RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY IN THE POST-MODERN WORLD: THE POSSIBILITY OF A "RELIGIOUSLY QUALIFIED" PUBLIC SPHERE

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SUMMARY

From the Enlightenment onwards, modern society has seen transcendental religion as an obstacle to democracy. In order to overcome this obstacle it has adopted two strategies. By the first, it has forced religion to adapt itself to the political symbolic code of democratisation (the "European model"). By the second, it has allowed religion to have autonomy but it has also relegated religion to a purely private sphere by separating it from the political arena (the "American model"). In both cases religion has become increasingly irrelevant for the public sphere. At the end of the twentieth century, these historical tendencies and the correlated configurations of society have fallen into a radical crisis: (political) democracy has lost its conceptual bases and (established) religion has lost its identity. How can democracy and religion evolve together?

The field of possibilities is a very large one. From the perspective of sociology this paper analyses the past configurations of society and present-day scenarios in and on which religion is a "third entity" in relation to civil society and the democratic state (or political system).

The thesis is that in a historical framework characterised by an increasing differentiation of the social and cultural spheres, with their respective symbolic codes, religion re-distinguishes itself as a latent sphere which seeks to contribute – certainly not without conflicts and frictions – to the construction of an ethically qualified public sphere in opposition to the increasingly secularised and privatised public sphere. This latter is now being spread by the purely functionalistic processes of globalisation. Religion, in the concrete expressions of the various religious communities, redefines the public sphere (i.e. civil society) and thus calls for a new relationship (or relational formation) with democracy.

Religion is no longer the field of integrating mediation between civil society and the political system, but becomes the propulsive impetus behind a "civil society of the

human". This last on the one hand is opposed to the "civil society of mere market communication", and on the other seeks to guarantee the human working of democracy. It challenges the institutional structure of a political system (be it referred to the state or to a supranational political community) which increasingly works as a mere function of a globalised market which depersonalises and commodifies daily life.

1. *The Question: Can Religion (and Religious Communities) be a Field of Encounter between the State and Civil Society?*

1.1.   The subject of the relationship between religion and democracy is notoriously one of extreme complexity.[1] In history there have been democracies which have arisen and have drawn nourishment from a religious input, and there have been democracies which have fought religion. Some democracies have favoured one religion alone, and other democracies have been opposed to all religions. It is more difficult to find democracies which have tolerated or had a positive approach towards different religions and promoted harmonious relations between them.

In reality, ever since the very idea itself was born of democracy as a system of government based upon a separation between the religious and political powers, the relationship between religion and the state has always been one of conflict. It would take too much time here to outline history from ancient times to modern times. Modern European

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[1] This complexity is to be found first and foremost in the many and various ways of defining religion and democracy. In this paper I use the following general definitions. By "religion" I mean a message of faith which brings with it a vision – or a system of beliefs – about the meaning and ultimate destiny of human existence which has a revealed supernatural character and confers a transcendental and *not merely sacred meaning* (and thus described in a specific sense as "religious", which imply not only an attitude of great respect and/or reverence to sacred 'things' but also a relation with a transcendent God) on the daily life (actions and events) of people and their social relationships. Throughout the paper, where not otherwise specified, I will refer mainly to the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions. By "democracy" I mean a political settlement made up of : i) a form of government of the people by the people achieved through the maximum participation of the citizens in public life; in modernity this participation is achieved through representative and/or direct institutions, with rules about decision-making based upon the majority principle; and (ii) institutions which recognise and uphold the set of the rights and duties of the citizenry.

history, as is well known, arose precisely in response to lacerating conflicts between political and religious authorities within Christendom, and in particular it was seen as a solution to the wars of religion. Modern political democracy took the form of an answer to the conflicts between different religious denominations which aspired to political power for themselves.

At the beginning of modernity (the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) attempts to make the state once again subject to the power of religion, or in contrary fashion to make religion once again subject to the power of the state, still prevailed. However, with the English revolutions there also emerged the idea of liberal democracy, an idea which sought to obtain a settlement between religion and the political power through the separation of their respective spheres and the provision of guarantees in favour of a certain pluralism within both spheres. But with the French Enlightenment (the eighteenth century) modern society underwent another major change. It saw and treated transcendental religion as an obstacle to democracy. In order to overcome this obstacle of transcendental religion, which the Enlightenment held to be mere superstition, modernity adopted two types of strategies.

By the first type of strategies it forced religion to adapt itself to the political symbolic code of democratisation, that is to say it saw and treated religion in relation to that code (nothing of a religious character was accepted within the public sphere unless it subjected itself to the criteria of democratic political procedures). By the second type of strategies it conceded autonomy to religion but relegated it to the purely private sphere and separated it from the political sphere. The first trend was prevalent in Europe (the "European model") and the second held sway in the United States of America (the "American model"). In the modern approach the political power must immunise itself against religion because the latter is a transcendental force. It does this in two ways.

(I)   In the European model, which was born with the French Revolution and then powerfully synthesised in the Hegelian view of history, religion is incorporated into the immanent Spirit which directs the evolution of society. Here religion appears as one of the subjective and

objective forces which must find their "realisation" (Hegel's *Bewahr-heiten* as *Aufhebung*) in the state.

(II)   In the American model, which was born in the New World and began with the Pilgrim Fathers, religion is seen as an autonomous basis of society but is conceived as a search for individual happiness. For this reason, in order to avoid one conception prevailing over another, it is detached from the political power and the sphere of action of the state by a net separation between the two spheres. This is done specifically so as not to fall into a hegemony of one religious vision over others.

These models are still dominant. But the transformations which have taken place in their character have reached the point that they have become obsolete.

In the European model, after being subject to the rule of the state, religion was placed at the margins of society because of the idea that democracy must be based upon a public sphere which should be indifferent to the religious choices of individuals. Religious choices are considered legitimate but seen as relevant only within the private sphere. Possible agreements ("concordats") between the state and religious communities have to be made on the basis of the political code of the state which, obviously enough, perceives only the external (institutional) aspects of religions. It has to treat them at the level of equality in the upholding of religious rights which are seen as pure and simple civil rights (the freedom to practice and express one's own beliefs within the limits defined by the state). Religious activity can only survive as a private fact which takes place, however, within a statal vision of private rights.

In the American model, as I have already observed, the range of freedom has always been, and still is, very wide. Today, the United States seems to be the most significant and instructive example of the rather rare instance of a multi-religious society. Indeed, upon this image the USA legitimises itself as being an example of "paradigmatic" democracy for the whole world. But is such really the case? Many are doubtful on this point because although it is true that the democracy of

the United States was born on the basis of certain fundamental religious values and upon assumptions about tolerance towards every type of religion, it is also true that the North-American democratic political system has never had a real religious foundation. If anything, that foundation has been of the Enlightenment type. But whatever the case may be, democracy in the USA has also gradually become secularised, and this to the point that at the present time religion no longer plays a fundamental role within the public sphere. From a contemporary perspective, the melting pot of religions protected in and by North-American democracy is no different from that promoted in the imperial Rome of ancient times. That this empire should appear to be as strong and secure as ever before should not suprise us, but there are those who believe that this is a giant with feet of clay. Whatever the truth of the matter, we have before us the evidence that the relationship between religion and democracy which has been typical of modernity is no longer tenable.

In both the European model and the American model, religion has been able to survive as a privatised sphere. Does this mean that it has become increasingly irrelevant for the public arena? The theories of the state (prevalent in Europe) and the theories of the market (prevalent in America) claim that this is precisely the case. To them religion is an important element of vivification for society and democracy, but this is on the condition that religion does not disturb the political power and functions so to support the economic market.

1.2.   In sociological terms, it is interesting to observe that with the end of the twentieth century the historical trends which have brought about an increasingly privatised and residual role for religion because of the effects of democracy have entered into an increasingly profound state of crisis. In the contemporary Western context, (political) democracy is losing its belief bases and (established) religion is losing its identity. Thus it is that we ask ourselves: how can democracy and religion develop and evolve (and above all else how can they survive)? What relationships should they have in order to strengthen each other rather than erode each other?

The field of possibilities is a very large one. In order to understand the possible historical developments, we need a relational framework endowed with a very high complexity, at least so much complexity as modernity has created through an increasing separation (differentiation) between religion and democracy.

From a sociological point of view, contemporary Western democracy – which presents itself as the model for the modernisation of the whole planet – is a form of societal organisation based upon the sharpest structural and cultural distinction between religion and the state that history has ever known. In this system religion seems to have an increasingly diminishing qualification to intervene in the public sphere. In Europe religion is openly opposed by the political power of the state. In North America it is entrusted to the market where it becomes a mere article of consumption. These forms of distancing between religion and (political and economic) democracy are sources of crisis for both – in moving apart religion and democracy lose their mutual synergy. The two terms should be coupled (related) together in a meaningful way, but it is exactly the symbolic systems of relational meaning which fail to perform. This is why *one can no longer speak* – as has hitherto been the case – *of religion as a field of positive encounter between the state and civil society* in the way that it was spoken about in the two models of the past, the European and American models – or rather, to put it more specifically, in the models of F.Hegel and A.de Tocqueville.

In today's world, religion must reverse the attitude which characterised it during the first phase of modernity when it should have upheld and defended its own "private" rights against the hegemony of the political power. Religion is concerned with the complex of rights of citizenship not so much in order to privatise civil, human, and social rights but more to examine and to "publicise" such rights (in the sense of illuminating and providing a positive appreciation of their public contents). In this endeavour, religion is characterised in a new way within its own boundaries by religious movements which act as the typically modern movements have acted and continue to act on the one hand, and by post-modern movements which seek an exit from the constraints

of modernity on the other. Although it remains a specific realm of the political system (the state), religion is differentiated within its own boundaries by trends towards the further privatisation (individualisation) of faith on the one hand, and by trends which do not abandon the role of religion as a (public) builder of social institutions which require a recognition of their own (public) status within the complex of citizenship on the other.

A series of structural and cultural changes at a worldwide level have meant that religion – in the concrete expressions of the various religious communities – now has a societal role which is completely new: religion claims greater relevance for itself in relation to the public sphere and thus calls for a new relationship with democracy understood as both a form of government and a structure of institutions which safeguard the rights of citizenship. There seems to be an increasing room for autonomous initiatives taken by religions i order to create *together* a new culture of democracy as an *associational* configuration opposed to those *lib/lab* arrangements which we have inherited by Western modernity (P. Donati 2000, chapters V and VI).

This paper analyses from a sociological point of view the past structures and present-day scenarios in and on which religion is a "third entity" in relation to civil society and the democratic state (or political system).

My thesis is that in a framework characterised by a growing differentiation of the social and cultural spheres, with their symbolic codes, religion is reorganising itself as a latent sphere which contributes (albeit not without conflicts and frictions) to the construction of an ethically qualified public sphere which is in opposition to the alienation spread by the purely functionalistic process of globalisation which rests upon an increasingly secularised and privatised public sphere. This is the contribution which religion can make to the renewal of a form of democracy which has lost its foundations at the level of values.

Whether examined in the transcendental forms of the three great world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), or in the immanent forms of modernity (the Goddess Reason, the Hegelian Spirit, or others), reli-

gion is no longer the field of integrating mediation between civil society and the political system. Religion, indeed, can no longer be confined, as modernity would like it to be, within the historical space of the balances, agreements, and negotiations between religious institutions and political institutions. It is, rather, becoming once again a latent and transcendental factor. In concrete terms, it is becoming the propulsive impulse behind a "civil society of the human" which on the one hand is opposed to the "civil society of mere market communication" and on the other challenges the institutional structure of a political system (the state and supranational political communities) which operates exclusively with reference to a globalised market economy which depersonalises and commodifies daily life. Religion itself is redefining itself and is acquiring a new relevance as the spiritual qualification of that process of civilisation which is in opposition to the growing dehumanisation of cultural, economic and social life at a worldwide level. In this way it takes on the goal of guaranteeing and upholding the human face of democracy. But it must also, in its turn, decide whether to pursue this goal through further privatisation or make itself the subject of a new public sphere (without excluding processes of privatistic re-entry).

1.3. In this sociological contribution I proceed in the following way.

First of all I ask myself the following question: is religion an obstacle to, or a prerequisite of, democracy? This involves understanding in which sense religion is one and/or the other. As we will see, there is no univocal answer to this question. Religion can be both, and this is because it is intrinsically ambivalent towards every particular historical configuration (or system of structures) (§. 2).

What is required, therefore, is an analysis of the concrete societal configurations which have existed in the recent past and are still in force in order to understand which relational "logic" is now emerging in the trade-offs between democracy and religion. As we will see, we have before us processes of uneven differentiation which involve enormous problems of mutual relationship formation (§. 3).

In order to face up to the future it is now opportune to define the scenarios which we have before us and to define the basic dilemmas

which arise. I would like to advance the point of view that on the scenario of the processes of globalisation which are destined to spread during the twenty-first century, the central dilemma is that of how to define a new public sphere in which religion and democracy can encounter each other in terms of a dialogue which opts in favour of a relational co-existence between the various civilisations rather than subjecting them to the domination of commercial technology. In my opinion, to put it bluntly, one must choose between a public sphere dominated by further commercial standardisation, which will be even more alienating than it is today, and a "religiously qualified" public sphere in which democracy takes the form of government which is subsidiary to a civil society nourished by the flowering of religious communities which have a shared interest, and even a shared identity, in avoiding the end of every form of humanism (§. 4).

In the conclusion of this paper I would like to further clarify this approach, which seeks to build a "democracy friendly to religion" within what I call the "society of the human" (§. 5).

2. *The Relevance of Religion for Political Democracy: is Religion an Obstacle to, or a Prerequisite of, Democracy?*

2.1. From a theoretical point of view, modernity begins with a fundamental question: is religion an obstacle to, or a prerequisite of, democracy? In what sense and in what ways is it (or can it be) one or the other?

The modern theory proceeds as follows: if religion is an obstacle to democracy it must be kept out through active neutrality (marginalisation) or passive neutrality (in-difference). If it is a prerequisite, that is to say that democracy needs religion, one needs to see if religion has specific functions or instead is supra-functional (that is to say whether it has determined or precise functions or whether it is a necessary presuppostion which cannot be limited to a small and limited number of functions). There are, indeed, democracies which are supported by functional religions, and other democracies which are supported by

supra-functional religions. But whatever the case may be it remains to be seen which religion has the qualifications and is entitled to act as a functional or supra-functional prerequisite of democracy, and how this bears upon the quality of democracy.

In theory many "modernities" are possible depending upon the answers the various societies give to these questions. This is true not only of today's world. Indeed, although it is true that the processes of modernisation create during the course of their action "multiple modernities" (S. N. Eisenstadt, 1997), it is also true that precisely at the very origins of what we call modernity we find different conceptions of the relationship between religion and democracy. However much this history has been under-studied and little remembered, it remains a fact that from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries societies dominated by religions, whether by Catholicism, by Judaism and even by Islam, gave rise to currents of thought and social actors which worked in favour of various models of modernity and in particular of different models of relations between religion and democracy. There was a plurality of ideas about civil society and the relations between civil society and the state (or the political-administrative system), even though only a few of the solutions which were proposed were to triumph.

R. Collins (1992) has advanced certain important historical-sociological theses in convincing fashion. First of all, he demonstrates that it is not in the least true that political democracy in the West was born in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in a state of opposition to religion. Instead, Western democracy is only conceivable on the basis of its Christian religious presuppositions. Secondly, he demonstrates that it is not in the least true that religion during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries was an obstacle to democracy, as positivistic thought has accustomed us to think. On the contrary, religion gave fundamental impulses to democracy. He also proposes the thesis that Catholicism was much more decisive in the construction of the modern democratic system than Protestantism.

R. Collins supports his theses with an abundance of historical references and evidence. To these we could add many others, such as those

proposed by the recent studies of G. Maddox (1996) on Anglo-Saxon countries, or more specific inquiries such as those which demonstrate the support of the so-called democratic Catholics for the construction of the French democracy of a Jacobin character (V.E. Giuntella, 1990). Furthermore, there is also the historical evidence on the contributions made by Catholic thought to the construction of modern Western democracy (G. Campanini, 1980). But it is not appropriate to dwell here upon this long history.

What I would like to emphasise is the fact that religion shows itself to be a positive factor in the development of democracy if, to the extent to which, and when, it is able to develop a specific civil society: a) in which there is a differentiation between the political power and the religious power, and b) where religion has the opportunity to influence the political system through its initiatives in the public plural sphere. The Western prototype is described by de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. In contrary fashion, O. Kharkhordin (1998) demonstrates that the Eastern countries of the Orthodox Christian world (and Russia in particular) are not able to achieve democratic forms because they have a prevailing communitarianistic conception of civil society which does not allow that differentiation of spheres and that (secular) political pluralism upon which a democratic system grows. In the middle, between the West and the East, there seems to be the Catholic religion which mixes together Western and Eastern characteristics. The formula of "communitarian personalism" (E. Mounier, J. Maritain) expresses this singluar combination of promotion of the individual as a person and at the same time of the bonds of community.

However, during the course of European history over the last two centuries the Enlightenment version of the relationship between religion and democracy has triumphed. This version only provisionally accepts religion as a temporary auxiliary instrument in the emancipation of humanity. Enlightenment thought thinks that once emancipated, humankind (and with it democracy) will no longer have need of religion. In America things have not developed differently. Although American rhetoric loves to bestow a position of importance on religion,

seeing it as a permanent source of spiritual nourishment for human history and democracy, it is also true that in the USA a "civil religion" has evolved which has had consequences which are not very different from those which have been witnessed in the European democracies.

2.2.   Enlightenment modernity, as a "contingency formula" which triumphed from amongst the various possible forms of modernity (N. Luhmann, 1992), has accustomed us to think in terms of dualistic oppositions.

On the basis of *this* modernity, religion is described as extrinsic – if not refractory and contrary because of its dogmatic contents (N.Luhmann, 1984) – to democracy. Democracy is understood as an escape/exit from religion: *"sortie de la religion"* to say it with M. Gauchet (1998), who prefers this expression to those of "secularisation" and "*laïcisation*", meaning that democracy becomes an instrument for absolute politics ("sortie de la religion ne signifie pas sortie de la croyance religieuse, mais sortie d'un monde où la religion est structurante, où elle commande la forme politique des sociétés et où elle définit l'économie du lien social", *ibid.* p. 11). The symbolic codes of religion and democracy are understood as two opposed ideal types. Religion means: non-rational faith or belief; (traditional or affective) choice in terms of values; a charismatic character; and partisan or "coloured" ethics. Democracy, on the other hand, means: instrumental rationality; individual choice; a procedural character; neutral ethics or indifference towards presuppositions in terms of values. The distinction between religion and democracy works within a symbolic code which thinks in terms of good/bad and pure/impure. In the eyes of the champions of the Enlightenment, democracy is supposed to be a system of good and pure thought, whereas religion plays the part of a system of beliefs which must show that it is not bad and impure.

In Europe this model was brought to the point where the nation-state came to take the place of the Church. The process of the construction of the European Union as an economic and political entity (and thus indifferent towards its religious presuppositions) has not changed, indeed it has accentuated, these features.

In North America, in different fashion, the model was moderated through the idea of a net separation between religion (church) and the state. In this way the state (the democratic system) was immunised against religion without having to try to bring it within its own realm, as in contrary fashion took place in Europe.

However things may have developed, Western modernity today continues to see religion as a merely private affair which becomes relevant for democracy only when it exercises an influence on the public sphere. It is at that moment that one must decide if, and how, to deal with it politically. Both when the policy is simply to confine it to the private, as mostly happens in America, or to regulate it so that it functions in accordance with the democratic political project, as mostly happens in Europe, the outcome is the same: religion is separated off from the public sphere as an element which disturbs it and it can be admitted only after receiving suitable democratic treatment.

This model (or value pattern) of modernity, which is dominant in the contemporary West, raises two major categories of questions.

Firstly, if religion is confined to the private what contribution can it make to democracy? Very little, it would appear. The contribution made by religion must be restricted to the sound upbringing of persons and where possible to a socialising control of their life-worlds. But this does not take place without democracy always being suspicious about the kind of upbringing which is given and which kind of control is effected. Indeed, democracy introduces itself progressively into the socialising processes and introduces into them its principles of ethical neutrality. This has the result that today the rhetoric of religion as a contribution to the civic sense of citizens, which was dominant throughout the Victorian nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth, has to be consigned to the rubbish heap. All in all, the public sphere turns out to be naked in terms of values and thus becomes a terrain of quicksands which are very dangerous for democracy itself (R.J. Neuhaus, 1986).

Secondly, can a democracy conceived as meaning the privatisation of religion be received in a positive sense by those non-Western cul-

tures (or peoples) for whom religion is a public fact? The modernity to which reference is being made loves to demonstrate that non-Western cultures are engaged in a process of increasing privatisation. The case of Japan is emblematic of this (M. Sasaki, 1999). But what has happened in Japan is not different from what has taken place in nearly all those countries which are following the path of Western modernisation, including Africa and South America (M. Sasaki and S. Tatsuzo, 1987). Any different path is here understood as a lag, delay or deviation.

In short, Western modernisation ends up by seeing religion as a functional element specially directed towards dealing with the undetermined, that is to say what remains indescribable, "appresented" (*appresentiert*),[2] and inexpressible (it is to be found in the environment of the system, to employ the language of systems theory). At the same time, because *this* modernity believes that everything can have equivalent functions, in it religion becomes a system of beliefs which can be substituted by something which it is thought can have the same purpose. Thus there is a search for functional equivalents such as aesthetics or the esoteric, phenomena which obviously enough do not provide the hoped for answers. But things do not stop there: given that democracy is not qualified to choose which religion (or religions) are most congruous (or functional) to it, it ends up by not choosing any religion at all. It does not choose, in the end, even from among its own "religions", that is to say from the modern ideologies which have been proposed as substitutes for revealed religion – the liberal, socialist or Enlightenment ideologies, whether in their strong or weak forms. As such, democracy is simply without faith, without trust, and without a belief in any values which are not merely instrumental and procedural. It must always make resort to the trust or social capital of civil society. But the fact is that given the present condition of Western countries, democracy finds that it has powerfully devitalised civil society, and this to the point of having to recognise that the public sphere is now "dead" (R. Sennet, 1977).

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[2] *Appresentiert* is the word used by E. Husserl, and generalized by N. Luhmann (1977) to mean what cannot be seen directly and therefore remains unvisibile and at the same time undetermined, i.e. "unable to be represented in so far as it is the other side of the moon".

2.3.   The relationship between religion and democracy as defined by Western democracy appears to be in an increasingly critical condition, both with regard to its own internal developments and in situations where it has been exported to non-Western contexts. This is true of both the European and the American models.

(i) In Western modernity the relationship between religion and democracy has plunged into a paradox. Politics cannot do without religion but the theories and practice of democracy still (indeed increasingly) tend to separate the political and religious spheres. The illusion that democracy can control the thought of its citizens has been revealed to be an illusion (N. Chomsky, 1989). Religion can no longer be seen as being on a higher level than politics, but the converse is also true. What are the alternatives? Or to put it another way: what relational *schema* should be adopted? Western modernity does not have solutions of a specifically relational character because it is based upon systems of thought and social practices which systematically seek to immunise themselves against relations (R. Esposito, 1998).

(ii) When the arrangements of Western society are exported to other socio-cultural contexts, to other "civilisations", they generate enormous kinds of problems. These arrangements, indeed, delegitimise the religious foundations of each democracy and secularise its forms and contents, thereby producing anti-Western reactions in an increasing number of national and regional contexts. Although there can be processes of convergence and consent in relation to Western-style arrangements, in empirical terms there more prevail forms of latent or masked contestation, when, that is, such reactions are not openly violent and aggressive in character.

The relationship between religion and democracy proposed by modernity provokes contradictions which people do not know how to overcome. The fact is that modernity postulates a certain equilibrium between the civil sphere and the political sphere which is to be achieved through the mediation of a civil religion. But modernity itself helps to upset this balance in a progressive way, although in a form whose speed or unevenness varies according to circumstance.

In Europe, the crisis of the modern forms of equilibrium has coincided with the fall of idealistic thought which made a certain civil religion (the bourgeois-socialist civil religion) the cement of the Spirit. This Spirit acts by means of theses and antitheses which are able to achieve the forward movement of history.

In America, the crisis expresses itself in the practical distancing of the paradigm (the myth of origins) which was originally espoused by A. de Tocqueville and then reformulated by T. Parsons. These authors see religion as the basis of a cultural system of "adaptive up-grading" which makes a "societal community" possible. This community, in their opinion, ensures that individual religious communities reproduce a shared creed (the American creed) and thus socialise individuals into a determined balanced separation between political democracy and religion (T. Parsons, 1967, 1994). But the sleight of hand of the internalisation of values shared by all citizens (both "American" and "Americanised") which overcomes their particular religious differences presupposes the existence of the power of a religion which is the agency of an effective socialisation which makes them internalise. Today the ability to be effective of this power is growing weaker day by day precisely because of the backlash effects of democracy. As a system of thought and living, in addition to being a political regime, democracy exalts the emotional and private aspects of life and thus limits and undermines the meaning of religion understood as a well-source of public life.

Both the European (idealistic and derivative) paradigms and the American (Tocquevillian and Parsonian) paradigms emerge today as being no longer tenable. The principal problems spring from external pressures which culture applies to democracy seen as a political system, both within Western societies and within non-Western societies. The Enlightenment formula must once again come to terms with the "other modernities", both inside and outside the confines of the West.

The reformulation of the Western ways of defining the relations between democracy and religion follows two distinct paths: we can call them the path of impersonality and the path of the search for the common good. Their failure gives rise to another path - the path of plurali-

sation. But, within the context of modern relativism, this third path cannot find any plausible outlets.

a) Regarding the first path, this defines democracy as a political system which guarantees everybody an impersonal, anonymous, procedural sphere where each individual is free to pursue his or her own ends without disturbing other people. Politics thereby becomes a system for securing binding collective decisions which are indifferent to the various religious communities. These last co-exist in a multi-cultural and pluri-ethical space in which they ask only to be recognised with regard to the legitimacy of their values and particular interests. Politics then refers to a public sphere as a depersonalised place where each person is allowed to do what is legitimate according to his or her opportunities and on the sole condition that he or she does not damage the equal opportunities of other individuals. In this path, religion is defined as any system of beliefs and practices which are based upon a group ("tribe") which seeks such a definition for itself independently of any possible tradition. Religion then becomes a new form of paganism, something which is now evident in both Europe and America (M. Maffesoli, 1989; L. Tomasi ed., 1999).

b) Regarding the second path, this defines democracy as a political system that pursues the common good, that is to say that it defines the public sphere as a community of discourse between social groups (including religious groups) which should be directed towards the same common good. In this approach, religion is defined as a system of faith which must gain credit on the basis of certain fundamental ethical requisites, and these must find recognition in the political community which has the task of pursuing the common good.

c) The theory of pluralisation of the social spheres elaborated by M. Walzer (1983) has had a certain success because it grasped the failures of both the first and the second approaches, and brought out the difficulties involved in following both. As a solution, Walzer proposes a sort of "third way" distant from both anonymous democracy and ethical democracy committed to the common good and which is to be

achieved through a recognition of the fact that each social sphere (including every religion) has its own contextual ("local") code of justice. This sphere should practise a democracy seen as a way of regulating the pluralisation of spheres which are in themselves auto-normative, including the religious spheres, based upon their own code of what is just. Walzer, however, does not say how these spheres can avoid colliding into each other when they act within the shared public sphere. In order to avoid coming into conflict, they would have to respect certain shared equitative criteria. That is to say that democracy would have to recognise a *qualified* pluralisation of religious spheres which converge on universalistic criteria when public interactions are involved. But the theory of pluralism *à la* Walzer does not offer any kind of solution along these lines. Indeed, it reproposes the same dilemma which renders impossible a choice between the other two paths – how can a democratic political system establish equitative criteria which are valid for, and shared by, all religious groups in the public sphere?

2.4.   From these brief observations, based upon accessible historical and sociological research, we can draw certain conclusions.

First, religion from certain points of view is an obstacle to, and from others is a prerequisite of, democracy. On balance, it is "ambi-valent". The conditions in which it expresses itself in one way or another must be seen in their respective historical contexts.

Second, the question of the relationship between religion and democracy cannot be dealt with in terms of relational co-existence *within* contemporary Western modernity in so far as the modernity to which reference is made loses a sense of the transcendent, engages in a process of secularisation and no longer perceives the relations between democracy and its presuppositions at the level of transcendental values.

Third, the evolution of the modern world nonetheless displays a trend by which religion, from being an obstacle to democracy, becomes a complex and necessary presupposition of democracy, even though it is potentially always ambivalent.

It is in this framework that one speaks about "other" modernities. But how should they be seen? Obviously enough, here we are dealing

with a question of understanding. Modernity cannot be understood as a formula which is good for all uses. The thesis according to which today all societies and all cultures, including those which are post-modern, cannot be anything else than a variant on modernity (as S.E. Eisenstadt argues) is an empty thesis.

The hypothesis that I would like to explore is the following: one can speak about other modernities which are sensitive to religion, and indeed to such an extent as to require the contribution of religion in order to cement the public sphere, if, and only if, certain presuppositions of modernity are abandoned and certain others are maintained. This discontinuity must be found where modernity cannot solve within itself the observation of religion as a source of social life, and thus must necessarily make way for an after-modernity in which the symbolic code of democracy and of religion do not mutually exclude one another.

The question moves onto the terrain of the competition between the competing conceptions of civil society which sustain social (cultural and normative) orders which are in conflict. But at the same time we need to be careful not to reduce religion to particular groups (lobbies and groups of influence) to be found in the public arena: religions conserve a view of the whole because they aspire to universalism and project their own values onto the whole of society.

2.5.   In contemporary historical conditions the subject of the relationship between democracy and religion has become increasingly complex because of the impact of certain major sets of factors.

i)   First of all, there is the fact that the two terms themselves appear to be increasingly contingent: ways of defining religion and democracy appear which are not only many in number but also have greater internal variance. Generalisations can be formulated but these necessarily have many limitations. However useful they may be, generalisations imply in turn further problems in the definition of the concepts and symbols to which they refer. Contemporary consciousness emphasises the possibility of contingency of each defining term (or symbol) and their different relationships. The vision of their (cooperative

or conflictual, mutually synergising or erosive) relationship often depends upon how the two terms of democracy and religion are actually defined. Usually the vision of one term by the other tends to be selective and discriminatory in its stance. Democracy sees those aspects of religion which are most convenient to it, and *vice versa* religion sees in democracy only that which interests it.

ii)   Secondly, the historical events of the past (wars of religion, struggles for power between the state and the Church, etc.) act to influence public opinion and theories of the present more than one would believe. This occurs through a kind of still persistent unconscious or collective imagination. In many countries religion is still thought of as a challenge to democracy, both in the sense that it impedes the establishment of forms of democratic government (the case of countries where fundamentalism predominates, for example Islamic fundamentalism, or where orthodoxy is at the service of nationalistic regimes, as occurs in the Balkans), and in the sense that religion is not satisfied with the proposal of a Western democratic system based upon the market but asks for more substantial democracy (this is what happens in many countries in Latin America and in the Far East).

iii) Thirdly, it is increasingly evident that the two terms are incommensurable. The concept of democracy which is usually employed refers to a typically modern and Western political structure, whereas religion represents the ultimate values of culture and has a universal claim in space and time.

If we can make religion and democracy draw near, be compared and be related to each other, this is only because both are interested in how the public sphere is defined and organised. And thus their dialogue is identified, circumscribed and mediated by such an interest.

In order to address this subject we need to develop a theory of the relations between religion and democracy which is of a sufficient level to match the complexity implicit in each context of discourse. Every society, within its own contours, has made, and continues to engage in, special selections from all those that are possible. And we must see

which selections are the most suited to solving the paradoxes and dilemmas of a modernity – that is to say Western modernity – which has ended up by producing a "meaningless" relationship between religion and democracy.

2.6.   Within Western modernity the question whether religion is an obstacle or a prerequisite loses meaning simply because the relationship between religion and democracy is no longer perceived. Every alternative form of thought must rethink the relationship between religion and democracy and take into account the fact (a) that the contingency of the terms which must be related to each other is growing; (b) that "local" cultural traditions not only persist but are created anew, and that these "reduce" (in a systemic sense) this relationship in very special selective ways which are at times drastically reductionist; and (c) that, on the other hand, there is an emerging need to maintain the confrontation between the two terms on distinct and multidimensional levels.

Which religion for which democracy? On this terrain is to be located the competition between religions which express different projects in relation to society and the state. It is interesting to observe that Catholic social doctrine as it has been developed during the course of the twentieth century has stood forth as a system of thought which, in a totally different way from other such systems, (i) raises the question of the *meaning* of religion for democracy and (ii) offers *meaning selections*, in the management of the relationships between religion and democracy, which are the most *articulated and complex* among those available. In twentieth-century Catholic social doctrine, religion is presented as a prerequisite of democracy which is at the same time distinct from, and supra-functional in relation to, democracy.

We need to explore at a detailed and profound level the very special way in which the social doctrine of the Catholic Church raises the question of the relevance and the consequences of religion for democracy.

If there is a distinctiveness in the "Catholic" way of addressing the question of the relationship between religion and democracy, that distinctiveness is based upon the fact that the Catholic position lays great emphasis upon *avoiding both the privatisation (secularisation) and the*

radicalisation (fundamentalism) of the possible solutions to the problem of how to relate these two realities. This position is singularly unique and autonomous when compared to the other religions. This is borne out by the whole of Catholic thought of the twentieth century (G. Campanini, 1980), which expresses a theory of democracy as a development of human rights (P. Donati 1992, 1997); as constant concern with the common service which religion and democracy must render to the human person (M. Schooyans, 1998); and as awareness that religion itself (indeed every religion), in the way it moulds an appropriate democratisation of society, is deciding whether it has a future on this earth (H.K. Zacher ed., 1998, 1999).

Catholic semantics answers the cultural and structural questions raised by contemporary so-called democratic societies by affirming that: (a) religion is an obstacle to democracy if by democracy is meant a political system without a cultural identity. Democracy must recognise cultural identities. It cannot be culturally neutral but must instead be committed to nourishing respect for cultural identities; (b) religion is a prerequisite of democracy if by democracy is meant a political system which respects cultural identities along the lines of subsidiarity and does not colonise them or invade them – something which involves the risk that they will be eroded to the point that they produce the opposite of democracy.

In this way, the Catholic position expresses a point of view which is both well-balanced and universalistic: it is *balanced* in so far as it avoids the extreme poles of privatised or privatising alternatives, and, *vice versa*, fundamentalist alternatives; it is *universalistic* to the extent that it proclaims the necessity to struggle for the promotion of fundamental human rights (the dignity of the human being, the principles of equality, freedom and solidariety among human persons), and asks other religions to adopt the criteria of reciprocity and real active mutual respect.

Although Western political democracy no longer seems interested in the contribution that religion can make, it would be an error to think, as many people indeed do (including many theologians) that the salvation of religion is to be found in a policy of becoming self-referring

and autopoietic. Religion cannot fail to ask its questions because it is, or rather it must be, missionary; it must go towards the Other, it must concern itself with the whole man and with all men in a *non*-self-referring way. The guiding problem, therefore, becomes that of *the relationship between religions*, much more than the relationship between individual religions and the state (or political system).

3. *The State, Civil Society and Religion: Old Historical Structures and New Processes of Differentiation*

3.1.   In order to address ourselves to this question we must understand how the relationship between religion and democracy changes with the expansion in the complexity of society. Indeed, the more one moves from pre-modern society to modern society and then to contemporary (or post-modern) society, the more the distance between the two terms becomes greater. And with this distance the problems of mutual observation, comprehension and interchange also increase.

From a theoretical point of view, there are three great models by which we can relate these realities: (I) in terms of hierarchy; (II) in terms of functional differentiation; and (III) in terms of societal pluralism.

The first two semantics concern the experiences which we have encountered up to the present day. The third is *in fieri*. Let us now examine them briefly.

(I)   *The semantics of hierarchy* assumes a relationship of superiority and/or inclusion in the relationship between one term and another. The reciprocal observation is carried out in terms of the power of one term over another. Understanding is limited to the fact that a term strives to refer the other to itself. The exchanges are agreements at the summit of society and are strongly institutionalised. In other words, there can exist, and indeed there have existed, societies in which religion includes the state (theocratic regimes which are still today to be found in certain Islamic societies) and societies in which the state has included religion (we can mention certain historical experiences de-

rived from the thought of Luther and certain Protestant denominations, although these have been on a rather small scale). In Catholicism, as is well known, theocracy (where the Church includes the state) has been almost only a temptation during certain historical periods. In the hierarchical code it is theoretically possible for the state to have a "democratic" form and for religion to be directed towards political democracy, but only on certain conditions which are in general of an exceptional character. The hierarchical code (or of inclusion) has prevailed in a decisive way in Europe and non-Western countries. Taking everything into account, it has proved itself increasingly unsatisfactory, both for religion and for democracy.

(II)   *The semantics of functional differentiation* assumes a relationship of distancing between religion and the state based upon the functional specificities of the two terms. These specificities can be elaborated in various ways. The reciprocal observation is carried out by trying to distinguish continually the functions which can, and must, be performed by each sphere with a minimum of mutual interference. The reciprocal understanding between religion and democracy is achieved through competitive interplay. The exchanges involve consensus/conflict between religious communities and the state. This model is notoriously associated with the "American case" in which the most varied kinds of experience have flourished. The attempt to entrust the mediation between religion and democracy to civil society (the "societal community", to employ the terminology of T. Parsons: see J. Alexander ed., 1998) does not solve the problems which are involved in the achievement of a meaningful integration between religion and democracy. This is because the society which springs from it tends towards a systemic separation of religion and politics which in the end defeats itself as a mode of positive relationship formation (A. Seligman, 1992). But contemporary society, and presumably the society of the future, no longer has the semantics of the past to hand. It can no longer take advantage of the semantics of *hierarchy* because post-modern society is now engaged in a process of denormatisation, nor can it avail itself of the

semantics of *functional* differentiation because mere functionality is not able to regulate these relations.

After-modern society (as I call it, meaning what comes after modernity in terms of relative discontinuity with it) must try to look for new semantics. In sociological terms, semantics must in some way reflect the emergent tendencies of religion, democracy, and the new forms by which they relate to each other. These tendencies are increasingly differentiated according to criteria which in part are functional and in part are of another order (supra-functional).

(III) The *semantics of societal (corporate) pluralism* sees the relationship between religion and democracy in terms of a differentiation between spheres which have *sui generis* qualities. Societal pluralism means the recognition of spheres of justice which have their own symbolic codes and at the same time know how to relate to each other synergically because they have a shared relational meta-code. Democracy should be this meta-code, and not so much as an external power imposed on the subjects (actors and agents) of democracy. In these semantics democracy is not merely procedural and religion is not a mere private affair. Religion becomes the sphere of vivification of a civil society of the human which gives substance and motivations to the democratic procedures. Reciprocal observation is not merely functional but also supra-functional. The understanding between religion and democracy takes place through co-operative interplay in the public sphere. The exchanges between religion and the state become secondary to the primary role of the direct exchanges between religions.

This third form of semantics has weak and strong points. The weak points are to be found in the fact that it presupposes civil action which can do without a constrictive political power which makes co-operative interplay between the different religions obligatory, that is to say that it can do without the Hobbesian solution of social order.

The strong points are to be found in the fact that in this form of semantics democracy can make use of a public sphere based upon the impulses of transcendent values. For this reason, it can be legitimated

in a much stronger way than in the case of a purely procedural democracy related to a public sphere of merely negative or relativistic tolerance.

3.2.   In order to understand the move from hierarchical semantics to those of functional differentiation and then to those which are corporate (in terms of an associational or societal pluralism), we require a framework which is sufficiently complex to deal with the enormous relational complexity which is implicit in these developments (see the relational diagram of figure 1).
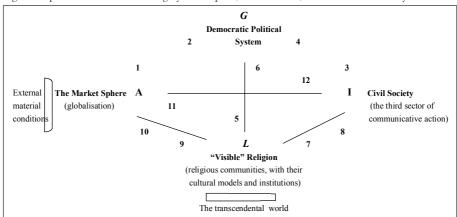
Fig. 1 – Spheres and Actors of a Highly Developed (Differentiated) Democratic Societal System.

This framework must identify the different spheres (with their logics of development) and the relations between such spheres, thereby demonstrating that these "make society" through processes of differentiation and mutual integration, by outlining interfaces between them where necessary.

The spheres to which I refer are:

A)   the sphere of the economic market, which is increasingly globalised and externally limited only by the conditions of material resources;

G)   the democratic political system, which is increasingly influenced internally by proceduralism. At the same time, however, it cannot but legitimise itself with reference to values;

I) civil society understood as a place of communicative action and social bonding (the third sector);

L) the "visible" religions, that is to say the concrete religious communities, with their cultural models and their institutions, which are on the boundaries of the transcendental world and the source of ultimate values.

It is interesting to observe: first, that each of these spheres must integrate with the others without seeking dominion over, or pre-eminence in relation to, such spheres. This is because each sphere has its own guiding relations. Second, the institutions of visible religion are distinct from civil society, whereas throughout modernity they have been considered as being constituent parts (elements) of civil society and as elements defined by it.

The relations between these spheres becomes increasingly dynamic not only because each relation acquires its own dynamic but also because indirect relations are developed between the various spheres (see fig. 1). Of the very many observations which can be made here, I would like to limit myself to drawing attention to the following phenomena (numbers refer to fig. 1):

1-2) The economic market and the state interact in the form of relationships between globalisation and democracy. The impulses of the global markets are certainly stronger than what it is possible to achieve at the level of democratic direction and control. In response to these processes, the democratic political system can only be emptied, or enter into crisis, or merely adapt itself to globalisation, unless it takes the step of resorting to religion and/or civil society to combat the phenomena of commercialisation and depersonalisation brought about by globalisation.

3-4) The political system and civil society interact in the form of a democracy which must be sensitive to the culture and the peculiar normative character of a third sector (made up of associations of the social private world) directed by the communicative action and the positive appreciation of social bonds.

5-6)   But this can only be done if the political system can observe religion and recognise it, interacting with it on the basis of mutual agreement, however much this last is negotiated or marked by conflict.

7-8)   Only if and when democracy recognises religion as something relevant to it, can religion interact autonomously with civil society. This interaction is necessary if one wants religion to be able to supply motivations to the communicative action of the third sector. But the converse meaning of the relationship also exists, that is to say that civil society must introduce civil dialogue into every religion. The democratic principle requires that every organised religion open up its own internal public sphere (in line with the principle of civil association)[3] and on such a basis enters into civil society in which it will find other civil associations which belong to other organised religions, as well as encountering the presence of non-religious actors.

9-10)   The economic market and religion interact in the form of a confrontation between instrumental action and action directed towards value. That this relationship is not conflated but played out through continual re-distinctions (*re-entries* according to the Luhmannian terminology), depends upon the fact that it is seen as a relationship proper rather than a dilemma-like or binary opposition.

11-12) The economic market and civil society interact with each other in the form of an alternative between globalisation and "local" communicative action. The way in which these terms are articulated depends on whether the economic market and civil society appeal to the state or to religion.

As I have already observed, the relations between the four spheres are made more complex by the fact that in a system which is highly differentiated indirect relations enter into play. For example, religion can influence politics (and the polity) through the market, or, *vice versa*, it can also influence the market through politics.
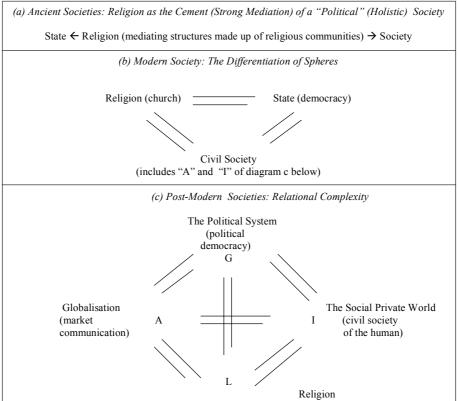
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[3] As regards the Catholic Church, see the volume edited by the "*Associazione Canonistica Italiana*" (1999).

This set of direct and indirect relationships is (constitutes, makes) the *new public sphere* of the post-modern world. The question which presents itself is the following: can such a sphere be religiously qualified in the sense that the (individual and collective) subjects which act within it, and the cultural standards with which they themselves work, are positively recognised and promoted because of their religious connotations ?

Most scholars believe that this is not really possible. The principal motive behind their negative answer to this question is to be found in the fact that the public sphere becomes too complex to be able to be sensitive to criteria of special recognition and behaviour, in addition to the fact that democracy cannot accept possible violations of the human rights within specific religious groups. This argument has much to be said for it. But on the other hand its limitations can be seen when it maintains that, to the extent that society becomes more complex, each domain and each actor should make themselves less sensitive to religious connotations because these latter imply ties, restrictions, and bonds which are disfunctional when it comes to the mobility, the readiness to change, and the communicative flows of a public sphere which must be able to influence each private domain. The argument according to which democracy cannot do otherwise than become fixed on liberal tolerance (conceived as mutual indifference between the various religious connotations) is dangerous, in addition to being at variance with the facts. It is precisely thinking about, and acting at a practical level in relation to, the public sphere in abstract terms – that is to say as an interaction between depersonalised individuals – which creates problems. This is because subjects deprived of their religious qualities also come to lose the deep meaning of their own action. They become incapable of managing the complexity of a system which must instead maintain a high level of differentiation. Intolerance and fundamentalism are precisely two of these outcomes, which are fostered by an incapacity to sustain a culture of distinction. Under many aspects, these outcomes are a direct product of modern liberal culture, not just a reaction to it brought about by premodern

traditional cultures. What needs to be done, therefore, is to explore whether there are other possible solutions.

3.3.   To understand the framework of possibilities which exist one must first and foremost observe that we have available to us three ideal-type ways of seeing and organising the relationship between religion and the state, which are also ways of mediating the social relations which are generalised by religion (see fig. 2).

Fig. 2

(a) Ancient Societies: Religion as the Cement (Strong Mediation) of a "Political" (Holistic) Society

State ← Religion (mediating structures made up of religious communities) → Society

(b) Modern Society: The Differentiation of Spheres

Religion (church) ——————— State (democracy)

Civil Society
(includes "A" and "I" of diagram c below)

(c) Post-Modern Societies: Relational Complexity

The Political System
(political
democracy)
G

Globalisation   The Social Private World
(market   A   I   (civil society
communication)   of the human)

L

Religion

(a)   In ancient societies religion is the cement of a society and co-incides with its "political" organisation (in the analytical sociological sense). The religious community organises structures which are the

natural place to mediate between the political function and daily life of the population. The mediation provided by religion is almost undisputed and usually every political community is also an ethnic community with a recognised prevalent religion. A large part of the world, especially in the Asiatic and African regions, is still organised in this way.

(b)   In modern societies religion detaches itself and is detached both from political society (the state) and from civil society (which includes the economic market and spheres of social solidarity – what we today call the third sector). Here the cement provided by religion is taken for granted by the other spheres. Indeed, early modernity still works by basing itself upon the traditional values of previous social formation (the Scottish moralists, John Locke and very many others take it for granted that there are natural ethical values and these are *naturaliter* Christian in character). Modernity utilises traditional religion as a non-problematic resource but in actual fact erodes it.

(c)   In post-modern societies what was called civil society further differentiates itself from the market (profit-making firms) and spheres of solidarity (the so-called third sector), and in such a way that today the overall societal system is based around four great differentiated spheres: the market (globalisation based upon commercial communication), the state (political democracy), the civil society of the human, and religion. Here the cement of society must be generated moment by moment, situation by situation. The mediation between religion and the state finds two "interfaces" which did not previously exist: on the one hand the market (in the form of globalisation: M. Albrow, 1996) and on the other the social private world (defined as the new civil society of non-profit-making spheres: P. Donati, 2000, ch. 2). It must be realised that religion still encounters difficulties in acting as a cement of society. But, together with these difficulties, there also grow the needs and the opportunities to connect of the various spheres, and in particular between religion and democracy as a system of government. The selective criterion becomes the relational criterion: action has to take place from time to time asking oneself if and how religious

membership influences action in each sphere and with what consequences with respect to other paths and other forms of membership.

The conceptual framework which is here advanced shows that:

(a)   the distances and interactions between the market (A), the state (G), the social private world (I), and religion (L) grow. For this reason, it becomes more difficult for (both visible and invisible) religion to integrate society, even civil society alone. Indeed, religion encounters greater difficulties in integrating itself;

(b)   but the various spheres (including organised religion) cannot operate without religion (L), and this demonstrates that religion does not provide only a functional service or supply a limited number of functional services. Its supra-functionality is to be found in the generalised symbolic media of interchange that it places in circulation for the whole of society.

It is this dual movement, (a) of separation and (b) of societal linkage, which requires a "religiously qualified" public sphere in the sense that the public interaction must produce a positive recognition and legitimation of the various religious faiths. It cannot be neutral in its approach towards religion.

The alternatives to this solution are:

–   a public sphere *dominated by one component, or function, or sub-system over the others*, and this means – in concrete terms – that societal integration is ensured by the *dominion* of politics and/or the economy (legitimated on the basis of power and/or money) over the life-worlds of civil society and religion;

–   or a public sphere which is *radically differentiated* through a hyperbolic structure in which every function goes its own way independently and exits from any configuration of equilibrium. This means and involves, in both theoretical and practical terms, the political and cultural *disintegration* of the public sphere.

In both cases there would be a lesser presence of the presupposition of isotropy (the principle of the equal expansion of everything in

all directions) which has been the guiding principle of modernity. If modernity must be conserved at the level of its finest acquisitions, it *must reintegrate the religious values* (as something legitimated to be manifested and recognized) *in the public sphere.* Only in this way can democracy avoid falling into forms of dominion or societal disintegration.

At the centre of these alternatives is the dilemma (pointed out in fig. 3, c) between globalisation (or abstract decontextualisation) and localisation (or local contextualisation), in the most general symbolic meaning of these terms: that is to say as a dilemma between the prevalence of imperso-nal-instrumental standards and the prevalence of particularistic-expressive standards, even in religious behaviour. This kind of polarisation is presently underway throughout the world. It brings with it the germs of what we usually call the "clash between civilisations" (S.P. Huntington, 1996). However it is defined, this clash cannot be resolved through strategies which appeal to the same factors which bring it about, that is to say through strategies of globalisation (with the neutralisation of religion) or, *vice versa*, involving the localisation of problems, cultures, and religions. In my opinion, the solution is to be found in the dimensions of the value legitimation of democracy and in an appropriate use of socio-cultural time (the L-G axis of fig. 2, taking into consideration the fact that democracy is in the present and religion is in the future). Let us now examine what this may mean.

4. *Scenarios and Hypotheses after Enlightenment Modernity: Secularisation, Fundamentalism and the Religious Qualification of the Public Sphere*

4.1.   We can briefly summarise the present-day scenarios as follows. The fall of the Communist regimes (the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989) demonstrated the existence of a phenomenon which was certainly unexpected at the end of the twentieth century: the fact that throughout the world, including in the West, religion has undergone a major renewal and has once again presented itself as a source of freedom. Religion has led many civil society movements (one thinks here of Po-

land, the countries of the former Soviet bloc, and various countries in South America). This has occurred because religion was no longer seen as a an obstacle to freedom, or as an inhibitor of action, but as an inspiring motive force of civil liberties (E. Gellner, 1992) and of a democratic public sphere (M. Khatami, 1999). There have also been phenomena in the opposite direction where certain religions have led processes of an authoritarian political nature. But in the case of Christianity this religion has certainly been at the base of what S.P. Huntington (1991) has called the "third wave" of democratisation.

What forms of freedom and democracy are we talking about? This is a question now posed by the whole world. Many see the revival processes of religion as merely a force of political democratisation which today reproduces the well known processes of the construction of that civil society which presided over the birth of the typically modern nation-state. But history never repeats itself. The present-day processes of religious revival are the delayed explosion of a phenomenon which elsewhere took place a few centuries ago. These processes also reflect the needs of desecularisation which are reactions against the phenomena of modernisation and propose a civil society which is different from modern civil society.

The freedom championed by the new religious movements, furthermore, can lead, in line with their instrinsic ambivalence, to various outcomes. They can lead for example to *symbolic and structural* conflations which confer an absolute primacy on religion (as in the case of the fundamentalist movements), or to more or less meaningful *shifts in boundaries* between politics and religion (in the case of movements along the lines of the Catholic Counter-Reformation), or to processes involving a *further secularisation* of the religious sphere (in the case of revolutions on the Protestant model).

At a practical level, all these cases are to be found. Whether one or the other prevails depends on the country or the region which is taken into consideration. Fundamentalist movements are present in various areas of the planet, and in almost all religions, including the West (in the Protestant field one thinks of the Evangelical Pentecostalists, in the

Catholic field the followers of Lefevre come to mind, and in the Jewish field the ultra-orthodox Jews may be cited by way of example). In countries which are Catholic by tradition we can observe a religious pluralisation within the Catholic Church, in addition to the growth of other religions. At a global level, new religious movements are appearing, of the holistic "New Age" kind, which suggest horizons of soft secularisation made up at the same time of a new cultural sensibility along ecological lines, an esoteric and pantheistic religious spirit, and a new mode of consumeristic secularisation (P. Berger, 1995; L. Berzano, 1999), or religious movements of the more individualising "Next Age" type.

This process of growth in religious freedoms is also a process of social differentiation because religious freedoms are born in the various points of the interactions between the spheres and contexts of life and impinge on all the social spheres and their relative relationships (from the economy to social, political and cultural exchange, for this see figs. 1 and 2).

This differentiation, however, is uneven in many ways but in particular in the sense that in general terms it implies a weakening of the political function (the political system in G). Hence the fact that the importance of the religious factor is indirectly accentuated either positively (as a transcendental inspiration) or negatively (as secularism) in relation to its influences on the system of the social private world (social associations) and the adaptive social systems (economies both as productive systems and as systems of consumption and cultural modes). The development of these systems – both adapative (A) and associative (I) – completely modifies the scenario for democracy. This is not only because democracy as a political system must now deal with a configuration of society in which the market and the organisations of the social private world are no longer politically controllable as was previously the case, but also in the sense that now both these poles, which are differentiated within the old civil society, that is to say the globalised market (A) and the spheres of pure social integration (I), encounter each other in a dilemma-like way. There is an objective struggle between these two great actors: the emerging challenge which confronts us is *globalisation versus local social integration*. As is borne out by so-

ciological inquiry into this field, in this challenge it is religion which is once again decisive and discriminating.
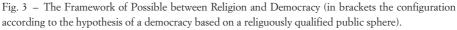
The decisive role of religion (L) is to be found in the fact that it can influence the public sphere through the spheres of social integration (I) or through the economy (A). The ambivalence of religion is emphasised once again. When it affects the the public sphere through organisations of the social private world it can create cultural segmentations on a religious basis or it can draw up new universalistic standards (for example in the form of human rights). When religion affects the public sphere through the market it can motivate processes of further privatisation or a re-ethicalisation (in the form of fair trade, "ethic banks", "communion economies", etc.) whether of production or consumption or lifestyles.
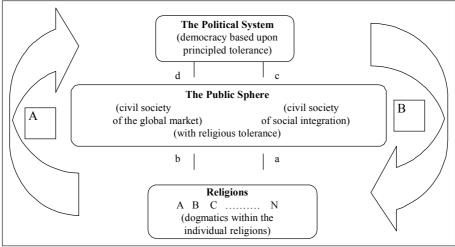
It is on this scenario that H. Cleveland and M. Luyckx (1996) believe that faith and politics are drawing closer together: "it seems much more probable that "religion" (defined as 'organised spirituality') is destined to take on a greater role of governance, and in truth that individual spirituality will become an increasingly important element in every kind of leadership. These two concepts of religion and governance will take into the twenty-first century a heavy cultural baggage: the inheritance of ancient spiritual traditions and all the theories, experiments and errors committed in the organisation of human beings in relation to shared objectives. It will be essential to understand this mixture of experience and folly, and to analyse how the changing dynamics of spirituality interact with the equally changing dynamics of givernance. It will be useful to think of our time as a period of transition from modern thought, still besieged by a cluster of pre-modern mental clothes towards a vision of the world which we will call simply *transmodern* (...) In the new vision there exists a distinction between religion and politics but not a separation. This means that political leaders can use arguments in which they really believe (...) Organised and spontaneous 'religion' will probably play an increasingly important role in the definition of public policy and its implementation"(*ibid.*, pp. 256, 264.).

The dilemma that accompanies the scenario of the challenge of *globalisation versus local social integration* is expressed in the contrast be-

tween an ethically neutral public sphere (fed by the processes of glo-
balisation) and an ethically qualified public phere (fed by the flowering
of a synergic pluralism of religious communities). Democracy must
choose whether to trust (more) one or (more) the other. But this choice
involves dilemmas which democracy with difficulty manages even to
identify and even less knows how to face up to. The democratic state
must choose whether to continue to exercise its power basing itself on
conventions (agreements, concordats) with individual religions, as in-
deed has happened in modernity, or bestow greater autonomy on civil
society, recognising the agreements that can intervene between differ-
ent religions and the subjects of civil society. In the first case it repro-
duces the Hobbesian solution of order; in the second it opens up to the
hypothesis of a new public sphere in which subjects do not alienate
their political power to the state. It remains to be seen what is, or could
be, such a kind of public sphere.

4.2.   In order to expound hypotheses about the possible develop-
ments of the public sphere in post-modern society it is useful to present
a diagram which expresses the problem in a schematic way (see fig. 3).

Fig. 3 – The Framework of Possible between Religion and Democracy (in brackets the configuration according to the hypothesis of a democracy based on a religuously qualified public sphere).

Amongst the various possibilities presented by the model (fig. 3), I would like to lay stress upon three major hypotheses which are also the three principal strategies of the relations between religion and democracy mediated by different forms of public sphere.

a)   The first hypothesis (progressive secularisation). The public sphere can be influenced by religion through agreements that each religion makes directly with the state. In this case the religion acts directly on the political system and influences its policies in such a way as to indirectly determine what takes place in the public sphere. In the past the Christian churches have acted first and foremost in this way. At times they have supported authoritative or corporative forms of the state, but it is generally recognised that they have also performed a role of democratisation of the public sphere understood as meaning an increase in freedoms and equality, even though in different ways and with different partners (H. Wilensky, 1981; F.G. Castles, 1994; D. Lehmann, 1996). The Constantianian and Caesaro-Papist variants were further versions of these relational styles. They are still to be encountered in some Eastern societies, for example where the most traditional Orthodox Christian Churches prevail. In the Western systems, this procedure is present in some European countries where there reigns a kind of compromise between Western Christianity and the welfare state, or rather the *lib/lab* systems. This configuration is often regulated by "concordats" between the state and organised religion.[4] Civil society is by-passed by the dialogue between the individual religions and the state. This is a solution which characterises not so much the liberal democracies as (and principally) the republican (Jacobin) democracies. In figure 3 it is the solution represented by the A+B line (compromise between religion and the state) which prevails over all the others. This strategy has produced or at least favoured – both directly and indirectly – the secularisation of the public sphere in the past and very proba-

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[4] It is a sociological fact that those countries in which state and established religions have closer relations show higher rates of secularisation in respect to other countries.

bly will continue to do the same in the future wherever this strategy prevails.

b) The second hypothesis (fundamentalism). Religion rejects dialogue with the secular state and shuts itself up within itself. It proceeds by affirming its own civil society and adopting strategies of the Gramscian type, or rather by seeing the conquest of civil society as the path to political hegemony. This hypothesis is more or less fundamentalist. It can be manifested in any religion. But today there can be no doubt that it characterises the more traditionalist currents of Islam[5] and Hinduism (in some parts of India). In fig. 3, line a+c is emphasised. This strategy clearly leads to authoritarian democracies, in addition to clashes between religions.

c) The third hypothesis (emergence of a religiously qualified public sphere). Religion becomes the promoter of a dialogue between different religious denominations and supports a public sphere based upon such dialogue, thereby contributing to the creation of a plural democratic state based upon "ultimate values" which are affirmed by consensus by and among the different religions. In fig. 3 is to be found the arrangement which favours the complex of lines a+b+c+d in relation to direct influence between the state and the religions. This is a strategy which could produce what I call a religiously qualified public sphere.

In this paper I am primarily concerned to develop this last hypothesis.

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[5] As an instructive example one can cite here the speech by the Bishop of Izmir (Smirne) to the Second Synod for Europe which was held in the Vatican in October 1999. Bishop Giuseppe Germano Bernardini wanted to illustrate the difficulties of achieving dialogue with Islam, and referred to certain significant statements by important Islamic religious leaders who have declared that "thanks to your (European) democratic laws we will invade you; thanks to our (Muslim) laws we will dominate you"; "you have nothing to teach us and we have nothing to learn", and similar such remarks. On this point it should be repeated that a religiously qualified public sphere implies, in that it is a sphere of religious tolerance, the first principle of reciprocity between subjects and faiths. As the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the recently mentioned Synod states: "the dialogue with Muslims must be conducted with prudence and with clarity of ideas about its possibilities and its limitations and with trust in the project of salvation of God towards all his children. For mutual solidarity to be sincere *one has to have reciprocity in relationships, above all in the sphere of religious freedom*" (the italics are mine).

4.3.   The idea of a religiously qualified public sphere corresponds to that of a sphere regulated by mutual tolerance no longer based upon the presuppositions of neutrality and indifference typical of modern liberalism, but upon the presuppositions of an active and promotional tolerance of religious values.

This is a sphere of tolerance based upon principles which have a shared foundation among the religions in a way which is proportionate to their being "capable of transcendence" in their relationship with the reality and the truth of the human being. The requisite of capacity for transcendence is indispensable to achieve the recognition and the safeguarding of the dignity of the human person.

The religiously qualified public sphere is that of a civil society (at the centre of fig. 3) as the field of encounter between subjects which enter into market exchanges and exchanges of social integration which are not already deprived of their religious membership but defined by such membership. They interact with each other positively appreciating such membership within the context of a political democracy which regulates the joint-presence of different religions through such spheres of exchange. This is the sphere of *civil relationality elaborated by the religions themselves* at the moment at which they act beyond themselves through the influence that they exert on the social actor. The religiously qualified public sphere *does not correspond to the idea of a civil religion* (which by now no longer has good reasons to go on existing: N. Luhmann, 1977), but corresponds instead to the idea of a *religiously inspired sphere of secularity*.

The need for such a sphere arises from new requirements: on the one hand from the gaping void of modernity with its concept of liberal tolerance, and on the other from the need for a positive and active tolerance based upon an appropriate combination of faith and reason.

It is known that modernity advances a strongly negative objection in relation to such a hypothesis. The objection maintains that religious membership should not have weight in the public sphere because democracy must see each citizen as "equal" (that is to say as an equally "random" individual). The supporters of modernity believe, indeed,

that the daily problems of democracy are due to the fact that there has not been enough modernisation and argue that we should go beyond the "reasonable" principles of modernity, that is to say: 1) the principle of the privatisation of religion; 2) the prevalence of the "politics of rights" over the "politics of goods"; and 3) the principle according to which the self, as a moral actor, should be understood in a secularised way (that is to say without the individual being able to justify his or her ethical action on the basis of religious presuppositions). In the opinion of the champions of modernity, these principles alone can maintain a public sphere made up of freedom and equal opportunity for everyone. Their belief is that only if the public sphere is based on such principles is there a real possibility of achieving mutual tolerance.

But the arguments of the champions of modernity do not work, and this for at least two reasons.

The first reason is of an empirical character and consists of the fact that the advance of secularisation has not progressed as it was believed it would as recently as the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, in all continents we are now faced with the re-emergence of fundamentalist movements. These movements may be the product of globalisation or other factors, but whatever they may be the counter-tendency of de-secularisation involves conflicts and problems in the public sphere which the principles of modernity cannot solve. Indeed, they can only make them worse. In short, *if the tolerance preached by the champions of the modern has its basis in secularisation it cannot continue*. This is because of the fact that secularisation is in crisis or is retreating almost everywhere.

The second reason is of an analytical character and involves the paradoxes of the processes of institutionalisation to be found in modernity. It is precisely the institutions of modernity that lead to the antithesis of their de-institutionalisation: in other words, abstract ethical universalism and ethical neutralism generate particularistic, segmentary and even tribal ethical attachments. Modernity produces its antithesis, that is to say reactions which express themselves in the politics of identity and of difference which spread as a return to ancient ethnic identities both in a negative sense (as in the case of racism) and in a positive

sense (as in the case of the development of positive differences such as those of gender). The self practised only because of the abstract autonomy of the individual can no longer satisfy the deep needs for meaning of the human person which emerge in post-modernity. Such needs can find an answer only in primordial identities and in new relational capacities. In short, there are constituent points of the self which the idealistic and rationalistic Reason (whether Fichtian, Hegelian, Enlightenment, or otherwise) does not understand.

There is, however, an argument which modernity rightly stresses. Often the return to traditional religion which we can witness in daily life does not bring with it a positive approach towards the other person (to our neighbour), that is to say towards values which allow an opening up to the Other. Although this tendency is also indeed manifested, in a great part of the present-day processes of de-secularisation there prevails the fact that every religion (whether traditional or post-modern) strives to achieve a validation of its own structure of belief without accepting, or even without being prepared to engage into dialogue with, other religions. This is because its followers only seek a legitimation of their own self in the face of uncertainty.

The fact is that religion must pass through the melting pot of the Enlightenment in order to transcend its historical-ritualistic forms. Traditional values can not become meaningful once again if they do not open up to complexity. For this reason, although it is true that the solutions invented by the historical period of the first half of the fourteenth century to the end of the twentieth century have revealed themselves to be secularised solutions without a future, it is also true that a fulfilled democracy must be able to observe and positively appreciate the process of the invention of new de-secularised answers.

There are two possibilities (scenarios). On the one hand we encounter the intensification/absolutisation of the tensions of modernity between faith and reason as two fundamentalisms which are opposed to each other. This would mean a certain kind of return to the dilemma of having a war of religion or choosing the path of secularisation. In the other hand, there is the promotion of a faith in perpetual dialogue with

reason, or rather the fostering of a religiosity which educates people in the meaning of reason, something which is a need perceived within all the monotheistic religions.

The new solutions should meet the need which is now emerging as being of primary importance: that of having a faith integrated into reason and *vice versa* a reason rooted in faith. Because when all is said and done, we also *need to believe in democracy*. Be this as it may, one is no longer dealing with a dimissive attitude to faith as ignorance.

4.4.   The approach illustrated here seeks to support the idea that it is possible to recover active and rational tolerance *within religious culture and not outside it*. It should be based upon values and not upon indifference. The equality of citizens in the public sphere must not be understood as uniformity or as a product of similarity, but as the happy recognition of difference. A. Seligman (2000) invites us to think about "principled tolerance", that is to say a tolerance based upon commitment to values able to relate the sacred and the profane; no longer counterposing them in an irreconcilable way but utilising them as expressions of a common knowledge which is an articulated system of values. Principled tolerance is basically, and foremost, the recognition of religious freedom as a fundamental right of the human person to live his/her relation to the religious truth without any form of social or political coercion (F. Ocariz 1989, 1995).

One can return to rational discussion and dialogue only within a "religious comprehension". Indeed, tolerance implies accepting something that we do not believe in or which we do not see as being credible. It implies that within a certain world of values, we become involved with others. It implies selections (and thus also restrictions) of thought and judgement. Tolerance is positive energy which involves a change in one's own behaviour. It does not limit itself to the constraining of behaviour, but also binds the thought and psychological and moral judgement of the person and supports it in the tension towards the truth without wanting the other person to accept that truth if he or she is not convinced by it. It is a tension between loyalty to one's own

thought and the sincere effort to accept and respect other forms of thought.

Over the last two hundred years tolerance has been founded exclusively on the privatisation of reason and the circumscribing of the religious elements (claims) of belief within the limits in which such elements could require recognition and legitimation. Democracy, that is to say, has chosen to base tolerance in a decisive way on secularised foundations. This process has corresponded to the institutionalisation of Protestant religiosity.

Liberal democracy has produced liberal tolerance for which belief is left to the interiority of the individual, whilst the external (public) practices are subject to the coercion (of the state). For modernity, indeed, social control is not a question of faith or belief but of public practices. This is not only the approach of Thomas Hobbes but also of John Locke, who is indeed usually cited as the liberal thinker who most positively appreciated the religious presuppositions of the public sphere. Seeing things in this way, modernity involves a tolerance which is not tenable. Freedom, indeed, is understood as a fluctuation free of internal controls and cannot, in the end, do other than go mad. While, in contrary fashion, democracy must try to achieve public order with a certain *Panopticon* (J. Bentham) – something which cannot but have feet of clay.

Modernity leads to the exasperation of social differentiation and in particular to the differentiation between the self and society. The post-modern world manifests, instead, the need for the reintegration of the self and society, of a relationship between individuality and sociality, rather than the accentuation of differentiation as such, of absolute differentiation. At a cultural level, advanced societies no longer call for an indefinite differentiation between faith and reason but require a greater integration between both which is based upon structures of reciprocity. This can come about through a reintegration of the values of cultural traditions (authority and transcendence) with the values of modernity. It is possible to favour sensitivity towards a transcendental authority without falling into authoritarianism.

We must redistinguish tolerance as indifference and tolerance as sensitivity towards transcendental principles (principled tolerance). This last is a second best solution for an individual religion which, within itself, strives for the first best of its own truth. The imposition of its truth on the external world would mean it becoming intolerant. Tolerance based upon principles is instead the rule of the space of dialogue concerning boundaries (a dialogue held on the boundaries), the place where the public sphere is precisely to be found.

This does not mean that persons should adopt a double standard ethics (one internal to the membership group and one external to it). They must not become schizoid. It only means that people must learn how to distinguish the operating validity of their religious beliefs and ethical principles when they act within their organized religion or outside it. The tolerance of *Ego* does not mean the recognition of an intangible right held by *Alter*, but only a (morally legitimate) omission in regard to an external behaviour of *Alter* which *Ego* feels to be bad or sinful and which he/she does not imped or repress. In the public sphere, where he acts as a citizen and not as a faithful, *Ego* renounces to persecute *Alter*, while acting in order to affirm peacefully what he believes be a positive and universal good, by this way maintaining one and the same attitude.

Liberal tolerance conforms to relativistic and negative impulses. It exalts the in-difference of religion towards politics (democracy), and sees religion in terms above all else of intolerance. It constructs itself upon a net separation between the public domain and the private realm, in which different types of tolerance are operative. In the public sphere principled indifference is at work, and in the private sphere a tolerance which conforms to the dictates of each religion. Religion cannot, and must not, intervene in the public sphere, in the same way as the state cannot intervene in private affairs, which are a question of tastes and aesthetic preferences. But is this a valid and sufficient form of tolerance for a fulfilled democracy? In reality this is only a temporary expedient which, deprived of principles, ends up by falling into what is its opposite.

The liberal bases of tolerance (as indifference and not as active tolerance) turn out to be fragile and fall into intolerance because:

– liberal tolerance is principled indifference, and thus has no "goods" to affirm; it does not act to promote good – on the contrary it makes every distinction between "goods" irrelevant;

– liberal tolerance is a practice which, because it in fact sees individual autonomy as an absolute good, produces the contrary, that is to say intolerance. This is because the person who possesses the sole good of individual autonomy does not countenance acceptance of other people or of other positions which can bring that autonomy into doubt.

Indeed, in the present-day public spheres of the modernised world, tolerance is practiced as a formal policy of (morally indifferent) rights with one single substantial value – that of individual autonomy. A culture shaped in this way leads to the emptying of values and to intolerance, something that is manifested in the conflict between values which are deprived of justification and comparability.

It is true that there exist variants of liberal tolerance, from the more sceptic forms to the more empathetic. But these are only minority positions which have a scarse effect and impact on the present-day relations between privatised religion and liberal democracy, relations which are based upon ethical indifference.

Because of this, A. Seligman (2000) proposes that liberal tolerance be opposed by *religious tolerance*, which meets the non-relativistic needs for substantial and positive values both of faith and reason. Religious tolerance is that tolerance which recognises the importance for all civilisations and all religions of being receptive to what is outside them, but at the same time locates interest in truth at the centre of all things, knowing that, although nobody has a monopoloy of the Truth, truth nonetheless exists and can be reached through a suitable declination of faith and reason.

The argument of Seligman is that although on the one hand the secularised pluralism of beliefs erodes faith in values (as P. Berger has demonstrated), it is equally true that faith in values can erode the mod-

ern idea of pluralism. A purely liberal democracy cannot survive without a perspicacious religious qualification. This is demonstrated by the emergence of contemporary intolerance, forms of irrationalism and forms of fundamentalism at the very heart of the most advanced societies. In order to combat such trends we need an epistemological modesty, both of faith and of reason. But this modesty must be religiously qualified.

This is why (with regard to fig. 3) democracy must be sensitive to religions both in a direct and in an indirect way through civil society. The two forms of democracy – liberal and republican (or Jacobin) – which have dominated the processes of modernisation, and which today come together in the complex of lib/lab citizenship (Donati 2000, chapters V and VI), have eroded the public sphere and cannot regenerate it. An authentic public sphere capable of transcendentality (that is to say as a sphere of the transcendental as an expression of the shared values of religions and of their transcendental truths) must be able to transmit values and trust to the democratic political system. It can do this if it itself is guided by religious tolerance rather than by liberal tolerance or even by Jacobin tolerance.

The religiously qualified public sphere exalts the principle of subsidiarity and thus the empowerment of the various civil spheres (P. Berger and R.J. Neuhaus, 1996). It places the problem of the translatability of one culture into another at the centre of its own elaboration, and the same may be said of the symbolic codes of a religion into codes that can be comprehensible for other religions, through a shared relational sphere (S. Budick and W. Iser eds., 1998).

5. *Conclusion: the Process of Civilisation and the Challenge of a "Religiously Qualified" Secular Public Sphere*

5.1. Seen from the perspective of modernity, religion seems to divide both the state (the political system) in itself and the state from civil society, and indeed civil society in itself. In the face of this polymognous character of religion, modernity carries out its experiment: it organises (regulates) the public sphere in such a way as to separate reli-

gion and democracy on the presupposition that such a separation acts to integrate the state and manages to balance the state with civil society in a better way and to make civil society more free. Political integration takes place on the basis of the principle of indifferent tolerance towards ultimate and transcendental values. But this experiment has been a failure.

The question is thus posed once again: can the political system of the democratic state immunise itself against religion ? And can it be different from (not make a difference between) religions? Given that civil society cannot, as such, be indifferent to religion, because of the fact that it lives off religious impulses, how can the different religions be reconciled in civil society and in the relations between civil society and the state?

The answers must be looked for in the complex of relations and interchanges (the AGIL complex of figures 1 and 2) which make up the public sphere. It is the public sphere which decides the possibility/ impossibility of responding to the questions posed above. The public sphere once again becomes the place of civilisation, and this after modernity had founded the process of civilisation on the emergence of the private world. We need to see whether the democratic principle *par excellence*, that of mutual tolerance, can still survive and what form it must adopt in order to sustain the new relationships between religion and democracy.

Indeed, the relationship between democracy and religion evolves in a way which depends upon which point of view in the polarity between the public and the private (along the private-public continuum) comes to prevail and leads the processes of change. The processes of civilisation can take place through the private world or through the public world, and normally they are a balanced combination of the two. But in modernity the dominant point of view is that of the private world: the state has seen religion as a private affair, and religion has had to observe democracy from the viewpoint of the private world. In the after-modern world exactly the opposite is required. Everything must be seen from the public sphere: the democratic state must see religion

as a public fact and religion itself returns to observing itself as a public fact.

We should draw all the necessary implications from the fact that whilst in modernity it is within the private sphere that the configuration of society is decided upon, in the after-modern the destiny of society is decidedly in the hands of the public sphere. For the state this means finding a principle of action which makes the various religions compatible from not merely the private point of view but also from the public point of view. For religion this means finding an internal configuration within its own institutional structure which enables it to be able to distinguish between its own internal constituent nucleus (its own orthodoxy) and a prospect of action towards the outside world, on the boundary with the environment (its "secular" dimension) which can enter into the public sphere with systems of pluralistic direction and action, of relational joint-living with the other religions.

In a brilliant essay, J.A. Waldron (1993) advanced a series of convincing arguments to the effect that a religion such as the Catholic religion has a full right to enter into the debate about the public sphere and about all the subjects and issues of political discourse. He does this in opposition to those who maintain that religious arguments must remain within the sphere of the private.[6] His arguments identify, in my opinion, certain valid principles by which to justify what I call a religiously qualified public sphere where both the ordinary citizens, and those who have institutional positions of importance, are not required to keep silent about their religious convictions either when they vote or when they decide about the public welfare or take institutional decisions (and this is perfectly compatible with liberal political principles, even though this does not require liberal philosophical beliefs). Waldron argues that "something like the pastoral letter has a natural place in public deliberations, even when public declaration is conceived in a secular liberal spirit and even when many or most participants in that

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[6] See the special issue devoted to the question of "the role of religion in public debate in liberal society" of *The San Diego Law Review*, 30, Fall 1993.

debate do not accept the premises on which the bishops construct their arguments. We will miss its potential relevance if we insist that all contributions to such debate must connect syllogistically with premises that are already part of a public consensus. If, on the other hand, we see the value of rethinking the structures of our premises, or of being disconcerted with the richness of their Christian provenance, or if, in general, we see the value of an open, challenging, and indeterminate form of public deliberation in which nothing is taken for granted – if we loosen our conception of public reason in these or other ways – then we may be less uncomfortable about the deployment of religious ideas, even explicitly and unashamedly theological ideas, in what we may still regard as ultimately a matter for secular politics".

At the centre of this area of concern, that of a new model of civilisation implemented through a public sphere of shared discourse, there is the question of the difficult space of secularity. What do we mean by the secularity of the public sphere ?

Modernity has defined secularity as the suspension, if not the negation, of the religious point of view. Such a conception has today become self-destructive. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, secularity understood as pure secularism can only retreat. We need to define secularity without suspending or denying the religious point of view. In this sense there can naturally be different positions which go from a greater to a lesser connection between elements of faith and elements of religion. But it cannot be doubted that secularity should be redefined as a capacity for dialogue and principled tolerance between positions which must not abandon their faith in order to enter into this space, something which has been requested by modernity. It should no longer be necessary to demonstrate secularity, even on the part of religious currents, on the basis of the fact that in them the element of reason must in the final resort prevail over that of faith.

There is more than theretical and empirical evidence that within the great world religions there exists a distinction between dogmatics within the individual religion (orthodox Jewish, Christian, Muslim) and the secular space of dialogue with the other denominations or religions

(as has been shown by E. Lévinas 1960 within the context of Jewish culture; E. Pace 1999 with regard to Islam; and A. Del Portillo 1998 in relation to the Christian world).

Legal and political orders can be brought into being in which faith and reason are mutually moderate. Secularity then means a faith tempered with reason, a reason tempered with faith. This new way of understanding secularity is built upon the assumption that it is possible to achieve an encounter between faith and reason not only within each religion but also – and as a consequence – in the dialogue between religions, and in particular in the relationship between the reason within each faith and the other "reasons". In this way it becomes practically possible to achieve a healthy religious pluralism on which to build a legal order which respects the religious definition of the public sphere (O. Carré, 1995; S. Ferrari and I.C. Iban, 1997).

Indeed, the relationship between faith and reason is a constituent part of both because of the real distinction which differentiates them and connects them at one and the same time. Faith is a constituent part of reason in the same way as reason is a constituent part of faith. Reason must operate within religion and *vice versa*. The methodological use of doubt has its justified value, especially when different religions compare and contrast their truths, but it can never have an absolute value (this was observed by Plato with his concept of *scepsi* which has nothing to do with the systemtic scepticism of the moderns but means only the rejection of a self-enclosed dogmatism. It is thus a methodological expression of love for truth, of wanting to take the language of the other person and his or her own reality seriously into consideration as a meaningful difference). This doubt, today, must be above else exercised in relation to the conflation that modernity ends up by producing between *Wertrationalität* and *Zweckrationalität*. Instead of levelling the former to the latter it seems necessary to commence a public discourse on the values of civilisation as a point of direct encounter between the religions, and which is not mediated through the political power of the state (or political system, however democratic it might be).

Pluralism based upon abstract universals is no longer tenable: we need to differentiate the universal with particular semantics, on the condition, however, that they maintain the tension towards a universal meaning. This societal (corporate) pluralism cannot be the work of the political system, but is a task which can be performed only by religious cultures which take into consideration the contribution made by reason.

The challenges of Sarajevo and Jerusalem are two emblematic metaphors of the need for a public sphere in which only active religious tolerance can construct a universal sphere based upon particular universalisms. The tolerance which we need must concede the particular and the universal at the same time, but it would be more precise to say that it must draw up a universalism which is differentiated according to the particular approaches of each religion, at least to the extent to which the religions referred to are capable of transcendence. Something of a transcendental nature is required in order to maintain the dialogue. This is why the hypothesis of a civil society which is pure unlimited community of discourse cannot form a plausible basis for that public sphere needed by the after-modern democracies. It is not enough to communicate without restrictions and without differences of power. We need to communicate together our own truth out of love for truth, knowing not only to respect the Other but also to love the Other, and this is possible only if it is done with *religious tolerance*.

Fides et Ratio, according to the recent encyclical of John Paul II, means directing one's efforts towards the creation of faith (trust) through a religiously qualified civil society and at the same time towards a democracy that can decide on the basis of rational assumptions. The secularity of the state (the "secular state") at the beginning of the third millennium can no longer mean the indifference of democracy towards religion or of religion towards public life, but must mean, instead, the circulation of the religious dimension of the public sphere, seeing religion as a source of vitality for the various social spheres which it promotes, on the condition that the concrete religion referred to demonstrates a capacity for transcendence and reciprocity.

5.2.   In a correct and sound relational approach, religion must be seen as a necessary dimension of both particular and generalised social relations. At a real level this is what is experienced in ordinary life where – in opposition to the hypothesis of future progressive secularisation – religion becomes increasingly (and not increasingly less) relevant in the spheres of even the most differentiated social life. In the after-modern life-worlds, religions tend to produce rules and lifestyles which impinge upon the economy and the organisations of the social private world and by this route influence the world of democratic interplay. There is more than one reason to support the view that religions must unite in order to combat the commodification and standardisation of the collective and individual mind which are generated by the processes of globalisation. The hypothesis presented here is that religions can do this through the construction of a religiously qualified public sphere which supports an associative democracy.

What about the so-called non-believers ? To my mind, they should be included as a significant part of this dialogue, provided that they too keep a keen distinction between what they think in the private sphere and what they recognize as valid for everybody in the the public sphere. There are good reasons to think that believers and non-believers can agree upon basic values and universal rules for the common good of all on the basis of human rationality and not of a particular religious credo.

The old slogans of modernity, like for example "a free Church *in* a free state" (the European model characterised by '*inclusion*') and "free Church *and* free state" (the American model characterised by '*separation*') are by now obsolete. Freedom is increasingly turning out to be a relational phenomenon as an interaction *between*. From a religious point of view, it has become so in a dual sense. First of all as the freedom of religion to create social relations which are goods in themselves (relational goods), i.e. as a right that exists independently of the state. And then as freedom to promote synergical relations between the strictly religious sphere and the political sphere through a new public sphere. In both cases positive freedoms are involved,

which promote the Other, and not purely negative freedoms, of defence *from* the Other. The motto could be: "church and state *relate to each other in terms of positive freedom*" (*relational model*), meaning that religion and democracy adopt a principle of subsidiarity towards each other, and enforce it reciprocally. By this way they can empower and develop their own identity within a relationship of complementary freedoms which work 'at distance' (religion and democracy must positively – not negatively – free their relationships in order to avoid conformity and/or instrumental actions towards each other).

Modern democracy has sought to create its own "civil religion" based upon liberal tolerance, but this attempt has failed. After-modern society needs active and propositive tolerance, that is to say religious tolerance which is not mere permissiveness or a melting pot or a salad bowl of the different religions.

Religions must face up to the challenge of a civil culture elaborated "in the plural" by religions which otherwise would exclude each other. They must, to this end, reject both the processes of secularisation and the new forms of fundamentalism. The goal may seem utopian, but it is, instead, made ever more concrete and urgent by the fact that democracy is no longer managing to counter the processes of commodification of human life brought about by globalisation. At the same time, because we certainly cannot return to the pre-modern era, religions can be legitimised as autonomous subjects of the public sphere on the condition that they bring about a more fulfilled democracy through the intermediation of the spheres of the social private world which promote the "society of the human".

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