

Secularism and the Challenge of Muslim Integration in Europe

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I. Introduction

The prevailing secularity of European culture is a sociological commonplace; the secularity of European (and North American) legal norms in the sense of a benevolent neutrality toward diverse religious convictions is a fundamental principle. These should be distinguished, however, from the distorting effect of *secularism* as an intolerant worldview shared by many of those who shape public opinion and government policy. This ideological secularism has the effect (the intended effect, in fact) of marginalising those for whom religious convictions are of deep and life-shaping importance, and of seeking to exclude such convictions from shaping their behavior, much less their participation in public life.

Larry Siedentop, in his brilliant history of the development of Western Liberalism, notes that ‘the perception of profound conflict between secularism and religious belief has been reawakened and taken a new form in Western societies recently.’ He describes this as ‘Europe’s undeclared “civil war”’ over whether religion should be allowed to play a role in shaping the public actions of individuals and voluntary associations. This conflict, he argues,

is as tragic as it is unnecessary. It is tragic because, by identifying secularism with non-belief, with indifference and materialism, it deprives Europe of moral authority, playing into the hands of those who are only too anxious to portray Europe as decadent and without conviction. It is unnecessary because it rests on a misunderstanding of the nature of secularism. Properly understood, secularism can be seen as Europe’s noblest achievement, the achievement which should be its primary contribution to the creation of a world order, while different religious beliefs continue to contend for followers.¹

What Siedentop is referring to as ‘secularism’ is neutrality on the part of government and dominant cultural institutions among fundamental life-perspectives, provided that their expression conforms to norms protecting individual freedom and social harmony. This neutrality is based on respect rather than on mere indifference or ignorance, and is an appropriate characteristic of public life a free society.

It is *not* appropriate, however, when it becomes ‘a principle of exclusion of religion from the public space’ rather than simply ‘a legal principle of state neutrality.’² As philosopher Charles Taylor has written, there are many policy questions on which individuals and associations with widely-differing worldviews may concur ‘but differ on the deeper reasons for holding to this ethic. The state must uphold the ethic, but must refrain from favoring any of the deeper reasons.’³ This may require compromises

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1 Siedentop, Larry. 2015. *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*. Penguin Books, pp. 349 & 360.

2 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 115.

3 Taylor, Charles. 2011. “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism.” In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. Eduardo Mendietta and Jonathan Vanantwerpen (Eds.). New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 34-59, p. 37.

about specific policies that leave all the parties to some extent dissatisfied, but this need not require a surrender of their underlying – and conflicting – beliefs.

The secularist orthodoxy, by contrast, insists that religious beliefs be kept strictly private, in the tacit (and sometimes explicit) conviction that they will gradually die away as they cease to play any significant role in public behavior. That this view has been challenged philosophically and sociologically in recent years has done little to lessen its influence on public policy. The resulting offenses against the human rights of freedom of conscience and freedom of association have affected members of various religious traditions. Religion, Olivier Roy has pointed out recently, is accepted as a form of identity, but not as an expression of faith, much less as the basis for public practice (except in a folkloric mode), with both Left and Right failing to understand that the fundamental values of ‘confessing’ believers can be very different from the values of those who bear the same religious identity without its associated convictions.⁴

Our concern here is not with the dimension of human rights, crucial as that is, but with the negative impact of this secularist orthodoxy on the ability of the societies of Western Europe to deal successfully with the presence of Islam. The insistence (particularly in France) on defining citizenship in exclusively secular terms may be exacerbating current difficulties in achieving effective integration of the children and grandchildren of earlier Muslim immigrants as well as the present wave of political and economic refugees. Troubling signs of irrational fears and prejudice compete – in the United States – with encouraging reports of cooperation between mosques and churches to meet local needs. Meanwhile, in France, a leading candidate for the presidency publishes a campaign book titled ‘Conquering Islamic Totalitarianism’ (François Fillon, *Vaincre le Totalitarisme Islamique*) while preparing to run against the *Front National*, which has made hostility to Muslim immigrants and their children a cornerstone of its program.

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While acknowledging significant differences in external circumstances, especially in the nature of the Muslim minority on the two continents, there is reason to believe that the strong tradition of religious pluralism in Canada and the United States may help to explain the relatively problem-free participation of Muslims in those societies. As José Casanova has quipped, ‘Americans think that they are supposed to be religious, while Europeans think that they are supposed to be irreligious.’⁵ The withering-away of religious establishments during the first years of the American Republic resulted not from ideological hostility toward religion but from the vigorous religious diversity of the people; ‘Americans instinctively grasped the moral symmetry between secularism, with its prized civil liberty, and Christianity, accepting that secularism identifies a necessary condition of authentic belief.’⁶

Intolerant secularism is to be distinguished from the sociological process of secularisation as well as from the legal and political principle of secularity (*laïcité*), the neutrality of the State among religious and secular worldviews and their expressions. Secularism (*laïcisme*), by contrast, is a belief-system and by no means neutral. Ethicist David Novak points out that

belief in secularism as a value goes far beyond the acceptance of the fact of modern secularity. All modern secularity requires is that our public norms and the arguments for them not presuppose common acceptance of Jewish or Christian revelation, even if these public norms are consistent with a particular community’s revelation and the authoritative teachings it derives from that revelation. Thus Jews and Christians can only make public moral arguments that are based on ideas of the general human condition rather than on the singular experience of God speaking directly to one’s traditional community. But it is ideological secularism, not the affirmation of secularity per se, that largely defines the culture of the universities, the media, the foundations, and the courts -- that is, the most powerful elite culture in our society. It is what inspires them

4 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 114.

5 Casanova, José. 2006. “Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad.” In *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*. David Scott and Charles Hirschkind (Eds.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Pp. 12-30, p. 17.

6 Siedentop, Larry. 2015. *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*. Penguin Books, p. 362.

all. This culture, which is often quite self-consciously the heir of the Enlightenment, regards both Judaism and Christianity as obstacles in its quest for radical egalitarianism.⁷

Of course, secularism as a belief-system is equally if not even more hostile toward Islam.

This essay explores some of the current expressions of secularism and its consequences, including an historical excursus on its historical development in France. It then suggests an approach to divergent worldviews and ways of life that, while holding fast to the principle of secularity, is more consistent with human rights and political democracy.

II. Response to Islam in Europe

When, several decades ago, I researched the policies of a dozen countries, mostly in Europe, for schooling of children of immigrants (Glenn 1996a),⁸ the hundreds of written sources and the dozens of interviews I drew upon focused almost exclusively on issues of language and culture. Much the same issues were evoked, whether the families involved were from Morocco or from Italy, from Portugal or from Turkey. Today, if I were to undertake this study again, most of the discussion would undoubtedly be about Islam and whether youth from Muslim families would become well-integrated European citizens.

These are difficult questions and raise complex sociological and anthropological issues, which I will not attempt to address (see recent discussions by Gilles Kepel 2015, 2016).⁹ My concern in what follows is not with the characteristics of Muslims in Europe (whether second and third generation or newly-arrived) but with the characteristics of European society, which make the religious distinctiveness of Muslims seem such an imposing barrier to integration. In considering this question, we will find that it invokes a broader issue, that of European society's relationship to its own Christian past and the survivals of that identity. A culture that has grown, in large part, unable to respond other than superficially to its own religious tradition lacks the capacity to respond sympathetically to the religious motivations of others. Deeply-held religious convictions thus inevitably seem strange and threatening to those with no personal experience of them.

From the prevalent European perspective, religion is not just another identifying characteristic of individuals and of associations, to be accepted as part of the accommodation and even validation of diversity of which progressive elites commonly boast. To the contrary, 'the demand by Muslims not just for toleration and religious freedom but for public recognition is ... taken to be philosophically very different to the same demand made by black people, women, and gays. It is seen as an attack on the principle of secularism.'¹⁰ In fact, the 'pluralism advocated by secularists is...deceptive.' Underlying it 'is a unified and complex world-view, the philosophy of secularism.'¹¹

As a result, the sympathies of European political progressives turned away from Muslim immigrants as the latter increasingly asserted their claims in religious rather than in cultural terms.¹² 'The entry of Islam into the debate has shifted the boundaries. At first accepted...in the name of multiculturalism and the defense of the Third World and of immigrants...the shift from the oppressed immigrant to the

7 Novak, David. 2002. "Jews, Christians, and Civil Society." *First Things*. February. Pp. 26-33. February-March, p. 27.

8 Glenn, Charles L. 1996a. *Educating Immigrant Children: Schools and Language Minorities in 12 Nations*, (with Ester J. de Jong). New York: Garland Publishing.

9 Kepel, Gilles. 2015. *Terreur dans l'Héxagone*. Paris: Gallimard and Kepel, Gilles. 2016. *La Fracture*. Paris: Gallimard.

10 Modood, Tariq. 2007. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. Cambridge (UK): Polity, p. 70.

11 Thiessen, Elmer John. 1993. *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination, and Christian Nurture*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 194.

12 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p.123.

demanding Muslim has alienated the progressive Left.¹³ So long as the religious practices of Muslim immigrants could be seen as cultural survivals, these were tolerated, but such practices ‘became unbearable when they take their place definitively on the stage of French society as the affirmation of a faith detached from any foreign culture.’ Members of the secular Left who, ‘in the 1980s defended the rights of immigrants against the *Front National* [are] indignant that the children of those immigrants display a Muslim identity and sometimes [they hold] ... positions that were those of the *Front National*, but with the clear conscience of those who still see themselves as antiracist,¹⁴ exhibiting ‘an air of satisfaction, even smugness, a self-congratulatory notion of living in the finest, freest, most progressive, most decent, most perfectly evolved playground of multicultural utopianism.’¹⁵

Thus the debate in Europe has shifted from one about multiculturalism and social inclusion to one about what is perceived, by the secular elite, as the threatening role of religion.¹⁶ It is as though nineteenth century anti-clericalism had risen from the grave to which it was largely confined after one country after another achieved what the Dutch called a ‘Pacification’ of conflicts over the role – and the limits – of religious convictions and institutions in society. We are faced, instead, with a ‘radical secularism that seeks to destroy the historic compromises with organized religion which is a characteristic of twentieth-century citizenship, especially in western Europe, and a promising basis for the accommodation of Muslims in those countries.’¹⁷ Others, less tactful, have spoken of ‘the hysterical madness of certain ayatollahs of secularism.’¹⁸

The deep concern, even panic in some circles, over the presence of Islam as a living force among immigrant populations found an academically-respectable expression two decades ago in Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. ‘Some Westerners,’ Huntington wrote, ‘have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam, but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise.’¹⁹ Although Huntington’s thesis has been widely criticized, ‘an ideological secularism is currently being reasserted and generating European domestic versions of “the clash of civilizations” thesis and the conflicts this entails for European societies.’²⁰

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A key stage in the transition from Islam-as-homeland-culture to Islam-as-irreconcilable-religion was the controversy that erupted in 1989 over several girls wearing the *hijab* or *foulard islamique* to school in Créil. This act seemed to many French opinion-makers, on the Left as on the Right, as expressing a rejection of the norms of French society on their own behalf or on behalf of those male relatives who, allegedly, forced them to do so.²¹ The controversy, with many twists and turns, reached its culmination in the appointment of a high-level commission headed by Bernard Stasi. Their report, released in December 2003, concluded that ‘it is no longer the freedom of conscience [of schoolgirls wishing to express their religious faith] which is at stake, but public order.’ Because of a presumed assault on public order by ‘Islamist groups,’ it was necessary for the government to give ‘strong signs’ to these groups by prohibiting headscarves (and, to avoid charges of religious discrimination) to ban other religious symbols such as Jewish yarmulkes and prominent crosses in school. But more than ‘public order’ was at stake;

13 Roy, Olivier. 2007. *Secularism Confronts Islam*. George Holoch (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press, p. 100.

14 Roy, Olivier. 2007. *Secularism Confronts Islam*. George Holoch (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press, p. 5.

15 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p.11.

16 Jansen, Yolande. 2010. “Secularism and Security: France, Islam, and Europe.” In *Comparative Secularisms In a Global Age*. Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (Eds). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 69-86, p. 71.

17 Modood, Tariq. 2007. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. Cambridge (UK): Polity, p. 132.

18 Scott, Joan Wallach. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton University Press, p. 31.

19 Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 209.

20 Modood, Tariq. 2007. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. Cambridge (UK): Polity, p. 85.

21 Glenn, Charles L. 1996b. “Hijab and the Limits of Tolerance.” In *The Legal Status of Minorities in Education*. Jan De Groof and Jan Fiers (Eds.). Leuven (Belgium): Acco.

[t]he language of Stasi and his colleagues revealed the absolutist nature of their beliefs and their fervent nationalism. The school was a “sacred” space, secularism was “un méta-idéal humain”; the headscarf ban was necessary to prevent the takeover of the school by “the street”.²²

This ‘absolutist secularism, undergirded by the idea that the French way of doing gender and sexuality was ‘natural,’ made it impossible to treat Muslim difference as a viable or normal way of being in the world.’²³ That teenaged girls, at an age when clothing is a key element of identity-assertion, should choose to express a religious identity in the sacred precincts of ‘the school of the Republic’ was profoundly offensive on the Left (which saw it as the oppression of women) as on the Right (which saw it as rejection of France itself).

From the secularist perspective, it was inconceivable that anyone would voluntarily submit to religious restrictions on free individual expression, including the right, as some observers sardonically pointed out, ‘to dress like little whores like [pop star] Madonna.’ Despite the publication of many interviews with young women who insisted that wearing the *hijab* was their free choice, and the Lévy sisters’ book-length account of their own decision to do so and subsequent expulsion from school,²⁴ the Stasi Report insisted that ‘[t]here are pressures constraining young girls to wear religious signs. Their family and social environment impose on them a choice that is not their own. The Republic cannot remain deaf to these girls’ cry of distress. The space of the school must remain for them a place of liberty and emancipation; it must not become a place of suffering and humiliation.’²⁵

Here we come to the crux of the irreconcilability of secularism with democratic pluralism: far from neutrality, it is ‘a comprehensive doctrine: a modernist, neo-Kantian doctrine of moral autonomy for all which tends to encourage interpretations of the head scarf as a sign of women’s submission.’²⁶ After all, every flourishing religious tradition is based upon some form of obedience to external constraints, whether creed or tradition or faith-community or, most often, to all three. Tevye the milkman says, ‘Without our traditions, our lives would be as shaky as ... as a fiddler on the roof!’ Or, as Stephen Carter has written,

I write not only as a Christian but as one who is far more devoted to the survival of my faith – and of religion generally – than to the survival of any state in particular, including the United States of America. I love this nation, with all its weaknesses and occasional horrors, and I cannot imagine living in another one. But my mind is not so clouded with the vapors of patriotism that I place my country before my God. If the country were to force me to a choice – and, increasingly, this nation tends to do that to many religious people – I would unhesitatingly, if not without some sadness for my country, choose my God. It is easy to paint people who put God first as dangerous fanatics, but, from the point of view of the believer, the fanatic is the one so certain that the state is right that he is willing to use law to interfere with religious belief.²⁷

The proponents of secularism may be willing to tolerate such views as the harmless idiosyncrasy of a Yale law professor, but they are appalled when Muslims assert their determination to act according to what they understand as the prescriptions of their faith, even if it is in ways as peaceable as wearing a headscarf. It is the religious meaning attached to the act, not the act itself, which is deeply offensive to the secularist.

A striking recent example of this secularist aggression was the effort, in several French resort communities, to prevent Muslim women from wearing “burkinis” that provide what these consider

22 Scott, Joan Wallach. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton University Press, p. 98.

23 Scott, Joan Wallach. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton University Press, p. 181.

24 Lévy, Alma and Lila Lévy. 2004. *Des filles comme les autres: Au-delà du foulard*. Paris: La Découverte.

25 Scott, Joan Wallach. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton University Press, p. 131.

26 Jansen, Yolande. 2010. “Secularism and Security: France, Islam, and Europe.” In *Comparative Secularisms In a Global Age*. Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (Eds). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 69-86, p.76.

27 Carter, Stephen L. 2000. *God’s Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics*. New York: Basic Books, p. 3.

a modest costume for the beach. As reported in the *Washington Post*, ‘[i]mages that emerged on Wednesday shocked the world: on a beach in Nice, police officers actually forced a Muslim woman — later identified as a third-generation French citizen from Toulouse — to remove articles of her clothing in broad daylight.’²⁸ The anti-burkini regulation in one of the thirty communities which had adopted these was suspended by the Conseil d’État on August 26, 2016 as not justified by any threat to public order, and it seems likely that such measures will succumb also to the widespread ridicule that they are causing. Nonetheless, they illustrate how a militant secularism, determined to drive all expressions of religion from public spaces, can violate the very principle of secularity, the neutrality of government among different forms of religious expression.

‘The scandal today,’ Roy points out ironically, ‘is the presence of religious signs in public spaces as *religious signs*.’²⁹ Of course, Europeans are surrounded on all sides by the relics of public Christianity, but these are not perceived as offending against the prevailing secularity. What public opinion and government authorities alike object to is public expression of what they consider *radical* religion. But, after all,

the term “radicalization” applied to religion is misleading: it implies the definition of a moderate state of religion. But what is a “moderate” religion? Can one speak of a “moderate” theology? Were Luther and Calvin “moderate” theologians? Certainly not: Calvinism, for example, is theologically “radical.” There are no moderate religions, only moderate believers, but the latter are not necessarily moderate in their beliefs, as would be desired by our society which is so secularized that every sign of faith seems at best incongruous, at worst menacing.³⁰

The danger of marginalizing individuals, associations, and institutions holding and expressing deeply-rooted religious convictions – always supposing that these remain within appropriate limits that respect the rights of others and of society in general – is that this will tend to exacerbate extremism. Olivier Roy points out a consequence of the secularist assumption that publicly-expressed religion is bizarre:

this “bizarreness” attracts certain youth, who are seeking precisely a posture of break with and not of insertion [into society]. They don’t protest against islamophobia because they themselves think that there is a profound incompatibility between Islam and the West. They make use of symbolic objects [*signes*] that cause fear (burqa, turban, and of course weapons, with a preference for the sword and the knife). It’s therefore absurd to “cure” them by the practice of a good moderate Islam dispensed by good moderate imams. They seek radicality for its own sake.³¹

Study by a psychiatrist of the profiles of hundreds of youth drawn to violent jihad found that few were solidly-rooted in the study and practice of Islam; many were marginal youth who first encountered Islamic teaching in prison or on the Internet: ‘about a fourth of my sample was deeply religious when they were young and about two-thirds were secular. The rest were Christian converts.’³² In fact, the jihadists who carried out the recent attacks in Paris and Brussels were well-known as criminals before they became Islamists; they were ‘radical losers.’³³ ‘Nearly to a person, all had been violent men, long before they became foot soldiers for the hyper-violent Islamic State. ... Some recruits have scant knowledge of Islam,’ according to European security officials.³⁴

As Roy puts it, ‘the radicals are almost all *born again* [in English italics in the original] who, after a very profane life (discotheque, alcohol, petty crime) return suddenly to religious practice, whether individually or in the context of a small group (never in the context of a religious organization).’ In

28 McAuley, J. 2016 “As France fights burkini war, many ask: Why?” *The Washington Post*, August 26.

29 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 114.

30 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 17-18.

31 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 117.

32 Sageman, Marc. 2008. *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 51.

33 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p. 140.

34 Warrick, Joby and Greg Miller. 2016. “Suspects have deep criminal roots.” *The Washington Post*. March 24.

fact, ‘none of them belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood ..., none took part in Muslim charities, none took part in proselytism through preaching, none was a member of an organization for solidarity with the Palestinian people.’³⁵ Mohammed Bouyeri, whose brutal assassination of Theo van Gogh on a downtown Amsterdam street in 2004 stunned the famously-tolerant Dutch society, ‘hardly ever went to the mosque. Fasting during Ramadan was about the extent of his religious life. Friends remember how much fun he was when he got stoned on hash.’ His acquaintance with Islamic texts was largely limited to ‘calls for jihad, glorifications of martyrdom ... translated from English-language websites.’³⁶

Why does this matter? Because the marginalization of “normal” religious expression in the case of Islam has had the effect of making it an attractive identity for those who are already socially marginalized and seeking an identity. The more mainstream society defines expressions of Muslim identity as dangerous, the more attractive they become to youth who find that dangerous identity a way to give significance and purpose to their drifting lives. Rejecting the cultural Islam of their parents, they claim to represent an Islam ‘of fighters, of the bloody, of the resister.’ They become radical, not because they have misunderstood the Qur’an or Islamic tradition, but because “they choose to be, because only radicality seems attractive [*séduisante*] to them. By engaging in a terrorist act, the loser imagines himself transformed into superhero.”³⁷

The determined secularism of Western European societies can have the effect of making those whose identity is bound up with their religious convictions and its public expression feel invisible. For some, this can turn into resentment and a determination to force the wider society to pay attention; it can

lead to aggression, as well as self-hatred; dreams of omnipotence blend with the desire for self-destruction. To prove their existence, to themselves and the world, people sometimes join great revolutionary causes, or embark on a mission to spread the word of God. Others, even more desperate, might commit a spectacular crime ... These are the most dangerous “radical losers,” the lone killers who cannot bear to live with themselves any longer and want to drag the world down with them.³⁸

The fact that there has been (so far at least) so much less jihadism in North America than in Western Europe may in part reflect the fact that Islam has not had the same symbolic weighting as attractively marginal and dangerous to disaffected youth in the United States and Canada, where religious expression and faith-motivated activities and associations are more broadly accepted. Unfortunately, there are recent signs that this may be changing for the worse.

If ‘committed Muslim’ is available as a satisfying identity to marginalised youth in Europe, what about youth from Muslim backgrounds who complete school and, often, university or technical training and are joining the middle class? Can ‘committed Muslim’ serve as a mainstream identity? One of the Muslim-American teenagers interviewed in our recent study of civic education in Islamic secondary schools across the country told us, ‘I think it’s important to adapt and overcome, because, like, well, [pause] ... America is kind of like a melting pot, right? And to be able to blend in, you have to stand out in a way. I think faith gives you that edge.’ Others expressed similar determination to be successful participants in American society without abandoning Muslim faith and practice; girls, for example, told us that they considered wearing the *hijab* in public – at the mall! – an important statement about the normality of the Muslim presence in the United States.

We lack similar data from a European context, but it seems likely that Muslim youth find it more difficult to see their expression of religious identity as simply a way of being French or Belgian or German. When a school staff member sought to persuade one of the Lévy sisters to remove her *hijab* by telling her that ‘people who cling to a religion are those who don’t know how to think for themselves,’ it required an unusually self-assured teenager to reply that this violated the woman’s obligation, as a

35 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 42 & 58.

36 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 194 & 199.

37 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 47, 74 & 123.

38 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p. 140.

representative of the state, of *laïc* neutrality.³⁹ By contrast, the right of Muslim girls to wear the *hijab* in American public schools has been defended by a Christian legal advocacy group⁴⁰ as well as by the federal government.

Forty years ago, and indeed more recently, some observers have thought complacently that the children of Muslim immigrants would abandon Islam as readily as they have abandoned the languages and many of the cultural habits of their parents. Many, of course, have done so, but many others have sought in Islam – often purified of much cultural baggage – a basis for successful participation in European life. To the extent that an intolerant secularism is making it more difficult to do so, it is working against social cohesion. Rejecting expressions of Islamic belief and practice which are perfectly compatible with a free and democratic society can only retard the emergence of a reformed (though not necessarily ‘moderate’) Islam.

The importance of such a “reform” would not be to struggle against radicalism, but to give religious visibility to socially-rising Muslims, to prevent Daech [ISIS] from proclaiming itself the spokesperson of a silent Umma. For a religious reform only takes root if there is a new demand for religious expression [*religiosité*], and thus a sociological transformation. But the sociology of Muslims in Europe is in complete upheaval: the rise of middle classes of Muslim origin and the emergence of new elites induce new modes of religious expression adapted to a secular society (this is why the radicals include few members of the third generation). This Islam is not necessarily liberal, but it is compatible with our modern societies.⁴¹

Ian Buruma argues that the “real threat to a mixed society will come when the mainstream of non-revolutionary Muslims has lost all hope of feeling at home.”⁴² So what are the barriers to the acceptance of such an Islam, embodied in well-integrated Muslim citizens, and what governmental policies would support its emergence?

III. Secularism as intolerant belief-system

Although secularism seeks to present itself as an appropriate neutrality toward and among religious and other worldviews, it is in fact itself a coherent – and intolerant – worldview, one that undermines a fundamental principle of democracy: that many conflicting voices have a right to be heard and to be judged on their merits. ‘Secularism acts politically against its competitors and defines them as what it is not. It claims to be the exemplar of justice, neutrality, democracy, common sense, rational argument, tolerance, and the public interest.’⁴³ Legal philosopher Robert George points out, however, that

whatever is to be said for and against secularism, there can be no legitimate claim for secularism to be a “neutral” doctrine that deserves privileged status as the national public philosophy. As MacIntyre has argued, secularism (which he calls liberalism) is far from being a “tradition-independent” view that merely represents a neutral playing field on which Judaism, Christianity, Marxism, and other traditions can wage a fair fight for the allegiance of the people. Instead, it is itself a tradition of thought about personal and political morality that competes with others. ... Secularism rests upon and represents a distinct and controversial set of metaphysical and moral propositions having to do with the relationship of consciousness to bodiliness and of reason to desire, the possibility of free choice, and the source and nature of human dignity and human rights. Secularist doctrine contains very controversial views about what constitutes a person – views every bit as controversial as the Jewish and Christian views.⁴⁴

39 Lévy, Alma and Lila Lévy. 2004. *Des filles comme les autres: Au-delà du foulard*. Paris: La Découverte, p. 32.

40 Moore, Kathleen M. 2007. “Visible through the Veil: The Regulation of Islam in American Law.” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 68, No. 3, Muslim Integration in the United States and France (Fall). Pp. 237-251, p. 244.

41 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 161.

42 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p. 246.

43 Baker, Hunter. 2009. *The End of Secularism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, p. 107.

44 George, Robert P. 1999. “A Clash of Orthodoxies.” *First Things*. August/September. Pp. 33-40, p. 40.

Thus, he insists, ‘Secularism is a philosophical doctrine that stands or falls depending on whether its propositions can withstand arguments advanced against them by representatives of other traditions.’⁴⁵

Since secularism, as it now flourishes in elite and academic circles, is anything but neutral, it does not deserve – any more than does Christianity or Islam – to enjoy a monopoly position in public discourse, in scholarly debate, or in education at any level. Thus, ‘[w]e can live in peace with secularity; we cannot live in peace with secularism as an ideal commanding its own realization in history.’⁴⁶

While in Europe, at present, the secularist intolerance is primarily directed against Islam, in the United States Christianity – at least in its more fervent forms – is also a target and ‘unfounded allegations that Christians are attempting to form a theocracy’⁴⁷ compete with charges that Muslims seek to impose *shari‘a* law on their fellow-citizens. Interviews with American secularists found that these

individuals may possess anti-Christian animosity in part due to fear of Christians imposing religious values on society. These respondents discuss a world in which our society is either religious or secular. Like their religious and political opponents, such respondents may have a dichotomous view, in this case one that advocates for a secular rather than religious society. ... Many respondents feared that Christians are plotting to take power illegally and dishonestly. They deeply dreaded a day when conservative Christians had fully infiltrated the government and ruled over the United States with an iron and intolerant fist.⁴⁸

The sociologists who conducted this study observe that the fact that ‘some with anti-Christian animosity held European societies up as the ideal sheds light on their ultimate goal. They desire a secularized society with limited Christian influence.’⁴⁹

While secularism may at one time have been based on a clearly-articulated humanism, it seems that today, at least in its popular forms, it is primarily a reaction against perceived threats from theistic religion. Historian Wilfred McClay has pointed out that ‘Secularism in our day boasts no energizing vision and no revolutionary élan. Instead, it must await the excesses of the Religious Right or some similar foe [such as Islam] to make its case, stir up its fading enthusiasm, and rally its remaining troops. Secularism sits uneasy upon its throne, a monarch that dares not speak its proper name, and dares not openly propound its agenda.’⁵⁰ This is undoubtedly the answer to then-Cardinal Ratzinger’s question, ‘Why in the varied panorama of secularism is there a prominent fringe that resolutely denies the right of a public presence to the Christian faith and its values?’⁵¹ This intolerant secularism owes whatever vitality it possesses to its opposition to clearly-articulated beliefs and acts based on such beliefs.

Philosopher Marcello Pera, former President of the Italian Senate, has charged that

[w]ith its words, liberal secularism preaches freedom, tolerance, and democracy, but with its deeds it attacks precisely that Christian tradition which prevents freedom from deteriorating into license, tolerance into indifference, democracy into anarchy. ... Today’s secularism is different. It views religion as an obstacle to coexistence, science, technology, progress, and human well-being. ... traditional secularism [really, secularity] created an open society (especially in

45 George, Robert P. 1999. “A Clash of Orthodoxies.” *First Things*. August/September. Pp. 33-40, p. 40.

46 Novak, David. 2002. “Jews, Christians, and Civil Society.” *First Things*. February. Pp. 26-33. February-March, p. 28.

47 Yancey, George. 2015. *Hostile Environment: Understanding an Responding to Anti-Christian Bias*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, p. 133.

48 Yancey, George and David A. Williamson. 2015. *So Many Christians, So Few Lions: Is There Christianophobia in the United States?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 53-54.

49 Yancey, George and David A. Williamson. 2015. *So Many Christians, So Few Lions: Is There Christianophobia in the United States?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 106.

50 McClay, Wilfred M. 2000. “Two Concepts of Secularism.” *The Wilson Quarterly*, 24, 3. Summer. Pp. 54-71, p. 58.

51 Ratzinger, Joseph. 2006. “Letter to Marcello Pera.” In *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*. New York: Basic Books, p. 114.

America), whereas today's secularism, in spite of its best intentions, is reducing our states to arenas of religious conflict (especially in Europe). ... Those who preach the relativity of values have renounced their own identity. The bitter truth is that the West is afraid of religion, and of its own religion first of all.⁵²

Pera contends that this unwillingness to accept the role of religion in the lives of many people leads to a 'feebleness of European identity' and thus 'is detrimental both to the European hosts and to the immigrants'.⁵³

Inevitably, it is a source of conflict of the sort that most West European countries experienced in the nineteenth century and eventually found political compromises to allay, allowing communities of faith to function in discrete spheres within a neutral public framework. They seem reluctant to apply such compromises to the new Muslim presence and its demands; 'the general approach to Islam in Europe has mostly revolved around the question as to 'whether Muslim communities can really adjust to Europe,' rather than 'whether the institutions and ideologies of Europe can adjust to a modern world of which culturally diverse immigrants are an integral part'.⁵⁴

This is a short-sighted response to deeply-rooted religious convictions, since '[i]f the state is going to interfere with the ability of the religious to build a religious world in which to live, we can hardly expect those religious people not to try to use politics as a way of building a world more to their liking'.⁵⁵ Surely it is unwise – as well as an offense against human rights – to make the peaceable expression of religious convictions the target of unjustified aggression, especially when that aggression is by the government. It is especially unwise when it results in reinforcing the marginality of the future creators of a well-integrated Western Islam.

French-style secularity doesn't take care of matters: by chasing religion from the public sphere, it confines it to the margins and to the radicals. Salafism is well-adapted to marginality, for it desires it. The Islam of the successful, of the middle class, desires, by contrast, recognition, institutionalization, and [public] presence. And how do we react? By wanting to forbid the *hijab* at universities! By so doing, we affect precisely the future elites, the very ones who, integrated and credentialed, will be in a position to invent an Islam that is "practical" and reconciled.⁵⁶

After all, it is not as though Islam were not able to adapt itself to many different cultural situations, as it has over the centuries of its expansion over Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe.

Secularism, under the guise of a supposed neutrality, has penetrated deeply into the practices and the prevailing atmosphere of schools, in the name of promoting among youth an autonomy possible only by rejecting 'imposed beliefs and values' such as those of the family. Such a quest of 'authenticity,' critics point out, produces a 'pathless wasteland without heritage, traditions, or monuments. As a result, public school children act as autonomous arbiters of truth, deciding for themselves what has value and meaning. This is not enculturation or education; it is moral idiocy and cultural self-destruction'.⁵⁷

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- 52 Pera, Marcello. 2011. *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies*. New York: Encounter Books, pp. 5 & 7.
- 53 Pera, Marcello. 2011. *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies*. New York: Encounter Books, p. 117.
- 54 Mavelli, Luca. 2012. *Europe's Encounter with Islam: The Secular and the Postsecular*. London: Routledge, p. 2.
- 55 Carter, Stephen L. 2000. *God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics*. New York: Basic Books, p.3.
- 56 Roy, Olivier. 2016. *Le Djihad et la Mort*. Paris: Seuil, p. 165.
- 57 Heath, Bradley. 2006. *Millstones & Stumbling Blocks: Understanding Education in Post-Christian America*. Tuscon, AZ: Fenestra Books, p. 79.

IV. Development of Secularism in its French Homeland

While *secularization* or counter-secularization, or both, as sociological processes have been occurring in recent decades in most countries, and almost all Western governments have adopted official *secularity* or neutrality among religious and non-religious worldviews, the development of the ideology of *secularism* is most closely associated with France. The term *laïcité* itself, Baubérot insists, is ‘francophone’: ‘this means that what we designate concretely by the term ‘*laïcité*’ was historically constructed in France in a special way [*de façon privilégiée*].⁵⁸ Officially, ‘on an institutional level, France claims to be the only secular [*laïque*] country of the European Community.’⁵⁹ Thus, in focusing our historical discussion on France, we are considering a special case, but one that is the source of the widespread intellectual and cultural fashion of secularism.

We should remember that the nihilistic secularism so prevalent today had its origin in the laudable aspiration to provide popular schooling consistent with a dawning era of political freedom, and in reaction to a Catholic Church that – in the spirit of the papal encyclical *Mirari Vos* (August 15, 1832) – could attack the ‘absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that *liberty of conscience* must be maintained for everyone.’⁶⁰ These struggles were especially acute in France, and led to the development of secularism as crusading faith.

Several ineffective efforts were made after the Revolution of 1789 to use popular schooling as an instrument for replacing loyalty to the Catholic Church with that to the new Republic, but the first effective effort by a French government to promote popular schooling was in the early 1830s, under the leadership of historian François Guizot.⁶¹ Although Guizot was careful to pay tribute (as did his American contemporary Horace Mann) to the centrality of a moralized religion in elementary instruction, some Catholic leaders believed that the State’s measures to centralize, regularize, and provide direction to schooling was an attack on educational freedom. A Committee for the Defense of Educational Freedom was founded in 1843, and the prominent Catholic layman Charles Montalembert published a blistering “war cry” entitled *The Duty of Catholics in the Question of Educational Freedom*, charging that France was the only country in the world where an official atheism reigned.⁶²

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In the wake of the Revolution of 1848, an association of socialist teachers asserted that ‘the day has arrived, teaching having become a true priesthood, that the teacher becoming the priest of a new world will be charged with replacing the impotent (as he is today) Catholic priest, with conducting men into the way of truth.’⁶³ During the period of reaction that followed, the role of parish priests in relation to village and town schools was seen by conservatives as a safeguard against what – rightly or wrongly, and probably a little of each – were considered the radical tendencies of schoolteachers. Montalembert described ‘two armies face to face, each of about thirty to forty thousand men: the army of teachers and the army of priests. The demoralizing and anarchical army of teachers must be countered by the army of priests.’⁶⁴

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the control and character of popular schooling became a constant political issue in France. ‘Anticlericalism,’ a term first used around 1862, came to be a rallying point for opponents of Napoleon III and, as Rémond points out, was ‘not religious

58 Baubérot, Jean. 1996. “Genèse du Concept de Laïcité en Occident.” In *Islam et Laïcité: Approches Globales et Régionales*. Michel Bozdémir (Ed.). Paris: Harmattan, p. 20.

59 Bacqué-Grammont, Jean-Louis. 1996. “À Propos de la Laïcité dans l’Europe Communautaire.” In *Islam et Laïcité: Approches Globales et Régionales*. Michel Bozdémir (Ed.). Paris: Harmattan, p. 85.

60 West, John G. Jr. 1996. *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, p. 104.

61 Glenn, Charles L. 1988. *The Myth of the Common School*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

62 Jardin, A. and J. Tudesq, *La France des notables. 1. L’évolution générale, 1815-1848*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 165; Chevallier, P., Grosperin, P., and Maillot, J. 1968. *L’Enseignement français de la Révolution à nos jours*, Paris: Mouton, p. 83.

63 Chevallier, P., 1981. *La Séparation de l’église et de l’école: Jules Ferry et Léon XIII*. Paris: Fayard, p. 51.

64 Ponteil, F. 1966. *Histoire de l’enseignement en France, 1789-195*. Paris: Sirey, pp. 230-231, 235.

indifference, quite the contrary;’ it was more a counter-religion than a non-religion.⁶⁵ The *Ligue de l’enseignement*, which would prove so influential in the development of secularized public schooling, was founded by Jean Macé in 1866, and drew together ‘professors, physicians, notaries, engineers, journalists and veterinaries, masonic lawyers and liberal Protestant pastors.’⁶⁶ By the following year it had 6,000 members, and 18,000 by 1870, committed to secular schooling of the common people; by 1877 the League had 60,000 members.⁶⁷ Macé had been appalled by the realization, with the institution of universal male suffrage, that ‘the fate of France was entrusted to the will of an ignorant multitude; it was above all necessary to educate this ‘uncultivated master’.⁶⁸

It is during this period that the terms *laïque* (secular) and *laïcité* (secularity) began to be applied to a program of opposition to clerical influence on social institutions; Arsène Meunier published a book entitled ‘struggle of the clerical principle and the secular principle in education,’ insisting that ‘the State is secular, and in consequence the instruction given in its name must be secular, and if this word doesn’t seem clear, we will say that it signifies for us that public education, without being irreligious, must forget all positive religion.’⁶⁹

Apparently the first appearance of the noun *laïcité* was in 1871, in connection with a political debate over secular instruction.⁷⁰ (*Laïque*, like its equivalents in other languages, had long been in use to make distinctions within religious organizations between the clergy and others or, among the clergy, between those belonging and not belonging to religious orders.)

In England, the anti-religious campaigner George Jacob Holyoake published *The Principles of Secularism* in 1870.⁷¹ The term never acquired the combative resonance in England that it did in France, however, no doubt because the accommodationist Church of England did not represent a suitable opponent. As popular schooling spread in England, it did so with a generally Protestant coloration that was not perceived as a threat to social and political progress.⁷²

56 In France, despite hostility to schooling on a religious basis in elite circles, the rapid spread of popular schooling during this period was in schools (whether public or “free”) operated by Catholic teaching orders, which served 28.7 percent of all pupils in 1850 and 1,871,000 or 40.4 percent in 1874. There were 104,000 pupils in private and only 79,000 in public secondary schools in 1877.⁷³

Without the work of religious teaching orders, primary education in nineteenth-century France would not have expanded as quickly or as completely. The Third Republic built a secular school system based on an extensive network of Catholic-sponsored schools developed during the previous half century, in which the idea and practice of schooling were first introduced [to many communities]. Religious congregations provided affordable schools in crowded cities and remote locations, places to which lay teachers were unwilling or unable to go.⁷⁴

The fact that many Catholic teaching orders did not charge tuition had the result that, under the Second Empire, “there were three to four times as many free pupils in Catholic public schools as in lay ones. Only by 1876 had lay schools begun to catch up, but even then Catholic public schools enrolled almost

65 Rémond, R. 1985. *L’Anticléricalisme en France*, Paris, Éditions Complexe, p. 46.

66 Furet, François and Jacques Ozouf. 1977. *Lire et écrire: L’alphabétisation des français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, p. 144.

67 Mayeur, J.-M. 1973. *Les débuts de la IIIe République, 1871-1898*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 113.

68 Weill, G. 2004. *Histoire de l’idée laïque en France au XIXe siècle* (1929). Paris: Hachette, p. 300.

69 Barbier, M. 1995. *La laïcité*. Paris Éditions L’Harmattan, p. 7n.

70 Barbier, M. 1995. *La laïcité*. Paris Editions L’Harmattan, p. 6.

71 Brague, Rémi. 2013. “The Impossibility of Secular Society.” *First Things*. October. Pp. 27-31, p. 28.

72 Simon, Brian. 1960. *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870*. London: Lawrence & Wishart; Stephens, W. B. 1998. *Education in Britain, 1750-1914*. London: Macmillan.

73 Gerbod, P. 1983. “L’influence du Catholicisme sur les Stratégies Éducatives des Régimes Politiques Français de 1806 à 1906,” in *L’offre d’école*. Frijhoff, Willem (Ed.). Institut national de recherche pédagogique, p. 240.

74 Curtis, S. A. 2000. *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France*, Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, p. 8.

twice as many free pupils.” It was this which permitted rapid expansion through “congregational ability to finance schools, through private charity and without total reliance on either state or commune”.⁷⁵

After the period of political uncertainty following the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Second Empire, the 1880s began several decades of political control by a strongly anti-clerical and mildly progressive political class who described themselves (misleadingly) as “Radicals.” Radicals were in reality spokesmen for the bourgeoisie; their most constant characteristic was a determined anticlericalism that often led them to militate against the influence of the Catholic Church and of Catholicism in French society.⁷⁶

At the constituent congress of the party, the first place among reforms which had been too long postponed was said to be those targeting clericalism. “The battle has started, and we must go all the way to the end”.⁷⁷ One of the primary objectives of this group – men concerned to re-establish order and with little sympathy for social and economic reform⁷⁸ – was to create, at last, a governmental monopoly of popular schooling that would undermine so far as possible the influence of the Catholic Church. Jules Ferry, under whose political leadership the Republic extended its control over popular schooling, insisted that schools should teach a new worldview expressing the aspirations of modern society ... a program deriving in part from his deep commitment to the Positivism of Auguste Comte and to the ideas prevalent in the masonic circles frequented by Ferry and other republican political leaders.⁷⁹ Comte’s teaching, John Stuart Mill warned,

that all education should be in the hands of a centralized authority, whether composed of clergy or of philosophers, and be consequently all framed on the same model, and directed to the perpetuation of the same type, is a state of things which instead of becoming more acceptable, will assuredly be more repugnant to mankind, with every step of their progress in the unfettered exercise of their highest faculties.⁸⁰

The philosophy on the basis of which this elite would guide humanity would be “for a generation at least, the religion of the leaders, before becoming that of the subjects,” a new religion of science, progress, and humanity. Comte taught that this would have to be imposed before it would make converts. “Only when ‘the positivist party’ had gained the upper hand in the political field would the religion of Humanity be able to acquire its ‘final influence’”.⁸¹ As Mill pointed out in *On Liberty* (1859), Comte’s system aimed “at establishing (though by moral more than by legal appliances) a despotism of society over the individual surpassing anything contemplated in the political ideal of the most rigid disciplinarian among the ancient philosophers”.⁸²

The Republicans who shaped French institutions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century “had all borrowed from Comte the idea that a *spiritual power* was necessary to establish a republic ... and all ended by joining the Freemasons ... and all wanted to make the School and the University this new Church”.⁸³ “For Comte as for all his disciples, instruction and education – for the two are inseparable –

75 Curtis, S. A. 2000. *Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth-Century France*, Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, pp. 39 & 40.

76 Partin, M. O. 1969. *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anticlericalism, 1899-1905*. Durham, N. C. Duke University Press, p. 15.

77 Wiewiorka, O. and Prochasson, C. (Eds.). 1994. *La France du XXe siècle: Documents d'histoire*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 148.

78 Ozouf, M. 1982. *L'École, l'Église et la République, 1871-1914*, Paris: Cana, p. 57.

79 Legrand, L. 1961. *L'influence du Positivismisme dans l'oeuvre scolaire de Jules Ferry: Les origines de la laïcité*. Paris: Marcel Rivière.

80 Mill, J. S. 1961. *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, p. 99.

81 Burrow, J. W. 2000. *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 78; Lubac, H. de. 1995. *The Drama of Atheist Humanism (1944)*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, p. 252.

82 Mill, J. S. 1975. *On Liberty*. New York: W.W. Norton, p. 15.

83 Nicolet, C. 1982. *L'idée républicaine en France (1789-1924)*, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 156-157.

were at the very base of the regeneration of humanity.” Their educational program forbade “all illusory questioning about prime causes or final ends, which absolutely excluded all transcendence.”⁸⁴

Consistent with the Comtean belief in the necessity of a unifying worldview, state schools, according to Ferry and such allies as Ferdinand Buisson (director of elementary education for many years) were not simply to be independent of Church influence but were to teach a *moralité laïque*, a set of beliefs and behaviors which Buisson did not hesitate to call a “secular faith.”⁸⁵ Buisson, a former Protestant minister who had become too liberal in his theology for a church career, had urged his hearers, in 1868, to “wait patiently for the definitive fall of the debris of the supernatural through the force of things and the development of humanity.”⁸⁶

It was, as Radical Paul Bert (another liberal Protestant) insisted, “the supreme task of the school” to create “elevated sentiments, a single thought, a common faith” among the French people. “This is the religion of the Fatherland, it is with this cult and this love, at once ardent and reasonable, that we wish to penetrate the heart and mind of the child, to impregnate him to the marrow; it is that which will constitute civic education.”⁸⁷ Buisson told the Radical Congress in 1903 that “the first duty of a Republic is to make republicans” (in Coq 1995, p. 28).⁸⁸ A quarter-century before he had instructed teachers under his charge that “confessional beliefs may vary, like political opinions; what does not vacillate is the intuition of the infinite and of the divine, of moral perfection, of justice, of devotion [to duty].”⁸⁹

This quasi-metaphysical definition of the role of public schooling led inescapably to conflict with the Catholic Church. “One does not understand the ... republicans of the 19th century if one does not realize that the anti-clerical struggle seemed to their eyes, as the result of a century of unhappy experiences, as the inevitable *precondition*, although never definitively achieved, of all future progress: literally, as the *motor* of history.” It was a matter of achieving the moral unity of the nation, more important even than its territorial or legal unity. All intermediate associations between the nation and the individual – apart from tightly-controlled local administration – were seen as an unacceptable threat to this unity. Even more challenging to the authority of the Republic was any form of transcendence which suggested a higher source of authority.⁹⁰

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In an age when philosophers were very influential among those seeking an alternative to Christianity, Charles-Bernard Renouvier urged supporters of the Republic to invoke the right of self-defense of the State. Indeed, the State “should not only provide the public service of education, but should forbid the enemies of liberty from doing so.” The “so-called liberalism of those appealing to ‘the right of the fathers of families’ to raise their children in accordance with their beliefs was in fact the [position] of the enemies of liberty. ‘The right to teach should be taken away from the Church and its affiliates; the State must take charge of the entire system of schooling.’” Schooling played such a crucial role in shaping and unifying the population that it must be seen as one of the most fundamental concerns of the State.⁹¹

Jules Ferry considered secularization “the most important social reform” and condemned Catholic schools as

establishments which are maintained as schools of counterrevolution, where one learns to detest and to curse all of the ideas which are the honor and the purpose of modern France... the youth who come out are raised in ignorance and in hatred of the ideas which are dear to us... Let

84 Nicolet, C. 1985. “Jules Ferry et la tradition positiviste,” in *Jules Ferry: Fondateur de la République*. Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, p. 28.

85 Buisson, F. 1912. *La foi laïque: Extraits de discours et d'écrits (1878-1911)*, Paris: Hachette.

86 Buisson, F. 2003. *Éducation et République*. P. Hayat (Ed.). Paris: Kimé, p. 31.

87 Bert, P. 1880. *Rapport présenté à la Chambre des Députés sur la loi de l'enseignement primaire*. Paris: Librairie de l'Académie de Médecine, pp. 48, 67, 107, 196-197.

88 Coq, G. 1995. *Laïcité et République: Le lien nécessaire*. Paris: Edition du Félin, p. 28.

89 Buisson, F. 2003. *Éducation et République*. P. Hayat (Ed.). Paris: Kimé, p. 83.

90 Nicolet, C. 1982. *L'idée républicaine en France (1789-1924)*, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 273, 447, 484

91 Blais, M.-C. 2000. *Au principe de la République: Le cas Renouvier*, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 331 & 334-335.

this go on for ten years more, this blindness, and you will see all this lovely system of liberty of instruction ... crowned by a last liberty, the liberty of civil war.⁹²

Thus popular schooling was a matter of fundamental self-protection for a republican regime, Ferry as Minister of Public Instruction told the Chamber of Deputies in 1879, asking whether the moment and the situation were such that “a republican government should ... deliver the direction of young minds to the anarchy of opinions, and to ... abandon to chance the intellectual development of the nation?”⁹³

Renouvier and Ferry were concerned not only about the strong role of Catholic teaching congregations in providing popular schooling in communal schools, but also about the growing attractiveness of Catholic private secondary schools.⁹⁴ “The old Radical leader Henri Brisson expressed one of the greatest trepidations of anticlericals when he wrote that ‘unless the state recovers its rights over education, modern France will perish through division’.”⁹⁵ By contrast,

to establish the secular school was also to set consciences free from the “retrograde spirit.” Ferry and his collaborators ... estimated that the Church was a obscurantist force, fated to disappear. The secular idea consisted of a precise ideological orientation and was inseparable from a system of thought. One touches there the double face of secularity: is it the acceptance of a factual situation, that of the neutrality of the State, of its refusal to profess a religion or a philosophy, or is it not a distinctive philosophy or rationalist, indeed anti-religious, inspiration? The “secular credo” that especially the moral [school] manuals diffused drew upon two neighboring sources, Kantian morality ... and liberal Protestantism.⁹⁶

Secularity, as understood in the Third Republic and since, was not neutrality but rather a way of taking sides between two conceptions of the State and of private life, a choice of what society should be like.⁹⁷ Buisson insisted that “we do not accept that the school be neutral in the absolute and total sense of that word, which would be an unsustainable exaggeration... the school founded by the Republic is a school of republican defense and action ... *laïque* in spirit, *laïque* in methods, *laïque* in doctrine.”⁹⁸

An historian of the period comments that “the discussion and adoption of the Ferry laws occurred in an atmosphere of battle which left the two camps, that of the republican majority and that of the Catholic minority, in a state of continuing hostility.” The influential bishop of Angers condemned, in vain, “the desire to teach all the youth of a country and to throw them into a single and identical mold, even though ... they pretend not to have a state doctrine with respect to religion, or to philosophy, or to history, or to all the rest.” After all, he said on another occasion, “not to talk to the child about God for seven years, while teaching him six hours a day, is to make him believe that God does not exist or that there is no need to be concerned about him.”⁹⁹

In 1902 – the same year that the National Association of Freethinkers was founded, with Ferdinand Buisson as its president – the Radical government ordered that all schools operated by Catholic teaching congregations, described by Prime Minister Combes as “foyers of moral insurrection against the Republic,” be closed. While a law adopted the previous year had given all citizens the right to form associations, an exception was made for members of religious congregations. In 1903, nearly 20,000

92 Legrand, L. 1961. *L'influence du Positivisme dans l'oeuvre scolaire de Jules Ferry: Les origines de la laïcité*. Paris: Marcel Rivière, pp. 144-145.

93 Ferry, J. 1996. *La République des citoyens*, I. O. Rudelle (Ed.). Paris: Paris: Imprimerie Nationale. Fillon, François. 2016. *Vaincre le Totalitarisme Islamique*. Paris: Albin Michel, p. 389.

94 Cholvy, G. and Hilaire, Y.-M. 1985. *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine, 1800-1880*, I, Paris: Editions Privat, p. 227.

95 Partin, M. O. 1969. *Waldeck-Rousseau, Combes, and the Church: The politics of anticlericalism, 1899-1905*. Durham, N. C. Duke University Press, p. 56.

96 Mayeur, J.-M. 1973. *Les débuts de la IIIe République, 1871-1898*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 114.

97 Prost, A. 1992. *Éducation, société et politiques: Une histoire de l'enseignement en France de 1945 à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 64.

98 Buisson, F. 2003. *Éducation et République*. P. Hayat (Ed.). Paris: Kimé, p. 310.

99 Chevallier, P., 1981. *La Séparation de l'église et de l'école: Jules Ferry et Léon XIII*. Paris: Fayard, pp. 253, 286, 306.

members of religious orders were expelled from the country, and a law adopted in 1904 forbade them to teach, no matter how many government-recognized qualifications they had obtained or how long they had served faithfully in public schools.¹⁰⁰

Some secular activists began to advocate a state monopoly of schooling.¹⁰¹ Opponents of religion were found not only in the masonic lodges but also in more than a thousand organizations of “freethinkers,” “pursuing ardently the completion of the work of the French Revolution and intervening in all sectors of the life of the country to secularize the State and the society, to ensure the complete *laïcité* of the French spirit.” Educational freedom, they insisted, was merely a sophism as long as there was a church seeking to distort the souls of children: “there can be no freedom in the presence of clericalism.”¹⁰²

Efforts of these militantly secular groups to create charitable associations and other institutions parallel to those maintained by Catholics were generally unsuccessful; nor was there great popular interest in books such as *The Small Catechism of the Atheist*. Charles Péguy pointed out in 1904 that “the profound vice of secular catechisms is dogmatism.” Just like the Catholic materials to which they objected, these secular schoolbooks were not concerned with liberating the human spirit; “they are religious catechisms especially dedicated to the ritual cult of a new god which is the modern State.”¹⁰³

France thus sought to shape the hearts and minds of the rising generation through popular schooling; Socialist leader Jean Jaurès would insist that “moral instruction should be the first thought of our teachers.”¹⁰⁴ The education provided in the state’s own schools made no pretense of neutrality; indeed, those who shaped it would have regarded a value-neutral school as an abomination.

Sociologist and professor of education Émile Durkheim left the teachers who read his posthumous book on moral education (1925) with the conviction that they had a more significant role than did parents in the formation of future citizens. “The center of gravity of moral life, formerly in the family, tends increasingly to shift away from it. The family is now becoming an agency secondary to the state.” Teachers in public schools saw themselves, and were seen, as being on the front lines of this struggle with clericalism and religious obscurantism. After all, Durkheim assured them, “the teacher ... must believe, not perhaps in himself or in the superior quality of his intelligence or will, but in his task and the greatness of that task. ... Just as the priest is the interpreter of God, he is the interpreter of the great moral ideas of his time and country.”¹⁰⁵

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Durkheim was in a sense echoing what education official Ferdinand Buisson had written, decades before, in his widely-used *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, describing the role of the teacher as “incompatible with neutrality, or indifference, or obligatory silence on all moral, philosophical, and religious questions.” After all, the teacher “continues to have charge of souls.”¹⁰⁶ There is ample evidence, in fact, that teachers sometimes overstepped the line of neutrality. Many teachers saw themselves as exercising a sort of secular apostolate to counter the influence of the local parish priest and perhaps the competing school operated by a religious order. “Often prolonging their classes, where defense of secularity was often confused with daily lessons, by organizing external activities” to the same end, including secular processions to counter those organized on saints’ days by Catholic schools. A Federation of Secular Youth, supported by many teachers, held its first congress in 1902, affirming that “Christianity is the enemy of all life, of all progress.”¹⁰⁷

100 Chevallier, P., Groperrin, P., and Maillet, J. 1968. *L’Enseignement français de la Révolution à nos jours*, Paris: Mouton, p. 139.

101 Ozouf, M. 1982. *L’École, l’Église et la République, 1871-1914*, Paris: Cana, p. 231.

102 Lalouette, J. 1997. *La Libre Pensée en France*, Paris: Albin Michel, p. 292.

103 Péguy, C. 1959. “Avertissement” (1904), in *Oeuvres en prose, 1898-1908*, Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, p. 1355.

104 Thomson, D. 1969. *Democracy in France since 1870*. Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, p. 146.

105 Durkheim, E. 1973. *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (1925). Wilson, E. K. and Schnurer, H. (Trans.). New York: Free Press Paperback, pp. 75 & 155.

106 Mayeur, J.-M. 1973. *Les débuts de la IIIe République, 1871-1898*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, p. 155.

107 Rebérioux, M. 1975. *La République radicale? 1898-1914*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, pp. 45-47.

“Confusing neutrality with secularity,” Ferdinand Buisson, by then a Radical-Socialist deputy, “reaffirmed the existence of a body of universal values on the basis of which ‘legitimate scholastic activities’ should be based.” Déloye comments that “an entire conception of human nature is claimed here, that of a possible and even desirable separation between membership in a common humanity and specific membership in certain social groups. In thus disassociating the individual from his religious or philosophical convictions, this universalistic conception of man – that of the textbooks of morality and of civic instruction of the secular school – makes it possible to put in place a differentiated political role: that of a citizen who emancipates himself from his primary memberships which carry particularist values and favor exclusivity”.¹⁰⁸ This emancipation was, above all, from religious associations.

Buisson and his allies succeeded in creating, during the three decades before the First World War, an educational system based upon a secular worldview that claimed universality and relegated all other ways of understanding reality to the sphere of personal preference and – implicitly – into the dustbin of history. They claimed to have uncovered the truth behind all religions, a universal morality that had supplied whatever vitality religions had possessed and could now be appreciated and adopted as a secular creed, taking a dogmatic position “on the nature of human beings, the goals of life, and its values”.¹⁰⁹ Thus “Ferdinand Buisson’s political project was to forge a religion that would be not only more religious than the dominant Catholicism, but above all would have more power of seduction, of persuasion, of adherence”.¹¹⁰ The secularity of those who forged the modern French system of popular schooling was thus by no means religiously-neutral.

It is for this reason that French public schools could not tolerate even the mute expression of a rival religious loyalty, as in the controversy over and eventual banning of the *hijab*. As Xavier Darcos, Minister of National Education 2007-2009 pointed out, “the school of Jules Ferry was in effect the product of militant convictions.” There was “no ideological, political or cultural neutrality”.¹¹¹ This was emphasized even more strongly by one of his successors, Vincent Peillon, who served as Minister under a Socialist government. In September 2013 Peillon issued a *Charte de la laïcité à l’École* and required that it be displayed in all elementary and secondary schools. The Charter begins: “The Nation entrusts to schools the mission of making pupils share the values of the Republic. The Republic is secular. The school is secular.” But Peillon does not hesitate to assert the religious character of the education that French public schools should provide, insisting that “*laïcité*, as the Republic’s doctrine, is inseparably philosophical, moral, political, religious, [and] pedagogical, and it is important to articulate together, as Ferdinand Buisson always did, these five inseparable dimensions”.¹¹² This would be a substitute religion, since, he wrote,

it is necessary at the same time to uproot the Catholic imprint, which does not fit with the Republic, and find, beyond traditional religious forms, a substitute religion that would be able to inscribe, even into customs, hearts, flesh, the republican values and spirit without which republican institutions are bodies without souls.¹¹³

This “republican religion is a religion of human rights, that is, of Man who must make himself God, together with others, here below”.¹¹⁴

Nor does Peillon shrink from insisting that these human rights do not include any limit on the role of the State in shaping the hearts and minds of the young. “Do we have to imagine that the Republic, as a result of [its] secularity, ‘stops on the threshold of the conscience’ with the goal of preserving their

108 Déloye, Y. 1994. *École et citoyenneté*, Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques. De Vries, Hent and Lawrence E. Sullivan. 2006. “Preface.” In Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (Eds.). *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. New York: Fordham University Press. Pp. ix-xii, p. 306.

109 Baubérot, Jean. 1996. “Genèse du Concept de Laïcité en Occident.” In *Islam et Laïcité: Approches Globales et Régionales*. Michel Bozdémir (Ed.). Paris: Harmattan, pp. 15 & 22.

110 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, p. 274.

111 Darcos, X. 2005. *L’école de Jules Ferry, 1880-1905*, Paris: Hachette, p. 11.

112 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, p. 29.

113 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, p. 34.

114 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, p. 35.

freedom? Isn't that to confuse confessional neutrality with moral or political neutrality?" Instead, "the school of the Republic must teach a morality which is more than a collection of rules, but rather a 'state of the soul,' that which is the religious essence of religions. The secular religion is not a fake religion. It is the most religious of religions" (Peillon 2010, pp. 193, 231).¹¹⁵

Peillon is unapologetic that "secularity [*laïcité*] is not confessional neutrality or a legalism, not even a simple toleration, but a religious, philosophical, political affirmation with great coherence and great power, and also with great precision." In fact, "secularity's purpose is to formulate the theological-political disposition appropriate to a democratic and social republic" (Peillon 2010, p. 261).¹¹⁶

Secularity, then, as a militant faith, or what it would be more accurate to call the ideology of "secularism" (*laïcisme*), is not content to ensure a public space, and public education, where no religion can dominate, but is determined itself to be dominant, and to use that dominance as a monopoly on the formation of beliefs and loyalties. The invocation of *laïcité* on all occasions, including what women should wear to the beach, is a way of appearing to uphold tolerance and the equal treatment of all citizens, while in fact imposing a particular view of reality which is anything but tolerant, anything but open to freedom of conscience.

Although France is the leading example of secularism as what could be called an "established faith," it is by no means alone in this respect. As legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon puts it, "there is limited room in the American public square for conversation, contention, and compromise among a wide variety of moral actors. State-sponsored secularism, legally tightening its control, is ever more openly intolerant of rival belief systems."¹¹⁷

V. Post-Secularity among the Intellectuals

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On the other hand, there has been a re-evaluation of religion by influential intellectuals who had previously tended to dismiss it. Concern about the effects of secularization, for example, has been expressed recently by resolutely-secular philosophers Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls. Habermas asked, in a published exchange with then-Cardinal Ratzinger, whether "a society with a plurality of world views can achieve a normative stabilization – that is, something that goes beyond a mere *modus vivendi* – through the assumption of a background understanding that will at best remain on the formal level, limited to questions of procedures and principles."¹¹⁸ In other words, whether the secularist reliance upon commonly-accepted rules resting on no firmer foundation than a willingness to cooperate for the common good can serve as a stable basis for the society and nation. He had come to recognize that we

find in sacred scriptures and religious traditions intuitions about error and redemption, about the salvific exodus from a life that is experienced as empty of salvation; these have been elaborated in a subtle manner over the course of millennia and have been kept alive through a process of interpretation... . I am referring to adequately differentiated possibilities of expression and to sensitivities with regard to lives that have gone astray, with regard to societal pathologies, with regard to the failure of individuals' plans for their lives, and with regard to the deformation and disfigurement of the lives that people share with one another.¹¹⁹

115 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 193 & 231.

116 Peillon, V. 2010. *Une religion pour la République: La foi laïque de Ferdinand Buisson*. Paris: Seuil, p. 261.

117 Glendon, Mary Ann. 2004. "The Naked Public Square Now: A Symposium." *First Things*. November, p. 12.

118 Habermas, J. 2006. "Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?" In Ratzinger, J. Cardinal and Habermas, J. *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. McNeil, B. (Ed.). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, p.22.

119 Habermas, J. 2006. "Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?" In Ratzinger, J. Cardinal and Habermas, J. *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. McNeil, B. (Ed.). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp. 43-44.

Habermas writes that “enlightened reason” of the sort that he has long advocated as the basis for political life “unavoidably loses its grip on the images, preserved by religion, of the moral whole – of the Kingdom of God on earth – as collectively binding ideals.” The nation/state requires such ideals; after all, “as a constitutional democracy, it depends on a mode of legitimation founded on convictions”¹²⁰ rather than on compulsion. These convictions, to the extent that they are religious, are nurtured within communities of faith and can be difficult to sustain otherwise, in the face of negation by a prevailing culture that does not recognize the authority of such religious perspectives.

Secular morality, according to Habermas, has an insecure and shifting foundation, since it “is not inherently embedded in communal practices. Religious consciousness, by contrast, preserves an essential connection to the ongoing practice of life within a community”¹²¹. As a result, secular morality tends to have shallow roots: it is a lowest-common-denominator drawn from many sources but not strongly-anchored in any and subject to constant re-negotiation as fashion and individual interests dictate.

Habermas is concerned about the hollowing-out of the sources of citizenship, and notes that “‘Religion’ owes its legitimizing force to the fact that it draws its power to convince from its own roots. It is rooted, *independently of politics*, in notions of salvation and calamity (*Heil und Unheil*) and in corresponding practices of coping with redemptive and menacing forces”¹²². Rootedness is the source of religion’s persistent power. In particular, “vital and nonfundamentalist religious communities can become a transformative force at the center of a democratic civil society – all the more so when frictions between religious and secular voices provoke inspiring controversies on normative issues and thereby stimulate an awareness of their relevance”¹²³.

Craig Calhoun comments that “Habermas sees political liberalism as in need of new moral insights and commitments and recognizes religion as a potential source of renewal.” Calhoun goes further by asserting that “[r]eligiously-informed actors, including Christian fundamentalists in America and Islamists in Europe, matter so much in contemporary political life that we endanger the future of the democratic polity if we cannot integrate them into the workings of public reason”¹²⁴. As Nicolas Sarkozy asked, when he was Interior Minister, “if we come to the conclusion that Islam is incompatible with democracy, then what do we do with the millions of Muslim French citizens?”¹²⁵ Some accommodation with faith-based motivations is in order, and it is increasingly clear that it will have to be a mutual accommodation, a commitment to a significant measure of pluralism in public life. “What will a Europe committed to secularity in its public life,” George Weigel asks, “do with people whose presence in Europe is economically essential but whose outlook is resolutely, even aggressively, unsecular?” (Weigel 2005, p.140).

This will require a redefinition of secularity, as no longer an intolerant ideology or a monolithic agnosticism but rather an arrangement permitting many voices, many perspectives on human flourishing, to be heard and respected in a pluralistic democracy.

120 Habermas, J. 2010. “An Awareness of What is Missing.” In *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Cronin, C. (Trans.). Cambridge (UK): Polity Press, pp. 19-20.

121 Habermas, J. 2010. “An Awareness of What is Missing.” In *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age*. Cronin, C. (Trans.). Cambridge (UK): Polity Press, p. 75.

122 Habermas, J. 2011. “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology.” In Mendieta, E. and Van Antwerpen, J. (Eds.). *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 17.

123 Habermas, J. 2011. “‘The Political’: The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology.” In Mendieta, E. and Van Antwerpen, J. (Eds.). *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 25.

124 Calhoun, C. 2011. “Afterword: Religion’s Many Powers.” In *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*. Mendieta, E. and Van Antwerpen, J. (Eds.). New York: Columbia University Press, p. 127.

125 Roy, Olivier. 2013. *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*. Schwartz, R. (Trans.). Oxford University Press, p. 192.

John Rawls, like Habermas, came to a late recognition that the processes of democratic governance and of life together in society could not rest on democratic proceduralism alone, but must draw upon the beliefs, including religious convictions, of citizens.

The roots of democratic citizens' allegiance to their political conceptions lie in their respective comprehensive doctrines, both religious and nonreligious. In this way citizens' allegiance to the democratic ideal of public reason is strengthened for the right reasons. We may think of the reasonable comprehensive doctrines that support society's reasonable political conceptions as those conceptions' vital social basis, giving them enduring strength and vigor.¹²⁶

Rawls concedes the special ability of religious convictions to ground the qualities required for life together in society. As Kwame Anthony Appiah summarizes this argument, "public reason, far from requiring citizens to suspend or withdraw their religious convictions, in fact presupposes that citizens have a variety of comprehensive conceptions, including religious ones, whose 'overlapping consensus' is consistent with the institutions of liberal democracy".¹²⁷ Rawls concludes that "[t]here is, or need be, no war between religion and democracy. In this respect political liberalism is sharply different from and rejects Enlightenment Liberalism, which historically attacked orthodox Christianity".¹²⁸

At the same time that religion and faith-based associations and organizations are being taken more seriously in policy circles, the ideology of secularism has awakened from the complacency in which it had been slumbering and taken on a newly-aggressive form, attacking religious expression – especially if Christian or Muslim – in a way that would have seemed in bad taste as well as unnecessary only a few years ago. What John Dewey called for in 1934, to make the secular faith "explicit and militant",¹²⁹ is now very much on the agenda of the "progressive" forces in Western societies.

Those jokingly called the "Four Horsemen of the New Atheism" (Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*, Richard Dawkins of *The God Delusion*, Daniel Dennett of *Breaking the Spell*, and Christopher Hitchens of *God Is Not Great*) have not hesitated to challenge even the right of parents to seek to pass on their religious convictions to their own children. Thus Dawkins, quite in the spirit of Plato's Republic, "suggests that parents should be replaced by the state: 'How much do we regard children as being the property of their parents? It's one thing to say people should be free to believe whatever they like, but should they be free to impose their beliefs on their children?'" (in Miller 2012, p. 84). In effect, the partial retreat of *secularity*, the enforced absence of religion from the "public square," has called forth a hostile reaction on the part of the elite arbiters of culture, a militant *secularism* unwilling to tolerate religious expression and behavior.

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VI. The Persistence of Religious Belief and Practice

Stephen Carter has been an eloquent voice for insisting that religion continues to play an essential role despite, and indeed because of, the prevailing materialism of our times.

In a nation grown increasingly materialistic and increasingly involved in urging satisfaction of desire as the proper subject of both the market and politics, the religious voice, at its best, is perhaps the only remaining force that can call us to something higher and better than thinking

126 Rawls, J. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*, with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited". Harvard University Press, p. 153.

127 Appiah, K. A. 2005. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton University Press, p. 81.

128 Rawls, J. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*, with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited". Harvard University Press, p. 176.

129 Dewey, J. 1986. "A Common Faith" (1934), in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953*, 9: 1933-1934. Boydston, J. A. (Ed.). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, p. 58.

constantly about our own selves, our own wants, our own rights. Politics without religion must necessarily be, in today's America, the politics of *me*.¹³⁰

Historian Wilfred McClay makes a similar point: "religion is an indispensable counterweight and resource for upholding human dignity and moral order, for speaking truth to power".¹³¹ And even the late Samuel Huntington conceded that, "the religious resurgence throughout the world is a reaction against secularism, moral relativism, and self-indulgence, and a reaffirmation of the values of order, discipline, work, mutual help, and human solidarity. Religious groups meet social needs left untended by state bureaucracies".¹³²

Despite constant predictions of the final demise of religion – and sociological evidence of the decline of religious belief and practice in most European countries – it persists in making its presence known in countless familiar and unfamiliar ways. Journalist and public intellectual Walter Lippmann noted this in his influential *A Preface to Morals* (1929), at a time when religion seemed in full retreat in the face of triumphant modernism. "Among those who no longer believe in the religion of their fathers," Lippmann wrote, "some are proudly defiant, and many are indifferent. But there are also a few, perhaps an increasing number, who feel that there is a vacancy in their lives." Lippmann, while not advocating a return to traditional beliefs, wrote for "those who are perplexed by the consequences of their own irreligion," those who "having lost their faith, ... have lost the certainty that their lives are significant, and that it matters what they do with their lives," who "believed with Shelley that when 'the loathsome mask has fallen,' man, exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king over himself, would then be 'free from guilt or pain.' This was the orthodox liberalism to which men turned when they had lost the religion of their fathers, But the promises of liberalism have not been fulfilled".¹³³

Almost nine decades later, to those not blinded by unshakeable secularist convictions, "to raise the chant of secular humanism, resolute atheism, the religion of secularism, or the sacredness of *laïcité* seems no more than whistling in the dark, vainly hoping that the specter of 'religion,' roaming like a zombie, dead-alive, through the political landscapes of the modern world, will go away (again). A different form of political, legal, cultural, and even psychological accommodation may need to be envisioned".¹³⁴ This is indeed the challenge of our time, in both Europe and North America, and it requires abandoning – as Habermas and Rawls, and sociologists like Peter Berger insist – the comfortable assumption that strongly-held religions will lapse into gentle and unchallenging forms of spirituality, or that societies can get along very well without the strong associational ties and moral mentoring provided by faith-based communities. After all,

a liberal democratic ethos, where it is uncorrupted by utilitarianism or me-generation expressive individualism, supports the dignity of the human person by giving witness to basic human rights and liberties. Where a healthy religious life flourishes, faith in God provides a grounding for the dignity and inviolability of the human person by, for example, proposing an understanding of each and every member of the human family, even someone of a different faith or professing no particular faith, as a person made in the image and likeness of the divine Author of our lives and liberties.¹³⁵

But how should contemporary societies come to terms with the presence among them of individuals and groups whose convictions set them at odds with most of their fellow citizens? This includes not only Muslims who continue to hold to cultural practices prevalent in their countries of origin, but the new

130 Carter, Stephen L. 2000. *God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics*. New York: Basic Books, p. 5.
 131 McClay, Wilfred M. 2000. "Two Concepts of Secularism." *The Wilson Quarterly*, 24, 3. Summer, p. 34.
 132 Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 98.
 133 Lippmann, Walter. 1964. *A Preface to Morals* (1929). New York: Time-Life Books, pp. 3 & 6.
 134 De Vries, Hent & Sullivan, Lawrence E. (Eds.). *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*. New York: Fordham University Press, p. x.
 135 George, Robert P. 2013. *Conscience and its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism*. Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, pp. 4-5.

generation of Western-born Muslims who may claim to espouse a purer form of universalized Islam. It may include also members of Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, and other religious traditions who have been attracted to new and intense forms of those traditions that do not fit readily within existing frameworks of accommodation.

Philosopher Charles Taylor has pointed out recently that this situation poses an uncomfortable challenge, since

[f]or those who see secularism as part of modernity, and modernity as fundamentally progress, the last few decades have been painful and bewildering. Powerful political mobilizations that appear to center on religion seem to betoken a return of what had already been safely relegated to the past. Religion seemed to be wreaking a terrible revenge for its previous marginalization, not only in the world at large but even in the most powerful Western liberal democracy, the United States. Liberals spoke darkly of a relapse into the medieval, into irrationality... . What we call secularization is a process that deeply destabilized and marginalized earlier forms of religion; but, partly as a consequence of this, new forms have arisen.¹³⁶

Since these new and intense forms of religion do not fit readily into the accommodations that were worked out over the past hundred and fifty years in most Western societies, it will be necessary to recreate effective ways of negotiating their relationship with the wider societies in which they form an uncomfortable presence. Unfortunately,

[r]eligion is too often seen in Europe as divisive and threatening, and associated with bigotry and dogmatism rather than reason. The view seems to be that we need freedom from religion, not for it. All too often religion is thought of as opposed to reason. An immediate corollary of this view is that it cannot contribute to public, rational debate. It may be tolerated as the private pursuit of those who choose it, but public policy should not take account of it, let alone be grounded on any religious view. It is in this spirit that public displays of religious belief are often prohibited. That prohibition is itself a symbol of deeper attitudes concerning the public role of religion.¹³⁷

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Perhaps the European politician who has symbolized the rejection of Muslims precisely because of their religion, while denying any racial prejudice against them, is the late Pim Fortuyn, a fascinating and disturbing figure assassinated in 2002. Five years earlier, Fortuyn had published “the Islamization of our culture” (*De islamisering van onze cultuur*), a polemic which, significantly, has been republished recently.¹³⁸ His brief but highly-successful political career in Rotterdam was based in large part on his willingness to exploit resentment at the presence of Moroccans and other Muslims. Buruma suggests that Fortuyn, “and millions of others, not just in the Netherlands, but all over Europe, had painfully wrested themselves free from the strictures of their own religions. And here were these newcomers injecting society with religion once again” (Buruma 2006, p.69).¹³⁹ That should not be tolerated!

Public policies based upon such intolerant secularism cannot serve as an effective framework for the accommodation of Muslim and other religious minorities in an era when behavior motivated by religious beliefs is an inescapable presence in Western societies, as it is elsewhere in the world.

136 Taylor, Charles. 2014. *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 146.

137 Trigg, Roger. 2013. “Threats to Religious Freedom in Europe.” Witherspoon Institute. Online. June 28.

138 Fortuyn, Pim. 2016. *De Islamisering van Onze Cultuur: Nederlandse Identiteit als Fundament* (1997). Uithoorn, The Netherlands: Karakter Uitgevers.

139 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p. 69.

VII. Pluralism as the Basis of real Democracy and Freedom

It is in the nature of a totalitarian regime to seek to eliminate all the “mediating structures” (Berger & Neuhaus 1996)¹⁴⁰ that come between the State and the individual and tend to set limits upon the ability of the former to influence and control the latter. Liberal democratic regimes often boast of their respect for free expression and association in many forms ... except, sometimes, when it is based upon deeply-held religious convictions. We have taken France as a model of such intolerant secularism, though it is by no means unique, as recent developments in the United States and elsewhere have demonstrated. But is this a healthy state of affairs for a liberal democracy?

The basis for such vigilant secularism on the French model is commonly a claim that allowing religion into the public sphere will unleash irrational prejudices and bitter conflicts. But is this necessarily the case? Dutch theologian Frits de Lange offers a striking image, asking whether

France is in fact a good model for our country? We have in any case long followed another tradition. In the Netherlands government neutrality has been at least until now not primarily understood as an unbelieving politics empty of worldviews (neutrality as equal indifference), but a policy that encounters different traditions of belief and worldview without partiality (neutrality as evenhandedness)... . How could we ever want the public square to be neutral, in the sense of empty of worldviews? Such a space seems like a parking lot after closing time, windy and sinister. It seems to me that a colorful marketplace is more attractive, with many-colored stalls in which all may present their beliefs. A pluralistic culture, with the government as an evenhanded market manager in the background. A market in which some representatives of Islam are even now loudly hawking their wares. One in which Christians have to be satisfied with a shrinking stall. But where, whether on the street or on TV, in school or in the university, yes even in Parliament, God and ultimate matters are spoken about. And discussed, which is more necessary than ever (see Rosenthal 2009, p.73).¹⁴¹

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What de Lange describes as a colorful marketplace is the structural pluralism that, in the Netherlands, accepts and supports the institutional expression of divergent worldviews. Though much attenuated since the Second World War, the Dutch system of *verzuiling* (“pillarization”) nurtured organizations and institutions within each of four *zuilen*: liberal/secular, Catholic, Protestant, and Socialist. Schools were similarly *verzuild*, with only about thirty percent operated by local government.¹⁴²

While, as noted, secularization and other forces in Dutch society and culture have greatly weakened the *zuilen*, they continue to enjoy governmental support and protection of their distinctiveness. It may be, indeed, that the virtues of the “pacification” achieved when, a century ago, public policy was based on this structural pluralism are to some extent being rediscovered. There are some encouraging signs of a growing commitment to apply the arrangements that have long ensured social peace between Christian and secular institutions and movements in Europe to the new reality of a large and growing group within the Muslim minority that takes the requirements of religion more seriously, and more disruptively, than has for some time been the case with most European Catholics and Protestants.

Such a pluralist arrangement in the Dutch tradition was proposed by Amsterdam’s mayor Job Cohen. In an annual lecture at Leiden University, in 2002, Cohen stressed the importance of helping members of the Muslim minority “feel at home in a modern, secular, liberal society in which many customs and values, and indeed collective memories, clash with their own.” The Dutch “should tolerate opinions and habits even if we do not share them, or even approve of them.” He suggested reviving a form

140 Berger, Peter L. and Richard John Neuhaus. 1996. “To Empower People” (1977). Republished in Michael Novak (Ed.). *To Empower People: From State to Civil Society*, Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute.

141 Rosenthal, Irena. 2009. “The Dutch Pastorate: Pluralism Without Pain?” *Education in Conflict*. In: ter Avest (Ed.). *Münster / New York / München / Berlin: Waxmann*. Pp. 59-82, p. 73.

142 For an overview, see Glenn, Charles L. 2011. *Contrasting Models of State and School: A Comparative Historical Study of Parental Choice and State Control*. New York and London: Continuum.

of *verzuiling*. “Dutch citizens used to organize their lives through their religious affiliations. Perhaps Muslims should be encouraged to do the same.” Indeed, Cohen argued, the “easiest way to integrate these new immigrants might be through their faith. For that is just about the only anchor they have when they enter Dutch society in the twenty-first century”.¹⁴³

It is possible, at least, to detect signs of change in official statements. Although in 2007, for example, the Council of Europe asserted that “states must require religious leaders to take an unambiguous stand in favour of the precedence of human rights, as set forth in the European Convention of Human Rights, over any religious principle,’ this position was softened in a 2013 resolution on ‘the importance of upholding freedom of conscience and religion.’ The Parliamentary Assembly called on member states to ‘ensure that the religious beliefs and traditions of individuals and communities of the society are respected, while guaranteeing that a due balance is struck with the rights of others in accordance with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.’ It also stressed that states should ‘accommodate religious beliefs in the public sphere ... providing that the rights of others to be free from discrimination are respected and that the access to lawful services is guaranteed’”.¹⁴⁴ This seems to open the door to a religiously-conservative voluntary association or institution maintaining traditional sex-roles – for example, appointing only men or only women to exercise certain functions with religious significance – provided that it does not seek to impose such restrictions on those outside the organization. Such pluralist accommodation is clearly contrary to the Council’s earlier statement that “a religion whose doctrine or practice [runs] counter to other fundamental rights would be unacceptable”.¹⁴⁵

Indeed, we might wonder at the arrogance involved in judging a religion “unacceptable.” It would be more consistent with freedom of conscience simply to rule that certain behaviors associated with particular religious beliefs would be contrary to law because violating the rights of others, without presuming to condemn the beliefs themselves.

Of course, accommodations have long been made for the Catholic Church and other Christian groups, though such Jewish practices as circumcision and ritual slaughter are now sometimes challenged in Europe. The question is, will similar accommodations be made for Muslims?

More is at stake than simply the religious freedom rights of a growing minority group, though that in itself is of course a matter of fundamental principle. The most basic interests of the majority are also involved since “a vibrantly pluralistic religious life ... is the only one compatible with the fullest possible respect for the dignity of the human person. For what is religion if not the most powerful of all expressions of ultimate values – values that, if truth be told, choose us as much as we choose them?”.¹⁴⁶ Thus,

the appropriate response to the new Muslim challenges is pluralistic institutional integration, rather than an appeal to a radical public-private separation in the name of secularism... . this involves recognizing the normative significance of religion, namely, it offers identities that matter to people.¹⁴⁷

These identities, and the communities and traditions that sustain them, “provide credible sources of authority in people’s lives beyond the authority of the state.” This, in turn, can empower individuals and voluntary associations to “prophetically challenge unjust or overweening state power”¹⁴⁸ as occurred in the United States during the movement opposing racial injustice, or as occurred in Poland and elsewhere in the successful challenge to communist rule. In an era when, even in the “liberal

143 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 244-245.

144 Trigg, Roger. 2013. “Threats to Religious Freedom in Europe.” Witherspoon Institute. Online. June 28.

145 Trigg, Roger. 2013. “Threats to Religious Freedom in Europe.” Witherspoon Institute. Online. June 28.

146 McClay, Wilfred M. 2000. “Two Concepts of Secularism.” *The Wilson Quarterly*, 24, 3. Summer, pp. 54-71, p. 52.

147 Modood, Tariq. 2007. *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*. Cambridge (UK): Polity, pp. 78-79.

148 George, Robert P. 2013. *Conscience and its Enemies: Confronting the Dogmas of Liberal Secularism*. Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, p. 231.

democracies” of Europe and North America, government is with the best of intentions intruding into ever-more spheres of life, it is essential for a healthy democracy “to nurture many different centers of meaning, including many different understandings on how to find meaning, so that the state will have competition”.¹⁴⁹

A good example of careful charting of the distinction between truly-neutral secularity and intolerant secularism was provided by a government commission in Quebec chaired by sociologist Gerard and philosopher Charles Taylor. In response to increasing strains deriving from immigration, especially of Muslims, this commission held extensive hearings across the province on cultural integration, collective identity, church-state relations, and how to handle issues of cultural and religious conflict. In their 2008 report, Bouchard and Taylor affirmed the essential secularity of public policy in Quebec (a century earlier, Quebec was one of the most pervasively Catholic societies in the world)¹⁵⁰ but explicitly rejected French-style “rigid secularism” that “has been given the mission to carry out the emancipation of individuals with respect to religion,” describing this as a “conception of secularism ... based on a negative opinion of religion which sees religion as incompatible with individual autonomy and rationality.” Adopting that understanding affirms “atheists’ and agnostics’ conception of the world, and of good, and consequently does not treat with equal consideration citizens who make a place for religion in their system of beliefs and values.” Respect for the “autonomy of individuals requires that they have the means to make their own choices regarding fundamental values, whether these choices are secular, religious, or spiritual in nature”.¹⁵¹

Banishing religion and its expression in action from the public sphere may achieve, in a formal sense, “the separation of church and state, and, in one possible way, the state’s duty of neutrality, but it does not sufficiently protect religious freedom and equality.¹⁵² While public “education in France had an emancipatory mission directed against religion; the [Bouchard-Taylor] Report did not find this to be compatible with the principle of state neutrality in respect of religion and nonreligion.” In contrast with France, where “secularism was an essential component of the republic’s identity”,¹⁵³ this was not compatible with the Canadian understanding of pluralism. As Taylor would write more recently, we tend misleadingly to “think that secularism (or *laïcité*) has to do with the relation of the state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity”.¹⁵⁴

It will be noted that Taylor (like Siedentop quoted earlier) is using “secularism” in the sense of the appropriate neutrality and even benevolence of the state toward competing worldviews and faith-based communities, so long as they comply with the norms of civic life. This requires that it be

subjected to a drastic limitation of its normative claims and scope if it is to achieve its own purpose, which is the safeguarding of political pluralism in heterogeneous societies... . secularism is able to unite diverse communities of belief and practice into one political community precisely because the moral claims it makes are limited and thus unlikely to be the source of serious disagreement among citizens. In other words, the secular state is a necessary framework for negotiating ethical differences among citizens, but not for adjudicating and

149 Carter, Stephen L. 2000. *God’s Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics*. New York: Basic Books, p. 116.

150 Hughes, Everett C. 1963. *French Canada in Transition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

151 Woehrling, José. 2011. “The B-T Report ‘Open Secularism’ Model and the Supreme Court of Canada Decisions on Freedom of Religion and Religious Accommodation.” In *Religion, Culture, and the State: Reflections on the Bouchard-Taylor Report*. Howard Adelman and Pierre Anctil (Eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 86-99, p. 88.

152 Woehrling, José. 2011. “The B-T Report ‘Open Secularism’ Model and the Supreme Court of Canada Decisions on Freedom of Religion and Religious Accommodation.” In *Religion, Culture, and the State: Reflections on the Bouchard-Taylor Report*. Howard Adelman and Pierre Anctil (Eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 86-99, p. 90.

153 Adelman, Howard. 2011. “Monoculturalism versus Interculturalism in a Multicultural World.” In *Religion, Culture, and the State: Reflections on the Bouchard-Taylor Report*. Howard Adelman and Pierre Anctil (Eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 37-57, p. 48.

154 Taylor, Charles. 2014. *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 310.

resolving such differences. Consequently, secularism cannot by itself justify for believers some of its components, like constitutionalism, human rights, and citizenship. It may be necessary, indeed, to seek a religious justification for the principle of secularism itself.¹⁵⁵

There are important exceptions to the adequacy of the principle of secularity as neutrality, however, when what Taylor calls “the deeper reasons” are themselves the focus of attention, as is inevitably the case with education that goes beyond mere instruction. If everything about the curriculum and the life of a school imposes upon pupils a materialistic understanding of human life that allows no room for alternative sources of meaning and of moral direction, the effect is not neutrality but imposed secularism.

While the argument that all children should be required to attend a state-operated common school for the sake of social cohesion “violates the principle of ‘freedom of association’ which is so fundamental to a liberal and democratic society”,¹⁵⁶ it has proved remarkably persuasive in many countries where “*l'école de la République*” or its equivalent enjoys a semi-sacred aura as the primary basis for national unity. “Advocates of the imposed community [of the common public school] argue that it is precisely the lack of community outside the school, the growing pluralism, that makes its enforced presence inside necessary; children should be molded not according to parents and their community but in the image of a manufactured ideal society” (Holmes 2001, p.200).¹⁵⁷

Precisely that diversity of convictions in the broader society outside of the common public schools, however, makes it increasingly difficult to provide, within that school, a true *education* in the sense of the shaping of character and of moral convictions on the basis of a coherent understanding of the world. Only schools whose distinctive character is purposeful and guided by such a worldview – whether it be religious or secular – are capable of giving a positive shape to the character of their pupils. In schools lacking such focus, “tolerating diversity is the moral glue that holds schools together. But tolerance further precludes schools’ celebrating more focused notions of education or of character. ‘Community’ has come to mean differences peacefully coexisting rather than people working together toward some serious end”.¹⁵⁸ Such schools may instruct, but they do not educate.

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In addition to being ineffective as nurseries of character and purposeful living, schools without a distinctive ethos violate the religious freedom rights of parents whose children are compelled to attend them over the religiously-motivated objections of their families. Religious freedom, freedom of conscience, secularity rightly understood, necessarily demand educational freedom. In a society in which individuals are free to seek to live by their deepest convictions – whether religious or not – and to raise their children accordingly, it is intolerable that they be required to send their children to schools which, explicitly or implicitly, dismiss those convictions as meaningless. Only by permitting and supporting a variety of educational options, each reflecting in every aspect of its functioning a coherent understanding of the goals of education and of a flourishing human life, can freedom of conscience be protected.

Policies supporting structural pluralism in schooling as in other spheres are not just a way of avoiding conflict over fundamental differences; they are a way of showing respect for citizens for whom those differences are life-defining, and for the associations and institutions through which they give them expression and continuity. Public policies that seek to nurture the health of civil society in one of its key sectors, that of educating the next generation, should go beyond a hands-off restraint, and instead should value and promote structural pluralism through providing, as in Western Europe, public funding

155 An-Na'im, Abdullah Ahmed. 2008. *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shar'ia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 276.

156 Thiessen, Elmer John. 1993. *Teaching for Commitment: Liberal Education, Indoctrination, and Christian Nurture*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 191.

157 Holmes, Mark. 2001. “Education and Citizenship in an Age of Pluralism.” In *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti (Eds.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 187-212, p. 200.

158 Powell, Arthur G., Eleanor Farrar and David K. Cohen. 1985. *The Shopping Mall High School*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 3.

for a diversity of schools responding to the divergent beliefs and educational goals of parents.¹⁵⁹ Such arrangements should now be extended, with the same safeguards and academic expectations as exist for schools of other religions, to Islamic schools.

Those who oppose educational freedom – ironically, including many who consider themselves “progressive” and committed to human rights – often invoke the familiar argument that only the common state-operated school can create loyal citizens and prevent social divisions. In fact, however, some of the deepest social divisions and conflicts in Western societies over the past two centuries have arisen precisely from efforts to impose a single set of educational goals. Indeed, “various jurisdictions have provided partial funding to independent, mainly religious, schools; none [of these] among four Canadian provinces, all the Australian states, and England has experienced an upsurge of religious division. In contrast, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, two countries that attempted over decades of repression to erase religious and ethnic division and culture by means of common schools, failed spectacularly.”¹⁶⁰

Such examples should serve as a sufficient warning against attempts, in Western Europe, to suppress the religious distinctiveness associated with Islam. Individuals, even some with good education and economic prospects, from the second and third generations of Muslims in Western Europe might choose to join the “murderous cause” of violent jihad, “but such a choice depends partly on the way they are treated by the country in which they were born. And this depends on another choice: whether to accept an orthodox Muslim as a fellow free citizen of a European country.”¹⁶¹ This requires confronting the common but mistaken assumption that national and social unity require cultural uniformity. In fact, efforts to impose such uniformity have often been the cause of bitter conflict, all the more bitter because it asks individuals and groups to surrender essential aspects of their identity.

It is certainly true that national unity and the smooth functioning of society make demands upon individuals and groups to conform their behavior to a significant extent to shared norms. We all must comply with the same laws about traffic and countless other matters, and should also be aware of and comply with unwritten norms for social interactions. Visitors and immigrants often find the latter puzzling at first and their failure to act in public according to the expectations, the behavioral codes, of the host society can be the cause of friction and negative stereotypes.¹⁶²

Yes, there are shared norms of public behavior, and the expectation that those claiming the benefits of citizenship or permanent residence will contribute in appropriate ways to the common good. But this should not require the surrender of all distinctiveness, or the occlusion of deeply-held beliefs. Democratic pluralism understands “civil society as itself constituted by irreducibly different spheres, each with its own relative autonomy... each has its own specific goods, as well as its own specific ways of relating to need, aptitude, competence, interest, or faith” (Dunne 2003, p.109).¹⁶³ This is by no means the same thing as multiculturalism as the latter is commonly understood; it does not seek to impose a relativistic understanding of morality and the nature of a meaningful human life; rather it allows space for contrasting worldviews to be lived out with full integrity, subject only to the norms of common life.

Surely the appropriate goal, with respect to the growing minority of Europeans and new residents of Europe for whom Islam is a central aspect of identity and moral orientation, is that by being allowed space and respect for the expression of that identity, they no longer feel under attack or marginalization and that, over time, they develop “a greater measure of critical reflection, tolerance of dissent, and

159 See, Glenn, Charles L. and Jan De Groof (Eds.). 2012. *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy, and Accountability in Education*, I - IV. Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishing.

160 Holmes, Mark. 2001. “Education and Citizenship in an Age of Pluralism.” In *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti (Eds.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 187-212, p. 208.

161 Buruma, Ian. 2006. *Murder in Amsterdam*. London: Penguin Books, p. 261.

162 See *The Economist*, October 15, 2016, p.48 for a recent example.

163 Dunne, Joseph. 2003. “Between State and Civil Society: European Contexts for Education.” In *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies*. Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (Eds.). Oxford University Press, pp. 96-120, p. 109.

openness to outside influence”¹⁶⁴ Only through such respectful but also demanding acceptance will they take their place as contributing members of European societies.

164 Dunne, Joseph. 2003. “Between State and Civil Society: European Contexts for Education.” In *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies*. Kevin McDonough and Walter Feinberg (Eds.). Oxford University Press, pp. 96-120, p. 108.