

The Crisis of the Secular State and the New Forms of Religious Expression

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The Islamic world is not alone in being affected by changes in the relationship between religion and politics. We may be witnessing a realignment of the links between religion, state and society, on a pattern closer to ‘Anglo-Saxon’ forms of secularisation than to the French model of separation of church and state. Religion is making inroads into a society decreasingly controlled by the state. The West today is visibly see-sawing between, on the one hand, calls for a tutelary state to protect a national community, and on the other, the development of a concept of civil society in which the state is merely a slightly remote arbiter. This oscillation occurs because we are not dealing with two contrasting, antipathetic entities (for example, Republican America and the centralised French state), but with two points of reference, each invoked in turn. And it is in this context of complex interconnections between the weakening of the state, supranationalism, civil societies and the democratisation of authoritarian regimes that religious revivalism flourishes; as the political space has become more complex, it has proved difficult to assimilate new forms of religious expression into the old binary construct of secularism, or laicity, with its two terms, state and religion. That, however, is the issue.

Secularisation heightens the specificity of the religious

French secularism was established by political decision; secularisation, on the other hand, emerges from cultural processes that are not legislated. This raises the question of the connections between the overt aspects of religion (dogma and rules) and the internalisation of a religious world-view in the form of a culture; this religious outlook may even express itself in a declared lack of belief, while at the same time the intellectual framework of religion survives in phenomena like Marxist messianism, secular ‘saints’, or Pan-Arabism. Secularisation is certainly a societal process, in other words, one that has a profound effect on a society without being assigned a specific space – the economy, sociology, or the role of intellectuals – within it. It is the way a society looks at a changing world, without its necessarily being explicitly articulated. We may assume that there is no secularism without prior secularisation, but secularisation does not inevitably lead to explicit secularism. By definition, secularisation affects a society; it is not a thought-system. One may observe the secularisation of religious behaviour in the western world, but the theologians do not necessarily draw conclusions from it¹. But secularisation automatically involves a redefinition of religious adherence (unless that is seen as a mere relic, destined to disappear). Once the religious authorities admit that true believers have become a minority, it then

becomes necessary to consider their relationship with the 'others', seen until then either as sinners or as lukewarm in their commitment, but in either case belonging to the Church, nevertheless. But is someone who has become 'secularised' still a Christian unbeknownst to himself, or is he a pagan who has entered a different cultural universe? Secularisation involves a reconstruction of religious identity as a minority identity, unless it is submerged in a concept as vague as 'Judeo-Christian civilisation'. Having or not having faith becomes a criterion by which two groups differentiate themselves. In the Christian churches, as in the Muslim ulemas, a fairly clear but shifting line can be traced between the two processes, exclusion and cooption; for example, who is to be denied religious burial, as were actors in seventeenth-century Europe? Secularisation means religion is no longer taken for granted, and creates the need to define oneself explicitly as a believer (or non-believer), not because the non-believer agitates against the religious community, but because the conditions for belonging to the religious group become stricter: faith must be declared. As the signs of religious adherence become more obvious, the group of believers is turned into a minority. (The minority is not necessarily a numerical one; even in societies in which the majority of the population are believers (as in the United States), many believers experience themselves as a cultural minority in an environment that appears materialist and immoral.)

The present-day return of the religious makes sense only because it is taking place (even in the Islamic world) against a background of secularisation. It is not the expression of religion as a constant, but of a reconstitution of the religious according to patterns that do not conform to the traditional church/state dyad. The problem is thus much more one of managing modern forms of fundamentalism than of restoring an outdated tool.

An 'orphan' secularism

That it was possible in Europe, during the twentieth century, to find a compromise on the place of the religious was due not only to the fact that the various actors agreed about how to share one political space, but also because believers eventually accepted the definition of religion offered by secularism and became 'culturally' secular, seeing their own religious observance as a private act, devoid of ostentation and of interest only to themselves. Political secularism was accompanied by a profound secularisation of society, even in those northern European countries where the churches retained their official status: religious observance declined everywhere. But political secularism is largely the result of a compromise between two institutional actors, church and state. And each of these is in crisis. As we have seen, the nation state, without actually disappearing, has been weakened by globalisation and by the rise of the European Union, while the tools for social integration and cohesion – schools, the armed forces, the labour market – have also become weaker, at a time of increasing segregation in our cities. But the churches are also being challenged as institutions, not by the state, or by secularisation, but on the contrary, by a religious revival that is by-passing them. These new believers probably have no difficulty in accepting secularism as the basis of public life, but they no longer assimilate it as a way of experiencing religion in the private realm. They wish to be recognised as religious in the public sphere. It is therefore not so much a question of revising the 1905 law on separation of church and state in order to make it fit Islam; it is not the ground-rules of the relationship of state and religion that are called into question, but rather the relationship between religion and a public sphere which is no longer seen as being formed under the watchful eye of the state.

The relationship between the religious and the political has become asymmetrical; religious fundamentalism does not (even in the United States) concern itself with political power, but with society. This applies equally to the Muslim neo-fundamentalists; to argue that because Tariq Ramadan is descended from the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, his ultimate goal can be presumed to be political (an Islamic state in France) is to misunderstand entirely the withdrawal from involvement with state power that characterises all contemporary fundamentalist movements. For them, the state is not an instrument for transforming society; it is the return to faith by individuals that will make it possible to rebuild society on religious foundations. They thus sit astride the trend toward individualism on the one hand and the broad thrust of civil society on the other. And that is why the traditional tools of secularism, oriented towards a legal definition of the social bond, are no longer effective.

The rise of Islam is taking place against a wider background; for the past twenty years, the West has been experiencing what has been called a 'return of the religious'. We should not delude ourselves about this phrase. It does not mean that religious observance has increased, but that it has become more visible, especially with the appearance of 'fundamentalist' forms of religious expression, in which the believer refuses to restrict his faith to the private realm but insists on its being recognised as an integral dimension of his public self, believing that religion should govern every aspect of his personal behaviour. Among these movements we find all forms of charismatic Christianity (including the Catholic one), orthodox Judaism, 'sects', such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, and, of course, Muslim fundamentalism. The qualitative change in forms of practice is more important than the quantitative growth in the number of believers; young people may have flocked to Catholic World Youth Days to see Pope John Paul II, but enrolments in seminaries are in steep decline. These new forms of religious expression are individualistic, with a high degree of mobility (there is free movement between groups, even between faiths), institutionally weak (mistrustful of churches and representative authorities), anti-intellectual (unconcerned with theological niceties) and frequently communitarian, but in the sense that one joins a community of believers, not one based on sharing a common background². Membership of a community is a choice, not a cultural inheritance.

Governments have difficulty in using the traditional tools of secularism in order to deal with what is seen as a return of the religious, because the configuration on which secularism rests is in crisis. The centralised state has been weakened as a result of the development of supranational institutions, and of the emergence of concepts like civil society, which is formed precisely outside the structures of the state. Economic liberalism, the formation of global, non-territorial identities (religious ones in particular), mobile populations and flexible identities all by definition change the ways in which we can think about the return of the religious. And the new forms of religious expression are much better adapted to globalisation; We have explored this in the case of Salafism (see *L'Islam mondialisé*), but it is equally true of all forms of Christian evangelism, which are very successful in terms of proselytism and conversion, precisely because they tend to 'deculturalise' religion and can thus meet the needs of groups who feel themselves deculturalised. On the other hand, the traditional churches – Catholic, Orthodox or Anglican – retain their close ties to cultures, or even to a nation state (Orthodoxy is the prime example; all Orthodox churches are national churches) and thus have much less success in terms of conversion. A religion exerts fascination the more it is detached from any context, deterritorialised, even exotic³.

One may, of course, feel that this development is a negative one and should be opposed; firm defenders of national sovereignty, such as Jean-Pierre Chevènement, are consistent in both their rejection of the European project and their treatment of the religious. This book is not an apologia for the inevitability of globalisation. We simply wish to show that in the framework of secularism, religious fundamentalism can be handled only by coercion, of which, indeed, the proponents of secularism are increasingly becoming the advocates (or rather, counsel for the prosecution). But the consequences are serious, because they involve dissociating secularism and democracy. We are all familiar with the old saying, ‘no liberty for the enemies of liberty’, but, apart from the fact that it was precisely that slogan that launched the Terror, the real question is whether such a policy is effective. Hard-line secularists showed consistency in supporting the Algerian army’s death-squads against the Islamists. But it is not clear that the result is democracy or even the establishment in Algeria of a modern constitutional state. In this case we start from the hypothesis that the pursuit of national sovereignty is a rearguard action.

That said, we have perhaps too great a tendency in France to look at the question of globalisation only through the prism of the centralised state. It is not the state as such that is in crisis, but a particular model of the nation state, which centralises society and is its driving force. It is not certain, for example, that one can speak of a model of the western state that could be contrasted with the weakness of the state in the Muslim world. The model for state-building offered to developing countries today, and applied in widely varying forms by the international community, is not that of the centralised nation state, but of a deliberately reduced, technocratic state, whose role is to arbitrate. One of its most salient features is an insistence on privatisation of the economy, but the entire technocratic, non-political approach to state-building tends this way: the only consideration in the establishment of institutions (legal or financial systems, for example) is the training of competent staff, while social action is put in the hands of NGOs or United Nations agencies, who are naturally unfamiliar with the nation state dimension. Every form of international activity, from that of the OSCE in the former communist countries, to the programmes of the UN Programme for Development and the World Bank, or the funding of NGOs by the EU or the United States Congress (not to mention direct action by occupying powers, for example, the Provisional Authority in Iraq under Paul Bremer in 2003 and 2004) is geared towards building ‘minimal’ states while favouring transnational institutions. The issue of democratisation is being played out today in the development of civil society. NGOs, both French and ‘Anglo-Saxon’, are explicitly oriented towards it, with the result that the French model of the state has no intermediary through which it can be ‘exported’, because the whole logic of democratisation is based on other models. All that remains are the remnants of bilateral cooperation, centred round state reform in ex-colonies.

Sacralisation of the state is evident in ‘Roman law’ countries but not at all in ‘common law’ (Anglo-Saxon) countries. Today a different conception of the state underlies models of democratisation, and the dominant model is the Anglo-Saxon, rather than the continental European one. An entire school of thought (American and British, obviously) sees true modernity as enshrined in Protestantism and the common law, in which it is the contract between individuals that provides the political bond, without devolving it to a tutelary state and without making it the incarnation of the popular will, which remains an arbiter, not an autonomous power⁴. It is clear that the sources of the common law had nothing to do with Protestantism (the old myth of the religious origins of political cultures). It was established in medieval

England under the Plantagenets, a French dynasty, and developed by clerics in the abbeys of an England that was still Catholic, but in a very different spirit from that of the jurists of the French monarchy. But the conjunction of the two (common law and Protestantism) creates a coherent whole that places the constitutional state on foundations very different from those underpinning French centralism. The latest form of modernity is found in the advent of the concept of civil society⁵. I may not believe for a moment that this civil society (which is, moreover, highly mythical) is replacing the state, but that does not mean that the centralising model of the state is not in crisis, or that the problem of democratisation presents itself differently. There is no escaping the debate on civil society, 'communities', group identities and so on. Even if we do not uphold a multiculturalist model (which is, moreover, entirely mythical), we are still required to take account of things that the French Revolution attempted to obliterate: 'intermediary bodies' and 'coalitions', in other words, groupings of people who think of the individual outside the state, and of human beings other than in their role as citizens. Furthermore, globalisation is contributing to the growth of transnational communities, especially religious ones, but also to 'virtual communities' based on the Internet: these communities are developing outside the territory of the nation state. This is the nub of the debate between a French or continental image of the state (the state is the truth of society) and an Anglo-Saxon image in which the relationship with the state is contractual, and the state does not carry values, other than the negative one of tolerance.

In the framework of democratisation of a society in which the state (rightly or wrongly) is no longer seen as its constitutive element, to the extent that it gives it its political form, and in which no church provides an alternative source of legitimacy and power, the question of 'laicisation' has no meaning. All that counts is secularisation.

But in France secularisation continues to be thought of in terms of secularism or 'laicity', and thus of allegiance to the state. The relationship of Catholicism with politics is mediated through the Catholic church, acting as intermediary. This applies neither to Islam nor to Protestantism; they are therefore either under- or over-politicised. Over-politicisation is, of course, ideological; it takes place through the mobilisation of a theological system, a corpus, as we have seen in connection with the Islamic revolution. The real problem in Islam is not secularism (no more than in the Protestant countries of northern Europe, where it was the Reformation that was responsible for the disappearance of the church as a rival institution of the state), but secularisation: in this respect Islam is in step with the contemporary issue of secularisation.

Contemporary fundamentalism as an agent of globalisation

What Christian and Islamic fundamentalisms have in common is that they strive to define a 'pure' religion outside any cultural, social or anthropological – and therefore, of course, national – frame of reference (even though nationalism in its own way is making a come-back).

In the conflict between church and state that took place around 1900, there were two adversaries or partners, because they were competing over similar things, namely the control of values through education. The church defended its ground. But today, the neo-fundamentalists ask for nothing positive from the state, other than non-intervention: allow us to wear the hijab, eat halal food, refrain from

shaking hands, and so on. They are absent when it comes to the large social issues, because they legislate for themselves and not for society. The church wished, and still wishes, to impose its values because it believes they are universal, bound up with natural morality and expressing what is right for everyone. For the neo-fundamentalists, the law is not what is right, it is the law.

By its very nature, neo-fundamentalism appeals to the rootless and thus to a section of second-generation immigrants. But also, and again by definition, it makes converts among non-Muslims who also feel rootless ('rebels without a cause', racial minorities, white youth from depressed outer suburbs who have been on the 'front line' with their immigrant friends and are 'born again').

However, while neo-fundamentalism may have no interest in the question of secularism, it cannot avoid that of secularisation. Paradoxically, neo-fundamentalism is an agent of secularisation, as in its time was Protestantism (though to read Calvin, one might not think so), because it individualises and 'de-socialises' religious practice. It addresses itself to the individual who explicitly decides to locate his or her life exclusively under the sign of the religious, and who thereby breaks away from the world of the majority. Individuals do not, of course, see themselves as 'secular' or secularised, but, on the contrary, like all those who are 'born again', as entirely determined and motivated by religion. But because this relationship with religion isolates them from their social environment (or leads them to create a new 'communitised' space, which for many of them, amounts to isolation), they themselves draw a line between a 'sanctified' world and the rest of society⁶. This is an issue also found in American Protestant fundamentalism: a recent novel was based on the distinction between the 'saved' and the 'left-behind'; one is either 'inside' or 'outside' (the idea of being 'saved from Hell' is also found in the names of some radical Islamic fundamentalist groups⁷). The return of the religious in the form of sects or of communities is merely the homage virtue pays to vice: secularisation has triumphed. This is why the trend towards 'communitarianism', condemned by upholders of a strict secularism, does not represent a challenge to secularisation, but helps to restructure the divide between the two spaces.

How is neo-fundamentalism to be managed?

Neo-fundamentalism is perceived today as a threat to society, in other words, one more element in the unravelling of the social fabric. However, it has little to do with the so-called clash of civilisations. What the critics of multiculturalism and communitarianism fail to understand is that the new communities created by the neo-fundamentalists are not an expression of traditional cultures. The killing of Theo Van Gogh shocked the Netherlands, but while his killer is of Moroccan descent, he is Dutch, writes in Dutch and defends a 'global' Islam. He sees that Islam all the more endangered in that it has no territorial boundary: it is an abstract identity, without roots in any society or culture, and which, in this instance, was given concrete expression by the act of faith of a believer who marked the boundary by drawing a knife across the blasphemer's throat. Present-day communitarianism is the reconstruction of an imaginary community, inscribed in a space which is not that of the nation state.

For a secular state like France, the first response was to 're-territorialise' in every area. It was a matter first of all of 'homogenising' public space by prohibiting religious expression, which belongs to another sphere. The banning of the hijab in schools looks like a continuation of the struggle to expel the Catholic

church from them, but in fact it is very different; the priest in his cassock was competing for control of a particular space; the young pupil wearing the hijab is not part of struggle for power, but rather is expressing an abandonment of public space.

Re-territorialisation also represents the search for a 'national' Islam. This is a logical and desirable step, as long as it is understood that it cannot be taken to mean defining a liberal, acceptable dogma. In fact, for a policy of re-territorialisation to work, it must be integrative and not exclusionary; it must give Islam its place without raising the question of dogma, but only that of the 'ground rules'. Symbolism and protocol are important here, in the sense of giving religious figures status and respect. This would mean involving local representatives *ex officio*, as with other faiths, and not from an often paternalist position of rewarding the 'good' and side-lining the 'bad'. Neutrality *vis-à-vis* dogma has to work in both directions; it is not a question of getting 'secular' imams to say agreeable things, nor of allowing religious spokespersons alone to speak for 'Muslims', thereby giving them authority over a section of the population of Muslim background that would not see itself reflected in them. The danger is that immigration will be managed via Islam and depressed urban areas via the mosques. Instead of religion being opposed, which would make it a rallying-point for identity politics and protest, it should be treated as 'purely' religious and not, even negatively, as an instrument of social control, in other words, making militant secularism an instrument of social control (which amounts to setting up the most fundamentalist religious elements as competitors, in other words, as representing an alternative).

In short, nothing must be done in respect of dogma, and representatives of the faith must be seen as clerics who have no spiritual authority other than that freely granted to them by the voluntary members of a purely religious community. However, that means dealing with the 'fundamentalists', because to exclude them *a priori* would defeat the desired end. The current campaign in defence of secularism aims precisely to define the neo-fundamentalists and other revivalists as enemies. But the forms of 'fundamentalism' that are now emerging are far from representing a systematic threat, and in any case are a development that must be managed if we wish to remain within a framework of democracy and respect for human rights.

'Integralism', communitarianism and secularism

I have borrowed the word 'integralism', from an excellent critical (but not polemical) article on Tariq Ramadan by Dominique Avon, which shows that these questions can be debated calmly⁸. Integralism is certainly a form of fundamentalism, but one which involves, not society as a whole (because society has become secularised) but the believer who attempts to live his faith integrally, in other words, not in self-segregation in a sect or a ghetto, but through negotiation with the dominant society and its authorities. Integralism seeks compromises but not concessions, because dogma is never put in question. Integralism is the modern form of fundamentalism, in the sense that it has integrated the fact that the sacred has been individualised and has ceased to be a 'given' in society, yet without challenging dogma. For the believer, integralism consists of sacralising his or her everyday life, and of putting everything under the sign of the religious⁹. Culture and society are no longer vehicles of the religious, which now rests on radical individual transformation, followed by the establishment of a voluntary community of believers.

This type of integralism is the mark of neo-fundamentalisms in all religions. It has a clear communitarian dimension, to the extent that believers demand complete respect for their faith, subject to agreed arrangements regarding respect for public order and the existence of the Other. A very interesting case is that of the Canadian Province of Ontario, which takes to its logical limit the concept of multiculturalism (in fact, neo-communitarianism, because communities are defined on the basis of religion and not of ethnic origin). In its 1991 law on arbitration, Ontario accepted de facto the establishment of community mediation courts (orthodox Jewish and Muslim, but the list could obviously be extended) which deal with conflicts and questions of personal status in cases where the laws of the state have not been broken and the parties involved agree to submit their case to the community court (for example, a couple seeking a divorce, on the understanding that a true divorce can only be pronounced by an official court). Similarly, in 2001, in Montreal, the court authorised the Hassidic Jewish community to set up an *eruv* in an apartment block in which non-believers also lived, in order to define a private religious space within public space itself¹⁰. Such a request (which would be unthinkable in France), made in this case by orthodox Jews, is in fact in line with the demand made by believers of all kinds who claim the right to 'duplicate' in some way secular space with a sacred demarcation which, since it means nothing to the non-believer, could not offend or restrict him (for example, some Muslims ask that all meat served in workplace cafeterias should be halal, on the grounds that it makes no difference to the non-Muslim, while the difference is crucial for the believer). One can clearly see, in Ontario's case, that in comparison with France there is an entirely different conception of the state (based on common law and contract) that makes it possible to accept the idea of community courts: the state does not interfere in the social bond agreed upon by consenting adults. Incidentally, these civil arbitration courts were modelled on commercial arbitration courts, which clearly shows the predominance of civil society over state law, and also the importance of economic liberalism in producing a vision of society.

Clearly, demands of this type are often perceived by the public as outrageous, and even in a multicultural society like Canada, meet with strong resistance; the establishment of a rabbinical arbitration court may have gone unnoticed in Ontario, but in 2001, news that a sharia court had been set up by the lawyer Syed Mumtaz Ali caused a great outcry, directed not against the principle of the court as such but against the fact that sharia law discriminates against women.

What is being reformulated here is the actual concept of a Muslim community from the neo-fundamentalist perspective. It is, indeed, a closed one, but it is explicitly conceived as a minority community within a de facto secularised space; one acknowledges the secularisation of public space, but one wishes to inscribe oneself in it as religious. Rather than a victory over society, it is more like a form of privatisation of public space. In this sense, fundamentalism is not incompatible with secularism, but poses the problem of its relationship with the state. The debate about apostasy follows the same pattern. It should be noted that, in Muslim countries where the question has been raised, eminent fundamentalists have not asked that 'apostates' be sentenced to death, but that they be legally excluded from the category of 'Muslim'. For example, in Egypt, there was the annulment of the marriage of the intellectual Nasr Abu Zaid, on the pretext that since he was no longer a Muslim, by virtue of his critical writings on religion, he could not be married to a Muslim woman. Behind the radical character of these campaigns can be seen a point of view according to which Muslims form a purely religious community, from which

one may exclude oneself (or be excluded). That is to accept the existence of a secular space: one in which the laws of religion do not apply.

By defining the community of believers not in sociological or cultural terms but as something with which one voluntarily identifies oneself, the neo-fundamentalist position creates de facto a space that is 'other' than that of the surrounding society, and thus separates the religious from the social. The rules apply only to the believer.

This neo-communitarian concept, shared by many other faiths, presents a problem for secularism, since it assumes the introduction of sacralised spaces into public space. Two spaces are now juxtaposed and no longer separate: the believer expresses his religious faith in the same space as the non-believer, but inhabits that space in a different way. French secularism cannot accept that, since it is the state that defines public space: there is no way in which it could be polysemic. Hence the tensions experienced today. Simply stated, this occupation of space should not be read as heralding a seizure of political power. It is linked with changes in the sphere of religion in general, and not with the spread of Islam, even though the presence of large Muslim populations in the West gives it a high profile

However, neo-fundamentalism and its 'integralist' view of the religious represent only one available option. There are many other possibilities, less visible for the very reason that they are not widely argued about.

From norms to values

Care must be taken not to make religious reform a condition of the acceptance of secularism. Many very conservative Muslims adapt perfectly to secularisation and secularism by reformulating their faith in terms of values rather than of norms, on the model of conservative Christianity¹¹. They defend the family, sexual difference and a strict moral code, while opposing homosexual marriage, even abortion and divorce (two phenomena that are scarcely problematic in traditional sharia law), but they remain within the framework of the law. Moderate but conservative Islam reorganises itself on the Catholic model, or even the orthodox Jewish one (e.g., on the question of dietary prohibitions). This move from legal norms to values is what makes it possible to accept the ground rules on which secularism and democracy are based. They are accepted as a fact of life by traditionalist Muslims living in the West, but obviously much less so by those who are 'born again' or by converts.

The debate is thus clearly one about values, but it does not involve two opposing value-systems, Eastern and Western; it is an internal debate within the West, on the nature of the family (around abortion, homosexuality, the role of women, artificial reproductive techniques, etc.), in other words, on the relationship between nature and liberty. Increasingly, assimilated Muslims are recasting their beliefs in the terms of the debate as it is conducted in the West.

Lastly, there are other Muslims who express themselves through pietism or social action, preaching against violence and drug use, for example. This activity may take many forms, but, whether articulated publicly or privately, it is a problem neither for secularism, nor for secularisation. It is therefore simply

forgotten in the debate, whereas the facts on the ground show that Islam, secularism and separation of church and state are compatible.

The myth of communitarianism

Secularism is perceived as a weapon for combating communitarianism, which is defined, as we have seen, on two levels: the *quartier* and the supranational Ummah, that is to say, the two levels on which society feels itself in crisis. But these two forms of communitarianism are in fact largely virtual and in any case, unconnected in the real world. The local community conceives of itself in relation to the great virtual community of the Ummah, which exists only in the imagination or on the Internet. The idea that communitarianism can bring together all a country's Muslims does not make sense: one can clearly see that in France communitarianism is always located below society (the *quartier*) or above it (the virtual Ummah), but never on the level of society itself: there is no Muslim community in France, but rather, a population that is scattered, heterogeneous and with little interest in being unified or even truly represented. (Witness the low level of participation in voluntary or cultural organisations; the lack of Muslim religious schools; indifference towards the CFCM (the French council for Muslim worship), which is kept at arm's length by the state but has no rival organisation that could be 'popular'; the absence of political mobilisation in elections or at demonstrations.) There is no more a Muslim community than there is a Jewish community in France, but a number of very diversified populations of which only a portion agree in recognising themselves primarily as a religious community. 'Communitarianisation' does not arise spontaneously: it is the creation of 'communitarian' leaders who claim to speak for everyone in order to win recognition from the state, which is in search of partners in dialogue, and which in return enhances their position as representatives of a community (the French president and his ministers always speak of the Jewish or Muslim 'community'). The state rejects communitarianisation while constantly using the word itself. Institutional communitarianisation is the effect of a demand on the part of the state, while in the *quartiers*, it results from the re-formation of a broken social bond. In any case, if there were a Muslim community, it would not have taken the government fifteen years to create a body representing France's Muslims that would not last a day without its support.

But how is communitarianisation expressed in the *quartiers*? What is the relationship between the social, the ethnic and the religious? On this point we lack statistical tools. What are described as 'problem' neighbourhoods probably have greater concentrations of immigrants than was the case in the 1970s and 1980s. It is certain that in them two phenomena are emerging hand in hand: the introduction of a new type of social control exercised by others (neighbours, or young people), especially over girls, and the opening of mosques, some more radical than others. But we are witnessing developments that are far from being homogenous or of leading to the existence of ghettoised religious communities. The big housing estates are caught between an atomisation of social relations and attempts to recreate a social bond. These attempts can take different forms, but obviously, if we speak of a social bond we are speaking of the re-establishment of a form of social control; it is only the patterns that vary: settlement in a given place by people coming originally from the same area, observance of Ramadan (even by non-Muslims) as an event that is more festive than religious, the role of groups of young men in the occupation of space and their domination of the few centres of social and cultural activity. The 'macho'

aspect of urban youth has been widely discussed, and the movement 'Ni putes ni soumises' ('Neither whores nor oppressed') was created to defend young women living in these neighbourhoods. The increase in the number of mosques is also undeniable. These phenomena, however, are artificially correlated with the rise of Islam, in which young men are seen as the guardians of their sisters' honour, and patterns of social practice as proof that such areas are being Islamised. In this case, the community is perceived as the 'closure' of a given area on religious criteria, around a foreign-born population that has deliberately separated itself from France as a whole.

What these analyses omit is the heterogeneity of these neighbourhoods and the entirely relative extent to which they are 'closed', but also the variability of religious constraints. The growth in the number of mosques is as much a sign of greater numbers of Muslims as it is a statement of their 'identity'. In fact, the mosques are very often in competition: new divisions have been added to the (still present) ethnic differences among Moroccans, Algerians, Turks, and so forth. They may be ideological (Salafist versus traditional mosques), generational (young people rejecting imams 'from back home') or between groups (e.g., mosques controlled by the Tablighi and Habashi movements). Similarly, social control is relative and in no way prevents deviant behaviour. Machismo is just as present in American inner cities, inhabited by young African-Americans and Latinos who are anything but Muslim. Lastly, far from being confined at home, girls know, by and large, how to handle relationships, but outside their *quartier*. One leaves the *quartier*, in fact, precisely by not conforming to current stereotypes (in the case of mixed marriages, for example, especially when a presumed Muslim girl marries a non-Muslim), but also through social mobility (e.g., by becoming a home-owner), which has the paradoxical effect of reinforcing the reputation such neighbourhoods have for poverty and social exclusion. Lastly, as often in studies involving women, they are made to form a group in themselves, oppressed by social constraints or reproducing those constraints by virtue of having interiorised the norms that legitimate them: caught between domination and alienation, women would seem to find their liberation via the law. This type of analysis forgets that most girls who wish to wear the hijab at school demand to do so of their own free choice, and frequently as a means of asserting themselves without breaking away from their community. Though violence is a certainty, many strategies are available, and a neighbourhood identity is often shared by all its residents, regardless of sex¹².

It is because urban social problems are attributed primarily to Islam that authoritarian secularism is used as a tool for managing these problems while other factors are ignored (or underestimated). Not only does such a policy by definition lack goals (because the 'Muslim' woman does not suffer in silence, waiting for the law to liberate her, especially if she is a single mother, has no resident's permit, or is receiving benefits), but it achieves the opposite effect. By making secularism repressive, we help both to put religion at the heart of the debate and to present it as an alternative. As a result, Islam becomes the dominant 'marker' among young immigrant populations. (Note the linguistic slippage by Nicolas Sarkozy, then minister of the interior, who, when appointing a Prefect from an immigrant background, used the expression 'Muslim Prefect'). The identification between Arab and Muslim is strengthened, while other Muslims, who are secular, and are certainly strongly opposed to Salafism, but who have great difficulty in establishing another identity, are left out. (See, for example, the 'Mouvement des Maghrebins laïques de France'.) It is because Islam has been made the prism through which the question of immigration, and problems of integration in particular, are viewed, that we are led, for lack of an

overall policy, to make intervention in the religious sphere a prerequisite. Rather than a clarion call on behalf of secularism, it is a distortion of the very principle of secularism itself.

The word Islam is used today to give unity to a complex set of behaviours, demands and identities that really only acquire meaning if one approaches them from a comparative point of view, seeing them in relation either to attitudes that are similar, but without a religious dimension, or to the same sorts of behaviour within other faiths. Islam is thus essentialised, as if it was the invariable factor that determined attitudes in widely differing contexts. Adolescents' search for self-affirmation by way of dressing provocatively is a commonplace of school life, but the problematic issue of the hijab has been experienced as penetration of the education system by Muslim extremism. A young woman who 'covers' may be trying at one and the same time to assert herself as an individual, to escape the constraints of her social milieu by adopting a symbol that gives her both value and independence, to get herself noticed, or to proclaim her 'authenticity'. There is clearly an 'Islam of the young', and it is a product of many factors: the generation-gap, the search for authenticity outside the parents' milieu, a statement of identity or a gesture of protest¹³. This is not a call for extreme tolerance, and young people must be challenged about the wider implications of their personal attitudes, about their social responsibilities and the connotations of things that to some of them seem trivial – anti-semitic insults, for example. But an all-out attack on Islam can only make them see rebellion, protest, adolescent angst and religion as even more closely bound together. These generational phenomena are necessarily transitional, but they are also attributed to an unchanging culture, thus transforming young people into objects that are manipulated, while they wish to assert themselves, on the contrary, as subjects.

This essentialist reading is also applied to political violence. Unquestionably, Osama Bin Laden acts in the name of jihad, but the violence that he organises (and orchestrates), and his attraction for many young people, also strike chords elsewhere, especially for an anti-imperialist far-left that is nothing if not European. We scrutinise Bin Laden, Zawahiri and Zarqawi for the minutest Koranic references, but nobody, as far as I know, has drawn attention to the macabre staging of the executions of hostages in Iraq, with their so-called court (in former times it would have been called 'revolutionary' but is now 'Islamic'), which stands behind the victim, under a banner carrying the organisation's name and emblem, the prisoner's confession, the reading-out of the sentence by a masked man, and so on. All of that has been borrowed directly from the far-left of the 1970s, in particular from the staging of the 'trial' of Aldo Moro by the Italian Red Brigades, in 1978.

'Islam' is thus used instrumentally in two ways: on the one hand by Muslims (young people who see themselves as a force for protest, or those motivated to become leaders of their communities) and on the other by those who think Islam is a problem. All of them consistently put the term Islam in first place.

But if we look below the surface, and put in perspective the forms of behaviour attributed to Islam, both across time (in terms of generational differences) and across social space (vis-à-vis other religions), we see that the genuinely religious element diminishes. The return of the religious is taking place in a secularised world, and it is, in fact, a sign of that secularisation, in that it carries it within itself.

Olivier Roy

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1. Secularisation has been a force in French society since the eighteenth century, and yet it was not until the 1940s that two chaplains issued an alarm-call that would have wide repercussions among the Catholic hierarchy (See Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel, *France, pays de mission?*). They interpret dechristianisation as a sociological fact and not the result of political or philosophical propaganda.

2. For Christianity and its sects, see the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger.

3. Several cases still remain to be studied: the establishment of a Sufi sect by European converts (the Mourabituns) among the Indians of Chiapas, Mexico, conversions to Catholicism and Anglicanism in Turkey, or the development of another brotherhood, the Haqqaniyya, in the United States.

4. David Landes, *Richesse et pauvreté des nations*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2000; Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, Knopf, 2002.

5. Marcel Gauchet examines the problem in the final chapters of *La Religion dans la démocratie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1998.

6. Olivier Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2004 [*Globalised Islam: the Search for the New Ummah*, London: Hurst, 2004].

7. *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days (Left Behind, No.1)*, by Tim Lahaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. Some radical Muslims believe the world is coming to an end, except for a small minority, those 'saved from Hell' (the name of several small radical groups, predominantly in Egypt).

8. Dominique Avon, 'Une réponse à Islam "réformiste" de Tariq Ramadan', *Nunc, revue anthropologique*, No. 4, October 2003, Editions de Corlevour. Sadri Khiari takes a critical but open-minded view of Tariq Ramadan in 'Tariq Ramadan, mythologie de la Umma et résistance culturelle', *Critique communiste*, March 2004.

9. 'Every act, from daily ablutions to the sexual act, from prayer to fasting, however secular it may appear, is sacred if it is imbued with thoughts of God'. Tariq Ramadan, *Islam, le face-à-face des civilisations*, Lyon, Editions Tawhid, 1995, p. 321.

10. 'In Montreal, the High Court has given the Jewish community the right to set up an *eruv*, an almost invisible thread which frees them from some of the religious restrictions of the Sabbath. The court invoked the principle of freedom of religion, but for other Outremont residents, it was an attack on the secular nature of Quebec society ... The *eruv* is a thread suspended between two buildings – on Fairmount Street, Montreal, for example. It has the effect of marking out an area that for orthodox Jews acts as an extension of their home. On the Sabbath, it enables them to use pushchairs or wheelchairs in public, something their religion would normally prohibit.' Radio Canada, 21 June 2001, report by Jean-Hugues Roy.

11. I study this case in *L'Islam mondialisé*, op. cit.

12. A meeting to set up a local branch of 'Ni putes ni soumises', held in the town-centre of Dreux by two people who were not 'from the *quartiers*' did not attract a single young woman who was. The woman who organised the meeting attributed this to 'community and family pressure', but an investigation by a local journalist showed that their reasons for not coming were conscious ones: 'This isn't the outer suburbs'; 'In my opinion, I don't need to prove I'm not a whore, because I'm not a whore'; 'I'm more in favour of looking for a consensus, myself.'. Pascal Boursier, 'Ni putes, ni soumises ne mobilise pas', *L'Echo républicain*, Wednesday, 12 May 2004. One can see here the total discrepancy between the interpretations of outsiders, which generalise, and emphasise religious traditions, and the personal experience of the young people interviewed, which is of action rather than submission.

13. Farhad Khosrokhavar, *L'Islam des jeunes*, Paris, Flammarion, 1997.

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