catastrophic experience, which has apparently indelibly marked the collective memory of European societies. The Enlightenment did the rest. Modern Europeans learned to separate religion, politics and science. Most importantly, they learned to tame the religious passions and to dissipate obscurantist fanaticism by banishing religion to a protected private sphere, while establishing an open, liberal, secular public sphere where freedom of expression and public reason dominate. Those are the favourable secular foundations upon which democracy grows and thrives. As the tragic stories of violent religious conflicts around the world show, the unfortunate return of religion to the public sphere will need to be managed carefully if one is to avoid undermining those fragile foundations.

Thus runs the basic story of the modern separation of religion and politics. There are of course some more intricate and some more plain versions of the European story of secularization, but all of them present it as the great achievement of western secular modernity. The particular American version of the story, combining as it does a high wall of separation of church and state with an exceptionally vibrant religious society, complicated the western narrative somewhat. But one could always have recourse to the convenient trope of American ‘exceptionalism’ in order to bridge the dissonance. Until very recently, moreover, the story of secularization was embedded within an even broader narrative of general teleological processes of social modernization and progressive human development. The west simply showed the future to the rest of the world. Today, there is an increasing recognition that we may be entering a global ‘post-secular’ age and that, as Mark Lilla pointed out in the cover story of the *New York Times Magazine* in August 2007, ‘the great separation’ of religion and politics may be a rather unique and exceptional historical achievement, the more to be cherished and protected.1

Although rather inaccurate as factual historical reconstruction, this basic narrative serves as one of the foundational myths of contemporary European identity.2 It should be obvious that the story is indeed a historical myth. The religious wars of early modern Europe and particularly the Thirty Years War (1618–48) did not produce, at least not immediately, the secular state but rather the confessional one. The principle *cuius regio eius religio*, established first at the Peace of Augsburg and reiterated at the Treaty of Westphalia, is not the formative principle of the modern secular democratic state, but rather that of the modern
confessional territorial absolutist state. Nowhere in Europe did religious conflict lead to secularization, but rather to the confessionalization of the state and to the territorialization of religions and peoples. Moreover, this early modern dual pattern of confessionalization and territorialization was already well established before the religious wars and even before the Protestant Reformation. The Spanish Catholic state under the Catholic kings serves as the first paradigmatic model of state confessionalization and religious territorialization. The expulsion of Spanish Jews and Muslims who refused to convert to Catholicism is the logical consequence of such a dynamic of state formation. Ethno-religious cleansing, in this respect, stands at the very origin of the early modern European state. From such a perspective, the so-called ‘religious wars’ could more appropriately be called the wars of early modern European state formation. Religious minorities caught in the wrong confessional territory were offered not secular toleration, still less freedom of religion, but the ‘freedom’ to emigrate. The Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, with its multi-confessional Catholic, Protestant-Lutheran and Orthodox ruling aristocracies, offers the unique exception of a major early modern state that resisted the general European dynamic of confessionalization and offered refuge to religious minorities and radical sects from all over Europe, well before North America offered a safer haven.

The secularization of the European state would arrive, if at all, much later and would not necessarily always contribute to democratization, as the secularist Soviet-type regimes most clearly show. As often as not, it was actually religious groups and religious politics that contributed – at times paradoxically and unintentionally – to the democratization and secularization of politics in many European societies. Indeed, secularization and democratization are two dynamics which do not always go hand in hand. Sometimes one can find democratization without secularization, and very often one finds secularization without democratization, a dissociation that at the very least calls into question the premise that a secular state is either a sufficient or a necessary condition for democracy. But the purpose of my critical remarks is not to correct the historical record, still less to offer a more accurate historical reconstruction of the complex European developments. The purpose is rather to point out how, despite its obvious historical inaccuracy, this common narrative of European secularization is not only frequently repeated by European elites but appears to be deeply entrenched in the collective memory of ordinary people across all European societies.

It is indeed astounding to observe how widespread is the view throughout Europe that religion is intolerant and creates conflict. According to the 1998 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) public opinion survey, the overwhelming majority of Europeans, over two-thirds of the population in every
western European country, holds the view that religion is ‘intolerant’. Since people are unlikely to expressly recognize their own intolerance, one can assume that in expressing such an opinion Europeans are thinking of somebody else’s ‘religion’ or, alternatively, are presenting a selective retrospective memory of their own past religion, which they consider that they have fortunately outgrown. It is even more telling that a majority of the population in every western European country, with the significant exception of Norway and Sweden, shares the view that ‘religion creates conflict’. Interestingly enough, the Danes distinguish themselves clearly from their fellow Lutheran Scandinavians in both respects. They score higher than any other European country, as high as 86 per cent, on the view that religion creates conflict and score the second highest (79 per cent) after the Swiss (81 per cent) on the belief that religion is intolerant. Along with most other former communist countries, the Poles score well below the western European average on both issues, which is striking given the widespread perception of Polish Catholicism as ‘intolerant’ and the fact that religion in Poland has in fact been a source of conflict.

I will not try in this paper to make sense of some of the rather peculiar patterns: why the Danes, for instance, maintain such a negative view of religion, in spite of the fact that they combine one of the lowest rates of church attendance (only 2 per cent attend church regularly) with one of the highest rates of church affiliation in all of Europe (only 12 per cent declare no religious affiliation, a high level of membership affiliation in the Danish Lutheran church comparable to the levels of much more religious Catholic countries such as Poland, Portugal or Italy); or why the Swiss hold equally negative views, in spite of the fact that they evince relatively high levels of religious belief (73 per cent believe in God, a proportion well above the European median of 65 per cent), high levels of church attendance (64 per cent attend church regularly and only 5 per cent never attend, proportions comparable to the levels of more religious Catholic countries, such as Poland and Ireland), and high levels of confessional affiliation (only 9 per cent declare no religious affiliation).5

What would seem obvious is that such a widespread negative view of ‘religion’ as being ‘intolerant’ and conducive to conflict cannot possibly be grounded empirically in the collective historical experience of European societies in the 20th century or in the actual personal experience of most contemporary Europeans. It can plausibly be explained, however, as a secular construct that has the function of positively differentiating modern secular Europeans from ‘religious others’ – either from pre-modern religious Europeans or from contemporary non-European religious people, particularly Muslims. Most striking is the view of ‘religion’ in the abstract as the source of violent conflict, given the actual historical experience of
most European societies in the 20th century. ‘The European short century’ from 1914 to 1989, using Eric Hobsbawm’s apt characterization, was indeed one of the most violent, bloody and genocidal centuries in the history of humanity. But none of the century’s horrible massacres can be said to have been caused by religious fanaticism and intolerance: neither the senseless slaughter of millions of young Europeans in the trenches of World War I; nor the countless millions of victims of Bolshevik and communist terror through revolution, civil war, collectivization campaigns, the Great Famine in Ukraine, the repeated cycles of Stalinist terror and the Gulag; nor the most unfathomable horror of all, the Nazi Holocaust and the global conflagration of World War II, culminating in the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All of these terrible conflicts were rather the product of modern secular ideologies.

Yet contemporary Europeans obviously prefer to selectively forget the more inconvenient recent memories of secular ideological conflict and retrieve instead the long-forgotten memories of the religious wars of early modern Europe in order to make sense of the religious conflicts they see proliferating around the world today and increasingly threatening them. Rather than seeing the common structural contexts of modern state formation, inter-state geopolitical conflicts, modern nationalism and the political mobilization of ethno-cultural and religious identities – processes central to modern European history that became globalized through European colonial expansion – Europeans seem to prefer to attribute those conflicts to ‘religion’ – that is, to religious fundamentalism and to the fanaticism and intolerance which is supposedly intrinsic in ‘pre-modern’ religion, an atavistic residue which modern secular enlightened Europeans have fortunately left behind. One may suspect that the function of such a selective historical memory is to safeguard the perception of the progressive achievements of western secular modernity, offering a self-validating justification of the secular separation of religion and politics as the condition for modern liberal democratic politics, for global peace and for the protection of individual privatized religious freedom.

But how ‘secular’ are the European states? How tall and solid are the ‘walls of separation’ between national state and national church and between religion and politics across Europe? To what extent should one attribute the indisputable success of post-World War II western European democracies to the triumph of secularization over religion?

The secular reality of ‘really existing’ European democracies
France is the only western European state which is officially and proudly ‘secular’ – that is, which defines itself and its democracy as regulated by the principles
of laïcité. By contrast, there are several European countries with long-standing democracies which have maintained established churches. They include England and Scotland within the United Kingdom and all the Scandinavian Lutheran countries: Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Finland and, until the year 2000, Sweden. Of the new democracies, Greece has also maintained the establishment of the Greek Orthodox church. This means that, with the exception of the Catholic church, which has eschewed establishment in every recent (post-1974) transition to democracy in southern Europe (Portugal, Spain) and in eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia), every other major branch of Christianity (Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Orthodox) is officially established somewhere in Europe, without apparently jeopardizing democracy in those countries. Since, on the other hand, there are many historical examples of European states which were secular and non-democratic – the Soviet-type communist regimes being the most obvious case – one can safely conclude that the strict secular separation of church and state is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for democracy.

Indeed, one could advance the proposition that of the two clauses of the First Amendment, ‘free exercise’ of religion, rather than ‘no establishment’, is the one which appears to be a necessary condition for democracy. One cannot have democracy without freedom of religion. Indeed, ‘free exercise’ stands out as a normative democratic principle in itself. The ‘no-establishment’ principle, by contrast, is defensible and necessary only as a means to free exercise and to equal rights. Disestablishment becomes politically necessary for democracy wherever an established religion claims monopoly over the state territory, impedes the free exercise of religion, and undermines the equal rights of all citizens. This was the case with the Catholic church before it officially recognized the principle of ‘freedom of religion’ as an inalienable individual right. In other words, secularist principles per se may be defensible on instrumental grounds, as a means to the end of free exercise, but not as intrinsically liberal democratic principles in themselves.

Alfred Stepan has pointed out how the most important empirical analytical theories of democracy, from Robert Dahl to Juan Linz, do not include secularism or strict separation as one of the institutional requirements for democracy, as prominent normative liberal theories such as those of John Rawls or Bruce Ackerman tend to do. As an alternative to secularist principles or norms, Stepan has proposed the model of the ‘twin tolerations’, which he describes as ‘the minimal boundaries of freedom of action that must somehow be crafted for political institutions vis-à-vis religious authorities, and for religious individuals and groups vis-à-vis political institutions’. Religious authorities must ‘tolerate’ the autonomy of democratically elected governments without claiming constitu-
tionally privileged prerogatives to mandate or to veto public policy. Democratic political institutions, in turn, must ‘tolerate’ the autonomy of religious individuals and groups not only to worship privately and in complete freedom, but also to advance publicly their values in civil society and to sponsor organizations and movements in political society, as long as they do not violate democratic rules and they adhere to the rule of law. Within this framework of mutual autonomy, Stepan concludes, ‘there can be an extraordinarily broad range of concrete patterns of religion–state relations in political systems that would meet our minimal definition of democracy.’

This is precisely the case empirically across Europe. Between the two extremes of French laïcité and Nordic Lutheran establishment, there is a whole range of very diverse patterns of church–state relations, in education, media, health, social services, etc, which constitute very ‘unsecular’ entanglements, such as the consociational formula of pillarization in the Netherlands, or the corporatist official state recognition of the Protestant and Catholic churches in Germany (as well as of the Jewish community in some Länder). One could of course retort that European societies are de facto so secularized and, as a consequence, what remains of religion has become so temperate that both constitutional establishment and the various institutional church–state entanglements are as a matter of fact innocuous, if not completely irrelevant. But one should remember that the drastic secularization of most western European societies came after the consolidation of democracy, not before, and therefore it would be incongruent to present not just the secularization of the state and of politics but also the secularization of society as a condition for democracy.

In fact, at one time or another most continental European societies developed confessional religious parties which played a crucial role in the democratization of those societies. Even those confessional parties that initially emerged as anti-liberal parties and at least ideologically as anti-democratic – as was the case with most Catholic parties in the 19th century – ended up playing a very important role in the democratization of their societies. This is the paradox of Christian Democracy so well analysed by Stathis Kalyvas. Catholic political mobilization emerged almost everywhere as a counterrevolutionary reaction against liberalism and its anti-clerical assault on the Catholic church. Political and even social Catholicism was in many respects fundamentalist, intransigent and theocratic. Focusing on Catholic ideology and doctrine, one was bound to conclude that Catholicism and democracy were indeed antithetical and irreconcilable, as the liberal and Protestant anti-Catholic discourse was never tired of stressing throughout the 19th century. Yet, somehow, the dynamics of electoral competition led to the transformation of Catholic parties everywhere. Those
parties, in turn, by embracing democratic politics, made a fundamental contribution to the consolidation of democracy in their respective countries. With important variations, a similar story repeats itself in Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium and Italy, the countries where Christian Democracy became dominant after World War II.

Let me quote Kalyvas’s conclusion at length, because it is poignantly relevant at a time when the alleged incompatibility of Islam and democracy and the supposedly anti-democratic nature of Muslim parties is so frequently and publicly debated:

Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties . . . were initially formed to subvert liberal democracies; both evolved into mass parties and decided to participate in the electoral process after painful and divisive debates. Their decision had tremendous consequences: both parties integrated masses of newly enfranchised voters into existing liberal parliamentary regimes, and both were deradicalised in the process, becoming part of the very institutions they initially rejected . . . Democracy in Europe was often expanded and consolidated by its enemies. This lesson should not be lost, especially among those studying the challenges facing democratic transition and consolidation in the contemporary world. 12

It is also mostly forgotten that the initial project of a European Union was fundamentally a Christian-Democratic project, sanctioned by the Vatican, at a time of a general religious revival in post-World War II Europe, in the geopolitical context of the Cold War when the ‘free world’ and ‘Christian civilization’ had become synonymous. Indeed, ruling or prominent Christian Democrats in the six signatory countries to the Treaty of Rome – Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries – played a leading role in the initial process of European integration. But this is a history that secular Europeans, proud of having outgrown a religious past from which they feel liberated, would apparently prefer not to remember.

The return of religion to the European public sphere: contemporary debates

Although there is not much significant evidence of any kind of religious revival in Europe, religion has again become a contested public issue. It may be premature to speak of a post-secular Europe, but certainly one can sense a significant shift in the European zeitgeist. When, over a decade ago, I developed the thesis of the de-privatization of religion as a new global trend, it did not, at first, find much resonance in Europe. The privatization of religion was simply taken too much for granted both as a normal empirical fact and as the norm for modern European societies. The concept of modern public religion was still too dissonant and
religious revivals elsewhere could simply be explained or rather explained away as the rise of fundamentalism in not-yet-modern societies. But recently there has been a noticeable change in attitude and attention throughout Europe. Every other week one learns of a new major conference on religion such as the present one, or of the establishment of some newly funded research centre or research project on ‘religion and politics’ or ‘religion and violence’ or ‘interreligious dialogue’.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the resonance of the discourse of the clash of civilizations have certainly played an important role in focusing European attention on issues of religion. But it would be a big mistake to attribute this new attention solely or even mainly to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and to the threats and challenges which it poses to the west and particularly to Europe. Internal European transformations contribute to the new public interest in religion. General processes of globalization, the global growth of transnational migration and the very process of European integration are presenting crucial challenges not only to the European model of the national welfare state, but also to the different kinds of religious–secular and church–state settlements that the various European countries had achieved in post-World War II Europe.

The process of European integration, the eastward expansion of the European Union (EU) and the drafting of a European constitution have posed fundamental questions about both national and European identities and the role of Christianity in both identities. What constitutes ‘Europe’? How and where should one draw the external territorial boundaries and the internal cultural boundaries of Europe? The most controversial, yet rarely openly confronted and therefore most anxiety-inducing issues are the potential integration of Turkey and the potential integration of non-European immigrants, who in most European countries happen to be overwhelmingly Muslim. But the eastward expansion of the EU, particularly the incorporation of an assertive Catholic Poland, and the debates over some kind of affirmation or recognition of the Christian heritage in the preamble of the new European constitution have also added unexpected ‘religious’ irritants to the debates over Europeanization.

While the threat of a Polish Catholic crusade to re-Christianize Europe awakens little fear among secular Europeans confident of their ability to assimilate Catholic Poland on their own terms, the prospect of Turkey joining the EU generates much greater anxieties among Europeans, Christian and post-Christian alike, but of a kind which cannot easily be verbalized, at least not publicly. The paradox and the quandary for modern secular Europeans – who have shed their traditional historical Christian identities in a rapid and drastic process of secularization that has coincided with the very success of the process of
European integration and who therefore identify European modernity with secularization – is that they observe with some apprehension the reverse process in Turkey. The more ‘modern’, or at least democratic, Turkish politics become, the more publicly Muslim and less secularist they also tend to become.

In its determination to join the EU, Turkey is adamantly staking its claim to be, or its right to become, a fully European country economically and politically, while simultaneously fashioning its own model of Muslim cultural modernity. It is this very claim to be simultaneously a modern European country and a culturally Muslim one that baffles European civilizational identities, secular and Christian alike. It contradicts both the definition of a Christian Europe and the definition of a secular Europe. Turkey’s claim to European membership becomes an irritant precisely because it forces Europeans to reflexively and openly confront the crisis in their own civilizational identity, at a moment when the EU is already reeling from a series of compounded economic, geopolitical and legitimation crises.

The spectre of millions of Turkish citizens already in Europe but not of Europe, many of them second-generation immigrants caught between an old country they have left behind and their European host societies unable or unwilling to fully assimilate them, only makes the problem the more visible. The question of the integration of Turkey in the EU is inevitably intertwined, implicitly if not explicitly, with the question of the failed integration of Muslim immigrants. The way in which Europe, in turn, resolves both questions will determine not only Europe’s civilizational identity but the role of Europe in the emerging global order.

What makes ‘the immigrant question’ particularly thorny in Europe, and inextricably entwined with ‘the Turkish question’, is the fact that in Europe immigration and Islam have been, until very recently at least, almost synonymous. This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of ‘otherness’ that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic unprivileged ‘other’ all tend to coincide. Moreover, all those dimensions of ‘otherness’ now become superimposed upon Islam, so that Islam becomes the utterly ‘other’. Anti-immigrant xenophobic nativism, the conservative defence of Christian culture and civilization, secularist anti-religious prejudices, liberal-feminist critiques of Muslim patriarchal fundamentalism, fear of Islamist terrorist networks – all are being fused indiscriminately throughout Europe into a uniform anti-Muslim discourse which practically precludes the kind of mutual accommodation between immigrant groups and host societies that is necessary for successful immigrant incorporation.13

Finally, the debates over the new European constitution also revealed that religion has become a public contested issue across Europe. From a purely legal positivist point of view, modern constitutions do not need transcendent refer-
ences. But in so far as the main rationale and purpose of drafting a new European constitution appeared to be an extra-constitutional political one – namely to contribute to European social integration, to enhance a common European identity and to remedy the deficit in democratic legitimacy – such debate was inevitable in order to tackle issues of common European values and common European identities.

Who are we? Where do we come from? What constitutes our spiritual and moral heritage and the boundaries of our collective identities? How flexible internally and how open externally should those boundaries be? Addressing such complex questions through an open and public democratic European-wide debate would be under any circumstance an enormously complex task that would entail addressing and coming to terms with the many problematic and contradictory aspects of the European heritage in its intra-national, inter-European and global-colonial dimensions. But such a complex task is made more difficult by secularist prejudices that preclude not only a critical yet honest and reflexive assessment of the Judeo-Christian heritage, but even any public official reference to such a heritage, on the grounds that any reference to religion could be divisive and counterproductive, or would be exclusionist by ignoring the contributions of Islam to European civilization, or simply would violate modern secular postulates.

I am not trying to imply that the European constitution ought to make some reference either to some transcendent reality or to the Christian heritage. But one should certainly be honest and recognize that any genealogical reconstruction of the idea or social imaginaire of Europe that makes reference to Greco-Roman antiquity and the Enlightenment while erasing any memory of the role of medieval Christendom in the very constitution of Europe as a civilization evinces either historical ignorance or repressive amnesia. The inability to openly recognize Christianity as one of the constitutive components of European cultural and political identity could also mean that Europeans are missing the historic opportunity to add a third important reconciliation to those already achieved between Protestants and Catholics and between warring European nation-states, by putting an end to the old battles over Enlightenment, religion and secularism. The perceived threat to secular identities and the biased overreaction in excluding any public reference to Christianity belie the self-serving secularist claims that only secular neutrality can guarantee individual freedoms and cultural pluralism. The quarrels provoked by the possible incorporation of some religious reference into the constitutional text would seem to indicate that secularist assumptions turn religion into a problem, and thus preclude the possibility of dealing with religious issues in a pragmatic sensible manner. To guarantee equal access to the
European public sphere and undistorted communication between all its citizens – Christians, Muslims and Jews, atheists, agnostics and believers – the European Union would need to become not only post-Christian but also post-secular.

Let me conclude by simply reiterating that in my view ‘religion’ is not the problem or at least does not constitute a serious threat to European democracy. But the return of religion to the European public sphere as a contentious issue does constitute a challenge to European secularism and to European secular identities. It is hoped that European democracies find a way to deal sensibly and pragmatically with the new and unexpected challenge.

2 At a recent forum at the 2007 Salzburg Festival on ‘Paths and pitfalls of interfaith dialogue’, aimed at exploring practical ways of advancing peace and interreligious dialogue in the Middle East, the basic genealogical story of European secular democracy was repeatedly told with obvious didactic purposes by the organizers, Liz Mohlen, vice-chair of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, and Helga Rabl-Stadler, director of the Salzburg Festival, as well as by Joschka Fischer, the former German federal minister of foreign affairs.
3 See Peter van der Veer’s ‘The religious origins of democracy’ in this volume.
5 Greeley, op cit, p 56, table 4.1, ‘No religious affiliation’; pp 70–1, tables 4.8 and 4.9, ‘Church attendance’; and p 3, table 1.1, ‘Belief in God in Europe’.
7 Stepan, op cit, p 213.
8 Stepan, op cit, p 217.
9 John Madeley has developed a tripartite measure of church–state relations, which he calls the TAO of European management and regulation of religion–state relations by the use of Treasure (T: for financial and property connections), Authority (A: for the exercise of states’ powers of command) and Organization (O: for the effective intervention of state bodies in the religious sphere). According to his measurement, all European states score positively on at least one of these scales; most states score positively on two of them; and over one third (16 out of 45 states) score positively on all three. Madeley, John T S, ‘Unequally yoked: the antinomies of church–state separation in Europe and the USA’, paper presented at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.
12 Kalyvas, op cit, p 264.
13 Note the similarities with the anti-Catholic discourse of the 19th century.
Democracy is not in itself secular. There are several possible connections between democracy and secularity, but there is no necessary one. Secularity can be promoted in a society by democratic means, but also, as in communist regimes, by dictatorial means. Democracy, however, by no means depends on secularization. In fact, there are hardly any secular democracies in the world, because there are hardly any secular societies. As a form of political participation and representation, democracy is typical of the modern nation-state, a particular state formation that emerged in Europe and the Americas in the 19th century and has been spreading through the world ever since. Liberal secularists may demand that the state be secular and that it treat religions equally and neutrally, but these secularists must acknowledge that if one allows freedom of religious expression, religion more often than not will play an important role in the democratic process. One therefore needs to distinguish between the relative secularity of the state and the relative secularity of society and to make clear how one defines that secularity. Modern states like England, Holland and the United States have all had their own specific arrangements for guaranteeing a certain secularity of the state, but these states have found their legitimation in societies in which religion plays an important public role. To give one clear example: it can be safely said that the separation of church and state in the United States is a response to a demand that emerged not from secularists but from religious minorities that were persecuted in England. Therefore, at least in this case, the secularity of the state is in fact a religious demand.
I have argued in earlier work on religion and the nation-state in 19th-century England that the secular perception of the public sphere, as argued by authors like Habermas, is a secularist prescription rather than a historical description.¹ In fact, one can easily discern the mobilization of religious groups at the end of the 18th century on behalf of causes that are both religious and secular, such as the modern missionary movements that protested against the East India Company’s support of Hindu temples in India and the anti-slavery movements that protested against England’s involvement in global slave trading and the use of slave labour on plantations. These religious groups transformed the public sphere and made the modern nation-form of society possible. An important further development with the rise of the modern nation-state in England is the nationalization of religion. Religion becomes less a form of political identification that pitches Protestants against Catholics than an element in unifying the nation under God and in giving the state a moral purpose. In my view, this also implies a major shift in the understanding of ‘religion’. Rather than being understood as ‘true religion’ against ‘false religion’, thus pitching all kinds of groups against each other, religion emerges as an umbrella under which different persuasions can be active without violent conflict. In the Netherlands, the formation of this umbrella is called ‘pillarization’, a form of communal organization of society that has pacified the different religious and ideological communities and created a platform for negotiating political influence in the state. Obviously, France, Belgium, Germany and Scandinavia have all had their own specific arrangements, but the overall pattern of the nationalization of religion is very comparable.²

Religion was of crucial political importance in western Europe, at least till World War II, and in countries like the Netherlands till the 1960s. It is not the growth of religiosity but the new presence of a strong Islam in the midst of the European nation-states that is a political problem in Europe. This is less a problem for secular democracy than for national and civilizational identity, and it might be worthwhile to consider whether Islam has replaced Judaism as such a problem in Europe. Today, manifestations of Islamic conservatism draw negative attention in ways that manifestations of Jewish conservatism hardly do. Despite the obvious differences between the histories of Muslims and of Jews in the west, the ‘problem of Islam in Europe’ combines and sometimes conflates religion and ethnicity in ways that remind one of earlier anti-Semitic nationalism. Symbolic of this shift is the newspeak about the Judeo-Christian foundations of European civilization, making Islam the outsider that Judaism was previously.

Europe has been globalizing and has been globalized over many centuries, depending on which starting point one wants to take for which kind of globalization. A recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York about Venice
and the Islamic world includes a Qur’an printed in 16th-century Venice, one of
the first in the world to be printed rather than handwritten, and portraits of the
Ottoman ruler Mehmed II by Bellini that closely resemble the artist’s portraits
of Venetian doges. This is the globalization of technology, art and trade, closely
connected to the globalization of religion. Religions like Christianity and Islam
are globalizing formations. They have spread through expansion and conversion
along trading routes and following military campaigns within Europe and beyond
it. This larger history of both competition and contact between Muslim and Chris‑
tian expansionists is certainly important and can be told in many ways that would
confound many recent depictions of Christian Europe as a bulwark against Islam.
All this would take us too far afield, however, and for our purposes it is sufficient
to look at the triad of religion–nation–empire. Although Spain and Portugal had
empires before the modern period, it is especially in England and France, as well
as in the Netherlands, that we see a simultaneous emergence of the nation-state
(with the important role of religion) and empire. I will leave France aside for the
moment, because of the special relation of religion and anti-clericalism in France.
In England and the Netherlands we see in the 19th century an emergence of a
religious concern for the heathens who come under imperial rule. This connects
with the civilizing mission of empire, although in an uneasy way, since the colonial
state always had to avoid being seen as a Christian state bent on converting the
colonized. Despite its neutrality, empire had to intervene in society, for the simple
reason that much of the empire had to be ruled by natives and thus the natives had
to be educated. Though in the British empire there is an early orientalist interest
in promoting native traditions of learning, this is soon replaced by modern educa‑
tion in literature and science, in an attempt to produce liberal ‘brown Englishmen’.
Besides such secular education, there is an enormous expansion of missionary
activity under the umbrella of empire that also focuses on education. Through the
effort to produce modern Christians by converting and educating the colonized
to both Christianity and modernity, the missionary societies had a lasting effect
on colonized societies. This effect is to be measured less in terms of converts
(relatively few in countries like India and Indonesia) than in terms of produc‑
ning modern forms of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc as counter-movements to
Christianity. It is these so-called revivalist, fundamentalist but basically modern‑
ist movements that one encounters everywhere in the colonial and post-colonial
world. What we see as political religion in the post-colonial world is then very
much a product of the imperial encounter.

It is often said that Islam in Britain, France and the Netherlands is a recent
phenomenon, but the historical overview above allows us to see that these west‑
ern European states had to deal with Muslim subjects during earlier phases of
globalization. With regard to France and Britain, one can easily perceive that Muslim immigration is a case of ‘the Empire strikes back’, while in the Netherlands Muslim immigration is primarily a case of 1960s labour immigration in a recently developed welfare society. In the Netherlands, however, Muslims had for a long time been the great majority of subjects of the Dutch crown, while being denied citizenship. It is instructive to look at colonial policy that was, as I mentioned above, geared to educating modern subjects who could eventually become citizens. Liberals like John Stuart Mill and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje saw the colonized as children who were under the care of the state but should be allowed their religious freedom as long as it did not lead to religious mobilization against the colonial state. This is not so different from a state today wanting to educate Muslim and other immigrants in modern citizenship in order to make them participants in the political process, while trying to prevent them from using their religion as a basis of mobilization. Considering the historical role of religion in these European nation-states, however, such a demand is entirely ludicrous, despite its similarity to the one made in the colonial state.

Another close similarity to the colonial state is the desire for a ‘responsible’ leadership that can function as a broker between the state and the minority group. In the Netherlands it can be amusing to see how much effort is put into creating such a leadership. Because ethnic leadership is not readily available, the state must often have recourse to religious leadership, such as imams, who are, more often than not, too poorly educated to serve in that capacity. Despite the negative advice of learned advisory committees, politicians in the Netherlands now demand that these imams be educated in Dutch universities, as if they were Protestant theologians. In this contradictory way, a religious leadership may be created by the Dutch state that did not exist before and does not represent the minority that the state wants to have represented. All of this reminds one very much of colonial efforts to produce indirect rule, but one must also remember that these appointed brokers are often swept aside by religious-political movements that emerge from within the community. In the current form of the public sphere, dominated as it is by the mass media, such movements often emerge in response to a particular issue, such as wearing the headscarf, Muslim education or (in Britain) the Salman Rushdie affair. In that sense, religious movements are no different from other social movements. Political participation is declining in most European democracies, and the participation of religious citizens is no different from that of others in this regard.

There is a contradiction in the secular European colonial and post-colonial state to the extent that secular neutrality does not coexist easily with modernizing interventions. The liberal demand that the modern state guarantee freedom and
equality, today including gender equality, raises the problem of creating secular equality while guaranteeing the religious freedom of orthodox Jewish, Muslim, Christian or Hindu communities. It is striking that in France the headscarf issue is presented primarily as an issue of protecting gender equality; thus it becomes a prime case of white men protecting brown women against their brown male oppressors, as in colonial times. Indeed, the interventions of the state in modernizing religious communities are constantly portrayed as emancipatory. It is to be expected that issue politics will develop primarily around issues of emancipation, especially gender and sexual emancipation. Secularization in the Netherlands took place in the same period as the 1960s sexual liberation, and Islam is seen primarily as a threat to the liberties gained in that period. Gay, lesbian and feminist activists are all up in arms to defend these liberties against a religious repression that reminds them of the Dutch past. Provocations like those concerning Theo van Gogh and Ayaan Hirsi Ali have played to this audience, and one may wonder whether emancipation of minority women is really the issue here. There seems to be a real pleasure in provocation and in showing off to an enthusiastic audience one’s own radical liberty in contrast to the backwardness of Islam.

With regard to political participation in European societies, it is important to see how that participation is framed in terms of secular and liberal demands, hardly allowing space for religious arguments and perspectives.

Another major issue concerning political participation of immigrants in European societies is that of dual citizenship and dual loyalties. Like 19th-century Roman Catholics in Protestant countries such as England and Holland, Muslim immigrants are suspected of not being loyal to the nation-state in which they have settled. Their first allegiance is to their religion, it is said, and this prevents them from being fully loyal to the new nation. This suspicion is exacerbated by the fact that states like Morocco do not allow their citizens to give up Moroccan citizenship after emigrating. Morocco’s actions have nothing to do with religion but rather with the need felt by such states to maintain control over the flow of migrants’ money into the country. Remittances are of such crucial importance to Morocco that the state does not want to relinquish control over the migrants who send the money. In Holland there are two cabinet ministers, one of Moroccan descent and the other of Turkish descent, both of whom have a second passport in addition to their Dutch one, and this has recently led to a great political outcry. But behind this suspicion, in my view, lies the constant doubt in modern nation-states whether those whose religion is not nationalized can be trusted. Especially when ethnicity and Islam come together, we have fertile ground for endless suspicion and fear. The fact of dual citizenship and secular doubts about the loyalty of believers alert us to the new phase of globalization we have entered:
the creation of the network society, a kind of society in which national boundaries are transcended by social networks. These networks create identities that go beyond the national and connect the local with the global.

In the current phase of globalization, religion continues to connect people and societies over great distances that are now more readily bridged by various new forms of communication. Islam, Christianity and other religions have developed several new global missionary movements that reflect this phase of globalization. They can all be called evangelical movements, whether their form is Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist. They are not aimed against democracies, but they are anti-secularist and sometimes truly anti-liberal. The Judeo-Islamic-Christian forms of religion, in particular, seem to share an agenda that focuses on so-called family values as an antidote to the corruptions of the modern age. Many of these movements are either directly political, in the sense that they mobilize voters for certain issues, or indirectly political, in that they urge believers to distance themselves from the secular world and come into conflict with the state over issues of education and gender. In this phase of globalization, the nation-state does not disappear but is transformed, weakened in some parts and strengthened in others. In Europe, the rise of the European Union means the emergence of transnational governance in crucial aspects of economic and social politics. The globalization of what are felt to be national financial institutions and industries also weakens national policy. But in other crucial domains, such as immigration policies, the nation-state is strengthened, thanks to an upsurge of anti-immigration sentiment throughout Europe. Though this sentiment is generally expressed even today in democratic ways – notwithstanding the presence of strong movements on the extreme right – it has created an atmosphere in which immigrant minorities have become scapegoats for widespread anxieties about globalization.

Historically, religious communities and movements have been important in transforming the public sphere in modern Europe and thus in creating the conditions for democracy. The presence of Muslim communities is widely considered to be a problem of integration in European societies. The presence in itself is not a problem for democracy, but the xenophobic response to it might be, if the right-wing response gives rise to a new phase of racist dictatorship in Europe. This seems, at present, a very remote possibility. The nature of the nation-state is changing with the rise of the network society. Because the nation-state is still important in a number of crucial areas of policy-making, democracy need not necessarily decline in the current phase of globalization. Nationalism is certainly not on its way out in Europe.


A few decades ago it was still quite common in the social sciences and the humanities to use the term secularization for changes in the social significance of religion and church in modern societies. In recent years, however, increasing numbers of social scientists have come to assume a worldwide upswing in religion. They have coined terms such as desecularization (Peter L Berger)," respiritualization," de‑privatization (José Casanova), and the 'return of religions' (Martin Riesebrodt). Also, in previous decades it was commonly claimed that modernization processes such as urbanization, industrialization, rising living standards, individualization and cultural pluralization would lead to a decline in the social significance of religious institutions, belief systems and practices. Today, however, it seems generally agreed that religion has retained its puissance even under modern conditions, that it is compatible with modernity, and that it can, at times, even serve as a source of modernity.

Thus, the main questions regarding religion’s contribution are whether the previously assumed process of church decline and secularization has ended and whether the significance of religion is indeed increasing in Europe. In order to investigate these questions, we must begin with a review of the main arguments of the secularization thesis, which has come under so much criticism in recent years. In the course of this review we must also specify what the secularization thesis does not state and offer an overview of alternative explanations dealing with contemporary processes of religious change. These include the economic market model, which has been proposed by North American sociologists of religion, and the thesis of religious individualization, which is more prevalent among their European
counterparts. Both theoretical strands draw a significant amount of legitimacy from their criticisms of the secularization thesis. After describing these models, we will subject them to an empirical assessment. This assessment will yield the conclusion that the secularization thesis still has a great degree of plausibility.

Three models within the sociology of religion

1 The secularization theory

The secularization theory has a long intellectual tradition and is without doubt the most prominent of the three sociological approaches discussed here. Early sociologists such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim argued that religion had forfeited its central position in modern societies; it was no longer able, as it had been in pre-modern societies, to provide a universally acknowledged world-view. But they did not claim, as contemporary critics of the secularization theory mistakenly allege, that processes of modernization would lead to the demise of religion and faith. Neither Weber and Durkheim nor contemporary secularization theorists such as Bryan Wilson, Steve Bruce or Karel Dobbelaere advance such notions.

What they do argue, however, is that the process of modernization, which transforms the entire social structure, cannot remain without consequence for religious traditions and institutions. However one defines modernization, the core thesis of the secularization theory states that processes of modernization will eventually have a negative effect on the stability and vitality of religious communities, practices and convictions. This thesis does not assert that this development is inevitable, irreversible, and, least of all, desirable. It simply states that it is probable. If, against their better judgement, critics of the secularization theory claim that its proponents suggest such an inevitability and irreversibility, they most likely do so in order to be able to distance themselves from it more easily. However, one searches their writings in vain for substantive evidence supporting these criticisms.

2 The economic market model

While proponents of the various strands of the secularization theory discern a strained relationship between religion and modernity, adherents of the economic market model presume compatibility between the two. In contrast to Peter L Berger and other sociologists of religion, such as Steve Bruce and Karel Dobbelaere, who adhere to Berger’s positions, proponents of the economic market model do not assume that the processes of religious pluralization in modern societies have a negative effect on the stability of religious communities, convictions or practices. On the contrary, they argue, the more pluralist the religious market, the greater the competition between the various religious providers. According to this
model, competition prompts each religious community and its representatives to improve their services in order to retain their clients and attract new ones. In contrast, in cases in which one religious community has a monopoly, the clergy allegedly tend to become indolent and lazy and to disregard people's needs. Competition, in turn, forces religious providers to exercise customer-oriented sensitivity, to optimize services and to continuously strive towards improvement. According to this theory, the diversification of faith options observable in modern societies stimulates the vitality of religious communities. Thus, it is not surprising that the proponents of the economic market model consider religious vitality to be greater in cities than in rural settings. In urban surroundings the number of religious providers is greater than in the countryside and therefore competition is steeper.

We must distinguish here between the institutional level and the level of individual consumers. The religious energy of the latter is also, however, stimulated by a higher degree of religious pluralism. According to market theorists, if various religious offers exist, the individual is more likely to find a 'pair of shoes' that fits. Under conditions of religious monopoly, in contrast, the likelihood of product dissatisfaction increases, because individual needs vary and cannot be satisfied optimally by a single provider. Where there are no alternatives, dissatisfaction with the one religious offering is more likely to prompt the consumer to turn away from the religious market altogether.

In this model, the conditions under which religious pluralism can unfold include the strict separation of church and state, so that no religious community holds a privileged position. The start-up costs for smaller religious communities are affordable only if the state does not intervene in religious affairs and does not favour one of the larger churches. Once religious pluralism is established, the productivity of the entire religious market rises because of growing competition.

With this line of argumentation, the familiar patterns of the secularization theory are reversed. Religious pluralism does not inhibit religiousness but rather enhances it. The separation of church and state does not hinder but rather augments the social capacity of religious communities and churches to retain their members. Cities are not religiously weaker but rather more vital than rural areas. If modernity is defined by processes of cultural pluralization, institutional differentiation and urbanization, then religion does not suffer defeat under conditions of modernity but rather profits from them.

3 The individualization theory

In terms of its theoretical architecture, the individualization theory inhabits a space somewhere between the secularization theory and the economic market model. It shares with the secularization theory the view that functional differ
entiation, rationalization and cultural pluralization spark macro-sociological changes. In contrast to the secularization theory, however, it does not assume that these all-embracing societal changes lead to a decline in the social significance of religion in modern societies. Instead, in concurrence with the economic market model, it asserts that modernity and religion are compatible. According to this model, modernization does not lead to a decline in the societal position of religion but rather to a change in its forms. Whereas in pre-modern societies religion was institutionalized in the form of church, in modern societies the connection between church and religiousness has been gradually dissolving. Today, religion and religiousness can be encountered in previously unexpected settings – in psychoanalysis, the leisure culture, communal cults, tourism and sports. The relationship between the individual and religion has emancipated itself from the custody of the large religious institutions; religious preferences are increasingly subject to the individual’s autonomous choices. Churches no longer define comprehensive belief parameters; instead, individuals decide on their own world-views and spiritual orientations. The individualization theory thus proposes that the constitution of individual religious convictions and practices is based on a unique selection from among various religious traditions, among which Christianity is certainly still an important point of reference but no longer the only one. Even in those cases in which individuals retain their church adherence, their faith practices take on an independent, individual character. The declining social significance of religious institutions thus does not go hand in hand with a general loss in the meaning of religiousness for the individual; quite the contrary. Institutionalized religion and individual spirituality, according to individualization theorists such as Grace Davie, exhibit an inverse correlation: the church’s decline leads to an upswing in individual religiousness, especially in forms of extra-church religiousness such as Sen meditation, occultism, spiritualism, esoterism, astrology, New Age and so on.

Assessment of the three models within the sociology of religion
In order to gauge the significance of religion at the empirical level, we shall distinguish between three dimensions of religiousness: religious membership, religious practice and religious conviction. The following is an attempt to provide an overview of religious commitment, religious practice and religious belief systems in Europe on the basis of selected variables in a comparison of countries over time. The dimension of membership is measured by denomination membership, the dimension of practice by the frequency of church attendance, and the dimension of conviction by belief in God. Furthermore, questions addressing belief in astrology and the virtues of spiritualism and occultism are included in
order to assess aspects of extra-church religiousness. We have included western and eastern European countries in our survey, as well as predominantly Catholic countries (Ireland, Portugal, Poland and Croatia), predominantly Protestant countries (Finland and Estonia), predominantly Christian Orthodox countries (Russia), and bi-denominational countries (Germany and Hungary).

Table 1: Religiousness and church adherence in selected European countries (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Church Belief in God</th>
<th>Astrology</th>
<th>Occultism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>(weekly)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland (n = 931)</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal (n = 1001)</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland (n = 931)</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Germany</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 717)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Germany</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 563)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland (n = 977)</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia (n = 968)</td>
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<td>20.8</td>
<td>84.2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Hungary (n = 1001)</td>
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<td>15.3</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (n = 1056)</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Volkswagen Project, ‘Church and religion in an enlarged Europe’

Table 1 offers an overview of the current religious situation in Europe as measured by the selected indicators in a comparison of countries. At first glance, we see that the level of religiosity, especially frequency of church attendance and belief in God, is above the European average in the predominantly Catholic countries: Ireland, Portugal, Poland and Croatia. The figures for these countries stand out clearly when compared to the predominantly Protestant countries. In Finland (partly also in Estonia, but on a smaller scale), we encounter the familiar Scandinavian pattern of religiousness, which is characterized by a relatively high level of denominational organization, a relatively low rate of church involvement, and a rather below-average intensity of faith. In the multi-denominational countries, individual religiousness does not attain values higher than the average for
Orthodox religiousness, as prevails in Russia, is in turn marked by a high degree of church affiliation and at the same time a low degree of participation in church life. Concerning the acceptance of extra-church forms of religiousness, we must note that those who believe in astrology or in the virtues of occultism and spiritualism constitute only a minority. Believers in occultism generally account for less than a quarter of believers in God.
If we compare the selected indicators across various age groups, a differentiated picture emerges. Denomination membership (chart 1) tends to be higher among older birth cohorts than among younger ones. In countries such as Poland and Croatia, however, there are hardly any age differences. In turn, we can note a sharp decline in frequency of church attendance (chart 2) among the younger birth cohorts in all countries, even in highly religious countries like Ireland, Poland and Portugal. As for belief in God (chart 3), younger people also tend to be less religious than older ones. Even if we find throughout that the oldest tend to
embrace belief in God more strongly than the youngest, we observe a curvilinear relationship for certain eastern European countries such as Hungary and eastern Germany: the oldest believe in God to a greater extent than the youngest, but belief in God among the youngest is higher than that of the middle birth cohorts. Correlating belief in spiritualism with age reveals a rather chaotic, jagged picture (chart 4). This most likely signifies no consistent correlation. Overall, however, in comparison to the three other items, we can detect an inverse correlation here: with rising age, affirmation of this belief form declines.

The decisive question we must pose at this point is, of course, whether we can interpret these age differences as age-cohort differences. In other words, do they depict life-cycle changes or trends that persist over many age cohorts? Regarding differences in the proportions of church attendees and believers in God, we can give an unambiguous answer to this question, since we can draw on long-term data concerning these two indicators for western Europe (charts 5 and 6): according to these data, the age differences are indeed attributable to generational differences in the case of these two indicators, and this means that we are dealing with long-term trends. The data express a decline in church attendance and belief in God over the past decades in the European countries under scrutiny, although we must concede a slight reverse tendency in some eastern European countries over the last few years. This reverse tendency does not significantly counter the linear impression of the general trend, however, as a correlation analysis conducted but not depicted here reveals.

**Chart 5: Church attendance in selected European countries**
We do not have long-term data on denomination membership for all the countries included in the survey. From the data we do have (for example, for Germany, the Netherlands and Finland), however, we know that the proportion of denomination members has declined in recent years and decades. It should thus be legitimate to interpret the observed age differences as age-cohort differences as well. The data concerning the spiritualism or astrology indicator are even more meagre. The limited data collected over the past few decades show, as we have already come to assume from the age differences, that popular affirmation of extra-church religiousness has indeed risen over the past years, although the overall level of acceptance remains rather low. We could thus interpret the higher acceptance values for spiritualism and astrology among the younger age cohorts as a Europe-wide rise in these belief forms over the past years.

Does this mean that we are facing a decline in traditional religiousness in Europe, as expressed by church attendance and belief in God, coupled with an upswing in extra-church religiousness, so that, as has repeatedly been proposed, the overall level of individual religiousness remains more or less unaltered? We can clearly refute this proposition. First, acceptance of forms of extra-church religiousness does not reach high numbers. Second, if forms of extra-church religiousness were able to compensate for the losses of forms of traditional religiousness, they would have to display an inverse correlation.
However, traditional and extra-church forms of religiousness do not display any significant correlation at all (table 2). If anything, there is a slight positive tendency. To put it differently, where church attendance and belief in God are on the decline, occultism and astrology do not gain in significance. Rather, they are themselves partially affected by this decline. Thus, although affirmation of extra-church religiousness has increased over the past years, the losses of traditional forms of religiousness are so high that they cannot be compensated for by a gain in alternative religiousness. In fact, these gains are partially offset by the losses of traditional religiousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Church attendance</th>
<th>Belief in God</th>
<th>Astrology</th>
<th>Occultism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in God</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Volkswagen Project, ‘Church and religion in an enlarged Europe’ (2006), NS = not significant

Individualization theorists such as Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Grace Davie, Thomas Luckmann, Michael Krüggeler and others are justified in their repeated criticism of the secularization theory – namely, that the religious change in Europe includes not only a decline in religiousness and church commitment but also a change in their dominant forms. However, this change in forms, expressed by a decline in the significance of traditional, institution-bound religiousness and a rise in the significance of non-traditional, extra-church religious tendencies, is itself part of the process of religious decline. Thus, the thesis of change in religious forms is not a challenge to the secularization theory so much as a confirmation of it.

The intertwining of secularization and the processes of religious transformation is illustrated by the decline in the social recognition of belief in God and the simultaneous changes in meaning this field is subject to. As we have already observed (charts 3 and 6), the social acceptance of belief in God has decreased in Europe over the past years. At the same time, however, the conception of God has changed from a personal image to that of an impersonal higher being (table 3). This shift is not to be understood as a sort of compensation for the loss of traditional belief in God. Rather, it signifies a general decline in significance, because
belief in a higher being is less behaviourally relevant than belief in God as a person. For example, the former affects education of children, political behaviour and moral attitudes to a lesser degree than the latter.19 The shift from traditional to non-traditional belief content thus goes hand in hand with a tendency of the individual to attribute less meaning to religion in his or her personal life. The simultaneous decline in belief in God and changes in the forms of belief in God are therefore anything but coincidental. Religion’s declining social significance is manifested in this change of religious forms.

Table 3: Changes in the forms of belief in God in selected European countries 1981–99 (in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Belief in God as a person</th>
<th>Belief in God as a higher being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Value Survey 1981–99

Isolating the causes of this ubiquitous decline in individual religiousness requires complex analyses that can be carried out only partially here. The secularization thesis presumes a relationship between the processes of religious decline and modernization; the economic market model presumes a relationship between
religious pluralization and religious vitality; and the individualization thesis pre-
sumes a relationship between individualism and religious syncretism: we shall
briefly scrutinize these alleged correlations more closely.

Table 4: Correlation between religious indicators and attitudes and
structural features in selected European countries, cumulative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Denomination membership</th>
<th>Church attendance</th>
<th>Belief in God</th>
<th>Astrology</th>
<th>Spiritualism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secularization theory</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>−.11</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>−.09</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>−.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>−.12</td>
<td>−.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic market model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with friends</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>−.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualization thesis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional life</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious upbringing</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Volkswagen Project, ‘Church and religion in an enlarged Europe’ (2006), NS = not significant

The results depicted in table 4 more or less confirm our expectations. Population
groups with higher income and higher levels of education exhibit a lower degree
denomination membership, attend church less frequently, and are less likely
to believe in God. Even higher acceptance of extra-church religious forms such
as astrology and spiritualism goes hand in hand with a lower level of education. A
different picture, however, emerges with respect to income variables. In this case,
there is no significant correlation to belief in astrology and spiritualism. This indi-
cates that spiritualism and astrology, despite their positive correlation with tradi-
tional forms of religiousness (table 2), do not correspond to the same character-
istics in social structure as these forms. It does not appear that we are more likely
to encounter them in modern settings; if that were the case, their correlation with
education and income would have had to have been positive. However, neither do
dey seem to belong to the more traditional milieus of denomination members,
church attendees and believers in God. Their exceptional position is again under-
lined in our analysis of age structure. As we have already seen, younger people
tend to be more attracted by extra-church forms of religiousness than older ones (table 4; chart 4). However, the exceptional position of these variables becomes apparent when we consider the effects of a religious upbringing on individual religiousness (table 4). While the probability rises—and here the effects we observed are highly significant—that one will adhere to the church, take part in church life and believe in God if one has had a religious upbringing, religious socialization does not have any influence on affirmation of extra-church religious forms such as astrology and spiritualism. It neither precludes nor promotes these forms. This finding supports the assumption that we are dealing with a new phenomenon that is somewhat distanced from traditional Christianity, belongs to the realm of individual responsibility, and depends less on communication and tradition. Thus, while traditional religiousness is more negatively affected by processes of modernization on the level of the individual, extra-church religiousness seems in part to be more compatible with modernity. It would, however, be an exaggeration to claim that processes of modernization abet it. Among other factors, the negative correlation between education and astrology (or spiritualism) refutes such a claim. Thus, the result of our analysis of the individual level is somewhat ambiguous. In general, we can assert a somewhat negative influence of modernization processes on individual religiousness, although this impact is not very strong. In the case of extra-church religiousness, the influence is decreased, but still significant (education), partially non-existent (income), and partially even reversed (age, exceptional life).

As far as the relationship between religious pluralism and religious vitality is concerned, we can observe that religious agreement with friends and acquaintances has no negative impact on church attendance, belief in God and astrology, but no positive influence on these indicators either (table 4). Only spiritualism is negatively affected by religious homogeneity, as the economic market model assumes.

For an analysis of the relationship between modernization and religion on the macro level, we lack applicable data to assess forms of extra-church religiousness for many countries. For church attendance and belief in God, as the two central indicators of Christian religiousness, clearly negative correlations with the level of modernization can be discerned for western Europe when GDP per capita is used as an indicator for modernization (chart 7). With a higher level of modernization in a country, church attendance and belief in God decline. In eastern Europe these correlations, perhaps because of the turbulence and irregularities caused by the processes of belated modernization after 1989, are to be observed only for belief in God (chart 8).
Chart 7: Belief in God and GDP per capita in selected western European countries (1998)

Belief in God

GDP per capita (World Bank, Maddison), $r = -0.65$
These results empirically prove the secularization thesis on the micro level as well as the macro level. In order to increase the robustness of this result, it would of course be necessary to include alternative explanatory factors, such as the relationship between church and state, the degree of religious pluralism, nationalist orientations and practices, the degree to which a welfare state exists, and the financial and personnel resources available to religious communities. Only thus could we test whether the correlation we have established remains stable when we control for intervening variables. This important task could unfortunately not be accomplished in the framework of this paper. In order to assess the validity of the economic market model, we shall briefly analyse the correlation between the degree of church–state separation and frequency of church attendance. To this end, a catalogue of five criteria aimed at capturing the degree of church–state separation was compiled. It includes the existence of a state church, theological seminaries in state universities, religious education in public schools, spiritual
guidance in the military and in prisons, and tax privileges and financial support of the church by the state.

Chart 9: Church attendance and church–state relations

We can see that the degree of church–state separation, as measured by the catalogue of five criteria, exhibits no statistically relevant correlation, either positive or negative, with frequency of church attendance. Future research will have to decide whether this means that the economic market model is simply not applicable to the religious situation in Europe.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis shows that a large amount of empirical evidence still supports the secularization theory and that the individualization thesis also has a certain degree of plausibility. Religion is indeed undergoing processes of individualization. However, these processes do not stand in opposition to the simultaneously unfolding tendencies towards secularization; rather, they are interwoven with them. We can observe that processes of modernization exert a
predominantly negative effect on religious membership, attitudes and practices. To a certain degree, this is also the case for those highly individualized, syncretistic forms of alternative religiousness that tend to be described as highly compatible with certain facets of modernity. These forms of religiousness are, however, sometimes completely unaffected by modernization and sometimes even profit from it. Thus, the secularization thesis and, to some extent, the individualization thesis are the most applicable to the study of religious change in Europe. The economic market model does not seem to be supported by the empirical data.

5 Norris, P and R Inglehart, 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and politics worldwide*, Cambridge. These authors would like their argumentation pertaining to the modernization theory (p 16) to be understood as ‘probabilistic, not deterministic’.
7 The argument surrounding belief in progress as a characteristic trait of the secularization theory is one of the feeblest criticisms that has been voiced against it. Even if it were justified, it does not suffice to refute the theory’s validity. Whether one greets the process of modernization as positive or dismisses it as negative has little influence on how one regards the relationship between modernization and secularization. This relationship, however, is the secularization theory’s sole object of inquiry. It is more likely that, in cases where claims towards such a relationship are denounced as naïvely progressivist, a feeling of unease about modernity is actually being articulated.
The contention of a change in religious forms, coupled with a certain degree of stability in the overall level of religiosity, is a central argument of the so-called individualization thesis described above.

This shift is mostly taking place in western European countries. Since many eastern European countries experienced a strong upswing in religiosity after 1989, in Hungary and Poland higher acceptance of belief in a higher being goes hand in hand with higher acceptance of belief in God as a person. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia and Slovenia tend to follow the western pattern.

Section II

State and religion: contemporary challenges
The passage from religious pluralism to cultural and ethical pluralism

Europe is in the middle of a process of transformation which can be defined as the passage from religious pluralism to a cultural and ethical pluralism which is often characterized by a strong religious foundation. As a result of this transformation, the traditional systems of relations between states and religions no longer work smoothly and, after a period of relative stability, have entered a phase of transition. The direction of this change is clear enough, but it is hard to be so precise about its likely outcome.

Religious pluralism is a well-known fact in Europe. For centuries Europe has been split up into Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox communities, with dividing lines which frequently cut across the same town or the same region. But this pluralism was contained within a shared horizon, defined by reference to the same sacred books (Old and New Testaments) and the same interpretative corpus (Patristic). Of course, Jewish and Muslim communities have been living in Europe for a long time, but the Jews were faced quite early on with the choice between assimilation and persecution (and they chose the first, without avoiding the second), and the Muslims were confined to a peripheral region of Europe after the Catholic reconquista of Spain in the 15th century. As a consequence, religious pluralism in Europe has predominantly been intra-Christian pluralism and the religious conflicts that divided Europe after the Great Schism and above all after the Protestant Reformation did not create insuperable cultural divisions. It is true that the relations between man and woman, citizen and state, state and religion were (and partly still are) conceived in different ways in Catholic,
Orthodox and Protestant countries, but this difference did not become so great as to generate incompatibility and to prevent mutual understanding. The unification process of Europe, for all its shortcomings, is proof that a shared notion of citizenship exists.

These common links have become progressively weaker. Two factors – the first internal and the second external to Europe – have played an important role in this weakening process and have paved the way for the birth of a culturally and ethically pluralistic society.

The first factor is immigration, which brought into Europe a growing number of people who did not know and did not share certain central features of the European cultural heritage. The way political or family relations are conceived or, on a more mundane level, the way people dress or what they eat mark a difference between members of these immigrant groups and the majority of Europeans. It is not only a difference of religion, but something larger that concerns lifestyles, beliefs, values, behaviour, etc: in a nutshell, a cultural difference.

Second, there is individualism, which questions assumptions that used to be taken for granted. Secularization had already weakened the control historical churches exercised over the central passages of human life – birth, marriage, death and so on; now the way these experiences are conceived and lived is in the process of changing. The range of possibilities has become far greater and the individual is in a position to make choices that were inconceivable only a few years ago. Europe is moving towards a situation in which different ways of procreating, marrying and dying that correspond to the different ethical views of individuals exist side by side and enjoy the same legal legitimacy. The debate on bioethics all over Europe and the recent reform of family law in a number of European countries show that the historic churches have largely lost their capacity to lead the public debate on central ethical issues and to influence the corresponding political decisions (although there are exceptions – I am thinking here of Italy – which should not be overlooked).

What I have said confirms that today we are faced with something more than simple religious pluralism. We have to deal with what is truly a cultural and ethical pluralism. But to understand this new challenge properly, we need to consider its most interesting feature. This cultural and ethical pluralism is by no means a result of the dissolution of the religious dimension in contemporary society; on the contrary, it is frequently characterized by a strong religious connotation or at least takes place in a context still dominated by the ‘révanche de Dieu’. On the one hand, the decline of the historical churches’ power to speak on behalf of the whole of European society has been balanced by the development, within these same churches, of new groups and movements, such as the Pente-
costals and the ‘born-again’ Christians in the Protestant field and Communion and Liberation and Opus Dei in the Catholic one. All of these are motivated by a desire to give expression to their strong religious identity in all fields of human life and, consequently, they want to affirm the religious foundation of ethical, cultural and political choices. On the other hand, the distinction between religion, ethics, culture and politics which had been accepted – willingly or unwillingly – by most Christian churches is not part and parcel of the heritage of many religious communities which have arrived in Europe in the last 40 years, starting with Islam and some of the new religious movements. As a result, cultural and ethical choices are frequently justified through a direct appeal to religion. The issue of the Islamic headscarf is a good example: what had been regarded, until a few years ago, as an ethnic custom is now perceived primarily as a religious expression. And there are equally clear examples in the Catholic field. In Italy the distinction between religion and politics is much weaker now than when the Christian Democratic Party ruled the country. At that time providing Italian political life with a Christian orientation was the task of laymen engaged in politics; after the break-up of the Christian Democratic Party, the same task was taken up by the bishops, who did not hesitate to give very precise and stringent political instructions regarding the referendum on artificial insemination and registered partnerships.

The final outcome of this blending of religion, culture, ethics and politics has been that negotiation and compromise are much more difficult today than in the past. When ethical and cultural choices are directly connected to the will of God, they tend to become non-negotiable.

**The legal impact of the transformation**

What are the legal consequences of this transformation of the European religious landscape? What is its impact on the systems of relations between states and religions? Today the traditional legal mechanisms that regulate the various aspects of human activity do not seem to work properly. Confronted with a pluralism which is at the same time cultural, ethical and religious, such mechanisms have difficulty in facilitating freedom for social communities without falling into the anarchy of particularisms. This difficulty can be explained by remembering how these mechanisms came into being. They started taking shape as a way of putting an end to the wars of religion of the 16th and 17th centuries. The central question then was how to make it possible for subjects with different religious faiths to coexist in the same country. The issue was religious pluralism, not cultural and ethical, and the problems it raised could be solved by neutralizing the impact of religion on public life. Although the (still incomplete) secularization of public institutions began to take place from the 19th century, the theoretical
solution had been found much earlier with Grotius’ formula *etsi Deus non daretur* (‘as if there were no God’). This approach shifted the centre of gravity of religion from public to private life and at the same time moved the centre of gravity of law from divine law to natural law based on reason. In other words, in order to make peaceful coexistence possible between Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans and so on, politics, the law, the economy and other areas of public life had to be secularized – placed under the exclusive control of reason and freed from the control of religion. But this solution, which guaranteed the religious peace of Europe for many years, cannot be easily applied today: first, because the connections between religion, ethics and culture make the repetition of the process of secularization much more difficult; and second, because the assumption that religion is a private matter which should not influence public choices is exactly what is now being questioned. It is necessary to find legal mechanisms which take into account the new public role of religions. But how is it possible to do so without falling into *communautarisme* which erodes the hard core of shared principles and values and risks endangering social cohesion?

The answer to this question has varied from state to state, according to their different histories and traditions. But these answers have some common features. First, the legal discipline of church–state relations is in constant flux all over Europe. There are many examples of these changes. In Portugal a law on religious liberty was enacted in 2001 and a new concordat with the Catholic church was concluded in 2004. In Spain the financing of religious communities and the teaching of religion in public schools has been reformed in recent years. In France three official reports were published at short intervals and prompted a number of legal reforms, some of which are still in progress: the Debray report on teaching religion in schools (2002); the Stasi report on *laïcité* in the French Republic (2003); and the Machelon report on the relations between religious communities and the state (2006). In Italy new agreements with minority religions were signed in 2007, and in the same year a new law on religious liberty was approved in Romania.4 Outside the European Union things are no different. In many public schools in Russia, the former homeland of state atheism, classes in Orthodox culture were introduced in recent years,5 and in Norway the decision was taken in 2006 to abandon the old system of the state church.6 These changes are too numerous and too close together in time to be explained away as simple coincidences. Rather, there is a sense that the socio-religious transformations of Europe have at last been noticed by the national legal systems, which have entered a process of adaptation to the new situation.

Second, a certain convergence of the church–state systems of the countries of the European Union (EU) is discernible. This is not the consequence of
any direct intervention by the EU, which has no competence in this field, but is
due to the growing EU presence in other areas, which have indirectly influenced
national legislations concerning religious communities. An analogous role has
been played by the European Court of Human Rights both within and outside the
EU borders, as a result of which certain anomalies in national legal systems, such
as the need to obtain authorization from the Greek Orthodox church in order to
build a place of worship in Greece, have been removed through decisions of the
Strasbourg court.

Finally, the constitutions of the post-communist countries of eastern
Europe, which since 1989 have had to build their systems of state–church rela‑
tions from scratch, were initially influenced by the United States and interna‑
tional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in
Europe and the Council of Europe which had played a significant role in their prep‑
paration, but after a few years this influence decreased and the most recent laws –
particularly those on religious freedom and association – are closer to traditional
European models.

Now, putting to one side the matter of what these legal reforms have in
common, the real question concerns the direction they are going to take. Are they
following a definite course and can it be identified?

The transformation of the church–state systems in Europe

Although the classification is outdated and does not answer the needs of con‑
temporary societies, we can start with the distinction between countries in which
church and state are separated, countries where concordats and agreements
with religious communities have been concluded, and countries that adopted the
church-of-state system.

The first fact to emerge from a legal analysis of these models is the decline
of the third category. On the one hand, all the post-communist countries – even
those with a strong Lutheran tradition – avoided endorsing the church-of-state
system in their new constitutions, and some of them went so far as to exclude
this option for the future too. On the other hand, Sweden gave up its church of
state, Norway is in the process of doing so, Iceland passed a law that strength‑
exes the independence of its national church, and Finland modified the system of
state church as a central component of its constitution, transferring the power
to appoint bishops from the head of state to the faithful of the Lutheran church.

Extending the analysis from northern to south-eastern Europe, the trend is con‑
firmed. The legal systems based on a constitutionally dominant religion, which
represents the Orthodox counterpart of the Protestant church of state, show a
parallel decline. The example of Greece, whose constitution defines the Greek
Orthodox religion as the dominant religion of the country, has not been imitated by any of the post-communist countries where the Orthodox religion is the majority religion. The English system of an established church fares a little better, because the Church of England quickly understood the need to accept religious pluralism and chose to exercise its prerogatives and political power in favour of all religions existing in the country: the Anglican bishops who are by law members of the House of Lords frequently act as representatives of the different religious communities, not only of the Church of England. But it is still open to question whether, in the long run, this strategy will succeed in meeting the demands for disestablishment which are regularly voiced by important sections of British public opinion. Why are systems with a church of state – a dominant or an established church – declining? The most convincing answer is that they do not fit a religiously fragmented society, particularly if religious membership is no longer a private choice only but also a public expression of identity. The state’s decision to have an official religion presupposes a religiously homogeneous society. When people are divided among different faiths, the state’s adoption of one of them becomes a weakness because it prevents some of the citizens from fully identifying with the public institutions. In conclusion, the process of transformation of the European religious landscape shows that the new religious, ethical and cultural pluralism has outgrown the systems of church–state relations which are characterized by the legal identification of the state with one religion.

The second result of this analysis concerns those countries which have a system of separation of state and religious communities. Separation is a very common word in the constitutions of the post-communist European countries, perhaps because of the influence of the United States on their preparation. But if these constitutions are considered more closely, it becomes clear that this concept of separation excludes neither recognition nor support of religious communities by the state. It has little in common with the separation affirmed in the French law of 1905, for example, which prevents the state from recognizing or subsidizing any religious community. On the contrary, it is a friendly and cooperative form of separation, which does not rule out the conclusion of concordats and agreements between the state and religious communities and coexists with constitutional statements that oblige the former to cooperate with the latter. An analogous process of transformation has taken place in the country which is the emblem of separation: France. Today in France there is an institute (the Institut européen en sciences des religions) which is financed by the state and has the task of training state school teachers in the place and impact of religion in society; there is a private law foundation (the Fondation pour les œuvres de l’Islam en France), supported by the state and enjoying the status of a foundation for the
public good, whose task is to promote the building of Muslim places of worship; there is a ministry (the ministry of the interior) which played a fundamental role in the creation of the Conseil français du culte musulman, a Muslim representative institution. These examples show that even in France separation has become much softer and no longer excludes state interventions in areas which, until a few years ago, were considered outside the boundaries of interest and competence of public institutions.\footnote{15}

Once again, we need to ask why separation has acquired a different meaning and why even those states which had made it the central feature of their religious policy have changed their attitude. This time the answer lies in the new significance acquired by religion and collective religious identities on the political stage. After the decline of the great secular ideologies, religions seem to be the only forces still capable of speaking the language of collective identity and of offering their faithful an interpretation of reality and a sense of membership. All this gives them the power to mobilize significant groups of followers.\footnote{16} This power is too important to be ignored by governments which, on the one hand, fear that religion will be exploited to create political and social unrest and, on the other hand, are tempted to make use of religion to achieve their own goals of internal and foreign policy. None of this can be achieved without engaging with religion and establishing relationships with religious communities, and therefore without giving up strict separation.

On the basis of these remarks it is possible to conclude that a process of convergence from extreme positions towards the centre is taking place in Europe, where the extremes are church-of-state systems on the one hand and rigid separation on the other. But what then is the centre towards which this process is moving? A closer examination of the Swedish case can help us here. In Sweden, giving up the church-of-state model did not imply the adoption of separation of state and church; instead, it opened the way to a complex system in which the legal status of the Lutheran church is defined by a special law and that of other religious communities is dependent on their registration. This arrangement maintains a special position for the old church of state and, at the same time, makes it possible to affirm the laïcité and impartiality of the state towards all religious communities, at both the symbolic and formal level.\footnote{17} Similar models have been adopted by most post-communist states and, in western Europe, by those countries which have recently reformed their system of church-state relations (Austria and Portugal,\footnote{18} for example). Religious communities can register in different ways and, depending on the type of registration they are able to obtain, receive different state support. This solution offers public recognition of religious communities and gives the state some control over them and the ability to grade its
support according to their importance. Finally, the proliferation of concordats with the Catholic church and of agreements with other religious communities should be highlighted. Such agreements satisfy the need of these communities to have a legal status that reflects their particular identity. In conclusion, the centre of gravity of the European system of church–state relations seems to be shifting towards a range of national systems that are distinct but which share certain common features: acceptance of the public standing of religious communities; recognition of their special features; a certain degree of state control over them; and the selective and graded cooperation of public institutions with religious communities.

This analysis of the European pattern of church–state relations seems to confirm Jonathan Fox's conclusion: modernization does not imply church–state separation but a moderate involvement of states with religions. This statement should be elaborated by noting that state involvement with religion is the consequence of the particular kind of modernization taking place in Europe today, which is characterized by pluralism and the public role of religions. These are the two main drivers behind today's transformations, as is confirmed by an examination of the most important fields of state–religion relations. For example, if we consider the teaching of religion in state schools, the clear conclusion is that everywhere in Europe – including Russia, the other post-communist countries and France – states regard the teaching of religion as part of their educative task. The models are different and range from the denominational teaching of a specific religion to non-denominational teaching about different religions. The differences are not negligible but, in both cases, the old dogma which assigned the task of providing religious education to the family and to the church – and not to the school – seems to be outdated. Even a secular state cannot afford to ignore the importance of religion as an instrument for understanding today's world.

But this involvement, too, has to take into account the individualism and pluralism that characterize contemporary society and have modified legal systems that for a long time allowed a certain degree of state involvement in religious matters. Teaching of religion in public schools is a good example of this influence. In those countries where, until a few years ago, only one religion could be taught (Portugal, Spain and Italy, for example), it is now possible to teach a number of different religions. Moreover, if requested by students and their parents, the teaching can vary from year to year. Pluralism and individualism have left their mark and have opened the school doors to some religious minorities that had formerly been excluded. At the same time individual choice, which in the past was limited to the right to be exempted from the teaching of religion, has now gained a central importance. This trend is confirmed if we look at the systems that some European
countries have adopted to finance religious communities. They have increased the number of religious communities entitled to state support and, at the same time, have structured this support in ways that give a central place to individual choice—the tax-payer, for instance, has the right to indicate the religious community that should be supported and, as mentioned above, can change this preference every year.

A healthy injection of pluralism and individualism into the legal systems that are emerging as the new centre of gravity of church–state relations in Europe is a good thing: it could help to frame the state’s ‘moderate involvement’ in ways that are compatible with democracy. If this path is not followed, it is likely that the European model of church–state relations will decline and be replaced by other models, closer to the separation seen in the United States or the neo-confessionalism of some eastern European states.

1 See the research conducted under the umbrella of IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion), a research programme that has brought together 450 scholars from 23 European research institutions.

2 ‘The changing nature of churchgoing in modern Europe’ is highlighted by Grace Davie in the passage ‘from a culture of obligation or duty to a culture of consumption or choice. What until somewhat recently was simply imposed (with all the negative connotations of this word), or inherited (a rather more positive spin), becomes instead a matter of personal choice.’ ‘Is Europe an exceptional case?’, in State and Religion in Europe, 2006. Istanbul: Centre for Islamic Studies, p 26.


7 The same happened in other legal fields. For example, the European Union has no competence in family law; nevertheless the national legal systems of the EU member states became closer.


9 See Ferrari, Silvio, ‘Church and state in post-communist Europe’, in op cit (note 5 above), pp 411–27.

10 On the reform of the state–church relations in the countries of northern Europe, see the proceedings of the conference held in Höör (Sweden) in August 2006 in the context of the research programme on the notion of ‘national church’ (L’année canonique, v. 48, 2007). See also Christoffersen, Lisbet (ed), Law and Religion in the 21st Century, Nordic Perspectives.

11 On the idea of church–state relations prevailing in the Orthodox countries, see the articles published in L’année canonique, v. 43, 2001.

12 In article 13 of the Bulgarian constitution, the Orthodox religion is defined as the ‘traditional’ religion of the country (see Peteva, Jenia, ‘Church and state in Bulgaria’, in op cit (note 5 above), pp 47–72; see also Kalkandjieva, Daniela, ‘Traditional religion vs. secular law in post-communist Bulgarian society’, paper given at the Copenhagen conference on Religion in the 21st century, 19–23 Sept 2007), while the Romanian law 489/2006 on the ‘Freedom of Religion and the General Status of Denominations’ recognizes ‘the important role of the Romanian Orthodox Church’ (art. 7).
13 See Grace Davie, op cit (note 2 above), p 30.
14 For a few examples see op cit (note 5 above), pp 417–21.
20 The last one was signed on 25 October 2007 between the Holy See and Bosnia-Herzegovina. More generally see the contributions published in Quaderni di diritto e politica ecclesiastica, 1999: 1.
In western European countries, ever since the creation of the modern state, schools have been one of the most important tools of government for shaping and maintaining social cohesion and for creating a ‘common citizenship’. At the same time, the idea of ‘common citizenship’ and the roles assigned to the private and state schools have differed in accordance with the character of individual states and with the space assigned by them to religion in the public sphere. In particular, states with a state-nation identity, such as France, which aim to achieve social cohesion through a common bond of citizenship based on public institutions, have usually entrusted ‘community building’ to state schools, thus marginalizing both private schools and religious education within state schools. The strict separation of public and private has rendered, on the one hand, private schools unable to participate in defining the common good and, on the other, religious education unfit to prepare future citizens. In contrast, in states with a nation-state identity, such as Italy, in which social cohesion is principally entrusted to a natural, cultural-religious homogeneity, there has been no separation, or only minimal separation, of state schools and private schools, and these latter – together with religious education in state schools – have always participated in the process of defining common citizenship.¹

Nevertheless, despite these specific historical differences and despite the fact that the European Union (EU) has not determined competences for religious teaching within state schools or the legal status of private schools,² common patterns among European countries have always emerged. This makes it possible to distinguish ideal-typical paradigms, which can summarize some
significant steps of the complex history of the relationship between school and religion in the ‘Old Continent’.

The separatist paradigm
What might be called the ‘separatist paradigm’ of the history of religious education in modern western Europe lasted from the second half of the 19th century until World War II, when a new paradigm came into being.

This first paradigm is identifiable with the strong opposition that existed between religion and state schools. In states like both France and Italy, in fact, modernity and democracy were synonymous with separation. Consequently, private schools and religious education were excluded from the state school system and institutional space, even if to different degrees in relation to the specific national context.3

However, the ‘narrative’ of the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ should not lead us too far astray. In fact, we should bear in mind that religious schools throughout Europe gave their pupils – at least de facto – the opportunity to have multiple identities and, in particular, to combine a ‘private’ identity with a ‘public’ one. Even when such religious schools were strongly identified with a specific group, they did not prevent their students from identifying with the state. Equally, religious education was not often absent from state schools.

These accommodations could be quite obvious in countries with a nation-state identity,4 but, perhaps surprisingly, it was also the case for countries where the state-nation identity was particularly strong, as in France. There the struggle between the state and religion took place within a single political framework, rather than between two totally opposing world-views. Thus, closing a religious school for political reasons would have been an action aimed against the ‘constitutional opposition’, rather than an attempt to protect the political system.

Consequently, in this first paradigm there was no ‘clash of civilizations’. The religious schools were either synonymous with state schools (in countries with a nation-state identity) or modelled on the state school (in countries with a state-nation identity), and provided the same instruction, if not an identical education. Moreover, removing God from state schools was never a totally radical operation.5 This also explains why a liberal, secular minority was able to implement a democratic system in Europe without a civil war and how this minority could control the democratic system based on the rule of the majority.

Thus the relative nature of the ‘dualistic principle’ becomes clear. Even if it was easy to separate ‘God’s school’ from ‘Caesar’s school’ by defining legal, formal boundaries, it was much more difficult to extend this separation to society as a whole.
Therefore, even in countries emphasizing the prominent role of the state and its institutionalized procedures, the nation continued to nourish these with its cultural and religious features. The declaration of the German public lawyer E-W Böckenförde that democratic states are based on presuppositions that they cannot guarantee was pertinent for that time too. As Jules Ferry expressed very well in his famous letter to teachers, an ‘old morality’ was needed to warm the cold procedures of the state. This ‘old morality’ was nothing more than the tradition of the nation, hidden behind a wall of dissimulation (rather than separation) that enabled the state to ignore the contribution of religious forces to the building of the state.

The pluralistic paradigm
One of the characteristics of the contemporary age is the coexistence in former colonialist countries of colonial cultures and religions that have moved to the ‘Old Continent’, bringing along their own ideas about relations between nation and state and between state and religion.

One important consequence of this reversed contact between the former colonizers and their former colonies has been the simplification and rapid ageing of the models that previously underlay the relations between religion and the public sphere. Both the separatist and the confessional models, in fact, have lost most of their significance. The systems inspired by the confessional model, which means that only a select religion has privileges, must now open themselves to other religions. The systems inspired by the separatist models, on the other hand, must open themselves to an unexpected demand for religious identities.

This process has coincided with the rapprochement between traditional (European) religions and European states, which has made possible the birth of a kind of European civil religion nourished by a group of selected, recognized religions. In other words, this process is coinciding with the explicit recognition by the state of the role of the nation and, more precisely, with public recognition of traditional European religions.

In the school system, this process has coincided, on the one hand, with the crisis of the former institutional dualism of private and state schools and with their fusion in an integrated and state-supported system; on the other, with a new role for religious education within state schools, which have to answer both the need of students, families and teachers for a public religious identity and the need to ensure minimal ‘religious literacy’ as a key to understanding contemporary society.

Consequently, state schools have experimented with strong internal diversification and no longer offer uniform curricula. The existence of different
curricula reflects the shift in public discourse about public services from ‘impartial neutrality’ to ‘pluralist neutrality’. This transformation throws into question the role of state schools in creating civil cohesion. It also complicates the task of state schools in constructing an institutional and social culture capable of interacting with the multiplicity of private social cultures.

In the contemporary public school system, the distinction between private and state schools is scarcely relevant; true private schools, which are outside the public school system (and do not enjoy its advantages), are rare. Thanks to the diversification of state schools, private schools have in fact become more like their state counterparts, accepting a standardization of their courses, clear procedures and a reasonable autonomy – instead of an absolute identity – in return for the benefits that authorities are increasingly prepared to offer. In other words, state-controlled schools no longer have a monopoly on the mission of creating social and civil bonds among citizens; private schools have come to accept this as their task too, grounded in constitutional principles and values. Finally, throughout Europe private schools have been recognized as sources of multiple and legitimate identities, as well as of a common citizenship that cannot transcend, but is able to subsume, individual, private identities. Following similar dynamics, religious teaching within state schools today has a new relevance: it is less an instrument for bringing up children in a specific faith than a place to try out an interplay of democratic and religious values. This explains why the Council of Europe has explicitly connected such teaching with citizenship education and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has proposed guidelines for improving the training of teachers and programmes to take into account the multicultural context of the member states. Consequently, both private schools and religious teaching within state schools today balance their own identity with the needs of the institutional space where they continue to exist, and the result is a reduction of their previously strict confessional character.

These dynamics show a deep change both in states and in religions. Religions accept the principles of constitutional democracies; states admit the institutional role of religions. In other words, the autonomy of religious groups that wish to enter the public arena must find a balance with the common rules for all citizens. As can readily be imagined, this process is not simple and, interestingly, is taking place in the age of the constitutionalization of the principle of secularism.

From a legal to a real pluralism: a difficult passage

Though contemporary legal systems interpret the legal principle of secularism as a synonym for respect for pluralism and difference – and the role for private
schools and religious education would seem to prove it—the concrete result has been the confirmation of the monopoly of the old private and public identities.

The descriptions above, in fact, work for religions that are perceived as historically part of national landscapes. But it does not work so well for religions that have only recently come to Europe, such as Islam or the so-called new religious movements. Nor does it always work very well today for Judaism, which is a traditional European religion but has undergone important changes over the last 50 years, partly the result of immigration from non-European countries. Judaism today is experimenting with a process of redefinition characterized by the emergence of new forms of strong communitarian education.

Many European and public authorities are not convinced that these religious groups are able to offer an education that will allow students to have multiple identities or that they have an agenda fully compatible with the constitutional values promoted by state schools and other ‘public religious’ schools. The secular view is that public expressions of non-traditional religious groups are synonymous with no integration, even if they are often, in reality, perfectly comparable with past attitudes of traditional religions.\(^{13}\)

Thus, the concrete implementation of secularism, interpreted as pluralism, now that it has been translated into the juridical sphere, is a problem for states and a challenge for groups that want to maintain an identity that cannot easily be merged with the ‘old common morality’ invoked by Jules Ferry at the time of the first paradigm, at the end of the 19th century.

What happens in reality? On the one hand, the only true private schools—that is, outside the state school system—are the schools of the ‘non-traditional’ religious groups, and these groups have many difficulties even opening these ‘simple private’ schools. In fact, contemporary school systems consider ‘simple private’ schools a backward form of education, confounding it with ‘home schooling’ and not categorizing it, as in the past, with other legitimate forms of school education. This approach leads to a non-transparent and unpredictable application of law to these private schools, which are often subjected to the almost uncontrolled discretionary power of public administrations. On the other, religious education offered by state schools tends to be restricted to the ‘traditional religions’. More generally, in this policy of ‘selected pluralism’ we see the revenge of corporatism against liberal attitudes and the paradoxical difficulty of enjoying a minimum set of liberal rights in Europe today. In the age of maximum rights and of substantive equality, it is much more difficult for groups that are not well organized to open a ‘simple private’ school that is not supported by the state than for a well-established group to open a school that is willing to be integrated into the state school system.
The process of adapting European school systems to the new social situations seems, then, to reveal a conflict between a legal principle of secularism (identified with the constitutional principle of open pluralism) and a political, sociological principle of secularism, a sort of rule of tradition, a civil religion interpreted as a principle of selective pluralism. This civil religion tends to view well-established religious groups as part of the system and legitimate sources of public morality. This reveals, once again, how the neutrality of the formal and procedural rights guaranteed by the state continues to depend on the specific and traditional character of the nation and how the emphasis on multiple identities is in reality much more circumscribed.14

Three European paradigms

It is possible to exemplify this situation by identifying three different ideal-typical approaches of European states, approaches that are based on their different relationships with the ‘wall of dissimulation’ mentioned earlier.

The first paradigm is emblematic of a state like France, which has a strong state-nation identity. In France the ‘wall of dissimulation’ is still strong. Public authorities have difficulty in recognizing the contribution of religious groups to public discourse and the many accommodations that the French legal system makes for religious groups and religious schools that are integrated in the state school system. Consequently, one can find a sort of ‘Catholicité’ hidden behind a theoretically neutral concept of secularism. This explains the complete integration of the Catholic school system in the state school system; the great dissimulation – which is a sort of compensation for earlier French anti-Semitism – towards the violations by most Jewish schools of the rules for state-supported private schools; and finally, the obstacles to the opening of Muslim schools and ‘sectarian’ schools.

The recent ‘headscarf law’ within state schools seems to reveal a response based on implicit norms which are deeply embedded in national history but lose most of their power if they require formal recognition.15 The general objection to the Islamic veil in France was not the result of French integrative laïcité as expressed in most legal texts of the state. The laïcité, which became law in 2004, was rather a version of the traditional ‘combative’ and ‘narrative’ laïcité.16 This is not the same as the constitutional principle, which is, on the contrary, today stressed by its ‘political’ or ‘moral’ false twin and in danger of losing its ability to play a role in the integration of various cultures in French society.17 The ban on headscarves in state schools reveals serious doubts about the ability of state schools to educate students to have multiple identities and facilitates the creation of mono-identity schools.18
Finally, in this first paradigm, in which religions are perceived as being unable to contribute in a fully open way to common citizenship, the only legitimate approach by state schools to religion is education about religion: a cultural and philological teaching directly provided by public authorities. This explains both the difficulty of taking religious identities into account in state schools and the embarrassment of investigating the religious dimension in private education when it oversteps the limits set by the separation (dissimulation) wall.

The second paradigm is typical of a state like Italy, with a strong nation-state identity. In Italy, where the Catholic church is the 'cement' of the nation, the 'wall of dissimulation' has partially fallen and been replaced by a 'wall of tolerance'. Thus, the public authorities have no problem in recognizing the contribution of religious elements to public discourse when they are represented or mediated by the Catholic church: the confessional teaching of the Catholic religion is still optional for students but compulsory for the state; Catholic schools are routinely funded by the state and other local authorities. There is also no problem in recognizing the accommodations made to meet the multiple needs of this church and its schools. The Italian laicità is clearly a 'baptized' or 'sane' one, as many popes have said. Nevertheless, the wall endures in relation to other religious groups, and above all, to those less disposed to accept the Catholic church's role as gatekeeper. These other groups, even if sometimes formally recognized, are not recognized as part of the national heritage, and they are not permitted to enter state schools to speak about their own experiences of faith; they are permitted only to speak about a generic and neutral 'religious fact'. Moreover, in Italy, Muslim private schools are simply not seen as an option, because they do not fit into the system of tolerance; the law concerning private schools does not work for them.

In Italy, therefore, the powerful role of the nation openly links laicità with Catholic identity. In February 2006, for example, the Supreme Court of the Council of State legitimized the presence of the crucifix in the classrooms of state schools, on the grounds of the need to transmit to 'non-EU students' the principles of tolerance and freedom already recognized by the constitution. This justification is quite interesting because it reveals a preference for pursuing social cohesion by means of a religious symbol rather than by means of the constitution itself. At the same time, this justification offers an interpretation of the religious symbol of Catholicism by which it becomes not an instrument for excluding people who have religious convictions that may be far from the national tradition, but rather an instrument for guaranteeing their religious rights. That is why the cross in Italy's state schools is the main defender of the headscarves of Muslim pupils.

In this second paradigm, in which (a specific) religion can contribute to common citizenship in a fully open way and in which it is possible to have more
than one (selected) identity even in state schools, the school approach to reli-
gion is primarily that of education into religion. The state prefers to allow the
(selected) churches (the Catholic church, above all) to explain what religion
is, in both state and religious schools. At the same time, the recognition of this
specific competence is subordinate to the Italian civil religion, and this explains
the difficulty in accepting manifestations of religious identities that are far from
Catholicism.

The third approach is typical of states with an openly pluralistic
nation-state identity and which recognize explicitly, with a minimum of dissimu-
lation, the importance of integrating different and non-traditional religions in the
school system. This approach, therefore, makes a pluralistic religious education
in state schools possible — even if it predominantly acknowledges Christianity —
and encourages the opening of state-supported religious schools in accordance
with the law. Such is the case of the United Kingdom, where there is much public
participation, starting at the municipal level, in the preparation of curricula for
teaching of religion(s) in the state schools and where the cooperative system
that governs the opening of state-supported schools encourages the participa-
tion of all (religious) traditions in the building of nation and state. This approach,
with all its difficulties, reveals a state ready to be educated from religion and to
recognize the role of different religious traditions in nourishing both private iden-
tities and a shared identity. This system requires detailed attention in preparing
programmes for teaching religions and in training enough teachers in the subject.
It also requires structured, open relations between religious groups and public
authorities, and the ability to look at different religions from a common and inclu-
sive perspective. This last requirement is also clearly essential to the creation of
state-supported private schools and is closely connected to the conviction that
the contribution of religions to common citizenship is in direct proportion to their
enjoyment of the rights of citizenship.

**Some final remarks**

After this short overview it is possible to make some final remarks.

First, it seems that democratic states must recognize a possible connec-
tion between morality, religion and secular law if they want to bolster the mecha-
nisms that sustain democracy. They must reconcile enlightenment and romantici-
sm, the state and the nation. That is the ultimate meaning of 'education from
religion', or of what Habermas calls 'complementary teaching' between religions
and secular morality. It also explains why contemporary societies need people
to be educated, in addition, about religion and — if they wish — into religion and why
school systems should take that into account.
Education into religion is education imbued with a specific religious tradition. As we have already seen, it is represented both by the particular space that state schools give to religious groups to communicate their experience to pupils that desire it and by the possibility for these religious groups to open private schools. Both of these possibilities could be allowed by the authorities: the opening of state schools to (optional) courses on particular religions could show the state’s awareness of the need to build multiple identities. It would also demonstrate an awareness that the state is not the only public ‘educator’ of youth but rather the guarantor of a developed and articulated institutional pluralism. Moreover, allowing religious groups to open private schools would demonstrate a respect for freedom of religion and freedom of education. At the same time, such a move would have to be accompanied by an awareness of the need to balance all the rights involved, so that the opening of private schools or the provision of space for teaching of religion within state schools would not create a lawless zone. When the state, renouncing all dissimulation, openly recognizes that it is a ‘manager of pluralism’, it should also recognize that it is the protector of the fundamental rights of every individual (human dignity first of all) in every community or institution, including religious schools.

Education about religion reflects the need for all citizens to be aware of the religious cultures in their society and of the changes in those cultures. Education about religion is not only a duty of the state but is also incumbent on religious schools that want to educate their students for life in society. This explains why the European Court of Human Rights has admitted the possibility of compulsory teaching about religion in state schools once the principle of pluralism is fully respected. This principle forbids precedence in this teaching being given to some selected religions, even if it is for merely ‘cultural’ or ‘historical’ reasons. That is also why the preparation of curricula on religions and the training of teachers of religions, both in state and in religious schools, should receive careful attention to prevent poor quality of the education into religion and to increase the prestige of education about religion.

We should, therefore, advance beyond an either/or logic of mutual exclusion, beyond a logic of contemporary pillarization, in which one kind of education (‘into religion’ or ‘about religion’) excludes the other, to a logic of inclusion, in which religious identities are not perceived as a danger to common citizenship and in which the need to be part of a democratic society is not seen as a threat to a specific religious identity. Moving beyond an either/or logic could help the state avoid the expectation that all religious groups show the same degree of acceptance of ‘integrated school systems’.
A differentiated attitude could be suggested. On the one hand, it could guarantee the ‘minimal and liberal’ right to open religious schools even to those who are (temporarily) unwilling to accept the logic of integration (which they perceive as the logic of assimilation). On the other, it could allow graduated manifestations of religious identity within state schools – from the freedom for individual manifestations only to a more structured model for religions themselves. This differentiated attitude could nurture reciprocal trust between the state and religious groups and could express a recognition that religious experience will continue to exist even in a secular society. Thus, the acceptance of religious schools that are far removed from ‘common values’ could play a role in state-building, if that acceptance is not limited to a simple consent that abandons the school and its community to its fate.29

The ultimate goal, therefore, should be an integrated system, inspired by the logic of education from religion and – reciprocally, for the religious group – from the state, in which both state and religious schools are aware of their reciprocal connections. This kind of school system could boost the growth of a democratic society and could support the school’s centrality in the restoration of the social and institutional cohesion that has been lost.

The integration of religious schools in a common system of instruction is connected with the opening of state schools to religious identities: education into religion and education about religion are inextricably linked and state schools should prevent any enforcement of secular education just as religious schools should avoid endeavours to teach religious studies only.30 This could avoid the risk of being pluri-cultural at the macro-level, but uni-cultural at the micro-level. It could also highlight the importance of a basic core curriculum, which responds to the pupils’ right to instruction as acknowledged by international covenants.31

To achieve – at least partially – all these goals, one needs a state that is strong (or at least with a strong minister of education!) and that also openly recognizes the essential role of the nation as a living community, destined to see many changes and many varied contributions.32 This must be clear if the state is to avoid all dissimulation, which can grow out of control both in privileging some groups and in damaging others,33 and if religious groups and their schools are to educate people destined to live together. Only a state and religious groups able to speak about communities, and not just about a community, can educate people today.

And this, as Walzer reminds us, is a very thin morality, but also a very thick one.34

2 In relation to private schools, the EU could intervene more easily on the grounds of defence of the free market.


4 In Italy, even at the time of the left-wing liberal government which formally expelled religious education from state schools (Coppino law of 1877), the teaching of Catholic religion could always find a space within these schools, when parents wanted their children to have free access to such teaching.


7 Baubérot et al, op cit (note 5 above), pp 111–12.


9 These European schools could be compared to the ‘Tali network’ in Israel, which are state schools with reinforced Jewish studies and are recognized not as state religious schools but as state education schools. As the latter, they could experience a withdrawal of students to ultra-Orthodox institutions and/or come under pressure from parents to enrich their religious curricula; see Maoz, Asher, 2006. ‘Religious education in Israel’, in University of Detroit Mercy Law Review, 83 (5): 695–6.


13 A process of ‘radicalization’ today also seems to be of concern to the Catholic church. Nevertheless, in this case, as the church is clearly perceived as traditional, this radicalization, as in the past, directly affects the political system, causing strong tensions in it; so far at least, it has not fed desires for a new separatism, in contrast to what has happened in relation to the radicalization of other ‘non-traditional’ religious groups.


16 Jean Baubérot has distinguished between a laïcité de combat and a laïcité pacificatrice: see, for example, Baubérot, 1990. La laïcité, quel héritage?, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 102.


18 The French approach, in which state schools forbid headscarves and kippas and the Catholic schools allow them, creates a situation that is the exact opposite of that imagined by the Israeli Supreme Court in the Jabareen case. In the view of this court, students in state schools are entitled to cover their heads in the name of religious freedom; in contrast, in private schools the religious freedom of students gives way to the religious freedom of the private community which controls the school; see Maoz, op cit (note 9 above), pp 704 ff.

19 See Ferrari, Alessandro, 2002. ‘State and churches in Italy: from liberal separation to democratic laïcité’, in Jahrbuch für Europäische Verwaltungsgeschichte, 14: 1–42.

20 See Ferrari, Alessandro, 2002. ‘State and churches in Italy: from liberal separation to democratic laïcité’, in Jahrbuch für Europäische Verwaltungsgeschichte, 14: 1–42. For canon lawyers the dissimulatio is the suspension of punishment by the church authority in face of attitudes contra legem which are impossible to avoid or accept. With the dissimulatio the ecclesiastical authority decides...
willingly not to see these facts, waiting for the moment where punishment (or tolerance) will be possible.

21 The only exceptions are permitted by agreement between the state and the Jewish community, which allows the latter to enter state schools to speak specifically about the ‘study of Judaism’ (art. 11, par. 4 of law n. 101 of the 8 March 1989); and by article 23 of the royal decree of 28 February 1930, which allows all religions – subject to certain conditions at the discretion of the public authorities – to enter state schools outside ordinary school time. Nevertheless, this last possibility has never been used; see Ferrari, Alessandro, La scuola italiana di fronte al paradigma musulmano, in press.


27 See the judgements Folgiero and Others v. Norway of 29 June 2007 and Hasan and Eyelim Zengin v. Turkey of 9 October 2007, in www.olir.it/tricerca/index.php?Form_Document=4331 and http://www.olir.it/tricerca/index.php?Form_Document=4572, accessed 8 September 2008. These judgements could have repercussions for countries, such as the UK, which provide teaching of religion that, although plural, reserves a prominent role for Christianity.

28 In Israel, for example, the National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel has called for ‘the replacement of the State school system with a strong system of public education’; see Maoz, op cit (note 9 above), p 719.

29 An example in Israel could be the experience of the primary schools run by the Chabad (Lubavitch) Hassidic community, which were recognized in the early 1950s as an independent network in the religious state education stream; see Maoz, op cit, p 692.

30 In Israel the first attitude was typical of the Frumkin Commission, at the time of the establishment of the state; the second attitude is typical of the ultra-Orthodox educational network; see Maoz, op cit, pp 682 ff.


32 It is interesting to note that the Shinhar Commission defined Judaism as a ‘a national and pluralistic culture in a continuous state of development’ and that it did not address its recommendations to the ‘national-religious or the independent ultra-Orthodox trends which are defined by their nexus to a cultural system with an integrated (and maybe interpreted as immutable) view’; see Maoz, op cit, p 685. In contrast, the report ‘Being Citizens’, submitted by Mordechai Kremnitzer in 1996, applies to all schools in Israel (Maoz, p 688), maybe in the conviction that an immutable view does not exist.

33 For a somewhat similar situation in Israel, see Maoz, pp 697 ff.

This paper will reflect briefly on the so-called ‘return of religion’, which is allegedly responsible for the crisis of laïcité regimes as ideal expressions of the separation of church and state. More precisely, I would like to focus on certain aspects of this thesis – the resurgence of religion – which are not usually sufficiently highlighted, even though the notion itself is well known and has been widely discussed not only among experts but also by the broader European public since the late 1980s.

Thereafter, I would like to show how empirical evidence suggests that this view should be carefully re-examined and possibly corrected. We need a more sophisticated sociological approach than those currently used, one that both generates the thesis about the return of religion and is also, in turn, supported by it. From the point of view of this more complex perspective, the crisis of the laïcité is likely to be revealed as more radical than is usually supposed, and it will also become clear that it is no more than one aspect – albeit a very relevant one – of the crisis of an entire political regime. By this I mean the étatiste political regime.

Finally, I shall devote a few words to underlining various resources that are embedded within European history and culture. I argue that such resources are useful when dealing with a crisis such as the current one, although they are usually ignored. The mobilization of these resources has recently begun, but we ought to take into account that they come at a price.

Effects and real dimensions of the return of religion
The laïcité regimes are in deep trouble. Since it is their own supporters who regularly affirm this, there is no need to present evidence in support of it. On the other
hand, it would be useful to indicate the physical boundaries of the regime the crisis of which is here under consideration. Since the crisis concerns laïcité, it affects a typically modern kind of institution dominant within continental Europe, of which France is the most prominent example. Such regimes maintain a separation between state and church which is conceived and supported by the state itself. By means of this separation, the state also redeploy religion, locating it outside the public space and thereby privatizing it.

In this context we must understand the term ‘state’ as precisely as possible. While it is true that we have known confessional states, we have never encountered laïcité regimes that were not supported and imposed by a state—that is, by a particular kind of self-organization of the political system. It is therefore important not to forget that this kind of self-organization of the political system hinges on the claim of the political authority to absolute sovereignty over society as a public space, as well as on the radical centralization of this authority and on the imposition of a civil law regime. Having said this, we can add that laïcité is one of the essential manifestations of the state when it reaches higher degrees of internal coherence and social hegemony.

By means of laïcité and its institutions the state strives to affirm the autonomy of political power with respect to ecclesiastical power. Such a goal is absolutely necessary in order to realize, effectively and rationally, the étatiste plan to exercise direct or indirect hegemony over every aspect of social life that lies outside the private sphere. None of this, of course, is to deny that, from time to time in the course of the conflicts and negotiations that have given rise to the various incarnations of laïcité structures, advantageous terms could be gained by a church protagonist, as in the case of certain concordats. Nevertheless, we can still agree with the mainstream sociological literature that recognizes many diverse situations as expressions of a more general ideal of laïcité.

All laïcité supporters, from the most enthusiastic to the most critical, including those arguing for a new era of laïcité, admit that it is embroiled in crisis: from Habermas’s analysis of ‘post secular’ to Baubérot’s criticism of ‘secular integrism’. They all argue that laïcité institutions as we know them are no longer able to confine religion within the borders of the private sphere or to generate a counterbalancing religion civile (in the Rousseauian meaning of the term) – at least, not to a sufficient degree.

Sociologists of religion are usually unable to explain how such a major development, bordering on the demise of laïcité, could be attributed to the pressure exerted by traditional or non-traditional religious agencies. It is true that new religious agencies have entered the European scene in an increasingly significant way during the last 20 or 30 years; that the increasing presence of immigrants
has involved the appearance of historic religious traditions which are newcomers to the European theatre; and that even within the old church-oriented religions there have been remarkable cases of religious innovation. Some of these are in part similar to those observed in the process of the ‘restructuring’ of American religion, but they are also sometimes original ideas. However, even when taken all together, these three groups of phenomena have not been able to invert the plurisecular trend towards secularization or, more particularly, the dramatically negative trend depicted by church attendance. If anything, from a merely quantitative point of view, we might be content to say no more than James Beckford, when he speaks of an unforeseen sharp slow-down in the decline of religion during the last decades. Moreover, from a morphological point of view, we could also point to some religious innovations introduced by historic Christian churches.

But in so doing we arrive at once at a crucial question. How is it possible that so little could produce so much? In other words, how is it possible that a simple and perhaps only temporary slow-down in the decline of religion could cause something as dramatic as the crisis of laïcité? How could so minor an occurrence seriously damage one of the essential qualities of l’état, as laïcité is defined in the first article of the French Fifth Republic?

We can accept this explanation of the course of events only if we bear in mind the extent of the laïcité project, the purpose of which is nothing less than the complete expulsion of religion from the public sphere, absolutely and without exception; if we do not forget that the ‘return of religion’ can also be attributed in part to the old Christian churches, prematurely judged to be subjugated and incapable of self-renewal; and if we also recall that this insistent stress on laïcité institutions is taking place at the same time as other dramatic social pressures which are undermining other pillars of the étatiste regime.

It is possible to understand how so little could account for so much only if this process is analysed with the use of a more accurate and complex theoretical framework.

A new framework for explaining the laïcité crisis
At this point we have to consider both the crisis of the laïcité regimes and three groups of causes: new religions, non-western religions, and religious innovations within traditional Christian churches, the last of which is particularly complex. In order to focus on all of the above from a sociological point of view and to resolve our consequent doubts concerning the disproportion between cause and effect, we need a more sophisticated theoretical framework than those currently utilized for the purpose.
The old paradigm for explaining the crisis of the laïcité regimes (the so-called ‘inherited model’) is not good enough. Indeed, positing the demise of laïcité is equivalent to positing the crisis of the old paradigm itself – the crisis of the classical secularization theories. This is even more clearly the case if we consider that we are analysing a crisis which has occurred exactly in that socio-political area for which these theories were developed and where, up to now, they have always found their most successful application: continental Europe.

The old paradigm cannot be salvaged even by serious revision from Steve Bruce. On the one hand, Bruce introduced the possibility of some successful ripostes on the part of religious agencies; in so doing, he put forward a very good hypothesis and also contradicted one of the central dogmas of the old paradigm: the inevitability of secularization. On the other hand, he clarified the local scope of the classical theories, noting that they are inapplicable to religious contexts such as that of North America, where there is a low-cost change in religious membership. Bruce strongly upgraded one branch of secularization theory, but having succeeded in that undertaking he is not then able to explain the fear of resurgent religion felt by secular supporters, such as Habermas and Baubérot. According to Bruce, we should consider laicist anxiety to be disproportionate.

The new paradigm is not good enough either, as I have tried to show in relation to the Italian puzzle, and as Chaves and Gorski have done in a more systematic way in their review. It is likely that the future application of the rational-choice theory in the religious field (as in other sociological fields) is going to depend increasingly on its ability to limit itself to a small number of phenomena and particularly to those related to participation (or ‘consumption’). This obviously implies a more limited area of concern in comparison with that of the old paradigm, and this could turn out to be of scientific merit and an advantage for the religious market theory. At the same time, the need to set the religious market theory within a larger framework of theories will become more evident. Only by doing so will it be possible to take into account the social and socio-religious context in which the allocation of time or money does (or does not) take place – a context which, as a social and therefore not merely economic object, the religious market theory (like any other economic theory) cannot encompass.

Not even a generic theory of institutional (or structural) differentiation is sufficient. In fact, such a framework is among the analytical instruments most utilized in explaining emerging laïcité and in stressing its civic value. Therefore, following this reasoning, we would be compelled to understand the laïcité crisis as an involutive process, as a de-modernization process.

My purpose is to examine the laïcité crisis, as well as the three above-mentioned groups of religious and social factors (the incursion of new religions,
non-western religions, religious innovations within historic churches), by means of a theory of advanced modernization centred on the primacy of societal function differentiation over other kinds of social differentiation processes, as elaborated by Niklas Luhmann. Luhmann developed his ideas by building on an earlier analysis by S N Eisenstadt on the function of social codes in relationship to societal institutions and, in so doing, was following a post-Parsonsian perspective. Luhmann’s theory helps us to grasp why we cannot represent advanced modernity – as opposed to so-called early modernity – in terms of many single institutional worlds (or ‘spheres’), each completely separate from the others (eg the state on one side and religion on the other, or the public versus the private sphere). The social communications factor that makes up the functionally specialized societal subsystems (religion, politics, economy, science and so on) always occurs within the same, sole societal environment, and, even more, within the societal subsystems, organizations and interactions. (For instance, the capitalist market is perhaps the best-known example of intersection between the economic subsystem and the political subsystem, and each of its single, highly contingent events is relevant from both an economic and a political point of view – as well as from many others.) According to Luhmann, there are no more ‘spheres’ with advanced modernity. Not only society as a whole, but even each single societal subsystem, cannot be made up of just one institution or, still less, of just one organization.

In support of my adoption of this Luhmannian perspective, I prefer not to recall here the results of several single empirical research studies which adopted this theoretical framework, but instead to take into account a few more general considerations. In particular, I refer to the large amount of work recently devoted to a synthesis or a general reinterpretation of the secularization phenomenon. I would like at least to mention the new version of Karel Dobbelaeere’s classic work, which includes a specific new chapter devoted to this aspect of Luhmann’s work, as well as James Beckford’s latest work, which is devoted to a general social theory of religion, in which he presents a list of secularization factors and pays much more, as well as more specific, attention to the functional differentiation of society.

Assuming the primacy of societal functional differentiation over other processes of social differentiation guarantees a more adequate theoretical framework for understanding many phenomena concerning the relationship between religion and other social factors during the current, more advanced phase of modernization. This approach makes it easier to understand the emergence of a religious market, without having to reduce all social religious phenomena to this. The same analytical strategy creates a framework in which it becomes easier to understand the multidimensionality of both religion and
religiosity. It creates a theoretical framework in which one can also understand the unexpected religious innovations emerging from within old church-oriented religions. More generally, in this way we overcome the theoretical isolation of the sociology of religion from social theory and so rejoin the classic mainstream.

In short, Luhmann helps us to better understand both secularization and its variant morphology. He detects two components in that process: (a) one component that is necessary but ambiguous in its sociological meaning (functional specialization and differentiation produces, in each societal subsystem, an increase in freedom from external influence and a simultaneous decrease in influence over other subsystems); and (b) a second component whose contents are unnecessary and whose effects, once they occur, are unambiguous. These effects stem from the relative successes or relative ‘unsuccesses’ contingently scored by any religious organization, depending above all on the efficacy and efficiency of the policies put into play.

The primacy of functional differentiation contributes to our understanding of the synergy of resurgent religion with other social phenomena (eg economic ones) and therefore the simultaneous impact of all these both on the state (as a particular form of self-organization by the political system) and on the state’s project of hegemony over the whole society.

**Primacy of the functional differentiation of society and state**

My argument depends on a willingness to accept the concept of ‘state’ as a conceptual idea that is no broader than a particular form of self-organization of political power (typically expressed, among other things, by the doctrine of absolute sovereignty and the civil law regime); and on a willingness to understand laïcité as the form of separation from ecclesiastical power followed and imposed by the most coherent expressions of the state project.

It seems that the programme to absorb religion’s functions and to confine its remnants to an area from which it cannot immediately and freely participate in the public space – to use the terms of Manent (2006) and Gauchet (1998) – continues to be essential for the laïcité structures and projects that currently exist. The same remains true for whatever part of this project has already been realized, just as it remains true for the so-called laïcité culturelle.

It is still quite easy to see Rousseauian and Hegelian (Aufhebung) roots at the base of the most widespread regimes and models of laïcité – at least, of those present in the current European debate. The welfare state and particularly the so-called ‘European social model’ are the most coherent and systematic realization of this étatiste perspective, not only with respect to religion. It seems to me that all this is very clear, so I will limit myself to just two cases. First of all, I would
mention the ‘post-secular’ programme launched by Jürgen Habermas, according to which religion might enter the public sphere only if its arguments were translated into the language of ‘reason’. A similar approach is to be found in the more recent and still more prudent writings of Jean Baubérot.

In short, the French model remains the benchmark for the laïcité orientation in the separation of church and state and in conceiving the rules of access to the public space. In effect, it played such a role during the political and cultural confrontation that led to the formulation of the still unratified European Constitutional Treaty.

If we look at the state from the point of view provided by the primacy of societal functional differentiation, we can understand how and why this social process challenges the étatiste regime and its laïcité, and how and why it causes a crisis for both. The functional differentiation of society and the related general differentiation between interactions, organizations and communication codes, as well as the related increase of individualization as the differentiation between social and personal systems, make it simply impossible for a single organization (such as the state) to absorb and rule the whole of society or the entire public space; indeed, it cannot absorb even the political subsystem. In the most favourable circumstances, any single organization governs only itself and survives delivering (and selling) performances (Leistungen). Taking into account the level of specialization reached by the various codes, the degree of contingency reached by single social events, and the level of social complexity in general, the state project appears, ironically, to be simply inconceivable.

All this influences the relationship between politics and religion and, particularly, between political organizations and religious organizations, and shows itself also in the laïcité crisis. But something analogous is also occurring between the political and scientific systems, between the political and economic systems, and so on. Manent links the state crisis to the autonomization processes undertaken by trade, law and morals, but ignores the role of religion. Other authors suggest different components. It would not be difficult to show that they are all considering more or less the same phenomena but are highlighting different aspects of the same social process using differing theoretical frameworks and with differing assessments of the breakdown. They all reach the same conclusion as Luhmann – namely, the explosion and disappearance of the state caused by the primacy of the functional differentiation of society.

The drastic slow-down in the quantitative decline of religion (together with the notable capacity for religious innovation demonstrated by the old Christian churches – and obviously not only by them) is just one aspect of this more general social process. In particular, these are events occurring in conjunction
with the differentiation of a religiously specialized societal subsystem. These are, of course, very important parts of the process of the functional differentiation of society, but they remain no more than parts. Without the synergy with whatever is simultaneously happening in the economic, scientific and other fields, the resurgence of religion could absolutely not, in and of itself, be the cause of the crisis of the state and of its laïcité regime.

One can now understand how it is possible to claim that the laïcité crisis is simply one aspect, albeit a crucial aspect, of the crisis of the state and particularly of l’état sociale, l’état providence – in other words, just one aspect of the crisis of what is known (perhaps with geopolitical exaggeration) as ‘the European social model’.

Let me underline one other consideration, which appears from this point of view something like a trompe-l’oeil. The simple slow-down in the decline of religion magically turns into the ‘return of religion’, at times even of ‘the sacred’, while what escapes notice is that the flood which can submerge the laïcité plain does not depend on the rising water level of the lake of religion, but rather on cracks in the state dam.

Scholars have already gone beyond this point. Sociologists, jurists and historians – I refer to the line of German and British research which has led to the Konfessionalismus Paradigm – have proposed a fascinating interpretation according to which the emergence of the state between the 16th and 17th centuries expressed above all a movement of social de-differentiation, an attempt to stop or slow down the process of functional differentiation of society which had been taking place at least since the 13th and 14th centuries. In this approach, from the beginning the state ceases to be only, or primarily, a driver of differentiation and – in this sense – of modernization. What appeared with the secular principle – the cuius regio, eius et religio consecrated at Westphalia – was not a renouncement of the project of a unique, legitimately organized and enforced social order, but rather the attempt to reproduce another social order organized and enforced by political power instead of by ecclesiastical power. The secular (and laïque) principle took root in continental Europe as a monarchic – that is, anti-polyarchic – principle.

For obvious reasons, the path of the Konfessionalismus Paradigm is one we cannot follow here. In like manner, we cannot analyse the state crisis itself (and the crisis of its laïcité) from the point of view of the functionally specialized global society (die Weltgesellschaft) – that is, from the point of view of globalization and of religious globalization.

To sum up, the state and laïcité crises are not caused simply by the ‘return of religion’. More correctly, what is happening is brought about by the impact of
a simultaneous functional differentiation of the main societal subsystems (religion, economy, science and others), which produces the very real laïcité crisis as a particular aspect of the still more real crisis of absolute state sovereignty.38

Resources available for coping with the crisis of laïcité

Finally we must face the question of the resources available in Europe for coping with the laïcité crisis. I argue that, in dealing with this question, both the price of a more complex theoretical approach and the ethical price of recognizing as well as abandoning the ideology of the absolute sovereignty of the state could turn out to be worthwhile investments.

It is precisely the analytical strategy adopted here that helps us to avoid confusing the laïcité crisis simply with a crisis of modernity, both in general and in regard specifically to the question of the self-organization of the political field and the separation of politics and religion. In fact, modernity offers us an alternative model for the separation of political and religious power which is very different from laïcité. This model is that of religious freedom, for which the standard reference is the two religious clauses of the Bill of Rights, contained in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and definitively approved in 1791. These clauses protect free exercise and at the same time prohibit the setting-up of an established church.

There is much scientific, multidisciplinary writing devoted to illustrating the paradigmatic difference between religious freedom and laïcité that I do not intend to detail here. Religious freedom gives rise to a practice of separation of political and religious power which in no way excludes religion from the public space. Religious freedom is a manifestation of one of those political realities which jurists and political analysts sometimes define as stateless societies, as a consequence of their non-statist way of political self-organization (and also of organizing the relationship between political and religious organizations as well as between political and other kinds of organizations); and it is a manifestation of the difference that distinguishes common-law regimes from civil-law regimes. More generally, the public space of stateless societies encompasses much more than just the portion controlled by the political system (in the USA the latter is dramatically differentiated internally in functions and levels in order to construct the well-known system of checks and balances). Religious freedom is an element of a political system and of semantics in which ‘public’ is emphatically not a synonym for ‘state’ or ‘politics’. In short, with regard to the question of sovereignty, religious freedom is a component and expression of a solution which is an alternative to that prevailing throughout continental Europe; a solution which tends towards a polyarchic social and political culture rather than a monarchical one.
I will conclude by commenting on two points which I consider crucial but which are often overlooked in the European debate on laïcité. Keeping these two elements in mind while grappling with the laïcité crisis should help us avoid getting bogged down by a representation of this crisis as a battle for or against modernity.

While it may not be so clear exactly what a post-modern network of political institutions, or a post-modern social order, should be, I believe it is very clear that modernity offers us at least two different political models to understand the distinction between religious and political powers—laïcité and religious freedom—and that the crisis of one is not necessarily the crisis of the other. The two families are clearly part of two differing political traditions, identifiable above all by two different solutions to the question of sovereignty (the state tradition and the stateless tradition) and by two profoundly different conceptions of social order (monarchic order and polyarchic order).

(a) We should not forget that laïcité is not the only concept rooted in our European history. At this moment, as in every crisis or transformation, we need to call on all the resources of our history. If necessary, we should be willing to pay any price to widen and deepen the awareness of our identity and of the possibilities open to us.

In no way is laïcité the only European model. The history of religious freedom also began (and continues) in Europe, while its most conspicuous example is found in the United States. Religious freedom began to take shape in England and Scotland during the 16th and 17th centuries, in the period between Henry VIII’s opposition to Lutheranism (which earned him the title of defensor fides from Pope Leo X) and the Glorious Revolution.39

Religious freedom matured in the course of a complex conflict between religious power and politics as well as between parliament and king, in which the former prevailed.40 John Locke is witness to and analyst of those events and of the new kinds of political-religious institutions that emerged, as well as of the gradual development of a social situation characterized by religious tolerance and religious pluralism—a situation that was simply inconceivable in those continental areas under the rule of cuius regio, eius et religio and imprinted with absolute political sovereignty and by compulsory religious uniformity. The synergy between religious spirit and liberal spirit, which would surprise Alexis de Tocqueville during his visit to a young United States of America in the first quarter of the 19th century, had undergone its first tests and reaped its first fruits precisely in the course of the Glorious Revolution.41

The system of religious freedom, which even today can only be ruled according to casuistry,42 reveals its essential connection with a common-law
Reducing our European identity to just one model of political institutions, to just one solution to the question of the separation of political power and religious power, to just one wing of the Enlightenment—this involves renouncing important resources which are of strategic use in today’s world, even if the recovery of those resources involves us in great cost. To give just one Italian example, two centuries of philosophical, historical and juridical idealism, together with Italy’s very recent association with the German-French étatiste subculture,\(^43\) have all but erased the memory of the shared roots of our legal culture and the common-law culture from the mind of the average Italian. Fortunately, this erasure has been from individual memory only, not from reality, nor, above all, from the juridical structure of the constitution (as is clearly shown by Giuseppe Dalla Torre among others\(^44\)).

In recalling all this, I am not proposing a naive choice between radical alternatives. My purpose is only to underline that European history and culture can make available to us more resources than is generally thought and so help us to deal with the crisis of laïcité (and of the state) without letting it develop into a tragedy.

(b) In the last few decades we have not merely witnessed a quantitative ‘return of religion’; we have also seen significant reforms in the relationship between political and religious power in Europe.\(^45\) The list would include the renegotiation of the concordat between Italy and the Holy See in the mid-1980s, the notable changes that have occurred in the United Kingdom, the disestablishment of the Swedish church, and much else.\(^46\)

If we look at these changes in the light of a more adequate sense of European traditions, we can then appreciate the enormous scope for reforms, corrections, integrations and hybridizations, all the while respecting the varied local socio-religious situations. Clearly, some of these measures are also significant experiments in de-monopolization and de-statization of the public space, in religious freedom and in ‘twin toleration’ between political powers that are obliged to accept limitation and single religious traditions selected on the basis of their ability to develop justifications for the principle of religious freedom and for regimes built on such a principle. (The highly innovative Second Vatican Council documents *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Nostra Aetate* have shown exactly such an ability in the case of the Roman Catholic church.)

In particular, I believe that the new Italian Concordat and its operative applications, negotiated by the Italian government and the Italian Bishops’ Conference (CEI), open up some intriguing prospects for changes in the values of religious freedom from within a continental political regime that is not entirely...
ratified by the civil-law regime. In this context it could be generally useful to analyse (among other things) the solutions reached on public financial contributions to religious bodies and on the teaching of the Catholic religion in the state school system.

As neo-institutionalist scholars would say, *laïcité* regimes (or those simply under the influence of a certain *laïcité culturelle*) could be progressively affected by isomorphic processes originating in religious freedom regimes. This would also show how, in a phase of increasing globalization which affects both religion and politics, a sort of global institutional field of relationships between political and religious organizations is emerging. In the course of this process, *laïcité* culture and institutions might simply become marginalized, as is already happening for the *étatiste* institutions in the global political system.

Finally, I would like to take a last look at the case of the Roman Catholic church. Even though this church is homogeneous neither internally nor from one pontificate to another, it is worth noting that from Vatican Council II onwards – and in particular since the declaration of *Dignitatis Humanae* on the liberty of religion50 – the official doctrine of the Catholic church has begun to move towards a religious freedom model of political–religious relations rather than towards *laïcité*.51 At the same time, starting with Paul VI and reaching a climax under John Paul II, the bishop of Rome has begun to play a leading role in strategies which can be viewed as drivers of the institutionalization of a global religious system. (In this context, we should recall the two interreligious prayer meetings in Assisi in 1986 and 2001.) In this way, the Catholic church has consciously taken part in that larger and more complex process called the ‘return of religion’, both by means of its internal diversification and by means of policy innovation and reshaping the structure of its own religious authority. So, even if its participation is neither homogeneous nor constant, the Catholic church not only gives de facto support to the processes challenging *laïcité* but also appears to be a bearer of critical and innovative models strategically oriented in the same direction.

Some religious tradition – and certainly to some degree Roman Catholicism as well – appears to be well placed to play a role as a transitional force in the crisis of the latest version of the European continental state. Even though we know that history does not repeat itself, Roman Catholicism in particular could play a role in a direction, *mutatis mutandis*, similar to that played by other Christian churches in constructing the alliance between Christians and liberals which triumphed in the Glorious Revolution. The context of globalization could turn out to be favourable for working out a solution that exploits the opportunities opened up by the crisis of the state regimes, heirs of a culture of absolute sovereignty.52
Of course, the outcome of the ebb and flow within Catholicism could also be a victory for the wing supporting the defence of the state regime and its so-called saine (‘healthy’) laïcité. The character of the ecclesiastical agenda, both Catholic and other, during the formulation of the unsuccessful EU Constitutional Treaty, was extremely complex, one might even say potentially contradictory. This demonstrates that, although the possibilities we have considered here are based on real circumstances and consistent arguments, it cannot be taken for granted that they will prevail in the political field or, indeed, in the ecclesiastical one.

1 Only from such a perspective is one able to understand the crisis of this institution (Cassese, S, 2006. Oltre lo stato, Bari-Roma: Laterza) as well as the different but relevant role that could be played in the future by some of its organizations (Panebianco, A, 2004. Il potere, lo stato, la libertà: La gracile costituzione della società libera, Bologna: Il Mulino, pp 299 ff).
7 See Norris, P and R Inglehart, 2007. ‘Supply, demand, and secularization’, in Free Inquiry, 27 (2): 29–32. However, religious participation alone cannot summarize and represent situations or trends of individual religiosity (in fact multidimensional) or of religious interactions, organizations, institutions or ideas. Therefore a statement regarding secularization that is grounded just on religious attendance data, even if correct, reveals itself to be very weak.
18 Diotallevi, op cit (note 11 above).
19 Interactions, organizations, social system, codes, ideas, function, performances, reflection; Luhmann, N, 1977. Funktion der Religion, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp 54 ff.


And this is exactly the etymological and original meaning of secularization; Nijk, A J, 1973. Secolarizzazione, Brescia: Queriniana.

Once again Manent – a state supporter – explains clearly how the very success of the étatiste regime could be among the causes of its demise.


And vice versa also through the increasing irrelevance of the religious cleavage within the electoral market, as well as for other traditional cleavages (gender, age, job, education, etc); cf Sani, G, 2006. ‘Il mercato elettorale rivisitato’, in Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica, 3: 351–62.


Luhmann, op cit (note 19 above), pp 49 ff.


Sociologists are very careful to stress the strong influence of religion on electoral behaviour; Sani, op cit (note 32 above). For some apparently strange cases, as well as the 2005 Italian referendum on ‘medically assisted fertilization’, see Diotallevi, op cit (note 36).

Also, the case of one (or even two) established churches could not contradict the principle of religious freedom; Albert, R, 2005. ‘American separationism and liberal democracy: the establishment clause in historical and comparative perspective’, in Marquette Law Review, 88: 867–925.


See the arguments offered by DallaTorre (see note 44 above).

While the so-called ‘teocons’ could be understood as a process of lesser intensity and opposite direction.

A document never to be separated from the *Nostra Aetate*; see conclusions in Diotallevi, L, 2004. ‘Cattolicesimo romano e globalizzazione religiosa’, in *Antonianum*, 2: 345–64.

Perhaps still influencing some sections of *Gaudium et Spes or of Apostolicam Actuositatem*.


The claim for a *saine laïcité* does not question the state, the social scope of its power, the centralization of its structure or its regime of an absolute civil law. Such a claim simply asks the state to follow and apply some principles rather than others.
My approach to the question of the democratic state and limits on religion will be a normative-deontological one, rather empirical-ontological. Of course, the reality, the religious reality, in a society reflects on the state’s affairs. But if there is a discrepancy between reality and deontology, progress in that society would mean trying to move the former into reaching, or at least approaching, the latter.

I would like to begin my analysis with a general observation – one simple in its generality. Religion and democracy are not antithetical. If we reflect that democracy is not only popular sovereignty on the basis of the majority, but also respect for human rights regardless of majorities, respect which constitutes a fundamental pillar of the democratic principle; and if at the same time we reflect that the reference to religion necessarily leads on to the problem of religious freedom – then we perceive, underlying the two institutions of religion and democracy, the concepts of human rights, on the one hand, and religious freedom, on the other. But religious freedom is itself a human right. Consequently, the two components of the title can easily be harmonized. If I wished to express this thought mathematically, I would say, ‘religion plus democracy equals religious freedom.’

Things become difficult, however, when we begin to render this general observation specific. In any event, even great values, even human rights, are subject in principle to restrictions, especially when they are in conflict with other values or rights. Furthermore, when a value is examined in isolation, everyone will say that it deserves unlimited protection. But when more than one value is encountered and differing solutions are indicated, we have to give an answer to the question to what degree restrictions are permissible.
In examining the question of the ability of the democratic state to impose limits on religion, I will introduce some references to the Greek regime and the relations there between state and church, not so much in order to brief you on the Greek system but because the problems that exist in my country and the solutions required are capable of being generalized in a way which goes beyond the frontiers of one country.

**Limits on religion with respect to its external relations**

I will refer, first, to the external relations of a religion (*forum externum*), in other words, to its relations with the rest of society.

1. A democratic state expects all religions to respect the religious freedom of others. And the state is entitled, and at the same time obliged, to insist upon this respect if it wishes to treat all its citizens, regardless of their religious convictions, as equal. This imposes an obligation on both religions and the state.

   The need to protect the freedom of religion of every last citizen means that the state, in regard to its state functions, which must take all its citizens into account, must be neutral in terms of religion, including the prevailing religion in that society. Otherwise, it will show a lack of respect for the individual rights of minorities and of those citizens who do not subscribe to the prevailing ideas about religion. The state must pay equal attention to those citizens, regardless of their number. Consequently, it cannot identify itself with one section of the population, however large, and speak only with its voice, as if there were no other citizens. Failure of the state to observe religious neutrality adversely affects human rights.

   Neutrality guarantees pluralism. And neutrality does not drive out religion from society, since it is the state, not society, which must be neutral. It is also self-evident that neutrality does not mean hostility towards religions. On the contrary, the neutral state can support religions (even financially) to the extent that religions need such support to exist, on condition that the support is provided proportionally and impartially to all religions. By supporting religions, the state helps its citizens to satisfy their religious needs. Through the proportionally equal treatment of all religions, the state does not lose its neutrality, just as it does not lose it when it proportionally supports political parties.

2. And yet the Greek state very often practises religion (the official Greek state, that is, not society and the citizens, who, naturally, are free to express themselves in terms of religion). There are legal provisions which, while addressed to all the citizens, speak as if the Orthodox Christian church were speaking. The pre-
amble of the Greek constitution, for example, appeals to the ‘Holy Consustantial and Indivisible Trinity’. Furthermore, a religious element is often introduced into purely secular occasions. Even the opening of parliament – the parliament of all the Hellenes, whether they are religious in the Orthodox sense, otherwise religious or non-religious – starts with Orthodox Christian blessings. We have become so accustomed to such blessings at events that are secular by their nature that we do not think how others who take part (as they have every right to) feel on these occasions.

Another example of the overprotected status of the dominant Greek Orthodox church in Greek society is the question of the oath. There is indirect compulsion to take a religious oath and the alternative is again a compulsion to reveal one’s religious convictions if one dares (because daring is required to do this) to state that one does not believe in the religious oath.

It is worth recalling at this point the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights in the Buscarini case. The appellants before the court had been elected members of the parliament of San Marino and were obliged, in spite of their objections, to swear an oath on the Gospels, since otherwise they would lose their seats as deputies. The court held that this pressure to take a religious oath was tantamount to a requirement from the people’s elected representatives to swear loyalty to a specific religion, which is contrary to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, protecting freedom of conscience and religion. It is worth mentioning that the court was not interested in discovering what the religious convictions of the appellants were or whether the religious oath taken belonged to the practice of their own faith. This is important, because religious freedom also includes the right of individuals not to reveal, if they do not wish to, whether they are believers, and in what, and not to be questioned on the matter.

3 In Greece it is argued that the church is entitled to take part in all significant social events and that it is entitled to institutional privileged support because the great majority of the Greek people belongs to it and it serves as a point of reference for the maintenance of the cohesion of Greek society. Thus, representatives of the Greek Orthodox church consider that it goes without saying that they should put themselves forward as representatives of the whole of the Greek people.

Nevertheless, the need for cohesion should not be met in a way that violates the human rights of members of minority groups. The members of religious minorities, who remain outside the cohesive factor that functions for society as a whole, are downgraded to second-class citizens. Consequently, the claim of the church to serve as a regulatory factor for the whole of society and as a factor unifying the nation, relying upon the majority principle, is not in conformity
with the democratic character of the state, which is entitled here to set limits. A democratic state must protect the human rights of each individual even against the majority principle.

Protection of human rights means protection of pluralism in every field. We must familiarize ourselves with the idea that in a society (and in our own) there is room for other cultural approaches and other ways of life besides the prevailing ones. All societies nowadays are multicultural, or are evolving in that direction, because it is precisely this that is called for by the need to protect the fundamental rights of every last citizen. Respect for human rights means, first and foremost, respect for the rights of others and especially of minorities.

A reflection of the civilization of a society is how it behaves towards minorities – to those of other races or religions and to those who are different; whether, in practice, it recognizes, and does not denigrate, their ideas, traditions and customs. The concept of the democratic society includes, as is rightly stressed by the European Court of Human Rights, ‘pluralism’, ‘tolerance’ and ‘broadmindedness’. It also assumes that the majority will not abuse the dominant position which it occupies in relation to the minority, which must receive fair treatment.

The need for the cohesion of society, which should certainly not be ignored, can be satisfied by cohesive bonds that are appropriate for all the citizens. Thus, for the citizens as a whole, a cohesive bond can be the ‘nationality’ of the state, in the sense of the common citizenship of that society’s members. This binds all the citizens to the state and its laws and above all to its constitution (or, where there is no constitution, to its basic laws), which contains whatever is shared in common and fundamental to unite all the citizens within its borders. Greek citizens, for example, whatever their racial origin, ethnicity or religion, have the Greek constitution in common. This is their constitution, therefore it applies to everyone, including minority groups. No Greek citizens can place themselves outside the constitution, whereas they could, for example, place themselves outside a religion. It is another matter that people of the same race, religion or language, all over the world, can cultivate the characteristics they have in common and the relations between them. These cohesive features (religious, linguistic, etc) are valuable for every group in society, whether in the majority or the minority. But they are not appropriate for society as a whole.

4 In Greece, this restriction is not imposed on the Orthodox church by the state, because politicians as a rule do not wish to antagonize it, bearing in mind the influence which it can have on a section of citizens who are also the politicians’ voters. Politicians remain silent even when representatives of the church wish to convey to the Greek people the sole and unique truth which they represent –
their own faith, their own doctrine — a tendency which may perhaps exist in all the monotheistic religions, which claim a monopoly for their beliefs. Monotheism has often been characterized by rejection of pluralism, by absolute positions and strict dogmas, and by intolerance that leads to fanaticism and hostility. Religious people, including, of course, Christians (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, etc.), are free to regard their faith as the only truth, the only right answer to the great metaphysical or ethical problems of man; they are not entitled, however, to require this of other people. The restriction which democracy can impose upon them is that they should make clear, in their behaviour towards others and towards society, that this is their truth and that others are entitled to believe in other truths, their own truths.

The conclusion is that a clear limitation is necessary for both religion and state. Every religion must realize that in the world community it does not have exclusive ownership of truth. There are also other religious or non-religious ideas which, even if it rejects them, it must respect. And the state has to abstain from favouring any religion in society at the expense of others.

**Limits on religion with respect to its internal relations**

It is also justified to place limits on the internal relations of a religion (*forum internum*), ie on the behaviour of a religion towards its own believers.

1 Of course, as a matter of principle, religions are entitled, in exercising their collective religious freedom, to resist any interference of the state in their internal affairs. They enjoy autonomy. The internal organization of a church (whether democratic or not), the participation or otherwise of the laity in the organs of its administration, and so on — all this is its own affair. A church’s basic rules of operation must ultimately be accepted even by those of its members who do not agree with them and cannot play a part in influencing their formulation, but who nevertheless remain members (although they are free to leave, in accordance with freedom of religion), perhaps in order to avoid jeopardizing its unity.

The Greek state violates this autonomy, since most administrative matters of the Greek Orthodox church are regulated by law, ie by act of parliament. The church accepts this restriction of its autonomy, first, because as a matter of fact it usually dictates to the state the content of such regulations; and second, because in this way it gains the status of a state church, which increases its prestige and influence.

2 At this point I will leave aside this specifically Greek phenomenon and examine the general problem of whether there are limits to religion’s autonomy which
are allowable in a democratic state. First of all, we should accept that autonomy does not mean that the ultimate supervision (in the broadest sense of the term) of the state is called into question with respect to any social activity, and thus with respect to the activity of the church, including its internal relations. The kind of supervision at issue here consists in checking on the observance of legality and of public order — a general supervision that applies to every citizen and to every public or private organization, whether autonomous or not.

Of course, freedom of religious conscience, as an expression of convictions, must be unlimited. It cannot harm third parties or society, since it basically expresses inner states of the individual.\(^2\) But this is not the case with freedom of worship. The exercise of this freedom is a manifestation of religious beliefs by activities of any kind that are developed in society and can potentially affect third parties. Here the need for limits arises. So, according to the Greek constitution (Art. 13), which precisely distinguishes between freedom of religious conscience and freedom of worship, religious activity in exercising freedom of worship should not be contrary to public order and good morals.

The same also applies to the corresponding restrictions that are stipulated in the relevant articles of the international instruments which speak of limits necessary for ‘public safety, public order, health and morals’.\(^3\) This is a minimum of fundamental values, common to all — values that all members of society accept or should accept for there to be safe and peaceful social coexistence, with respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of other members of society.\(^4\)

So, for instance, the right to a hearing before ecclesiastical courts is covered by the protection of human rights. The democratic state may intervene to provide its protection. Within this range of interventions are to be found cases of cults which permit mass suicide, allow the use of violence or completely alienate their followers from their family or property (this excludes cases of monastic life).

Furthermore, religious freedom of all believers belonging to a religion means that they are entitled to change their religious views. Their religion is not entitled to bind them to its doctrines or to exert compulsion upon them even indirectly. Such indirect compulsion is manifested in many ways in Greece (and in a number of other countries which have an official or unofficial state or otherwise prevailing religion). Entry of a new citizen into the church takes place in infancy through baptism. New Christians are not asked, nor can they choose. And by the time they get older, they will have undergone indoctrination in Orthodox dogma as the only religious truth through religious instruction at school.
The amount of religious education which juvenile pupils receive in the state primary and secondary schools of Greece (as in many other countries) goes beyond the limits which a democratic state should tolerate. In 1976 the European Court of Human Rights held (in the Danish case of Kjeldsen, Busk, Madsen and Petersen) that the state is prohibited from pursuing indoctrination by means of the school subject of religious education or religious studies; instead, it must teach the subject in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. Otherwise it comes into conflict with Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Greek Council of State (ie the Supreme Administrative Court), reversing one of its earlier judgements, held that the ‘religious studies’ content – and not the indoctrination content – of the religious education subject, with emphasis on the history, the role and the principles of the prevailing religion in Greece, corresponds more fully to the mandates of the constitution and to the international human rights conventions.

In many other crucial matters the citizen is not offered any option other than a religious one. For example, the funeral of an individual in Greece can only (with extremely rare exceptions) be a religious one. The adherents of a religion, however, are also citizens of the state. And a democratic state must protect them from their religion, safeguarding their right to have other, civil, options and even to change their religious views. Religion can only stipulate religious consequences for such people.

The state, therefore, has a right to intervene to protect the rights of the members of a religion by providing them with alternative solutions, ensuring their right of choice, and reforming the educational system in a more liberal direction. The state must guarantee to its religious citizens respect for their religion, but at the same time it must imbue them with values which help the citizen to develop a free spirit, even if this reduces the influence of religion. The individual’s autonomous choice must be guaranteed, so that individuals can decide on their own world-views.

Another restriction concerning both the internal and the external relations of a religion arises in the case of a conflict between the free expression of religious beliefs and a more general social interest. A topical example is the issue of the Muslim **hijab** (headscarf). The question is whether it is justified, in situations where there is group activity of citizens and the group is subject to exceptional discipline (eg the army and primary and secondary schools), for the exercise of individual rights to be subject to exceptional restriction. Team spirit, it might be argued, and responsibility towards the group (a more particular manifestation of
social responsibility) require us to waive, for as long as we are in that group, certain idiosyncrasies, for example, of appearance and dress, which might promote divisive tendencies and the fragmentation of the group, and encourage an attitude of ‘us and them’. Such idiosyncrasies might hinder the development of shared human values in the conscience of schoolchildren, since attention is drawn to what is divisive, while those things that are common and unite all mankind are played down.

The issue of the Muslim head-covering has also been addressed by the European Court of Human Rights. A Muslim woman teacher in a public primary school in Geneva claimed the right to wear the Muslim hijab in the classroom. The court dismissed the appeal, explaining that such a head-covering constituted an obvious religious symbol which could result in proselytization among susceptible pupils. However, the main reason, in the view of the court, was that ‘it is difficult to reconcile the head-covering with the message of tolerance, respect for third parties and, above all, respect for the equality of the two genders and of non-discrimination which every teacher in a democracy should convey to the students.’ On the other hand, in a recent judgement, the German Federal Constitutional Court held that a teacher may wear the Muslim head-covering in class. This is because, as the court held, there is no relevant provision of law prohibiting this for those employed in education.

The reference to the Christian tradition in the preamble to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights

I shall conclude this paper with some observations on a problem which has divided opinion over the preamble to the Draft of the European Constitution (or Constitutional Treaty or Reform Treaty, as the more moderate version now being promoted is called).

1 As is well known, at its summit in Nice in December 2000 the European Union adopted the Charter of Fundamental Rights (without binding force), which is supposed to be incorporated into the constitutional text.

In the preamble to the Charter there is a reference to ‘the spiritual and moral heritage’ of the Union and the ‘indivisible and universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity’, as well as to the ‘principles of democracy and the rule of law’. The proposal that an explicit reference to the Christian values and traditions of Europe should be included in the preamble was not accepted. This has been seen in ecclesiastical circles, especially in the Orthodox and Catholic churches, as an expression of the ‘hostility of powerful forces’ towards Christianity – a hostility that views it as a religion that ‘distorts history’.
A reference to the Christian religion could have been expressed with various degrees of intensity. There are three possibilities:

(a) The most intense would be a confessional reference to religious faith such as the formulation of the Greek constitution’s preamble appealing to the Holy Trinity. Such a form, encompassing a direct or indirect confession of faith, would negate freedom of religious conscience. It would be contradictory for this fundamental freedom to coexist with any confession of faith.

(b) A second possibility would be to mention Christian principles and Christian teaching as generally accepted cultural values and ones on which the Charter of the European Union must be founded. At first sight, such a reference might seem to be unproblematic, at least when seen as one among several values expressed in the European Constitution. A closer examination of the issue, however, leads to a different view.

The provisions of the Charter and the Constitution contain principles which are generally recognized as a supreme expression of modern European legal culture. This general recognition applies, naturally, with particular force to the principles that are mentioned in the preamble (either of the Charter or of the Constitution). The principles set forth in the preamble are the most general values which no one calls into question — or at least which no one is entitled to call into question. They are, in other words, the values which represent and unite all European citizens. This is the decisive criterion according to which a principle should or should not receive mention in the preamble: is the value in question representative of and common to all European citizens and not to one section of them only?

Every European citizen must feel that he or she is represented by the values of the preamble, which must therefore be of general application. The same is also true in cases where acknowledgement of a value is an integral part of civil obligation for all citizens. This is the case, for example, when it comes to recognizing the principle of democracy and the principle of the rule of law: no one should be allowed to reject these principles. If, however, citizens are free not to adopt a value as their own, that value cannot be considered to be of general application. This is precisely the case with religious principles. They concern the religious citizen only, while those who are non-religious are entitled to disregard them.

It goes without saying that religious faith deserves the respect of all, even of those who are not religious. Religious and non-religious citizens, irrespective of their numbers, owe mutual respect for each other’s ideas. The religious element deserves honour and respect, but its values are not common to all. No part of the population, however large it is, is entitled to impose its ideas on the rest.
Religious convictions are worthy of respect and are protected by the freedom of religion, but they lack the characteristic of general acceptance.

It is therefore clear that religious principles, which are not common to all the citizens of Europe, cannot be treated as values that are common to the member states. If there are values in Christian teaching which people who are not religious or who do not subscribe to the same religious beliefs accept (and there certainly are many such values), then these values are not specific to Christianity and should not be linked to that specific religion. No one religion can claim exclusivity over values such as these (for example, solidarity), nor should they be connected to religion in general.

(c) Let us examine a third, less intense form of reference to Christianity—a reference to religious tradition as a factor which has affected the development of European history and has helped to shape its cultural heritage. That religion, and Christianity in particular, have had such an influence on Europe's cultural heritage—and a decisive one at that—cannot, of course, be disputed. A constitutional text, however, does not record history. It records values of general force, binding upon citizens. It does not narrate; it sets out rights and duties and determines what has to be done. It is a text of law, not of history. If it were, mention would also be made of the non-religious European traditions, such as the philosophical traditions, the traditions of the Enlightenment and of religious tolerance, and so on, which have played a much more decisive role in shaping today's values of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights.

3 Religious faith, then, should be respected and the historical contribution of Christianity to the development of European civilization is beyond dispute; nothing is being demeaned or devalued. But it is the task of the historian to record historical reality, and text of the European Constitution should contain no avowal, direct or indirect, of religious faith, nor should it elevate Christian (or other religious) teaching into a generally accepted value. To do so would eliminate freedom of religious conscience, which is a foundation stone of the European institutional edifice, and would offend against human rights and the principle of equality.

Conclusion
My conclusion is that the religious neutrality of the state—which can be guaranteed only by a secular state—is necessary in order that religions receive the respect that is their due from the democratic state, that their proper limits are recognized, and that pluralism is safeguarded. Of course secularism is not sufficient for democracy; there have been in the past, and there still are, authoritative and oppressive secular states. But secularism is necessary for democracy.
The secular nature of the state can be ensured only in a system of separation of state and church, a system which, however, retains scope for cooperation between the two sides. It should also be noted that separation does not necessarily mean privatization of religion. Religious institutions can be legal entities *sui generis*, belonging neither to the private nor to the public sector.

The system of separation does not exclude from society religion and religious traditions, as is sometimes claimed in an effort to denigrate the notion of separation. Religious feeling and metaphysical concerns will always exist in some part of the population. The problem is a problem not of religion but of religious freedom – a freedom that must be fully safeguarded and respected by all. Such freedom can exist, in legislation and in practice, if there is no discrimination; if a position of superiority is not given, directly or indirectly, to members of a society because they belong to one religious community and not to another; if there is mutual respect between religious majorities and minorities; if the state, truly neutral in this matter, treats its citizens on a basis of equality, irrespective of whether they believe in a religion and which religion it is; if the religious and non-religious ideas of each citizen and their application in practice remain a personal matter and do not imply any precedence in society; if no one is pestered or persecuted about whether and what he or she believes. In this ideal situation, religions will unite both people and peoples, not divide them, as unfortunately still happens today.

If religious beliefs affect the running of the state and lead to a deviation from the principles outlined above, then that society is deficient in protecting human rights and especially in protecting religious freedom. Democracy must take this freedom seriously.

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3 See, for example, Art. 9 § 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
4 Therefore this is not a matter of the prevailing ideas about good morals, a reading which would leave minority views about morality unprotected. There is an erroneous opinion, which some maintain in Greece, that the ‘foremost criterion for determination of good morals is undoubtedly the morality of the Orthodox Christian Church’ (expressed in the decision of the Court of First Instance of Athens, number 7380/1996, a decision subsequently overturned by the Appeal Court). The view that the prevailing social morality should be taken into account is dangerous and illiberal, since it would place a ban on the views of minorities or minority groups that have ideas different from those of the prevailing morality.
The treatment of religion in the age of globalization is often extremely reductive. Most studies of religion in relation to globalization focus on the phenomenon of fundamentalism. The current trend is to consider fundamentalism as the foremost religious reaction to globalization, sparked by the ‘moral relativism’ supposedly inherent in globalization. As Bauman has put it, ‘With the market-induced agony of solitude and choice as its only alternative, fundamentalism, religious or otherwise, can count on an ever-growing constituency.’ As a result, however, most contemporary approaches to religion ‘reduce religious activism to an anti-modern artefact of corrigeable secular errors, a dangerous and ignorant revolt against nonetheless profane injustice, suffering and objectification.’

There are of course alternative arguments, such as those of Bryan Turner. However, the focus is always on anomic modes of behaviour and the deregulations spawned by such an upheaval of our social and geographic space. In other words, fundamentalism has thus far been seen as the response of discontented groups to the processes of secularization, urbanization and de-traditionalization that we group under the broad umbrella of ‘modernization’. Islam is often cited as the example par excellence of such religious fundamentalism: in terms of its conservative or reactionary interpretation of the Islamic religious message, or, in extreme cases, its sectarian usage and recourse to violence. The Islamic quest for authenticity is thus said to signal the definitive decline of the western Enlightenment. The anti-consumerist ethics of contemporary Islamic ideology would thus be a reaction to the postmodernist pressure to consume, tempting certain fringes
of the Muslim world towards a self-isolation which takes the form of a strict fundamentalism informing all aspects of private, social and political life.

The question we must ask, then, is whether cultural globalization leaves open any possibilities for religion besides fundamentalism. The condition of Muslims in numerous cultural and national contexts, for example, shows that this unilateral approach fails to account for the emergence of a hybrid Islamic culture produced by the interaction between Islamic belief and various societies.4

Thus, the new spatio-temporal context of global culture need not be synonymous only with alienation; it can also indicate emancipation. Globalized culture is not bound to a particular place or era, but rather to an ill-matched mixture of components whose origins are everywhere and nowhere. As Arjun Appadurai emphasizes,5 this means that the imagination gains a certain amount of power and that the spectrum of possible lives expands accordingly. The social power exerted by the imagination manifests itself in two ways. The first of these, obvious and highly visible, is the resistance to a globalization that is considered a synonym of westernization, even among the Muslim world’s secularized elite.6 However, the social power of the imagination also makes itself known in another, less visible and less examined way. Phenomena such as the globalization of mysticism and Islam’s hybridization with various cultures point to alternative forms of encounter with modernity. Rather than considering the various forms of contemporary Islam as a mere reaction to globalization, then, these forms should be treated as an integral part of cultural globalization itself, including such forms in their reactionary or fundamentalist manifestations. That is, cultural globalization also includes forms of discourse and practice that have cultural references outside western language and society. Instead, these forms, which Stuart Hall calls ‘vernacular modernities’,7 borrow the language, the outlook and the mythology of particular groups. These groups or cultures may well be undergoing a process of modernization, but this process does not make use of the standard western narrative or ‘ideological landscape’,8 exemplified by such concepts as democracy, progress and human rights.

From this standpoint, neither religion in general nor Islam in particular can be considered merely as the causes of international conflict, nor as reactions to modernity. In this article, I would like to present certain overlooked forms that exist in the globalization of the Islamic message and in its encounter with the secular and democratic contexts of western Europe and America. In this regard, globalization does not refer solely to Islamic transnational doctrines or behaviours but also to European politics and international agendas – such as the war on terror – which affect Muslim communities locally and nationally. The main dimensions that influence this globalization of Islam in the western context are:
a plurality of discourses that create a meta-narrative about Islam; the dominant political and cultural framework specific to each nation in the west; the complex interplay between ethnicity and religion; the collusion between Islam and lower-class status; and the dynamics of deterritorialized Islamic movements such as Salafi or Jamaat Tabligh.

**Meta-narratives about Islam**

In order to study ways in which Muslims define and experience their identity, it is necessary to take into account the frameworks and structures that are imposed by dominant meta-narratives about Islam. Certainly, the importance of the way an individual is viewed by others and the importance of interaction in identity formation are well known. Muslims, more than any other religious group, are no longer in control of this interaction. A discourse about Islam is imposed upon them, a discourse that has spread across all levels of society from the micro-local to the international.

In the post-9/11 context, one of the elements shared by European and American Muslims has been the permanent collusion between Islam (perceived as an international political threat) and Muslims living in democratic nations, as shown by the hostile reactions that followed the attacks of 11 September 2001. This continual move to correlate the international situation with Muslims living in democratic nations reveals the permanency of an essentialist approach to Islam and Muslims that is rooted in several centuries of confrontation between the Muslim world and Europe. This discourse tends to play continuously on the confrontation between Islam and the west, and to describe Islam as a problem or obstacle on the path towards modernization, thus pushing Muslims to make adjustments, particularly since 11 September. Of course, no ethnic or religious group escapes stereotyping when it interacts with other groups. What seems specific to the case of Islam is: (1) investing the historical moment with meaning, from the micro-local to the international level; and (2) the strengthening of the stereotype by certain varieties of scholarship that have been built up around Islam.

The essentialist approach, as described and criticized by Edward Saïd in *Orientalism*, is still very much alive. It is remarkable to note that, since the 1980s, considering Islam as a risk factor in international relations has been legitimized by perceptions which have been deposited over centuries and would seem very familiar to any 18th-century gentleman or honnête homme. The same recurring attributes have been activated and reformulated by changes in international and domestic circumstances. It seems that the attacks of 11 September have reinforced the interpretation of Islam as an inherent risk factor.
Islamic identities are constructed at the heart of these contexts. There is an interstitial space between the act of representation and the actual presence of the community. It is within this gap that the specificity of Muslims appears. In order to look into this gap, we must ask of Islam: ‘who says what and where?’ In a situation where the relationship between dominating and dominated has so many consequences, three scenarios are possible: acceptance, avoidance or resistance.11 These three possible attitudes sublend the multiplicity of discourses and actions in the name of Islam, whether they are oriented towards Muslims or non-Muslims. Acceptance means that a dominant discourse is accepted and is accompanied by cultural amnesia and a definite will to assimilate. This trend is marginal among immigrant Muslims. Avoidance refers to behaviours or discourses that attempt to separate Muslims as much as possible from the non-Muslim environment by developing, for example, a sectarian usage of Islamic religious beliefs. Resistance means refusing the status given to Islam within dominant discourses and politics. Resistance need not be violent: it can involve, for example, taking a view opposite to that of dominant narratives and producing a voluminous literature that functions as an apology for Islam. As for practices, certain forms of resistance involve what Erving Goffman calls ‘contact terrorism’, which means using certain Islamic symbols linked to clothing or behaviour in order to play on other people’s fears and repulsion. Resistance can also take on more radical forms, such as being attracted to certain violent Islamic movements, as is demonstrated by the cases of Khaled Kelkal, a French citizen born in France to Algerian parents and involved in the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) battle, and of Richard Reid and John Leid, who joined the cause of al-Qa’ida. However, there also exist positive forms of resistance through which Muslims reappropriate for themselves elements of Islamic practice, based on personal commitment and faith while still ‘keeping up with the times’.

**The diversity of dominant political and cultural frameworks**

The ethnic diversity of European Muslims is often (and very rightly) underlined, but it is also important to take into account the diversity of national contexts. The status of religion within different societies, modes of acquiring nationality, the presence or absence of acknowledged multiculturalism and the specific characteristics of each European country have a direct influence on the dynamics of the formation of Muslim minorities and on the construction of identities. National and regional diversity is even greater in the United States and has a definite impact on the way Islamic identities are constructed.16 If, on the other hand, the culturally unifying elements are taken into account, then it becomes clear that one of the greatest differences between Europe and the United States resides
in the greater secularization of social relationships which, in the case of Europe, makes less valid any form of social or cultural action based on religious values, and which tends to invalidate certain relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims (such as inter-faith dialogue). In other words, if European Muslims do not act in certain ways, we should seek the reason for this among the range of opportunities made possible by the dominant elements of the European society in question. There are many examples of such identity formulation that are closely related to the characteristics of the dominant culture and political framework. It is thus that Britain’s multicultural policies have impeded the specifically religious dynamics of the Muslim minority, at least before the time of the Rushdie affair. In the same way, the introduction of religious instruction within state schools in Germany and Austria has motivated Muslims to create textbooks with the goal of transmitting the Islamic tradition in a way that is adapted to being a minority. In the United States, the significant racial rift, as well as multicultural ideology, is among the factors that have perpetuated the fact that Muslims identify with the multiple ethnic groups to which they belong. At the same time, there are two further factors that distinguish the American situation from the European: (1) the social recognition of religious organizations’ collective action; and (2) the cultural capital of American Muslims. These two factors have meant that, more rapidly than in the European context, a Muslim voice has begun to emerge beyond the paradigm of ethnic diversity: for example, through such organizations as the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Circle of North America, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, among others.

More specific to European Muslims is the importance of the link between the local and the national level within the dynamics of Muslims’ identification. For example, when a Muslim representative body has been established, as is the case in Belgium, negotiations between government bodies and Muslims still generally take place within local urban contexts. More generally, the visibility of a new generation of Muslim leaders is based on the validity of action originating at the local level, whereas in the United States the different levels of legitimacy (i.e., local and national) coexist without necessarily entering into competition with each other. In a similar vein, disputes at the local level feed national debate about Islam and vice versa, according to subtle dialectics between the two levels of visibility and Islamic activity, which are also part of the global debate about the political role of Islam. For example, the refusal of permission to build a mosque at Lodi in 2002 has become an element of public national debate in Italy and is used to justify hostility towards the construction of mosques all over Italy. Such debates have been fuelled by the international situation following 11 September.
Ethnicity versus religion

Whether in Europe or the United States, individuals’ identification with Islam appears in most cases to be an element of emerging ethnic communities. From Turkish immigrants in Germany to British Indians and Pakistanis, or even (to a certain extent) North Africans living in France, Islam is a vital element in the orchestration of ethnic identity within European societies, especially for the first generations of immigrants. The same process is at work among Muslim populations in America, for whom racial and ethnic rifts are even more marked.

Simultaneously over the last decade, more ‘trans-ethnic’ forms of the notion of Islamic religion have begun to be developed. For example, in Great Britain a new generation of Muslim leaders is starting to emerge, distant from the ethnicized and often isolationist Islam dominated by the early Indian and Pakistani immigrants. Since the Rushdie affair, these new leaders have opened a dialogue with the national government. This emergence of a new generation of leaders within associations and religious movements is a phenomenon that is spreading all over Europe and is part of the acculturation of Islamic references to a secularized context. This acculturation is realized through a contradictory double movement: the privatization of Islamic references and the increase in the collective practices of Islam (a point developed in the conclusion below).

A comparable process is at work among American Muslims with the appearance of a pan-Islamic discourse based on the refusal of cultures specific to the Muslim world and on the search for a ‘truer form of Islam’ whose values are consistent with those of American society. However, America and Europe are different because the difference in context means that the opportunities available are not the same. In the case of America, the pan-Islamic approach is often led by the immigrant elite, specialized in lobbying at the national level, who try to turn to their advantage the fact that religious values are held to be valid factors within public debate. Karen Leonard has termed this elite ‘professional Muslims’. Such a strategy does not mean that professional Muslims always put this pan-Islamic approach into practice in their daily identifications with Islam. On the other hand, the existence in certain European countries of third or even fourth generations of Muslims means that there are already well-established French, British and Belgian Islams, detached from the ethnic and national cultures of the first generations, whether by cultural references, language, behaviour, interactions with non-Muslims, and more.

In both the European and the American cases, we must keep in mind the gap between the reality of Islamic practice and theological or intellectual discourse. Daily, concrete practices reveal an acculturation to the secularized
context, a kind of ‘homemade’ Islam, and the taking into account of relativism. This is not always reflected in intellectual output, especially in Europe.

The global religious market
Globalization is a cultural process that encourages the development of non-territorialized cultures and communities based on race, gender, religion or even lifestyle. In this respect, Islam is a powerful element in identity formation, weaving together solidarity between various groups that are separated by the constraints of very different nations, countries and cultures.

Over the past two decades, two different globalized forms of Islam have attracted more and more followers in different parts of the Muslim world and beyond. The first refers to theological and political movements that emphasize the universal link to the Community of Believers (Ummah) such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jamaat Tabligh or the Wahabi doctrine. Today, the conditions for communication and the free movement of people and ideas make the Ummah all the more effective, as does the weakening of national ideologies. Unlike Protestantism, where the diversification of religious interpretations has led to the founding of separate communities and the proliferation of sects, the unity of the Ummah has been maintained, as an imagined and constantly renewed community based on an understanding of a shared fate.

It is important to make a distinction at this point between radicalism and fundamentalism. The desire to believe in an Islam based on a direct relationship to the divinely revealed is often the cause of decisions to join Salafi or Wahabi movements.\(^\text{17}\) Such movements are fundamentalist, as they refer back to the sources of the religion: the Qur’an and the Hadiths. This return to the source texts can be conservative or puritan, as is shown by the growing success of the Jamaat Tabligh and by the influence of such schools of thought as the one built around Sheikh al-Albani.\(^\text{18}\) However, this return to divinely revealed sources can also give rise to more open-minded interpretations, informed by social and political facts and issues of various European contexts.

The other form of global Islam refers to diasporic communities that develop solidarity beyond the boundaries of nations and culture and which are often labelled ‘transnational networks’. This form refers to non-governmental participants such as religious leaders, immigrants, entrepreneurs and intellectuals, who develop bonds and identities that transcend the borders of nation-states. Three principal traits are associated with transnational groups: (1) the awareness of an ethnic or cultural identity; (2) the existence of group organizations across different nations; and (3) the development of relations—whether monetary, political or even imaginary—with people in different countries.\(^\text{19}\)
The forms of virtual Islam are also parts of this globalized Islam. ‘Electronic religiosity’ is causing Islam to expand globally via the circulation of audio and videotapes, the broadcasting of independent television satellite shows, and (most significant of all) the creation of websites. In particular, bulletin boards, chat rooms and discussion forums on the internet are promoting alternative and even contradictory understandings of Islam, where only nationally based interpretations previously existed. In so doing, these media impact Islamic discourse and have broken the monopoly that traditional religious authorities had over sacred issues.

Thus, mobile dynamics establish the autonomy of social groups in the field of international relations. These social groups do not strive to assert themselves as collective participants in a transnational arena; instead, private interests push them into a role that was not intended for them. Family reunions, marriage arrangements and business activities, for example, are usually motivated by individual or family interests, but these activities often entail international mobility. Private decisions affect not only visiting rights, family groupings and monetary flows, but also religious, linguistic and cultural models, indirectly producing a collective result on the international scene.

A glimpse into the complex interactions of the local, national and international groupings characterizing Islam in Europe and the United States reveals some of the shortfalls in current scholarship on the subject. Because of the importance of transnational networks for western Muslim communities, any analysis that stresses Muslims’ obligations to the host society – to the exclusion of international influences – fails to provide a balanced view. The adaptation of Islam to the democratic context is a two-dimensional activity, involving identification both with global or transnational forms of Islam and with national cultures in the various host countries.

**Islam, ethnicity and poverty: ‘dangerous liaisons’**

The socioeconomic condition of European Muslims is fragile. The unemployment rate for immigrant Muslims is, as a general rule, higher than the national average: in the Netherlands, it stands at 31 per cent and 24 per cent for Moroccans and Turks, respectively. In 1995, the French National Institute for Demographic Studies showed that with education levels being equal, unemployment was twice as high for Muslim immigrant youth as for youth from non-Muslim immigrant backgrounds. This remains true over a decade later. The employment situation of Muslims in Britain is particularly critical. People originating from Bangladesh and Pakistan have a level of unemployment three times higher than that of the minority communities considered most disadvantaged. Within the inner cities,
almost half of all Bangladeshi men and women are unemployed. This marginality is passed on to the generation born and educated in Britain: in 1991, the unemployment rate for young people of Pakistani origin aged 16 to 24 was almost 36 per cent, whereas the unemployment rate for white Britons was less than 15 per cent. This disadvantage is not limited to jobs requiring only minimal qualifications, but also concerns higher-profile fields such as medicine and education.

This socioeconomic marginality is in most cases accompanied by residential segregation. Data from the British census shows that Pakistani immigrants tend to live in the most dilapidated or unhealthy kinds of housing. The ethnic concentration per residential area or per residence is also a factor that must be taken into consideration within the inner cities of Britain and Germany and in France's poorer suburbs.

Such a situation of relegation has had important consequences for Islam in Europe. The political temptation is to associate Islam with poverty and to consider (albeit without any open acknowledgment) that the former is the cause of the latter. On the Muslim side, there has been a tendency to use Islam in a defensive or reactive way. Ethnicity thus becomes a trap when collusion occurs between ethnicity, religion and poverty. This trap can in some situations lead to riots or a state of social unrest, as is recurrently the case in Britain. A team of researchers on community cohesion, established under the auspices of the Home Office, led an inquiry in the London district of Southall and in the towns of Oldham, Burnley, Birmingham and Leicester, where riots broke out in the spring of 2001. The results, published on 11 December 2001, are alarming. They describe whole groups withdrawn from society, experiencing an immense feeling of frustration, and confronted by poverty and a lack of equal opportunities. ‘You are the only white person I shall meet today,’ said one of the people of Pakistani origin who was interviewed for the report. Whether in the domain of housing, employment, education or social services, the report describes a Britain that is segregated according to race and religion, both factors being closely related. The predominant anti-Muslim racism is responded to by withdrawal and a reactive use of Islam. There is a lack of communication between ethnic groups and local political milieus, in particular with respect to the delicate questions of culture, race and religion. The British situation is reminiscent of that of black American Muslims. Consequently, the use of Islam becomes an element that accentuates separatism.

Although the same levels of segregation are not found on the European continent, the ethnic perception of social differences is also very much present within the urban spaces of France, Germany and the Netherlands. The riots of late 2005 in the outskirts of Paris and Lyon are a case in point. In France, the poorest populations (a majority of Muslims) have become concentrated in the suburbs.
Ethnicity generally corresponds to a way of defining oneself or of being defined by others, whether as Arabic, North African or Muslim. It is thus based on factors that allow differentiation (such as facial features or religion) without having to be systematically realized by culturally specific behaviour. The ‘Muslim’ identity plays this essentializing role for disenfranchized French youth independently of its actual relationship to Islam. For example, the 2005 rioters were perceived as ‘Muslims’ even though they neither rioted in the name of Islam nor considered Islam an important element of their own social identity.

The correlation between social problems and Islam can be invoked as one of the reasons for the political success of movements on the extreme right, not only in France (witness the National Front’s second-place finish in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections), but also in Belgium, Austria and even the Netherlands, where similar thematics and parties can be observed. Indeed, the collusion between Islam and poverty accentuates the validity of the hypothesis about the incompatibility between cultures and about the threat constituted by the settling of Muslims in the west.

One of the consequences of 11 September 2001 has been the accentuation of stigma via the correlation of Islam, the poor suburbs and terrorism. The terrorist attack has indeed hardened the discourses on immigration (in Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal) and on security. It is still too early to measure the effects of related legislation on the religious behaviour of Muslims in Europe, but it is very likely that the consequences will involve an increase in the reactive and defensive uses of Islam. In the United States, within the post-9/11 context, a new and unprecedented form of racialization of Muslims has emerged. Muslims are linked to counter-terrorism policies, and immigrants and people of immigrant origin are targeted.

Conclusion: the challenge of theological revival

Regarding the religious practices of Islam, we might speak in terms of the Europeanization and Americanization of Islam, two phenomena that follow parallel paths. We have already noted that ethnicity plays a more important role than the religious in the definition of Islamic identities. However, there also exists a scenario according to which the relationship to Islam takes precedence over the relationship to the ethnic group.

The dominant mode, found within European Muslim populations, is an attempt to reconcile a maximum amount of individual freedom with the belief in a more or less well-defined form of transcendence, which can be lived according to the constraints of one’s own era (via, at a minimum, the observance of key rites of passage such as circumcision, marriage and burial). People who follow such
a mode will define themselves as ‘non-practising believers’. Many such believers, who do not really practise, do not reject the ethnic Islam inherited from their parents, which provides them with a festive and traditional relationship to Islam. Such people generally have little knowledge of the Islamic tradition and of the rituals that it prescribes. Most will not have received any instruction in the Qur’an, whether within or beyond the family. In such a context, Islam means faithfulness to one’s group of origin and implies no real feelings of belief or piety. This kind of loose identification with Islam is present in both the middle and the upper social classes.

More generally, for those who defend Islam as a form of identity, the term ‘Islam’ is associated with ritual-like moments in family life – notably when special feast days are celebrated (for example, Aïd-El-Kebir) – which imply a break in the surrounding space and time. Furthermore, the word is also associated with the respect due to parental beliefs and practices without implying the same conformism among those who show this respect. Islam is thus conceived of as a cultural heritage which is inscribed within family traditions and behaviours and which serves as the link to the family’s country or area of origin. It works chiefly as a ‘marker’ that shows lines of filiation and is thus more cultural than religious.

A second group, a minority by far, is defined on the other hand by a strict demand for the respect of Islamic prescriptions. Religion in this case is invested as orthopraxis – that is, as concern for respecting religious prescriptions to the letter and embodying them in one’s daily life. Identification with Islam offers the individual direct access to daily reality and provides a framework so that he or she can structure life: the world can be sectioned off into the ‘pure’ and the ‘impure’; all acts can be categorized according to the degree to which they are lawful or unlawful. All available evidence describes this behavioural conformity as a function of Islamic prescriptions (whether on the topic of food, clothing or ritual acts).

In this second group, Muslims are involved in an individual search that takes the form of learning classical Arabic (which most Muslim children in the west do not understand). They begin active investigation of the divinely revealed texts and read general works on the founding and tradition of Islam (for the most part in French translations). The chief European-language books that are available in almost all bookstores offer descriptions of the pillars of Islam or of the prescriptions in different domains (social, economic, cultural, educational). Others are biographies of the Prophet, tell of the exemplary lives of certain famous Companions, discuss the status of women, or are concerned with the relationship between Islam and science.

The Europeanization of Islam is thus built upon a paradox. The democratic context promotes a diversification of religious practices marked with the
seal of individualization and secularization. However, given the lack of religious authorities and of sufficient places for people to learn about Islam, the Islam that is studied is still, in the majority of cases, dominated by the conservative trends of the Muslim world. Europe has become a chosen land for fundamentalist movements dominated by Saudi Wahabism and other trends grouped together as Salafist. Their establishment can be explained by the fact that they are capable of quickly supplying a basic education in Islam to those people who lack not only real knowledge of the subject, but also the means to get access to such knowledge. The education that is dispensed is therefore conservative and tends to promote withdrawal and a rejection of the non-Muslim environment, especially among the more fragile layers of Muslim youth. When collusion occurs between Islam and marginality, the trend is to identify oneself with Islam in reaction to the hostility or underrating of one’s surroundings. Of course, destructive use of the Islamic message does exist, as is shown by the involvement of young European Muslims with al-Qa’ida and with the attacks of 11 September in the United States. We must investigate the meaning of these commitments to a kind of theology of hatred which is not always limited to the poorest members of society and which is more specifically a European phenomenon. Explanations that involve nihilism or humiliation are insufficient. 27

Alongside this radical and destructive trend, there is another unprecedented and opposite conception of Islam being formed: an Islam that is a source of morality and that can educate, which extols the logic of individual choice (ie free will), and which breaks away from the ethnicization of religion. European and American Muslims put forward an individual logic for decision and choice-making that fits well with the increasing subjectivization of religious affiliation. It is not enough to believe and to practise one’s religion because one was born into a given tradition or belief system. It is necessary, rather, to express one’s individuality by making a choice to be a practising believer and to give a personal meaning to the divinely revealed message. This results in the individual distancing himself or herself from the family, a move justified by the fact that the parents do not seem to understand what ‘real’ Islam is, and because they have no ‘true knowledge’ and act only under the influence of customs and superstitions linked to their culture. This search for a universal Islam, well informed and governed by individual logic, highlights the unprecedented experience of reconstruction within the European context of a religious tradition. It is important to underline at the same time the extreme rigour of this process, which can demand difficult ruptures with the family milieu, as well as the adaptation of elements of the Muslim tradition to the context of the Muslim community’s minority status.
These modes of identification with the Islamic tradition are also very visible (in different ways) within American society. However, we can say that, given the greater importance of the elite within American society, intellectual output is also more substantial there than in Europe. There is, in particular, one current that is critical of the emerging Islamic tradition. It attempts, taking a hermeneutic point of view, to produce interpretations that call into question the traditional approaches on a certain number of points: relationships with non-Muslims, relationships with secularism and in particular the status of women. The status of women is a key element in the divergence between modernist and conservative approaches. With one or two exceptions,28 the supporters of modernism were or are to be found in the United States (e.g., Khaled Abou El Fadl, Farid Esack, Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud, among others).29

Because of the increasing deterritorialization of religious references, a gulf is opening up between fundamentalists and modernists regarding the interpretation of the Islamic tradition,30 an interpretation that will be called upon to play a decisive role in the future structuring of the Islamic landscape, not only in Europe but also in America. One fundamental dimension of the differentiation of identifications with Islam will concern the changing perspective on the status of the Islamic tradition and the acceptance of relativism linked to the democratic and secular context.

6 One of the most disconcerting aspects of the discourse on globalization coming from the Muslim world is that it generally takes a completely hostile view of globalization, perceiving it as a kind of westernization with an imperialist agenda—the contemporary equivalent of European colonialism. This idea is shared by almost all Muslim intellectuals, both Islamist and secular. See, for example, the comparable anti-globalization positions of the secular Lebanese journalist and intellectual Abbas Beydoun and the Islamist Egyptian academic Hassan Hanafi (www.quantara.de).
8 Appadurai, op cit (note 5 above).
9 What we profess to know about Islam is to a large extent the product of a vision constructed by centuries of discord, as much political as religious. The mobile and paradoxical reality of Muslims tends to disappear under the weight of perceptions that have been progressively deposited over the centuries. These perceptions are constructed out of specific historical moments and encounters which permanently crystallize different, even contradictory, sets of images such as violence, heresy and debauchery, or sensuality, brutality and cruelty. Many such perceptions descend from the tradition of orientalism. While the more conspicuous forms of orientalism have been profoundly modified by sociology, anthropology and political science, its more latent forms (the result of amassed representations) still continue to operate. Edward Said is thus correct in asserting that the orient and Islam only exist as topoi, a collection
of references, and a sum of characteristics linked to the imagination. Within such an interpretation, supported by actual quotes from religious texts, Islam is always presented as a closed system, a prototype for traditional closed societies, thus denying Muslims and Islamic society any capacity for change. Such interpretations are, of course, clearly motivated in part by the same ideology that has sought to justify, since the 19th century, attempts at dominating these parts of the world.


13 See, for example, the abundant literature on Arab Muslims in Detroit.


17 Historically the Muslim Brothers, founded in 1928, or the Wahabi movement, born at the founding of the Saudi monarchy, are part of the Salafist current. The institutional and political evolutions of these two trends have made the term ‘Salafist’ a synonym for conservatism, or even for reactionary stances, notably within the context of Europe. It should be noted that Wahabism is hostile to all forms of intellectualism, religious establishment and even mysticism. However, this is not true of all trends based on a return to the word of the religious texts. Not all Muslim Brothers, for example, were originally anti-modern or anti-intellectual.

18 A late specialist in Hadiths and a sheikh at the University of Medina.

19 Diaspora is one form of deterrioralized identities which links dispersed people with their country of origin. In the case of Muslims, even if their bond with their country of origin is strong, it is challenged by a broader solidarity with the Muslim world at large. To understand how the term ‘diaspora’ is now used beyond its historical origin to designate transnational identities of immigrants, see Sheffer, Gabi, 1996. ‘Whither the study of ethnic diasporas? Some theoretical, definitional, analytical and comparative considerations’. In Prévélakis, George (ed), The Networks of Diasporas, Paris: L’Harmattan, pp 37–46; and Cohen, Robin, 1997. Global Diasporas: An introduction, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

20 Mandaville, Peter, 2000. ‘Information Technology and the changing boundaries of European Islam’, in Dassetto, Felice (ed), Paroles d’Islam: Individus, sociétés et discours dans l’islam européen contemporain, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, pp 281–97. It would be misleading, however, to consider online Islam as an exclusive indicator of a new democratic public space without paying attention to specific social changes within specific Muslim contexts. In other words, to assess accurately what Muslim websites are accomplishing in terms of knowledge, perspective and affiliation, sociologists must investigate how electronic religiosity is resonating with significant social changes in general.


23 In March 2002, during parliamentary elections, an openly xenophobic and anti-Islamic party emerged, led by Pim Fortuyn. To general surprise, this party won a majority of votes at Rotterdam. Fortuyn was murdered in mysterious circumstances on 6 May 2002. Despite his death, his party attained second place during the parliamentary elections of 15 May 2002, behind the Christian Democrat party, with 26 out of 150 seats in parliament.

24 The anti-terrorist law signed by George W Bush on 26 October 2001 increased government ability to supervise and control citizens (including their family members and people who are not yet citizens). It was followed by comparable initiatives in Europe. In Britain a law on anti-terrorism, crime and security issues
was passed on 14 December 2001, giving rise to debate on the restriction of public freedom; it, too, increased the power of the police in matters of collecting information and watching citizens. In Germany two laws were voted on, the first on 8 December 2001, the second on 20 December 2001. They increased not only the funds available to police forces, but also their powers of investigation. Moreover, these new laws included plans to place armed security agents in German planes and to review the law according to which religious organizations are accorded certain privileges because they are seen as public corporations. The debate on security has been subverted by the events of 11 September 2001 and by taking counterterrorist measures into account, as is shown by the French law promulgated on 15 November 2001. This law is concerned with security issues in daily life, though a number of clauses connected with the battle against terrorism were introduced during debate at the National Assembly after 11 September, amalgamating interior security, crime and terrorism and thus contributing to an increase in the alienation of young people living in the poor suburbs. In particular, two measures cited by the law (the first connected with the need for quiet behaviour in the entrance halls to large apartment buildings, the second concerning people who ‘regularly’ do not purchase a valid ticket when using public transport) do not seem to have any relationship with more important crime issues or terrorism. One of the paradoxes of 9/11 is that in certain European countries, such as France, international events have not, for the first time, affected the dynamics of Islam’s recognition as a social fact. The way that Islam has established itself at the local level is probably the reason for this. An astonishing and paradoxical dissociation has occurred between the ‘Muslim neighbour’ (whose religion one might be aware of but does not really acknowledge) and ‘Islam’, a term still unknown and often carrying a range of negative images. See Cesari, Jocelyne, 2001. ‘Islam de l’extérieur, musulmans de l’intérieur: deux visions après le 11 septembre’, in Cultures et Conflits 44 (winter 2001): 97–115. See also Cesari, Jocelyne and Sean McLaughlin (eds), 2005. European Muslims and the Secular State, Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

See http://www.euro‑islam.info.


Tariq Ramadan is one such exception. See Ramadan, Tariq, 1999. To be a European Muslim, Leicester: Islamic Foundation.


Fundamentalists (as represented, for example, by Wahabism or the Tabligh movement) recommend a return to the divinely revealed text in order to apply the principles of the Qur’an and the Sunnah in daily life, and refuse any kind of adaptation of Islamic principles to the modern world and its culture. Several very diverse currents exist, ranging from the rejection of politics (eg Tabligh) to radicalization (eg the Taliban and al-Qa’ida). On the other hand, there is a current of thought that recommends a return to the divinely revealed text but which does not reject contemporary surroundings or modernity. This latter current is often referred to as reformist, but given its explicit objective of returning to the religious texts in order to find solutions to contemporary political and social problems, as well as its explicit reflection on the philosophical principles of modernity, I prefer the term ‘modernist’. Between the founding figures of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan El Banna, Mohamed Iqbal and Ali Shariati or Rached Ghannouchi, there are obviously significant differences. (This form of modernism should not be confused with the first vintage of modernists, between the two world wars. In the Muslim world, at that point very much under colonial denomination, this group recommended that Islamic principles be abandoned in favour of a form of modernization without God, following the western model.)
Section III
Youth perspectives
Publicizing, secularizing and integrating Islam in Europe

The seminar on ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ organized by the Network of European Foundations (NEF) in May 2007 brought together around 30 young Europeans from different countries and all major faith communities, as well as some who do not belong to any religion. Among the participants in the debate there were, amongst others, young researchers, representatives of the faith-based and secular NGOs, and representatives of the media.

The seminar was divided into three sessions, which dealt with secularism, integration of Islam into European societies, and the role of media and education. Although the relationship of all European religions with democracy was the subject of the debate, most of the discussions revolved around Islam and democracy in Europe. In contrast to the wider public debates on such topics, in which the voices of followers of Islam are relatively rarely heard, the NEF ensured that the insiders’ perspective was also taken into account. Almost one in four participants in the seminar was a Muslim or had Muslim origins. These young Muslim researchers and representatives of the Muslim and non-Muslim NGOs and media were part of the emerging new Muslim elites that have been playing an increasingly important role in the public debates about Islam in Europe.

In this paper I touch upon three major issues which were discussed during the sessions and which I consider to be of particular importance. I briefly elaborate on publicizing, secularizing and integrating Islam in contemporary Europe.
Publicizing Islam

Islam in Europe receives public attention mainly as a result of the exceptional cases. These exceptional cases include all kinds of controversies around Islam and Muslims, from the headscarves and Satanic Verses affairs to the more recent ones surrounding Danish cartoons and the pope’s speech in Regensburg. These affairs take on the form of ‘hermeneutical incidents’,1 which do not only have short-term consequences, as examples of the ‘clash of civilization’, but also longer-lasting ones, as they become fixed points of reference in the subsequent interpretations of Muslims and Islam. Thus these ‘media events’, as Dayan and Katz rightly point out,2 become, in the collective memory, the equivalent of historical monuments: a sort of rhetorical instrument through which the social memory is constructed. The fact that this memory is usually made up of recollections of conflicts and clashes and in general of extraordinary events does not prevent most people from applying it to ‘ordinary’ Muslims and ‘non-sensational’ Islam – with predictable consequences.

Why is Islam publicized mainly through exceptional cases? I believe this is, in most cases, not deliberate but the consequence of a number of structural factors related to reporters and to the methods they apply to news-gathering.3 First of all, the negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims is a result of prejudices reporters hold as members of a particular society. Communications theory suggests that leaders of public opinion are inclined to present the news in such a way that it corresponds to their own views and to the norms and values of the society to which they belong. In practice, it means, for instance, that reporters tend not to bother to seek a second opinion on a certain subject, mainly because the information gathered and the negative statements made by significant individuals largely coincide with their own perceptions of the groups concerned.4 This is in line with the point made by Vincent Geisser, who observed that the essence of media Islamophobia does not lie in demonization of Muslims, since no professional journalist tries a priori to paint a negative image of Islam and its believers, but in a tendency to standardize and simplify opinions in such a way that they fit in with existing ideas and impressions.5 As Geisser points out, the mass media has not been creating a new Islamophobia, but rather strengthening and re-creating the existing one by feeding on long-standing popular views on Islam and Islamism.

The second major structural shortcoming of the media that results in the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the mainstream press and on radio, television and websites is a matter of the so-called ‘news value’ of a story – that is, the extent to which a particular report departs from what is currently ‘normal’ in society. In order to give a higher news value to stories and hence to grab the attention of readers, viewers and listeners, journalists are inclined to emphasize
the differences between Islam and Muslims, on the one hand, and Christianity and western society on the other. For instance, a report arguing that female circumcision practised in (some) Muslim societies is incompatible with western views on the equality of men and women has higher news value than one which states that such a practice is forbidden by law in most Muslim countries. Yet other ways of increasing news value are, for instance, to attach a particularly strong ‘social weight’ to a story, or even more commonly, to exaggerate the scale of the phenomenon reported.

A solution to the problem of media coverage of Islam being conducted through exceptional cases would of course be to switch to ordinary cases. For the reasons outlined above, this task is clearly not straightforward. However, as is demonstrated by the Guardian web podcasting programme Islamophonic, for example, and the Belgian Radio programme Et Dieu dans tout ça (‘And God in all this’), covering ‘ordinary’ Islam can be done and can attract substantial audiences.

Secularizing Islam

Another hotly debated issue during the seminar in Brussels was secularization. Secularism is a tricky term. Often viewed as antithetical to religion, it is in fact wholly dependent on it, since without the idea of religion the concept of secularism could not exist. Most of the participants in the youth debate agreed that understanding it in the light of a clear-cut distinction between private and public is often not workable either, and that it is much better to conceive it as a complex balance between different demands, expectations and rights that require constant renegotiation.

Secularism, as Talal Asad reminds us, does not simply insist that religious practice and belief be confined to the space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of a ‘free-thinking’ citizen. Rather, secularism builds on a particular conception of the world and of the problems generated by that world (eg the need to control mutually hostile sects); it encourages religious faith in the private sphere and tolerates religious organizations in public spheres, but it is highly critical of public bodies that are organized according to religious principles (eg religious political parties). Thus, if religion is deprivatized—that is, refuses to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity and secularization have reserved for it—and enters the public sphere, it can only effectively do so on terms acceptable to secular mores. In practice, it means that if religious spokespersons wish to be listened to and not just heard, they have to act as secular politicians do in a liberal democracy. That Muslim spokespersons in Britain have been rapidly learning these skills is clear from a comparison of the
Reactions of British Muslims to the publication of Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and to the decision of the British government to join the ‘coalition of the willing’ in invading Iraq. In the former case, they were almost completely isolated from members of society at large in their angry demonstrations, in which Rushdie’s books were burnt and calls were made in broken English for the author’s death. In the latter case, British Muslims formed an important part of the wider anti-war movement which brought more than one million people to the streets of London in February 2003. The alliances they have built over the years have enabled them not only to successfully lobby the government (in conjunction with other faith groups) for religious questions to be included in the 2001 census, but also to persuade the major British newspapers not to republish the images of the Prophet Mohammed during the Danish cartoon affair.

An important factor that lies behind this change in the way British Muslims have been deprivatizing Islam is the transition from the ‘transplanted’ to the ‘implanted’ Islam (to use the terms of Felice Dassetto) or from Islam as a religion of immigrants to Islam as a religion of European-born or ‘European-socialized’ citizens. The Islam that was brought to western Europe by immigrants from almost all over the Muslim world is a faith that is very closely linked with the allochthons’ ethnicity and private sphere of life and possesses many features of a so-called ‘low Islam’. The faith of their children, who were born or spent their formative years in Europe, is, on the other hand, characterized by weakening ties with the ethnic background of their parents. It is also increasingly moving into the public sphere and acquiring a growing number of features of a ‘high Islam’.

During the debate on secularism it was also stressed that being deeply religious and at the same time being a good and loyal citizen is not contradictory, as some versions of secularism may imply. It is worth recalling that religion (including Islam) contributes to the normative dimension of citizenship, not only by inspiring many emancipatory movements, such as those against slavery and racism, but also by nurturing sensibilities that give public life philosophical and spiritual depth. In spite of the increasing secularization of western societies, *civisme* – the ensemble of moral qualities considered necessary for the character of the ‘good citizen’ – remains largely grounded in religious ethics. Thus, religions are still important sources of moral and social values. As Parekh points out, they continue to have much of great relevance to say about the good life, personal responsibility, family values, social justice, global redistribution of resources, the environment, and other issues that dominate the contemporary public agenda. On the other hand, secularism, which (among other things) keeps religious passions at bay, avoids social authoritarianism and discourages moral absolutism, may also nurture moral positivism and political cynicism, undermine the whole-
ness of people’s lives, and homogenize public discourse. Furthermore, secularism, in contrast to religion, is not able to mobilize people’s moral and spiritual energies. Today, as José Casanova aptly points out, these energies are most commonly being mobilized in three kinds of action: in defence of traditional life styles against state and market penetration; in defence of traditional moral norms against the absolutist claims of states and markets to function according to their own intrinsic functionalist norms; and, last, in defence of the principle of ‘common good’ against individualist modern liberal theories that would reduce the common good to the aggregated sum of individualist rational choices.

**Integrating Islam**

The processes of integration of Muslim immigrant populations into wider European societies have been advancing at different speeds in different countries. Generally the Muslim populations in countries such as (for example) France, Great Britain and the Netherlands, where Muslim immigrants started to settle shortly after World War II, have been better integrated than the Muslim populations in countries such as (for example) Spain and Italy, where they arrived more recently.

There are also significant differences in the progress of various types of integration. Structural integration, which is measured by variables such as the rate of naturalization of immigrants, has progressed very well in France and Great Britain, for example, but rather slowly in Germany, where the citizenship law was only recently modified to allow Muslims of Turkish and other descent to become German citizens. Social integration, which is measured by the rates of mixed marriages, has been quite well advanced in France, but insignificant in Great Britain, where marriages of Muslims with partners from outside their ethnic and religious communities are very rare and arranged marriages (often between cousins) are the rule. Cultural integration, which is gauged by the extent to which the culture of the allochthonous community penetrates the wider society and vice versa, has produced bhangra music and chicken tikka massala in Britain, for example, and introduced Moroccan-style mint tea to pub menus in Brussels. Finally, the identity dimension of integration encapsulates a person’s subjective feelings and definitions of belonging to an ethnic or national community. In 1995 in Germany, for example, only 21 per cent of second-generation Turks identified themselves as Germans. This, however, should not be surprising in view of the strict law on citizenship in force at the time, which excluded most German-born Turks.

The participants in the seminar tended to agree that integrating Muslims into European societies would never be fully successful without at least partial integration of Islam into the core of the European identity. In other words, if
European Muslims are supposed to embrace the European project and strongly identify with Europe, there has to be some room in the European identity for them as followers of Islam, as there is already for followers of (say) Judaism. As things stand, there is very little space for expressions of Muslimness within the framework of a European identity that has been to a large extent developed in opposition to Islam.19 While Judaism has been recognized as one of the pillars of the European identity, Islam has been widely viewed as its major adversary – as the ‘other’ which has only had a negative impact on the birth of European civilization. This essentialist perception of European history erases not only eight centuries of Muslim rule in Spain and its rich heritage, still visible today in places like Grenada and Cordoba, but also the dynamic cultural, economic, technological and intellectual exchanges between the Muslim European powers (Muslim Spain and Sicily and Ottoman southern Europe) and their Christian counterparts. The redefinition of the ‘other’ is crucial not only with a view to the fuller integration of around 15 million Muslims into western European societies, but even more so in view of the possible future EU membership of 70 million-strong Muslim Turkey.

The question whether European societies are ready for such redefinition remains open, while the troubled EU negotiations with Turkey are the clearest sign of hesitation on the part of the political elites. A first step towards the redefinition of the Muslim ‘other’ will be revision of the way Muslims and Islam are portrayed in European schoolbooks. Some countries, partly as a result of lobbying by their new home-grown Muslim elites, have already started to do so. In other countries, such as Poland, for example, where the Muslim population is very small and weak, many schoolbooks still promote stereotypical images of Muslims and their religion.20

Conclusions
Today it is impossible to predict what the future character of Islam in Europe will be. However, it is certain that it will largely depend on progress in the aforementioned processes of incorporation and secularization of European Muslims. The way Islam is publicized will also have a significant impact on the image of the future European Islam. The key role in all these processes will be played by emerging new Muslim elites that manage to turn the stigma associated with their religion into a source of empowerment. These young and vocal European Muslims who have taken part in the NEF seminar on ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ will need, however, the assistance of their non-Muslim compatriots in order to redefine their positions in their societies and to reconstruct the image of their religion. In other words, the character of the future European Islam will depend largely on both Muslim and non-Muslim Europeans.
PUBLICIZING, SECULARIZING AND INTEGRATING ISLAM IN EUROPE


3 For more information on some of the issues associated with media portrayal of Islam, see Said, E, 1981. Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world, New York: Vintage.


6 Shadid and van Koningsveld, op cit (note 4 above), p 190.

7 More information on the programme can be found at http://www.guardian.co.uk/islamophonic.

8 More information on the programme can be found at http://old.rtbf.be/rtbf_2000/bin/view_something.cgi?id=0178638_sac.


13 Here it should be recalled that the presence of Islam in this part of the continent is not a completely new phenomenon, as Muslims ruled Sicily (827–1091) and the Iberian Peninsula (711–1492) and have, with interruptions, lived in and travelled throughout the geographical region practically since the beginning of historical Islam itself. See, for example, Lapidus, I M, 1988. History of Islamic Societies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 378–89; and Fletcher, R, 1998. Moorish Spain, London: Phoenix Giant.


18 For an overview of the political and philosophical positions with reference to the role of religion in the public sphere, see, for example, Loobuyck, P, 2007. ‘The position of religious arguments in political decision-making: the discussion in contemporary political philosophy’, paper presented at ‘Religion in the Post-secular Age: Public or Private?’, Budapest, 1 and 2 February 2007.


Today’s debate on religion and secularism in Europe is preoccupied with the question of how to integrate Islam and Muslim communities into European societies without risking the further disenfranchisement and alienation of its Muslim minorities.

However, before analysing this question, it is worth recapitulating the evolution of secularism in order to understand its role for both European and Middle Eastern countries. The separation of church and state can be traced back to the Hellenic tradition where life was classified into reason (logos) and belief (mythos). These categories were later integrated and thought of as ‘profane’ and ‘divine’ in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the era of the Renaissance, which was stimulated by the discovery of ancient Greek philosophical texts based on translations from Muslim philosophers, it was the concept of individualization that clashed with the dogmatism and authoritarianism of the Christian church. In the subsequent era of the Enlightenment, rationality became a major driving force in the philosophical, cultural and political discourse of European societies.

Eventually, in the context of confessional territorialization and technological progress, the emergence of the modern nation-state increasingly challenged the traditional role of church and religion in Europe. The power struggle between church and state was brought to an end by their separation and by the precedence of rationality and modernity over religion and tradition – at least in the political arena. Today, European countries incorporate the concept of secularism in their democratic institutions and uphold the secular identity of their societies. Based on its particular historical experience, each European country puts
a different emphasis on the role of secularism. While in France the concept of *laïcité* apparently plays a pre-eminent role in the conception of French republicanism, Germany's democratic, plural and liberal constitution (*Grundgesetz*) authorizes Protestant and Catholic churches to raise taxes. In Britain, the monarch, as head of state de facto and de jure, has representative power only but remains at the same time the head of the Anglican church.

The idea of secularism also served as one of the main driving forces in the modern political history of the Middle East, eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In fact, however, the concept of secularization is not inherently opposed to any particular religion, tradition or geographical region. For more than a hundred years, the idea of secularization represented an important element in the history of nation-building in the Middle East. In particular, the anti-colonial and nationalist independence movements in various countries in the Middle East and North Africa aimed to establish secular states. As part of the modernization process, secularization was in many cases forcibly implemented, leading to numerous conflicts between the traditional population and religious movements on one side and the government on the other.

For instance, in the aftermath of the creation of the Turkish republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal, the founder of Turkey, elevated the concept of *laïlik* (secularism) to a central position in his state ideology, imposing it on the multi-ethnic and religious population in all areas of society: politics, culture, media and academia. In Turkey, the repercussions of secularization are still reflected in the current problems between the government’s ruling party (AKP) and the secular military elite and sensationalist as well as nationalist media. Despite the fact that the Turkish people gave the AKP a strong mandate in the parliamentary elections of 2007 (47 per cent), the military and the biggest opposition party (CHP) remain unconvinced and critical. This old guard of generals and party officials strongly believes that the current government, formed by a religious-conservative party, threatens the secular character and the very identity of the Kemalist state.

Today, the concept of secularism in Europe has developed in meaning and increasingly infuses the concept of democratic pluralism. At the same time, it remains problematic to justify the intervention of the state in certain religious expressions, rituals and procedures. The ban on head-scarves in French schools was an example of the controversial intervention of the state in the religious sphere, as well as in the rights of individuals and in the religious part of the Muslim community. It is difficult to speak of equality, tolerance and pluralism if the definition of religious identity is determined by the strict understanding imposed by the secular state. The secular, democratic and pluralist state has to be capable of absorbing the variety and diversity of its minorities. Otherwise, by interfering
in the privacy of its religious minorities, the state fails to maintain its position of neutrality. It is especially disturbing when state intervention fluctuates according to current political trends: such arbitrary treatment of minorities is both anti-democratic and anti-secular.

The role of religious communities and organizations has to be defined within the democratic and pluralist parameters of every European state. In order to ensure state neutrality within the concept of a democratic, pluralist and secular society, all religious groups must have the right to enjoy equal rights and duties.

With regard to Muslim organizations that wish to establish Islamic teaching courses in Muslim state schools, the government must have the right to assess the situation on the ground. In partnership with Muslim communities, it should give Muslims the right to teach religion in accordance with their religious principles and on the basis of a pluralist and democratic understanding. Such an accommodation runs counter neither to the idea of secularism nor to the religious principles of practising Muslim communities. It is the natural consequence of modern democracies that are composed of a diverse social fabric.

Secularism remains central to understanding the identity of western societies as well as Middle Eastern ones. The relationship between religion and politics still plays a fundamental role and will continue to influence major political decisions, especially with regard to the integration of Muslim communities in Europe.3

Integration of Islam in European societies
With regard to the integration of Islam and Muslim minorities in Europe, it is worth acknowledging first of all that Muslims are generally able to live comfortably in Europe according to their religious principles and traditional customs. Today, many Muslim communities from various Middle Eastern and Islamic countries constitute diverse ethnic and confessional groups in France, Germany and the UK. However, the majority of Muslim immigrants are not affiliated to any religious organization or institution. In fact, only a minority of Muslims living in Europe are members of mosques and other organizations or sympathize with any particular Muslim movement.

Second, the differentiation of Muslims into Salafis, Wahabis, Islamists,4 moderates and extremists reflects a relatively new phenomenon in the political discourse. Muslims are put into numerous categories, so leading to further confusion in the public debate, which fails to reflect the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population that remains unorganized. In addition, this ‘post-9/11’ discourse is dominated by European legislators and policy-makers who contribute to the debate from a somewhat non-rational perspective. After the attacks in New
York and Washington in 2001 and the bombings in Madrid in 2005 and in London in 2007, informed opinion on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly expressed its concerns about Muslim immigrant populations – concerns ranging from assimilation, integration, over-segregation and radicalization to terrorism. Muslims were seen as a problem and not as part of the solution to these issues. Multiculturalism came to be seen as little more than lax treatment of Muslim minorities living in ‘parallel societies’ and as a mark of the failure of western societies to successfully assimilate their Muslim minorities into a dominant culture that still remains vague and exclusive. Many pundits narrowed down the concept of multiculturalism to the particular case of Muslim minorities in society and failed to see the broader picture presented by society as a whole.

Third, while some countries question the loyalty of their Muslim minorities towards their European home country (e.g. France), others criticize their reluctance to integrate into society (Germany) or to embrace ‘western’ values and full citizenship (Great Britain). In addition, governmental positions increasingly claim to represent secular values based on liberal, democratic and pluralist principles but complain about the failure of multiculturalism and the emergence of ‘parallel societies’, especially in relation to Muslim communities. This official position demonstrates a certain negative attitude towards Muslim populations that has led to further tensions between the mainstream Muslim populations in Europe and European governments. Muslims comprise a diverse group of ethnic and confessional immigrants and descendants of immigrants, the majority of whom migrated to Europe for economic reasons; indeed, they represent a significant part of the active working underclass in Europe. The relationship of this group to the majority population should be analysed from this angle rather than from a purely religious perspective.

Furthermore, many decision-makers subscribe to the view that ‘Muslim immigrants’ lack the will to integrate and assimilate into their ‘host countries’. This position does not accurately reflect the economic and social realities on the ground. The living conditions in the suburbs of Paris and Lyon, or in Bradford and Berlin – socially deprived and economically marginalized – are typical of the difficulties facing immigrants in western societies.

Fourth, it seems that populists and demagogues in the Netherlands, Germany and France, who express xenophobic and Islamophobic views, are dominating the debate on integration, assimilation and segregation of Muslim communities in Europe. Various political parties in Europe have succeeded in gaining votes by exploiting the fears of sections of the population who increasingly believe Muslims to be alien to European societies. It is also disturbing to see decision-makers focus on Muslim integration more and more from a security
standpoint. In these ways European policy-makers and media representatives have strengthened Islamophobic tendencies within society by emphasizing radicalization rather than integration. These trends have also put major obstacles in the path of constructive dialogue which is desperately needed between Muslim communities on the one side and representatives of public institutions on the other.

Finally, in order to successfully tackle the issue of integration of Muslim communities into European societies, it is essential to find ways to improve their economic situation, social mobility and political participation. It is also necessary to introduce inclusive forms of secularism and citizenship that help to create a common identity between the majority and minority populations. This seems to be a basic deficiency in the way European governments engage with the issue of immigration and integration, particularly when it comes to Muslim minorities. Furthermore, there is a fundamental difference between the integration of Muslim individuals into society as citizens with equal rights and opportunities and the integration of Islam itself. The majority of Muslims generally have a loose affiliation with religious community centres but consider themselves Muslims culturally.

As to the question of how to integrate Islam into society, it is a matter for theologians, philosophers and social scientists to analyse the religious component and contribution of Islam to a non-Islamic reality. In this context, it is crucial to expound a peaceful and cohesive concept of Islam in the west, where religious aspirations within liberal democratic states have to be seen to bring benefit to the community as a whole.

One important way to dissociate the Islamic religion from the current negative perceptions of Islam is to avoid using phrases such as ‘the war on terror’ which belong to the rhetoric of Islamophobia. This task is very clearly the responsibility of political representatives and the public media.

The role of media and education
According to a study of the portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the media carried out in the UK in November 2007, over 90 percent of articles about Muslims in national newspapers were negative. According to the report, which was commissioned by the London mayor Ken Livingstone, Muslims in Britain were depicted as a threat to traditional British values. The report also revealed that only 4 percent of 352 articles analysed were positive. The media coverage of Muslims and the ‘demonization’ of particular religious groups illustrate the main reasons why people fear integration of Muslims in Germany, Britain and elsewhere. This
situation further perpetuates a negative and distorted picture of Muslims and complicates the integration process in European societies.

Conclusions
It is essential to influence leaders of public opinion in order to avoid spreading stereotypes and misrepresentations of Islam and linking Muslims to terrorism or irrational extremism. After 9/11, Muslim voices were often asked to speak about issues related to terrorism or radicalism but not about the positive contribution that Islamic culture has made to human civilization. This one-sided and negative presentation of Muslims in the media colours the attitude of the majority towards their Muslim neighbours and very likely influences their voting behaviour in elections. Thus, the media must revise its policies and consider its own responsibilities in contributing to a peaceful and constructive debate on Muslim integration in Europe.

It is just as important to improve the level of education in Muslim communities in particular and in society as a whole. The internet and other forms of media have a strong impact on the whole of society, including Muslims. By joining forces, Muslim communities, intellectuals and representatives of the media must reinforce the fundamental principles that underlie an inclusive and progressive approach towards the inclusion and integration of Muslims into democratic and plural societies.

8 Perceptions of Discrimination and Islamophobia: Voices from members of Muslim communities in the European Union, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC 2006).
Epilogue
The youth debates and the Jerusalem conference in retrospect

This paper draws together some of the discussions from the five events that comprised the Network of European Foundations (NEF) initiative on ‘Religion and Democracy in Europe’ implemented during 2007.

The series of discussions began in January 2007 with a ‘Roundtable with Journalists’ held at the London School of Economics. Six themes emerged from that meeting and three core themes were taken forward to two ‘Youth Debates’ in Brussels and to one virtual discussion under the auspices of the online European magazine cafebabel.com. While the latter format drew a relatively small number of contributions, there were 4900 hits on the pages, which means that the themes addressed in the NEF initiative have circulated in a far larger constituency than real-time events could hope to achieve. The series of events concluded with a large and successful conference at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, where a number of academics presented papers related to the theme of religion and democracy.

The youth debates were less theoretically sophisticated than the academic papers presented at the Jerusalem conference, but they were tightly focused on the core themes. The conference papers were more wide-ranging, but when they engaged most directly with the core themes, there was frequently a clear continuity with the kind of view that dominated the youth debates.
together around 30 participants with rather more academic backgrounds—young researchers primarily, although we also heard from a young MEP and from representatives of NGOs and religious organizations—who, like the group in the first youth forum, were invited to address the three core themes drawn from the roundtable. The themes were:

1. Taking secularism seriously
2. The challenge of Islam in Europe
3. The role of the media and education

**Cosmopolitanism**

With such a wide range of outlooks and opinions being canvassed at the youth events and Jerusalem conference, it would be hard to capture a single message or policy that would faithfully reflect the discussions. It is possible nonetheless to identify a dominant perspective, a perspective shared by many at both the youth debates and the Jerusalem conference. (Some caution is needed here since the dominant perspective is also the dominating perspective—the perspective of the most vocal participants.) The best way to describe this perspective is in terms of its cosmopolitanism.

In the reflections on religion and democracy in Europe at the youth debates and the Jerusalem conference the dominant ethos was open, tolerant (or rather, respectful), constructive, universalist, and deeply critical of perceived injustices to ‘foreigners’ in Europe. Racisms, nationalisms and sensationalist media were all identified as serious problems facing Europe today.

The importance of drawing a distinction between tolerance and respect was widely affirmed. Tolerance, it was argued, is a relation to an ‘other’ that typically wants nothing to do with the other, and which is quite often little more than a better-than-nothing alternative to outright hostility to the other. One is tolerant of what one does not really like and which, in one’s heart of hearts, one may well wish would go away. Tolerance is then a kind of veiled or dissimulated intolerance. This worry is particularly sharp in the context of thinking about the growing Muslim presence in Europe. In contrast, respect implies a genuine openness to the other. The thought here is that respect is a relation in which one is oneself open to transformation in and through one’s encounter with the other.

In this regard it was also acknowledged by some participants that respect is a two-way relation, and that Muslims too may have to engage with serious questions about the challenges of living in a culture that is not everywhere readily embraceable by traditional Islamic norms and social values. The crucial point is that the open society embraced (if not fully realized) in Europe today poses a challenge to traditional and mainstream Islam—it is not simply that Islam is a
challenge to Europe. This is, of course, a minefield, and one should not, because of the outright hostility to ‘the west’ expressed by conservative Islamist groups, assume too quickly that there is a simple ‘clash of civilizations’ here. A number of participants emphasized that many Muslims find in Europe an attractive and sympathetic society to which they can and do become committed, and to which – like Muslims in Europe over the centuries – they can make a significant and distinctive contribution. There is almost certainly a majority preference amongst migrants to Europe, Muslim or not, for the kind of open society advocated there, and European institutions should tap into the desire to be part of such a society as it is expressed by new arrivals. The general tenor of contributions was, therefore, that the basic imperative for European societies today is a double one: to seek not only to integrate newcomers but also to develop a cosmopolitan culture of respect for the other. There is no special emphasis on either side of this imperative, but both need emphasis. The importance of encouraging a cosmopolitan Islam in Europe, a phenomenon that Jocelyne Cesari identified as already quite visible in the US, becomes evident at this point.

At the Jerusalem conference it became clear that the opportunities here are both helped and hindered by the impact of globalization. On the one hand, globalization brings the world much closer to a classical cosmopolitical arena in which we are all ‘citizens of the world’. The massive growth in global communications (especially the internet), global travel and global trade has radically transformed and sometimes completely eliminated the boundaries and distances that had previously marked the world and our places in it. As a result, supranational and transnational as well as more traditional international institutions are increasingly relevant agents in the lives of citizens of traditional nation-states. And this is no less the case for those who are currently stateless. The European Union faces complex challenges in this context, as, for example, an agent for humanitarian intervention or as an advocate for the development of supranational laws regulating the cosmopolitical right to ‘universal hospitality’. On the other hand, the same process of globalization also weakens traditional forms of authority, particularly traditional political and religious authorities. In both political and religious contexts, discourse is now entering the public sphere in a new way through the development of transnational social movements and virtual communities which are not territorially bounded and for which territorial jurisdictions, traditional authorities and representative institutions are increasingly irrelevant. In short, contemporary globalization goes hand in hand not with the homogenization of world cultures but with a multiplication of public spheres and a formation of different (non-Enlightenment) ‘modernities’. As Shmuel Eisenstadt noted, it is a deeply paradoxical situation.
The use of global media and internet communications by conservative Islamist groups is well documented. However, many participants at the youth debates and Jerusalem conference clearly felt strongly that the mainstream of European politics and media was largely responsible for the public perception that Islam is a threat to European societies. On the other hand, more often than not this perception was expressed alongside a determination that a new and more refined civil society in Europe should be constructed within the traditions fostered by parliamentary democracy and responsible journalism.

Taking secularism seriously
At the Jerusalem conference José Casanova presented what he called a mythical 'secularization narrative': following a pre-modern period, European societies decoupled religion and politics, relegated religion to the private sphere, and forged for themselves thriving, open, liberal democracies. Some of the participants in the youth debates affirmed an even more classical myth of the modern: a secularization thesis in which European societies have come gradually over time and in stages to rid themselves of primitive or prescientific superstitions, replacing them in modern times with an objective, scientific world-view and an emerging secular culture. This thesis suggests that Europe has been moving, and is moving still, towards a fundamentally secular future in which religion will 'wither away' as have other such 'superstitious' conceptions. In this view, religion has no place in modern political decision-making, and expressions of confessional commitment have no place in schools or workplaces either. Religion, first relegated to the private sphere, will eventually disappear as a significant contributor to our self-understanding and to our conceptions of the good life.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of both the youth debates and the Jerusalem conference was a strong perception of the complete inadequacy of this modern myth. The private–public division was regarded as both crude and distorting. Churches, religious societies and religious groups are social actors – and are so not just in fact but in their nature: religiosity is bound up with a religious life that can rarely be confined to a person’s ‘private’ life. (Protestantism may be the significant exception here.) However, there was also general agreement that religious beliefs and observances should not undermine a framework of human rights and, indeed, should be protected by such a framework.

The challenge to Europe today is to adjust to the multi-faith, multicultural reality of its societies in a spirit of liberal pluralism in which no one is excluded – except those who exclude themselves by refusing to endorse the very basic principles expressed by human rights legislation. Such a society embraces the possibility of a plurality of views on what constitutes a good life and human flourishing.
It is not a ‘secular culture’ in the sense that religious views are excluded from the public sphere, but in the sense that the state deals with different political, ideological and religious views in an even-handed way.

An initial definition of what is advocated here is thus the idea of a neutral state in an open society. A society with a secular state is therefore not a society dominated by secular beliefs and values in contrast to religious beliefs and values. It is not the ‘godless’ society which some religious believers imagine and fear. The secular state is a state which is committed not to the elimination of all religious institutions and all religious values but to the preservation of basic human rights and to resisting attempts by any group to turn the state into a vehicle for a particular system of belief, theistic or atheistic.

In Jerusalem there was some concern with the idea of neutrality appealed to here. There are two main criticisms. First, the claim is that there is no such thing as a ‘neutral state’. European states in particular have practised systematic abuses against minorities and colonized peoples, behaving in profoundly non-neutral and often violent ways. A second connected complaint is that any claimed state neutrality is simply a mask for the hegemony of a particular political or religious social group. The first objection would seem to leave intact the idea of neutrality as a political goal or objective. The second objection is rather more complicated since it draws attention to the fact that the distinction between state and society is ultimately an abstract one. States in Europe have come into being in a history that is irreducibly political and deeply informed by religious struggles. No emerging state can, in these conditions, be truly ‘neutral’. This theme requires further investigation. One of the papers at the conference urged us to acknowledge that European secularity (and perhaps even ‘secularism’ as an avowedly atheist ideology) has its roots in a distinctively Christian social environment. The secular is not opposed to the religious. On the contrary, the movement of ‘secularization’ belongs to an ongoing historical differentiation or distribution of ‘shares’ between the sacred and non-sacred that occurs within all religiously informed societies, and in the formation of modern European states this has been a movement profoundly influenced by the world-understanding of Christianity.

Even if there are problems with the idea of neutrality, the idea of an open, plural society was strongly endorsed throughout the discussions in London, Brussels and Jerusalem. The multi-faith and multicultural character of European societies was regarded as a strength and not just as a fact – something to be cherished and cultivated as well as something to come to terms with intellectually or theoretically. It is the future of this cultural or societal pluralism that some feel
to be threatened today – not by the spectre of communism but by the spectre of conservative Islam.

**The challenge of Islam**

The participants at the youth debates and Jerusalem conference often tended to see the ‘problem’ of Islam simply in terms of the failure of European society to be properly open. The challenge of Islam in Europe is primarily the challenge for Europe to shape a more inclusive approach towards Muslims; to integrate and respect them as citizens and as individuals. It was widely thought that the social problems connected with conservative Islamism are primarily functions of economic exclusion leading to social alienation, and hence not internal features of the mainstream of Islamic culture in its encounter with European society. From this perspective, concrete questions such as social discrimination should be tackled. One of the position papers in Jerusalem stressed that neither of the two existing models of integration, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘assimilation’, has succeeded. This claim was contested by a number of other participants, and it was widely felt that some form of non-communalist multiculturalism – a dynamic and genuinely diverse culture of respect and mutual recognition – would enable Europe to find a new path and lead to the formation of a new and inclusive ‘we’.

Many of the contributions helped to reduce the sense that we are facing something like a simple ‘clash of civilizations’ here. One proposal was to distinguish carefully between the question of the place of Muslims in Europe and the question of the place of Islam in Europe. While it is hard to see how best to conceptualize this distinction in detail, the perceived difficulties of a ‘clash’ seem to be far more strongly connected to the latter than to the former. One should not, because of the outright hostility to ‘the west’ expressed by the now-familiar voices of radical and highly politicized Islamist groups, assume too quickly that there is a ‘clash of civilizations’ that simply prevents Muslims from making a constructive and distinctive contribution to European societies. This is clear both from past history and from present experience.

**Media and education**

In connection with Muslim populations in Europe, there was a widespread perception that they only appear in the media at all in connection with ‘the worst’: in connection with terrorism or the sometimes violent protests of conservative Islamic activists. In this way we tend to be given and tend to form a very negative picture of both Muslims and Islam. An insufficiently self-critical and well-informed media focuses most rapidly and insistently on stories which fit its pre-existing anti-Islamic prejudices and which seem then to confirm those
prejudices, ensuring that the public understanding of Islam in Europe is to a large extent a misunderstanding or misperception. Nevertheless, there was no proposal to alter the current situation through further legislation beyond existing laws dealing with offence, insult, inciting racial or religious hatred, etc. The stress was, rather, on the importance of cultivating the best traditions of investigative journalism in Europe: writing and broadcasting which is informative, critical and evidence-based. In this case, as in the perception of a general social misperception of Muslims in Europe, the participants at the youth debates and Jerusalem conference highlighted the importance of education as an instrument for social cohesion and peace.

A minority view at the Jerusalem conference was that the multicultural ‘experiment’ had failed and that what matters most for social harmony is simply the prevailing socio-economic conditions. However, as noted in the previous section, the multicultural model envisaged by this criticism was fundamentally ‘communalist’: a society composed of semi-autonomous groups living parallel but largely independent lives. For many people in Europe today, especially in the major cities, the experience of a multicultural, multi-faith society is quite unlike this. Both in schools and in workplaces people live in environments that embrace an increasingly rich weave of cultures and faiths. The point is that in a society where people respect the identities of others, they do not merely tolerate differences but are open to their own transformation through their encounters with others. Indeed, as far as schools are concerned, there was widespread affirmation of the significance both of a ‘good’ education and of the defects and dangers of a monocultural education. It was clear that many of the participants had undergone or were undergoing an education with a fundamentally Eurocentric curriculum that is taught to a student cohort that is itself predominantly and sometimes exclusively ‘white European’. Here again there was an emphasis on the need to develop a non-communalist cosmopolitan culture of respect for others. World literatures, histories, traditions and heritages should not be excluded from curricula, and the multiplication of allegiances, loyalties and identities that marks a multicultural, multi-faith society should be properly acknowledged and embraced. For many participants, multiculturalism even of a very basic kind has not so much failed—it is yet to begin.
We need a new concept of secularism that reflects multicultural and multi-religious societies. I agree with Detlef Pollack when he says: 'If modernity is defined by processes of cultural pluralization, institutional differentiation and urbanization, then religion does not suffer defeat under conditions of modernity but rather profits from them.' The concept I have in mind could be described as a 'secular state and open society': a concept where the separation between state and church allows religion to influence not only private life but also public life. The separation between public and private life is increasingly blurred and difficult to achieve in practice. Religion is not just a private matter but also affects the public debate. Churches are social entities that go beyond the individual and aim to influence the public sphere.

In my opinion a new kind of democracy is required: a pluralist democracy based not on tacit cultural similarity but on the recognition of an open and accepted notion of diversity. When I say a 'secular state and open society', the open society in question is defined not in terms of public and private but on the basis of cultural and religious plurality. We have to look for a new 'we' that is more consistent with plurality. Creating democracy based on a true 'we' out of so many people, communities and cultures is a real challenge that needs to be faced. Europe has become a multicultural and multireligious society. The main challenge for contemporary democracies in Europe is to recognize and incorporate cultural differences. Tolerance and respect for every religion is the starting point for this, including freedom to wear religious symbols. Secularism should become the context for negotiating religious differences. The key question is how
the secular state manages religious diversity: how we can arrive at shared values rather than aim at common values.

It is important to continue with activities that foster a mutual understanding between different religions and cultures, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims. This should go beyond eating each other’s food and celebrating each other’s official holidays. It should focus particularly on each other’s opinions and ideas. It is necessary to eradicate the taboo that prevents an open discussion of cultural and religious differences, as everybody in the population needs to be accepted not only as an equal citizen but also as an accountable citizen. The key issue is reciprocity, by which I mean mutual responsibility; there is need for a framework that leaves space for the recognition of differences and diversity.

Education and the media play an important role in shaping perceptions of religion. The role and responsibility of the media in influencing the public debate and public opinion need to be addressed. Obviously a free press is a fundamental feature of democracy. The issue of the responsibility of journalists is crucial. Stereotyping and stigmatization in shaping perceptions of religion have to be avoided, but the same is true of media in western countries that bend over backwards to show compassion for and understanding of frequently intolerant religious groups instead of asking the tough questions.

With respect to education, we should attempt to bring diversity into the educational system. Young people, even starting in early childhood, should be able to learn intercultural realities and interact with people from different backgrounds. Intercultural exchanges may be an effective instrument. The teaching of religion should be reformed to include pluralism and to place an emphasis on interfaith dialogue. Education should encourage curiosity and the ability to think critically, reflect, question and never accept anything without understanding why.

There is an increase in religion – in religious manifestations and organizations – in European society. This is partly due to immigration. Religion is coming back to Europe. And it is not just Islam: we are also witnessing a growth in new Christian movements. A European Islam will emerge that could be very influential in the rest of the Islamic world. The growth of Islam in Europe poses the challenge of incorporating Islam into European societies – the nationalization or Europeanization of Islam. Is there a ‘European Islam’ and, if so, what are its distinctive features?

We should disentangle problems instead of heaping everything at the door of religion. I agree with Gilles Kepel when he says that the young people rioting in Paris in November 2005 were more interested in becoming integrated into an affluent European society than in burning it down and establishing an Islamic
caliphate on its ashes. We have to differentiate more precisely between what is really caused by religion and religious beliefs and what may sometimes be attributed to religion but is more fundamentally caused by failed integration policies, marginalization and socio-economic exclusion.