

ISSN 2328-2177  
DOI:10.17265/2328-2177

# *Cultural and Religious Studies*

Volume 5, Number 4, April 2017



From Knowledge to Wisdom

David Publishing Company  
[www.davidpublisher.com](http://www.davidpublisher.com)

# **Cultural and Religious Studies**

Volume 5, Number 4, April 2017 (Serial Number 29)



David Publishing Company  
[www.davidpublisher.com](http://www.davidpublisher.com)

**Publication Information:**

*Cultural and Religious Studies* is published monthly in print (ISSN2328-2177) by David Publishing Company located at 616 Corporate Way, Suite 2-4876, Valley Cottage, NY 10989, USA.

**Aims and Scope:**

*Cultural and Religious Studies*, a monthly professional academic journal, covers all sorts of researches on topics including gendered identities, cultural citizenship, migration, post-colonial criticism, consumer cultures, media and film, and cultural policy, the religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Mormonism, as well as specialists in the fields of Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology of Religion.

**Editorial Board Members:**

Virginija Jurėnienė (Lithuania) Diana Dimitrova (Canada) Rasa Pranskeviciute (Lithuania)  
Arvind Kumar Sing (India) Cristina-Georgiana Voicu (Romania) Dott. Salvatore Drago (Italy)  
Carmen Rivera Alviar (Philippines) Seyed Masoud Noori (Iran) Marion Meyer (Austria)  
Anabel Ternès (Germany) Mara Magda Maftai (France) Christopher Roman (USA)  
Adam Świeżyński (Poland) Alessandro Vettori (USA) Nuha Alshaar (USA) Nasrin Mosaffa (Italy)  
Victoria Arakelova (Armenia) Shokoufeh Taghi (UK) Enes Karic (USA) Emma Tagliacollo (Italy)  
Yousef Awad (Jordan) Kamalroop Singh Birk (UK) Bülent C. Tanrıtanır (Turkey)  
Grace Russo Bullaro (USA) Yihong Liu (China)

Manuscripts and correspondence are invited for publication. You can submit your paper via Web Submission or E-mail to [culture@davidpublishing.org](mailto:culture@davidpublishing.org). Submission guidelines and Web Submission system are available at <http://www.davidpublisher.com>.

**Editorial Office:**

616 Corporate Way, Suite 2-4876, Valley Cottage, NY 10989, USA  
TEL: +1-323-984-7526  
FAX: + 1-323-984-7374  
Email: [culture@davidpublishing.org](mailto:culture@davidpublishing.org)

Copyright©2017 by David Publishing Company and individual contributors. All rights reserved. David Publishing Company holds the exclusive copyright of all the contents of this journal. In accordance with the international convention, no part of this journal may be reproduced or transmitted by any media or publishing organs (including various websites) without the written permission of the copyright holder. Otherwise, any conduct would be considered as the violation of the copyright. The contents of this journal are available for any citation, however, all the citations should be clearly indicated with the title of this journal, serial number and the name of the author.

**Abstracted/ Indexed in:**

Google Scholar  
Hein Online Database, W.S.HEIN, USA  
Chinese Database of CEPS, China  
American Federal Computer Library center (OCLC), USA  
Chinese Scientific Journals Database, VIP Corporation, Chongqing, P. R. China  
Ulrich's Periodicals Directory  
Pro Quest  
Summon Serials Solutions

**Subscription Information:**

Print \$520 Online \$320  
Print and Online \$600  
David Publishing Company  
616 Corporate Way, Suite 2-4876, Valley Cottage, NY 10989, USA  
Tel: +1-323-984-7526  
Fax: + 1-323-984-7374  
E-mail: [order@davidpublishing.org](mailto:order@davidpublishing.org)



David Publishing Company  
[www.davidpublisher.com](http://www.davidpublisher.com)

# Cultural and Religious Studies

Volume 5, Number 4, April 2017 (Serial Number 29)

## Contents

### Culture

**Culture and Leadership in the 21st Century** 179

*Remi Alapo*

**A Humanist God? On the troubled Relationship Between Humanism and Religion Today** 190

*Marco Russo*

**Resource Extraction in the Territories of Indigenous Peoples: The Quest for Cultural Rights** 196

*Apparao Thamminaina*

### Religion

**Poetic Religiosity in Brazilian Urban Peripheries** 205

*Marcos Henrique de Oliveira Nicolini*

**Addressing Religious Issues at UAE Schools in Times of Global Changes** 223

*Ameera Ahmed Almessabi*

# Culture and Leadership in the 21st Century

Remi Alapo

University of Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Some factors that have contributed to the need for organizational leaders to adapt, and adjust to other national cultures are the globalization of the workforce, the expansion of international companies, and exposure of many national organizations to increased business competition. The increased competition has forced organizational leaders to engage in the understanding of the cultural limitations of organizations and their leadership practices. In addition, cross-cultural leadership researchers in 21st century are cognizant of the fact that culture is a condition, and a boundary to previous leadership theories and practices. Using Gerte Hofstede's cultural dimension model, culture and organizational leadership as they relate to the leadership practices of participants, and National and Family Cultures are examined in this revised paper.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:* Hofstede's cross, cultural leadership, power distance, culture and leadership, national culture, family culture, cross-cultural leadership, culture and leadership styles

## Introduction

The 21st century has been met with increases in integrating cultures and economies on a faster pace (Suk-Hing Chan, 2005). There is a demand in the global economy for national cultures to adjust and adapt to global market trends. From this wide-scale of multi-national business practices in cross-cultural environments, both national and organizational leaders can step outside of their country's norms as new national cultures and leadership practices emerge. As the world integrates businesses and cultures, many organizational leaders are crossed between their cultural beliefs, norms, practices, and leadership approaches in the ways in which they understand cultural influences on leadership (Hanges, Lord, & Dickson, 2000).

Some factors that have contributed to the need for organizational leaders to adapt, and adjust to other national cultures are the globalization of the workforce, the expansion of international companies, and exposure of many national organizations to increased business competition. The increased competition has forced organizational leaders to engage in understanding of the cultural limitations of organizations and their leadership practices. In addition, cross-cultural leadership researchers in the 21st century are cognizant of the fact that culture is a condition, and a boundary to previous leadership theories and practices (Hanges, Lord, & Dickson, 2000).

Two studies reflected opposing views on the nature of a person's cultural influence on his or her leadership style. The underlying argument in these studies is that in organizations, the environmental factors present in the society affects the leadership practices of leaders. An appropriate leadership style or practice in

---

Remi Alapo, Doctor of Management (D.M), Organizational Management and Leadership, University of Phoenix.

<sup>1</sup> The following is a revised section on culture and leadership, a part of the dissertation research by Alapo, R. (2011). *The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Nigeria: A phenomenological Study*.

one culture may not be appropriate in another (Hanges, Lord, & Dickson, 2000). Globalization has moved leaders towards common goals, such as being effective and remaining competitive in an innovative 21st century. The national culture of a person's country may be different from the leadership practice of another, therefore it is an ambiguous statement to previous cross-cultural leadership theories that a universal leadership practice exists. That is why it is important for organizational leaders to learn about and adapt to cross-cultural leadership practices and leadership styles of environments in which they work or one where they conduct business (Okpara, 2007).

### **National Culture**

In a study on national culture and leadership, proponents of culture-specific perspective maintain that the effectiveness of leadership is unique and depends on national culture (Zagoršek, 2004). These authors argue that a person's beliefs, values, ideals, and norms are deeply rooted in a person's leadership practices, and that national culture affects the leadership behaviors, styles, goals, structure, culture, and strategies of organizations. Central to organizing a core belief to understanding a person's leadership style is national culture (Newman, 2003).

National culture implies that an acceptable way or practice of leadership in one culture may not be preferred in another. Social psychologists have argued that culture is socialized in a person through shared values of social groups that play key roles in a person's cognitive, emotional, and social functioning. These socialization patterns, in turn, shape how people perceive the self and others in cross-cultural environments (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989).

### **Family Culture**

Cultural factors affect leadership in many ways. Leaders, especially within the extended family system see themselves as working for members of the family as well as for the extended family, rather than for his or her own immediate gratification. In culturally inclusive societies, organizational leaders view themselves based on their family name, responsibilities, and the societal construct of how a man or woman should or should not behave amongst peers, subordinates, and others in the work environment. Societal constructs are based on age, gender, level of education, and region. Decision-making in many family culture relies on patrilineal family and social structures, in which individuals foremost will base their leadership style on the national and family culture of their societies. Therefore, national culture affects personality, attitudes, and behaviors of a leader or person in positions of power (Ejiofor, 1987; Okpara, 1996).

Previous studies relating cross-cultural leadership issues to work behaviors, have concluded that cultural factors influence a person's leadership style (Ejiofor, 1987; Okpara, 1996). Universalities and culture-specificities are more likely to be found than not, in places or societies where family culture and tradition are very strong. Previous studies confirmed the notion that perceptions of what makes an effective and ineffective leader are similar in content across cultures. With variations of what is important, especially between similar cultures that share an overarching value structure, such as religion. There are large variations on how people perceive leadership in cultures different from each other (Dastmalchian, Javidan, & Alam, 2001; Ling, Chia, & Fang, 2000).

## **Culture and Leadership Styles**

From a social perspective, culture is defined as a collective understanding of different people who

distinguish themselves as a group having different practices, beliefs, values, and norms from the other (Hofstede, 1980; Rodriguez, 1996). Leaders that learn to adapt to and interact with others in another culture are more likely to develop a successful, long-term business relationship because they have expanded their cultural understanding of another person or country's national culture. Leaders that do not have a clear understanding of the national culture present in their environments when they are leading in the 21st century can have failures in their leadership even when they have good organizational strategy in place. Culture is the set of ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and values common to a group of people. Culture shapes the human behavior that is different from one society to another. The attitudes, behaviors, and values mentioned above take on added meaning with respect to time, language, and cultural context. This definition is consistent with other definitions that national culture defines on behaviors, attitudes, and values of the members of that society (Hunt, Osborn, & Shermerhorn, 1994; Newman & Nollen, 1996).

### **Hofstede's Cross-cultural Framework**

Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of a group from another (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede's work highlights differences in Western and Eastern cultures and is most widely cited in cultural studies (David, 2007). Another definition of culture is as follows:

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, believing and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (e.g., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. (Unger, Papastamatelou, Gassemi, & Lu, 2014)

A cultural dimension model based on a research study done in 67 countries was developed from a study, where influences of culture on individual behavior were in observation. In these studies, five cultural dimensions which can address changes of culture and management in a society were observed: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation and they were named Hofstede's five dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1980, 1991, 1994, and 2001).

#### **Power Distance**

Describes the degree of inequality amongst people considered acceptable in a society. Power distance is the extent to which a society accepts that power distributes unequally, and measures the degree to which there is a psychological distance between a leader and his or her followers. Power distance is a continuum, with small power distance on the left and large power distance on the right. Leaders with small power distances prefer the democratic approach to sharing power with everyone in the group. Leaders with high power distance tend to be autocratic with power centralized in the hands of a few, such as with the elite, often based on class differentiation. This dimension refers to the comfort level that people have in interaction and decision-making decisions within the hierarchical structure of the organization. High power distance is present when subordinates do not feel good about decisions made by leaders. Low power distance indicates that subordinates may wonder why leaders have a slow pace to decision-making. Power distance also refers to the perceptual inequality among people between different cultures. Societies that have high power distance tend to have a highly centralized management system (Zhang, 1994; Hofstede, 1994; Randolph & Sashkin, 2002).

#### **Individualism and Collectivism**

Individualism is the notion that an individual is the primary unit of reality, giving it ultimate value. In

contrast to collectivism, which maintains that the group holds the ultimate value, and stresses the needs for individuals as subordinate to those of the group. An individual's welfare is an end goal and should not sacrifice any individual for the sake of another. Collectivists look at reality as mediation among the group and consequently, give the group the authority to confront reality rather than the individual. This collectivist view can be said as true for cultures where there is huge national and family culture presence in the leadership practices of leaders (Stata, 1992).

Individualism starts from the premise that to get to know the whole, it is necessary and sufficient to know the elementary or 56 atomic facts. It adopts the norm to tackle problems one at a time. Epistemological individualism focuses on the individual knower isolated from the learning community. It is true that cognition is a brain process, but individuals do learn from interaction with other group members (Bunge, 2000). Individualism as a priority to personal goals over those of the group, while he referred to collectivism as the concept of giving priority to the group over the individual. This dimension describes the level to which individualism and collectivism depend on the values of the society as well as other factors such as educational levels and subcultures within the organization (Lee, 1992).

### **Masculine and Feminism**

This dimension describes the degree to which society perceive values and traits that are associated with masculine qualities. Masculine imagery is deprived of sensitivity towards themselves and others with the attainment of social status and material wealth; masculine males are expected to be independent and display assertiveness. In contrast, qualities of femininity include nurturing and sympathy. This dimension also describes the difference between genders as well as the characteristics of one gender prevailing over the other (Hofstede, 1994, 2001). Masculinity refers to the degree that certain values such as assertiveness, performance, and competitiveness prevail over feminine values such as quality of life, warm personal relationships, service, and solidarity. Dimensions of masculinity are preferred in societies where males are favored in leadership positions, certain professions are attributed to masculine pride and preferably chosen for male members of the family rather than for females. This aspect also holds true that the national culture in many societies is patriarchal. This duality of concepts interprets differently in various cultures however (Hofstede, 1994; Rodriguez, 1996).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

This dimension describes the extent to which a person can deal with threatening, ambiguous, or anxiety-provoking situations. Strong uncertainty avoidance associates with traditional cultures while weak uncertainty avoidance associates with contemporary cultures. This dimension describes the amount of uncertainty that can coexist with the amount of tolerance people can have for uncertain situations (Hofstede, 1994, 2001). A high-level of uncertainty avoidance indicates that subordinates prefer carefully detailed goals, assignments, policies, and procedures. In low levels of uncertainty avoidance, subordinates can tolerate unclear descriptions of the goals, processes, and procedures. A low-level of uncertainty avoidance can lead to chaos if presented in an environment in which subordinates prefer clarity. Organizations with high uncertainty avoidance culture adhere to the organizational hierarchy in management, processes, rules, and regulations (Zhang, 1994; Randolph & Sashkin, 2002).

### **Long-term and Short-term Orientation**

This is the last dimension which refers to the degree to which organizations adopt either long or short-term



performance strategies (Hofstede, 2001; Hunt et al., 1991). This cultural dimension derived from research done by Michael Bond using the Chinese values survey in support of Confucian dynamism and focusing on relationships, thrift, a sense of shame, personal steadiness, reciprocity, and respect for tradition (Hunt et al., 1991). Long-term orientation reflects persistence, perseverance, and thrift as compared to short-term orientation that reflects personal stability, respect, tradition, and fulfilling social expectations. Hofstede stated that *long-term orientation* stands for the fostering of virtues, rewards, perseverance, and thrift. Its opposite pole, *short-term orientation*, which stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular, a respect for tradition, preservation, and fulfilling social obligations (Hoppe, 1990).

An important insight into the validity of data that may not be universal of socio-cultural dimensions relevant to leadership, as in the case of their discoveries on studies of leadership between the East (countries of the former Soviet Union), and the West (the United States and Germany) (Ardichvili & Kuchinke, 2002). Grouping countries based on cultural, geographic, or religious proximity could be equally questionable. For example, one may expect that Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos would form a homogeneous subset because of proximity and sharing of similar religious beliefs. These countries are quite different (Mom-Chhing, 2009). Regional differences within countries may also influence leadership style from one country to the other.

Another example, one may expect that Nigeria has the same culture throughout the country but the national culture is different from the family culture or other traditional practices that vary from each Nigerian society or community to the other. Therefore, leadership and management development recommendations based on country profiles, and grounded in Hofstede's dimensions should be conducted with caution to ensure their validity. Hofstede's work provides practical applications in cross-cultural training and development to help people work more effectively in more than one culture. Application of dimensions can help people understand their own cultural tendencies (Rosenhauer, 2007).

### **Problem**

The universal 21st century global market leadership culture is in direct conflict with the national and family cultures of Nigeria.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this section of the research was to investigate Nigerian women in leadership positions and the relationship of both national and family cultures as they relate to their leadership practices. This section<sup>2</sup> of the research study provides the descriptive analysis on power and organizational leadership as they relate to both National and Family Cultures and to understand the effects of both national and family culture on power relations within the participant's respective places of business or organizations. The questions for this section were asked to understand the perspectives of research participants as they interpret their perceptions and the ways in which both national and family culture affected their leadership characteristics.

### **Methodology**

The research group involved an organization, body of members, characterized by a unique culture, values,

---

<sup>2</sup> These results are the descriptive analysis which have been revised and were based on the section on Culture and Leadership in the 21st Century. A dissertation research conducted by Alapo, R. (2011) titled: *The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Nigeria: A Phenomenological Study*.

and social beliefs. The scope of this section of the research study was a practical orientation to examine applied power as used by individuals. A phenomenological qualitative research study explored the culture and leadership in a cross-cultural environment, examining both national and family cultures as the basis for cross-cultural leadership, and utilizing Gerte Hofstede's five cultural dimensions of culture as analysis for this section of the research on culture and leadership. The research was conducted amongst a group of 50 women, ages 35 to 50 years of age who were in leadership positions in an organization working to increase the number of women in management and leadership positions in Nigeria. An open-ended survey questionnaire was appropriate for the proposed research study because it allowed participants to describe their day-to-day lived experiences. The researcher gathered insights into the lived experiences of a like-minded sample of respondents from the research population as they described their cross-cultural leadership experiences. The following are the descriptive analysis of the section on power and organizational leadership.

## Results

### Descriptive summary1: Role of National and Family Culture on power

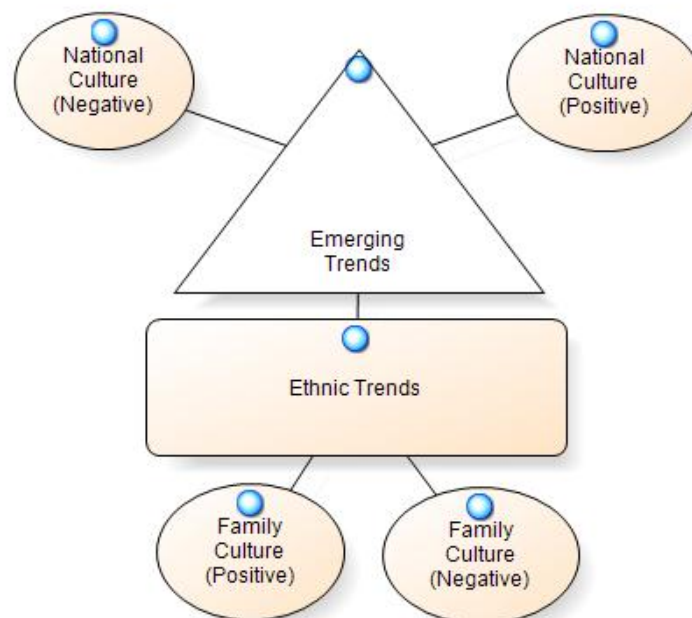


Figure 1. Emerging trends of national and family culture.

When asked to describe what the role of both the national and family culture of Nigeria was on the leadership styles of women, many of the participants responded both positively and negatively to this question. One respondent answered that national and family culture was an emerging trend because many people still expected women to submit to men, even when those women were more qualified. Another answered that the natural tendency of Nigeria's culture is to assign family roles to women. This culture is weakening as more and more women continue to succeed in the corporate, political and business worlds. Many of the respondents believed that "contrary to the common opinion that culture did not permit women to be leaders, culture, both family and national is viewed as a tool that helped to nurture the great potentials in women".

For instance, culture lays emphasis on the woman as a home maker and by experience, the better home makers are better leaders. The national and family cultures in Nigeria are rapidly changing and now one can find more women in management and leadership roles. Especially since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, where more women are now involved in business and political leadership, and have been elected or appointed to serve in government, and lead major corporations in the country. “Their successes have marked a dynamic and transitional shift to climb to the economic and leadership ladder”.

From some participants’ point of view, cultural perceptions in Nigeria affects the leadership role of women because Nigerian culture does not easily embrace the concept of women having leadership positions in the society. Men are perceived as heads of the family even where, as is the case these days, women are the bread winners. Nigerian culture in one respondent’s view has grossly hampered the development of women. Less importance is attached to the birth and development of female children especially in the respondent’s community. Ignorance and lack of extensive exposure has limited the potential of women leaders in Nigeria. “Women need more education, more exposure and more development to boost their self-esteem”.

In as much as there is persistence to have more women in leadership, one respondent doubted that the Nigerian culture fully believes, and accepts what they profess. In Nigeria, the national culture is at least on the surface supportive of women in leadership positions, and at the family level, it varies. There is the assumption that a woman in leadership ceases to be womanly. For instance, “she loses all sense of femininity and womanliness, and so she is perceived as not fit for marriage. This trend in the group has seen a high number of professional women being unmarried”. Nigeria is a highly filial culture, and this results in added pressure on the professional woman for marriage and children from the family circle.

Finally, when asked what role the national and family culture has played on the leadership styles of women in Nigeria, many of the respondents stated that in education and knowledge, women needed to travel far and wide, to meet other women in leadership positions—especially those in the highest positions of leadership. “An educated woman makes a whole lot of difference as a mother, a mentor, a leader and a counselor”.

**Descriptive summary2: Cultural values when exercising power**

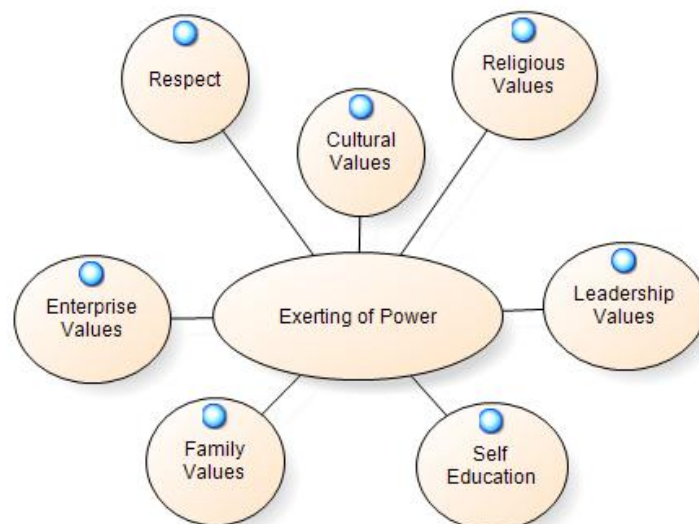


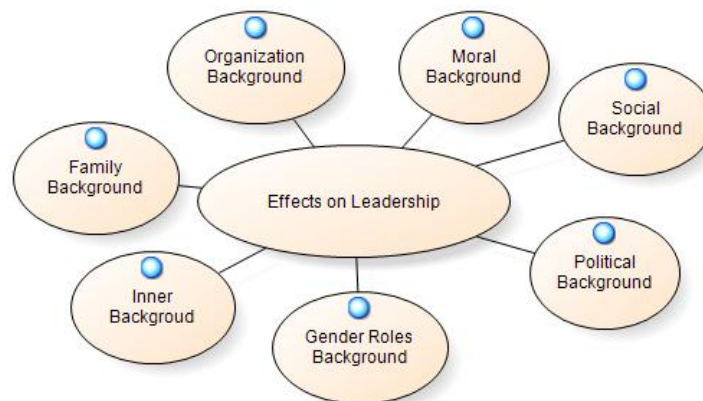
Figure 2. Cultural values when exerting power.

When asked if respondents considered their cultural values when exerting power within the organization, the following were some of the patterns that emerged. Some of the participants responded by saying “yes” especially when addressing older generation of Nigerians whether at work, at home, or in social circles because of the Nigerian culture which gives more value and respect to older generation. One participant responded that as a leader, “they have to defer to those who are in higher positions regardless of their cultural values, respect other’s opinions, listen to the wishes and aspirations of subordinates, and carry everyone along particularly the men-folk who may not believe in the abilities of a female leader”. Some responded that generally, one huge problem is that men feel that women in positions of power are trying to measure up to them.

Several of the respondents answered that “No”, they do not consider their cultural values when exercising power within the organization especially in a target driven one. They need to drive their subordinates regardless of their gender. One respondent answered that within the organization, Nigerian culture gives utmost regard to those who are older. “Good as it sounds; it creates obstacles in the workplace, when there is a need to delegate tasks, address, or discipline an older member of staff”. Another participant responded that they did not consider their cultural values. “As a Nigerian woman, it comes naturally, though it could sometimes hinder the fast flow and regulations of a business”.

One participant responded that they do not consider their cultural values in exercising their leadership because it does not add to their organizational growth. This participant further went on to say that leaders who want growth in their organizations had play by the rules and cultures present within their organization and not so much of the national or family cultures of Nigeria. They do need to be firm in their decision-making which they believe is the way forward. “Work place rules are sacrosanct. The office is not a village market square but a cooperate organization from which investors expect return on investment but that they do treat elders with respect”.

### **Descriptive summary 3: Role of societal culture on leadership**



*Figure 3. Role of societal culture on leadership.*

Overall, many respondents answered positively on this question, in that their supportive family background, learned family values, moral support, boosted their self-esteem, and contributed immensely to their current leadership positions. “Societal culture has assisted many women in positions of power to learn to be good leaders” one respondent answered. They believed that one should earn one’s position in society whether in the family, socially, or in the organization. Some respondents also believed that “one has to be a

good follower before they can be a good leader". Society expects women to be less corrupt and to maintain high moral standards in a largely corrupt society. Initially, one respondent was more considerate about cultural issues such as considering the manner they spoke to elders. However, the reality of the work environment is that the workplace culture dictates their leadership style.

One respondent answered that their strong determination in giving out the best of their leadership position to their employer does not allow societal, national culture or family background to affect the leadership style and view of power of one respondent. This respondent believed that their leadership style was impacted by their upbringing. One, in which family or national backgrounds did not affect their chosen leadership style. Nigeria is a country where respect for elders is very important. "There is the need to say 'Sir' or 'Ma' to older subordinates, and people in the society".

Culture and family background enhances the view of power, and on the leadership styles of one participant. One participant believed that "one should not let power go into one's head", but rather, use it to influence the quality, and nature they possess in others opinion to "be a good role model". On the negative side, culture has affected the leadership styles of some participants tremendously because one should always keep the family background, Nigerian culture, one's peers and societal views of how a woman should behave in mind before dictating or delegating tasks in the business environment. "As much as women are crossing the cultural or societal barriers, it is still believed in some quarters that some positions cannot be held by women". Therefore, the role of national and family culture has both its positive and negative aspects in influencing the leadership styles of women, in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The 21st century has been met with increases in integrating cultures and economies on a faster pace (Suk-Hing Chan, 2005). There is a demand in the global economy for national cultures to adjust and adapt to global market trends. From this wide-scale of multi-national business practices in cross-cultural environments, both national and organizational leaders can step outside of their country's norms as new national cultures and leadership practices emerge. As the world integrates businesses and cultures, many organizational leaders are crossed between their cultural beliefs, norms, practices, and leadership approaches in the ways in which they understand cultural influences on leadership (Hanges et al., 2000). The findings from the responses of this section of the research varied on participants' demographics and leadership experiences with both the national and family cultures present in Nigeria.

### **Summary**

Some factors that have contributed to the need for organizational leaders to adapt, and adjust to other national cultures are the globalization of the workforce, the expansion of international companies, and exposure of many national organizations to increased business competition. The increased competition has forced organizational leaders to engage in understanding of the cultural limitations of organizations and their leadership practices. In addition, cross-cultural leadership researchers in the 21st century are cognizant of the fact that culture is a condition, and a boundary to previous leadership theories and practices (Hanges et al., 2000).

The purpose of this section of the research was to investigate Nigerian women in leadership positions and the relationship of both national and family cultures as they relate to their leadership practices. This

section<sup>3</sup> of the research study provides the descriptive analysis on power and organizational leadership as they relate to both National and Family Cultures and to understand the effects of both national and family culture on power relations within the participant's respective places of business or organizations. The questions for this section were asked to understand the perspectives of research participants as they interpret their perceptions and the ways in which both national and family culture affected their leadership characteristics.

A phenomenological qualitative research study explored the culture and leadership in a cross-cultural environment, examining both national and family cultures as the basis for cross-cultural leadership, and utilizing Gerte Hofstede's five cultural dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation were used analysis for this section of the research on culture and leadership. The research was conducted amongst a group of 50 women, ages 35 to 50 years of age who were in leadership positions in an organization working to increase the number of women in management and leadership positions in Nigeria. An open-ended survey questionnaire was appropriate for the proposed research study because it allowed participants to describe their day-to-day lived experiences. The researcher gathered insights into the lived experiences of a like-minded sample of respondents from the research population as they described their cross-cultural leadership experiences.

### References

- Alapo, R. (2011). *The role of culture on the leadership styles of women in Nigeria: A phenomenological study*. School of Advanced Studies, University of Phoenix, Arizona.
- Ardichvili, A., & Kuchinke, K. P. (2002). Leadership styles and cultural values among managers and subordinates: A comparative study of four countries of the former Soviet Union, Germany, and the US. *Human Resource Development International*, 5(1), 99-117.
- Bunge, M. (2000). Ten modes of individualism-none of which works-and their alternatives. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 30(3), 384-406.
- Dastmalchian, A., Javidan, M., & Alam, K. (2001). Effective leadership and culture in Iran: An empirical study. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 50(4), 532-558.
- David, J. P. (2007). *Cross-cultural perspectives on knowledge management*. Libraries Unlimited. Westport, CT.
- Ejiofor, P. N. O. (1987). *Management in Nigeria: Theories and issues*. Onitsha, Nigeria: Longman.
- Hanges, P. J., Lord, R. G., & Dickson, M. W. (2000). An information-processing perspective on leadership and culture: A case for connectionist architecture. *Applied Psychology—An International Review*, 49(1), 133-161.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequence: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Culture and organizations*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hoppe, M. H. (1990). A comparative study of country elites: International differences in work-related values and learning and their implications for management training and development. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(3), 590.
- Hunt, G. I., Osborn, N. R., & Shermerhorn, R. J. (1991). *Organizational behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kluckhohn, C. (1951). *The study of culture: The policy sciences*. Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press.
- Lee, I. (1992). An analysis of conflict management techniques used by Korean employees and American employees working in public and private organizations in United States (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University).
- Lee, W. L. (2001). *Leadership*. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.
- Ling, W., Chia, R. C., & Fang, L. (2000). Chinese implicit leadership theory. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 140(6), 729-739.
- Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.

<sup>3</sup> These results are the descriptive analysis which have been revised and were based on the section on Culture and Leadership in the 21st Century. A dissertation research conducted by Alapo, R. (2011) titled: *The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Nigeria: A Phenomenological Study*.

- Mom-Chhing, C. (2009). *Towards understanding Cambodian American leadership culture: A grounded theory*. University of Phoenix, Arizona.
- Neumann, W. L. (2003). *Social research method: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Newman, K., & Nollen, S. (1996). Culture and congruence: The fit between management practices and national culture. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 27(44), 753-779.
- Okpara, J. (1996). An examination of the relationship of motivation needs, cultural factors, and job satisfaction among managers in selected business enterprises in Nigeria (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, New York).
- Okpara, J. O. (2007). The effect of culture on job satisfaction and organizational commitment: A study of information system managers in Nigeria. *Journal of African Business*, 8(1), 113-130.
- Randolph, W. A., & Sashkin, M. (2002). Can organizational empowerment work in multinational settings? *Academy of Management Perspective*, 16(1), 102-115.
- Rodriguez, C. (1996). *International management: A cultural approach*. Mason, OH: South-Western.
- Rosenhauer, S. (2007). *Cross cultural business communication: Intercultural competence as a universal inter culture*. Munich: GRIN Verlag.
- Stata, R. (1992). What is individualism? Speech at the MIT Radicals for Capitalism, Cambridge, MA.
- Suk-Hing Chan, D. (2005). *Relationship between generation-responsive leadership behaviors and job satisfaction of Generation X and Y professionals*. University of Phoenix, Arizona.
- Triandis, H. C. (1989). The self and social behavior in differing cultural context. *Psychological Review*, 96, 506-520.
- Unger, A., Papastamatelou, J., Gassemi, K., & Lu, A. (2014). The relationship between the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) and the Hofstede-Dimensions: Preliminary empirical evidence from Germany, Morocco, and China. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 2, 100-105.
- Zagorsek, H. (2004). *Universality versus cultural contingency of leadership: A comparative study of leadership practices in six countries*. University of Ljubljana.
- Zhang, X. (1994). A comparative study of the perspective of managerial role behavior: Cultural-common and cultural-specific perspectives (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia).

# A Humanist God? On the troubled Relationship Between Humanism and Religion Today

Marco Russo

University of Salerno, Fisciano, Italy

The relationship between humanism and religion has always been difficult, since the Renaissance. If we look at the Humanist Associations active today in the world, we find that the relationship has become almost a declared war. Religion appears to be the greatest enemy of humanism, i.e., of the humanity. Authentic humanism seems to be exclusively secular and atheistic: you can do good only if there is no God. In this contribution I look at some programmatic documents of Humanist Associations to understand the reasons for this contrast, in the background of secularization. The result is that some criticisms of religion — its potential for violence and obscurantism — are historically and theoretically justifiable but partial. Indeed, they show a poor and narrow vision of religion that leads to a narrow view of the human experience. A more complex vision of man requires a more complex vision of religion. A complex vision of man includes the most “irrational” and enigmatic aspects of our being, as love, death, pain, desire, imagination and even freedom and creativity. On this basis we can appropriately understand the historical and existential role of religion. Otherwise, if God is the one painted by humanists, God would not be good, let alone a good humanist.

*Keywords:* humanism, religion, Humanist Associations, secularism, secularization complexity, existence, transcendence

## Introduction

The humanism-religion relationship is very strictly on historical and theoretical level. Historically, it is the core of the process of secularization. Theoretically, there are crucial questions about the nature of Christ, the phenomenology of religion, the nature of morality, the sense of anthropocentrism.

A perspective that, in the contemporary age, allows the two levels to overlap is provided by humanistic associations. Preceded by various types of “Ethical Unions” born in the 19th century, they were founded in the 20th century in the United States and England, but also, in parallel, in South America, and then have had a remarkable diffusion in many parts of the world.

Humanists have been very active in charitable work, education and social reform, and campaigning for human rights, peace and international co-operation. At the United Nations, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), WHO (World Health Organization), were all led by humanists in their early years.

Their philosophical position is condensed in the motto: *Good without God*. But they are not just theorizing humanism, they intend to practice it, make it a lifestyle (Copson & Grayling, 2015; Norman, 2006). This is a



particularly important aspect. While in the 20th century the sophisticated philosophical controversy raged on the theme of “humanism” (Heidegger, Sartre, Maritain, Lubac, Foucault...) (Toussaint, 2008; Rockmore, 1994), these associations tried to *practice* it in everyday life, from below, with a pragmatic spirit. They and we with them ask ourselves: Is it possible to do good, to live according to justice, with a cooperative spirit, without any faith and/or transcendence? Would God be a good humanist?

### **Renewing Religion: Reading Some Humanist Associations Texts**

In 1933 appeared Humanist Manifesto I, signed by 33 intellectuals (including John Dewey). It is the presupposition of the AHA foundation in 1941. The first Manifesto talked about a “new religion” and referred to humanism as a religious movement to transcend and replace previous religions based on allegations of supernatural revelation. Charles F. Potter, one of the co-authors of the Manifesto, had already written a book eloquently entitled *Humanism: A New Religion* (1930).

The genesis of the Manifesto was told by Edwin Wilson, who was one of its authors together with Charles Potter and Raymond Bragg. All three were Unitarian ministers. Wilson writes: “The way for humanism in Unitarianism had been opened when the measures and foundations of truth and morality were placed outside of the Holy Bible and within human reason and moral conscience. Thus, as Unitarianism grew, religious humanism began to appear long before proponents had a name for it. By its rejection of revelation, religious humanism was inherently opposed to biblical literalism, dogmatism, and religious creeds” (Wilson, 1995, p. 9). Wilson also recalls the careful search for one “verbal integrity and a semantic change from traditional religious terms in order to clarify their naturalistic approach”; he observes that “the manifesto framers were careful to disclaim the document as a creed, which it has nonetheless been interpreted as such” (Wilson, 1995, p. 40).

Despite its religious roots American humanism has a decided secular outlook. In Humanist Manifesto I we read: “Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life [...] Religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life” (*Preamble*).

Humanism recognizes that man’s religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage (Humanist Manifesto I, paragraph 4). Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method (*ibid.*, paragraph 5). Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man’s life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now (*ibid.*, paragraph 8). In the place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being (*ibid.*, paragraph 9). We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking (*ibid.*, paragraph 11).

#### **Humanist Manifesto II (1973)**

Those who sign Humanist Manifesto II disclaim that they are setting forth a binding credo. They concede that religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine “spiritual” experience and aspiration. Nevertheless “traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience *do a disservice to the human species* [...]”. Traditional religious morality deny humans a full appreciation of their own potentialities and responsibilities. The final warning is preemptory “No deity will save us; we must save ourselves”.

**Humanist Manifesto III (2003)**

Here, the bond with religion is cut off. You no longer need to discuss it and take a stand against it. It's directly stated: "Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. Humans are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change. Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience. Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity. Humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals".

**The Amsterdam Declaration (2002)**

This declaration is a statement of the fundamental principles of modern humanism passed unanimously by the General Assembly of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). The specific point on religion states "Humanism is a response to the widespread demand for *an alternative to dogmatic religion* [...] Humanism recognizes that reliable knowledge of the world and ourselves arises through a continuing process of observation, evaluation and revision".

**Short Course of Humanism (2007)**

In this introductory text the BHA clearly lists the reasons for not having faith: (1) Religions claim things to be true for which there is no supporting evidence, and encourage belief in the unbelievable and superstition. (2) The rigidity of religious codes of behavior stifle our opportunity to think and act rationally, and sometimes, ethically. (3) Ancient religious rules are unhelpful when thinking about new moral issues, where reason and compassion are more useful. (4) Religious authority has been, and still some time is, used to justify oppression, discrimination, an injustice (for example, against women, gay people particular races, and other religious groups). (5) Religious differences have been, and still sometime are, a major cause of war, even when religious leaders preach peace. (6) Religious authority is often used to justify puritanical and pointless repression of pleasure. (7) Religious authorities often stifle free debate. (8) The idea that there is a "better life" in a "better place" devalues this life and this world (p. 13).

For these reasons it's false that religion is the source of morality. Morality is independent from and much more necessary than religion. The main motivation to behave well and live a good life is found in human nature and society. To survive and live well, we need to live harmoniously and co-operatively in communities. Moral is a product of the biological and social evolution. After all is our common human nature that explains the considerable agreement between religions, societies, and ethical and legal systems, about what is good or bad. Humanists have been impressed with the apparently universal nature of the Golden Rule, "Do as you would be done by" or "Treat other people in a way you would like to be treated yourself". All traditions seem to have come up with a version of it. It can be formulated both positively (as above) and negatively ("Don't do things to other people that you wouldn't like done to you").

We should base our moral choices on the reasonably predictable effects of actions. Empathy and feelings are further sources and tools of moral.

**Comment and Criticism**

The reading of these texts leads to the following observations:

(1) contemporary humanism completes secularization, understood as the "age of reason", that is, as the

downfall of faith, of the public relevance of religion;

(2) contemporary humanism outlines itself by a systematic contrast to religion, considered as an impediment to moral and rational knowledge which are in turn considered as the only means to improve the human condition;

(3) contemporary humanism replaces the social and cultural function of religion by eliminating its negative aspects (irrationalism, obscurism, repression, violence) and reinforcing positive ones (intersubjective bond, rituality, morality, search for meaning, expectation of happiness).

The first point confirms that humanism is a tenet of modernity (Russo, 2015; Buck, 1987). Between the Renaissance and Enlightenment there is a “humanist family” (Todorov, 2002) that goes from Petrarca to Montaigne, from Machiavelli to Hume, from Pascal to Kant. The focus of this family is the *human condition* taken in itself, in its internal complexity; a complexity that no religious or purely metaphysical conception is enough to explain and solve. Physical, psychic, historical, geographical and socio-political aspects become more and more important to explain the human being and to build a well-balanced society. Man (and not only nature or God) is capable deciding his destiny.

There are basic contrasts between a theistic and a humanistic standpoint, because where religion prevails, man is not the centre and not the end of knowledge. Although, modern humanism does not intend to replace God by man, making him the master of the world. Humanity is an ideal, a task, a collective achievement, not a fixed feature to bring to light. It is necessary to develop a human culture, that is to cultivate values, lifestyles inspired by an idea of common good extended to the greatest number of people, rejecting merely instrumental reason, market logic, power relationships, cynicism of the private or national interests. The ultimate end of our actions is *cultivating humanity*, not superhuman entity (God, goodness, justice) but *much less merely infrahuman ones* (pleasures, money, power).

The great discovery of modern humanism is that there are purely immanent *values* – not just goods – like detached benevolence, solidarity, awe for the moral law, universal sympathy, which can be promoted by building a universal civilization, that is under certain conditions of training, discipline affirming non-punitive upbringing (Taylor, 2007). The core issue is that the roots of these values and of universal order are religious or metaphysical (if metaphysics is rational investigation of what goes beyond nature). Now, let us leave aside the “political theology”, the translation of religious concepts into secular concepts. I prefer rather to emphasize that it’s within the study of man, within Immanence, that modern humanism, more philosophically aware, has found the signs of Transcendence. To explain the human condition, its structural contradictions, its “strangeness” in nature, it seems to be necessary to suppose a *beyond*: to go beyond the given, the present, the material possessions. Such a *beyond* is a religious element, but we use it also in metaphysics, anthropology, psychology... almost to explain the fact of religious experience!

This leads to reflection on the second point. It is true that there is a close connection between secularism and humanism. Lay state, scientific rationality, human rights, the anthropological re-interpretation of metaphysics and theology are certainly the Enlightenment’s response to the bloody wars of religion triggered by the Reformation. However, a secular state does not necessarily mean a secular society. Science is never completely neutral, nor is it able to absorb all reality in itself. Human rights rely on anthropology that elaborates metaphysical concepts (freedom, dignity, fraternity, moral conscience). In short, secularization is not a simple downfall of religion but a transformation of the conditions of belief (Taylor, 2007). The loss of the centrality of the theistic source has also been the discovery of new sources of moral experience, more directly

related to the concrete experience of men. The constitutive tentativeness and the pluralization of moral sources have been an epistemic gain in understanding the good and how to enhance earthly life (Taylor, 1989). Christianity itself has been induced to recognize the value of the *saeculum*, the secular meaning of Jesus' incarnation.

Humanism, therefore, does not coincide with radical Enlightenment, that is, with an "intellectual atheism" (BHA, 7) that liquidates religion as the infant stage of human development. The history of the concept of humanism is intertwined with the criticism of religion, but not in the sense of its pure elimination but of its rethinking. The "drama of atheist humanism" (Lubac, 1987) is that it holds a dramatic connection with what it denies. On the one hand, hatred against religion shows that it is attributed enormous power and appeal. On the other hand, atheist humanism proposes itself as a religion for its ecumenical will to regenerate the world. More and better than the great intellectual figures of atheist humanism (from Libertins to Feuerbach, Marx, Comte, Sartre, Russell), humanist associations clearly show this need to produce ties, establish values, and ritualize behaviors. Humanists form communities, celebrate weddings, funerals, parties. They publish books and programs to spread their ideas, their own creed.

So I'll get to the last point. Humanism considers religion not only useless but dangerous because it obstructs reason, it's repressive and often causes war. In my opinion this is a partial and somewhat inconsistent reading. Inconsistent because humanism wants to replace religion, that is, to play its social and symbolic role in a rational and controllable way. There are of course lay rituals (from concerts to sports), there are of course purely secular values and rules. But alone they do not seem to be able to involve individuals deeply or steadily. Religion plays its communitarian role and affects individuals because it goes beyond ordinary reason and compensates for its limits: it is a faith. To be a faith must have elements of mystery, transcendence, sacredness, consolidated through a longlasting tradition. As long as there are "irrational" aspects in life (or rather aspects that have a different, non-standard logic) it's difficult that rationality will be able to fully absorb them. Just remember the "border-situations" (Jaspers, 1994) of pain, death, guilt, shipwreck, but also ecstasy, plenifullness, dizziness that destabilize our existence. As much as our knowledge has grown tremendously, we continue to have make a lot of effort to grasp social phenomena such as violence, excess, neurosis, craving, squandering, the need to express ourselves, to create, etc. And indeed, religion has resisted secularization, capitalism, and globalization.

Furthermore, humanists make a partial reading of religion. Certainly religion can have violent aspects. But it is always very difficult to determine how much this violence depends on the use (political, social, economic) of religion or if it belongs to its true message. It's also difficult to see what is happening in our societies if there would be no more faith and no religious institution at all. It is difficult to imagine it because our societies have until now never been totally secular; the identity and channeling factor of religions still continue to act. Even in the most advanced secular society religion is present as a permanent object of criticism or as the *alter ego* of pure immanence. It does not seem to be eliminated as interlocutor or even as a challenge. That is why we now also speak of a "post-secular" society (Habermas, 2012) as the attempt to balance mutual self-restraint between faith and knowledge, secularism and religion. It seems unlikely that the millennial contribution of religion in human history as a source of myths, rites, symbols, prohibitions, hopes can be reduced to superstition and violence. Religion has contributed to set up and contain the – dramatic, troubled, unbalanced – humanity of human being.

In conclusion, humanist associations allow the strength and weakness of atheistic secularism to be assessed. They show the power of the *idea* of humanity: to build a just and balanced society made by men for men, sharing a common destiny. They show that humanism can be a “good practice”, even before being a theory or a ideology: how to learn to live as someone else’s neighbor. But they also highlight that there is nothing more anti-humanistic than relying on a simplified, one-dimensional, shallow model of man and reason. Contemporary humanist’s writings are often based on such a model. In this way they betray the original spirit of humanistic tradition. They confuse it with post-Enlightenment atheism, with Positivism. In short: Without God there can be good humanism, but just because God is far from its humanistic image. God will never be a good humanist.

### References

- AHA (American Humanist Association). (n.d.). *Humanist Manifesto I-II-III*. Retrieved from <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/>
- BHA (The British Humanist Association). (n.d.). *A short course on humanism*. Retrieved from <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/>
- Buck, A. (1987). *Humanismus: Seine europäische Entwicklung in Dokumenten und Darstellungen (Humanism: Its European development through documents and pictures)*. Freiburg: Alber.
- Copson, A., & Grayling, A. C. (2015). *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*. London: Wiley Blackwell.
- Habermas, J. (2012). *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II. Aufsätze und Repliken (Post-metaphysical Thinking 2)*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
- IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union). (n.d.). *What is Humanism*. Retrieved from <http://iheu.org/humanism/what-is-humanism/>
- Jaspers, K. (1994). *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen (Psychology of Worldview)*. München: Piper.
- Lubac, H. D. (1987). *Le Drame de l'humanisme athée (The Drama of atheist Humanism)*. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf.
- Norman, R. (2006). *On humanism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rockmore, T. (1994). *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, antihumanism and being*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Russo, M. (2015). *Umanesimo: Storia, critica, attualità (Humanism: History, Critics, Topical Issues)*. Firenze: Le Lettere.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Source of self: The making of modern identity, 1989*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press.
- Todorov, T. (2002). *Imperfect garden: The legacy of humanism*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Toussaint, S. (2008). *Humanismes, Antihumanismes De Ficin à Heidegger (Humanism, Anti-Humanism: From Ficin to Heidegger)*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres
- Wilson, E. (1995). *The genesis of a humanist manifesto*. New York: Humanist Press.

# Resource Extraction in the Territories of Indigenous Peoples: The Quest for Cultural Rights

Apparao Thamminaina

National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, India

The rapid industrial growth amidst the resource-rich habitats of indigenous people results in an unprecedented and inescapable influence of the other. Most often, such interactions are exploitative for the indigenous communities. Besides this, the development induced displacement escalate the fear of loss of “cultural practices” among the indigenous peoples. The “official” argument often confines to the fact that the people are displaced with better facilities to a place few kilometres away from the original habitat. Such an argument forces to establish harmony between development and the displaced and ignores cultural rights and customary boundaries. In such cases, indigenous peoples negotiate for the protection of cultural rights with the corporate establishments and statutory bodies using a variety of means. This idea is explored in the context of the resistance movement organized by the indigenous Kondhs of Niyamgiri region of Odisha, India.

*Keywords:* indigenous peoples, cultural rights, identity, development, Kondhs

## Introduction

The indigenous people of India have survived against all odds in the history. Their identity maintained over generations despite the colonization of their territories or the interaction with modern society. Although the status of indigenous or aboriginal is contested in Indian context, it is primarily attributed to those communities identified as Scheduled Tribes (STs) by the government of India. The indigenous peoples of India prefer to identify themselves as *Adivasi* (first inhabitants) or *Vanavasi* (forest dwellers). The claims and aspirations of indigenous communities may widely vary. But their common ground is a quest for the preservation and flourishing of a culture tied to their ancestral land (Wiessner, 2011). The colonial administration recognized the relationship between forest and *adivasis* and had a specific category “forest tribes” in the Census Report 1881 (Xaxa, 1999). The symbiotic relationship between tribal communities and forests has been widely discussed in the literature. Their relationship with forest is not limited to economic aspects but play a pivotal role in cultural attributes. This intricate relationship is the issue of special concern in relation to the dispossession caused with the establishment of industrial development projects in the *adivasi* habitats of the country.

The constitution of India ensured rights and privileges to those identified as Scheduled Tribes (STs) by the government of India. But, violation of rights by various agencies is the significant cause of unrest. The debates on the idea of indigenous people and their rights and privileges are relevant in this context. Roy Burman (2009,

---

Apparao Thamminaina, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology.

p. 1) rightly says, “One of the prime factors for claiming aboriginal or indigenous status for the tribes is to enable them to gain territorial, land rights and control over natural resources”. However, there is no mechanism to identify indigenous people. Few communities of the country are identified as STs. But, all the STs need not be indigenous people. The problem of recognizing few people as indigenous is there all across the world because of lack of clarity on the criteria. The debate around lost tribes of Europe raises similar concerns. As Kirsch (1997, p. 64) rightly points in the case of Amazonian and Melanesian tribes, “societies that are identified as lost tribes may gain advantages from their new-found status. If the ‘lost tribe’ label is discredited, these societies stand to lose access to the special privileges that this status can confer”. Therefore, privileges from the State helpful to these communities in order to protect from any agency that causes harm and make the people vulnerable.

### **Kondhs of Niyamgiri**

Kondhs are the indigenous inhabitants of Niyamgiris hills and forest. They are identified as Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) [renamed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group] by the Government of India. Kondhs of this region are divided into three endogamous categories. They are: Dongria Kondhs, Kutuya Kondhs, and Jharnia Kondhs. Cultural and ethnographic aspects of Kindhs are well documented in several ethnographic works (Patnaik, 1981; Sarkar, 1981; Nayak, Boal, & Soreng, 1990; Aparajita, 1994; Jena, Pathi, Patnaik, & Seeland, 2006). Dongrias live on the hills in the interior forest and entirely depend on the forest for livelihood. Jharnias live near the streams and depend on forest (Minor Forest Produce) for livelihood. Kutuyas live at foothills; partly depends on forest and partly on agriculture. Kondhs speak *Kuyi* language but part of the population speaks Odiya too. Since a majority of the population depending on the forest for livelihood; their life is intricately interwoven with nature. These nature worshippers believe that the God exists everywhere in the forest. All the objects of nature, that is: the hills, stones, trees, and streams have supernatural power. The entire Niyamgiri ranges of mountains are sacred for them. Therefore, they maintain a harmonious relation with all the objects of nature. They use the products of nature judiciously. They have not yet completely got into the surplus based production system. Their lifestyle is marked by discipline and co-operation. They often move in groups to collect food from the forest. The collective consciousness occupies the front stage in all their social interactions.

### **Cultural Rights of Indigenous People**

Article 1 of the International Labour Organisation’s “Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries” (ILO No. 169) defines indigenous peoples as those “people in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions”. Further, the ILO Convention states that “self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply” (Article, 1). In other words, being indigenous is what people can regard themselves as being (or not being). Such criteria are ambiguous. The definition of ILO may not be applicable for many countries where the emphasis is not on the country as a whole. The contested histories of migration and the claims and counterclaims of people play a pivotal role. The Indian government

identifies people into various categories based on socio-economic criteria. In such categorization, idea of indigenous is closely identified with Scheduled Tribes (ST) although not necessarily the same. Therefore, in the Indian context, it becomes a socially constructed identity with reference to putative similarity or difference (Jenkins, 1996, 1997) and it is to be complicit in a history of somebody else's making (Sundar, 1997). A more inclusive understanding of indigenous communities emerged from Kennewick debates. The debates suggest four interwoven strands in "indigenous". In the first, the term suggests *association with a particular place* (usually lengthy)—a locality, a region, a country, a State...second, "indigenous" is synonymous with *prior inhabitation*...third, "Indigenous" also carries a sense of *original or first inhabitants*...a fourth strand accounts for indigenous peoples as *distinctive societies* (Thornberry, 2002, pp. 37-39). The last part is very important as well as very complex. It is difficult to identify several communities as indigenous or not in the context of their absorption into "mainstream" society. Therefore, the question of who is indigenous and who is not, becomes a political question, a question of representation rather than of fact (Fernandes & Thukral, 1989). Another important debate is the similarity or the difference between "tribal" and "indigenous". In this context, ILO Conventions distinguish "tribal" from "indigenous"—the former term takes much of the burden of the distinctive society, while the latter is expressed as a historical priority (Thornberry, 2002, p. 39). The important question here is, whether all the tribes are indigenous or not? The answer depends on the socio-political context of a country and varies accordingly.

Regardless of the identification as "indigenous" or "tribal" or both, the identity in the welfare state is associated with the rights and privileges. Article 20 of the UN Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous Peoples (2008) recognizes "the right to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to freely engage in all their traditional and other economic activities". The spirit of this article further emphasized through the Article 26 of the same Declaration which states "Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired". The signatories have to abide by this declaration, although, it is not a strong legal binding. In a recent press release (8th August 2017), the United Nations states "But a decade on, we need to acknowledge the vast challenges that remain. In too many cases, indigenous peoples are now facing even greater struggles and rights violations than they did ten years ago"<sup>1</sup>. India has a long history of protecting the rights of "indigenous" and/or "tribal" communities. It should not compromise on the same spirit. But, an *adivasi* ("original inhabitant") and/or those identified as scheduled tribes by the Government of India constitute a large percentage of those displaced or destroyed by the current capitalist mode of development (Fernandes & Thukral, 1989). Besides this, the non-tribal immigrations into the tribal areas changed the demography of the regions inhabited by *adivasis* (Sundar, 1997; Apparao, 2012). As a result, the socio-political and economic identity of the people of these regions is blurred. The claims of the people with or without recorded proofs often add confusion to this scenario.

Niyamgiri hills and the forest is not merely a resource but a sacred world for the Kondhs. Their ideas of resource use and resource management do not aim for surplus. As Rose (2005, p. 303) argues, the philosophy of aborigines reveals, "Rather than humans deciding autonomously to act in the world, humans are called into action by the world. The result is that country, or nature, far from being an object to be acted upon, is a self-organising system that brings people and other living things into being, into action, into sentience itself".

---

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/pdf/Press%20Release%20Indigenous%20Day%202017.pdf>.



Such philosophy of aboriginal communities reflects in their day-to-day life. Since nature is treated as sacred, the encroachers or whoever harmful to nature are treated as profane. For example, Kondhs consider those NGOs fight for the protection of nature as sacred and the government and private agencies which extract resources as profane. Although indigenous communities use resources, they do it for subsistence. They are rational in doing the same. They believe in the sustainable use of resources. At the same time, the resources have not got destroyed since a small population depends on them for subsistence, not for surplus. Their traditional knowledge helps them to establish a harmonious relation with nature. Therefore, treating indigenous communities as natural conservators is not an overstated idea. The entry of non-tribals into the resource rich regions inhabited by *adivasis* and their philosophy of maximization of profit led to the destruction of natural resources but not the use of resources by *adivasis*. *Adivasis* resists such attempts and treats outsiders as profane.

### Violation of rights

Sterlite Transmission Ltd (2001) or Vedanta Resources (2004) or Sesa Sterlite Ltd [SSL] (2007) ignited conflict among people, state and non-state actors in Niyamgiri region. The Greenfield aluminium refinery at Lanjigarh became operational in 2008. As per company's claim "In January 2009, SSL was awarded the ISO 9001:2008, ISO 14001:2004 and OHSAS 18001–2007 certificates for adopting global standards in quality, environment and health and safety systems"<sup>2</sup>. SSL also claim: "The company strives to facilitate the socio-economic transformation of local communities around Jharsuguda and Lanjigarh through concerted efforts in the spheres of health, education, livelihood, infrastructure and environment"<sup>3</sup>. However, the objective is not achieved, probably, due to the huge void between the understanding of the company on local communities and the reality. For instance, the name Vedanta, as described by the company, "originated from the philosophy taught by the Vedas, the most ancient scriptures of India. The word 'Vedanta' means 'ultimate knowledge' and helps an individual gain the knowledge of his or her intrinsic self. This knowledge helps individuals lead the life of peace, harmony and bliss"<sup>4</sup>. But, the company was not really successful in building peace and harmony with the indigenous peoples. The Kondhs resisted against the extraction of minerals in Niyamgiri hill ranges. At the same time, their slogan of ensuring participation of local communities in the development process was not successful, probably such idea of development is a misfit in the worldview of Kondhs.

The rights of the Kondhs of Niyamgiri are totally ignored while granting the environmental clearance for the aluminium refinery (Amnesty International, 2010; Padel & Das, 2010). The people have deep concern about the impact of mining on Niyamgirimountain, from which they derive many of the religious beliefs and cultural practices that define their identity (ActionAid, 2007). They are also afraid of displacement and loss of livelihoods with the industrial establishments for mining. The Kondhs believed that the industry will conduct mining activities around most of the hills in the years to come and nothing would be available for people. The toxic substances from red mud pond of the Vedanta company leaked into Vamshadara river due to the cracks to the red mud pond during heavy rains<sup>5</sup>. It polluted the water bodies in the vicinity and caused health hazards to the people and animals. However, the company claims that there are no toxic substances present in the water

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/pdf/Press%20Release%20Indigenous%20Day%202017.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday/pdf/Press%20Release%20Indigenous%20Day%202017.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.vedantaaluminium.com/vision-values.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/vedantas-red-mud-pond-leaks-into-vamsadhara-river-33296>.

bodies of the region<sup>6</sup>. This reflects the failure in assessing the potential impact of the mining project on people and the ecosystem. This incident escalated fear among the people. They are scared with the rumours spread in the region describing the possible catastrophe in future.

The attempts to extract minerals from resource-rich tribal regions are not new. It is essential to understand the purpose and the process of such activities. The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act<sup>7</sup>, 1996 and the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006<sup>8</sup> made a number of provisions to ensure the rights of tribal people on their land and resources. The FRA 2006 made it mandatory to conduct Gram Sabha (village council meeting) and take its approval to establish any industry in the Scheduled Areas<sup>9</sup> of the country. The company has documentary evidences for conducting gram sabhas. But, people of Niyamgiri says, the company did not conduct Gram Sabhas. Voluntary organizations alleged the company for forging<sup>10</sup> Gram Sabha resolutions. This reveals the violation of the rights of the people of Niyamgiri region in the process of establishing mining company. The Kondhs resisted the same. But, the resistance was overshadowed for a long time by the aluminium giant. In such condition, Kondhs joined hands with various voluntary organizations to strengthen their movement against the company. The contribution of people is more important in this context since no agency can build a sustainable people's movement without the active participation of people.

### **Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti (NSS)**

NSS is a collaborative organization or a joint action group of the people and NGOs to fight against the mining establishment. Kraemer, Whiteman, and Banerjee (2013) discussed the dynamics of organizing and counter-organizing processes around anti-corporate mobilization and the significance of national and transnational advocacy networks in the Niyamgiri movement. The source of funding to the people's movement was in debate. A funding agency cannot really build a sustainable people's movement with mere sponsorship. It is true in the case of government agencies too. Neither the government agencies nor the political parties are in a position to build a sustainable people's movement in favour of "development" if the same is detached from the people's idea. Therefore, trying to identify funding agencies as the obstacles for national development is a worthless task. Instead, it is fruitful to examine the causes and consequences of a people's movement against a project which meant for the economic development of the nation.

### **Saxena Committee Report and Supreme Court Judgement**

Ecological significance of the territory is vital since its use for mining leads to the imbalance in the eco system. The Saxena committee report (2010) vividly states, "The proposed Mining Lease (PML) area, which lies on the upper reaches of the Niyamgiri hills, is surrounded by dense forests and is the habitat for diverse species of plant and animal life" (Saxena et al., 2010, p. 1). The report emphasized on the people and their eco-system. It has also revealed the fact that the Niyamgiri is not only a habitat but a source of life and livelihood for Kondhs. It provides the basic needs such as water, food, and medicine to the inhabitants. The report mentions, "The two [Dongria Kondh and Kutuya Kondh] communities regard the Niyamgiri hills as sacred and believe that their survival is dependent on the integrity of its ecosystem" (Saxena et al., 2010, p. 2).

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.vedantaresources.com/media/161444/vedanta-red-mud.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201211290242170976562pesa6636533023.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201211290332077861328File1033.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from <http://tribal.nic.in/Content/DefinitionofScheduledAreasProfiles.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.kractivist.org/india-making-a-hollow-in-the-forest-rights-act/>.

This is a critical point to understand the causes and consequences of the people's movement.

The report of Saxena committee laid the foundation for the historic judgment by the Supreme Court of India. PESA Act, 1996 and Forest Rights Act, 2006 are also instrumental in arriving at the decision to conduct Gram Sabha to hear the voices of people for the in-depth scrutiny into the issue. The Supreme Court of India in its historic judgment ordered for 12 Gram Sabhas. In its judgment (2013, pp. 78-79), Supreme Court of India opines, "We are, therefore, of the view that the question whether STs and other TFDs [Traditional Forest Dwellers], like Dongria Kondh, Kutia Kondhs and others, have got any religious rights, i.e., rights of worship over the Niyamgiri hills, known as Niyamgiri, near Hundaljali, which is the hill top known as Niyam-Raja, have to be considered by the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha can also examine whether the proposed mining area Niyam Dangar, 10 km away from the peak, would in any way affect the abode of Niyam-Raja. Needless to say, if the BMP [Bauxite Mining Project], in any way, affects their religious rights, especially their right to worship their deity, known as Niyam Raja, in the hills top of the Niyamgiri range of hills, that right has to be preserved and protected. We find that this aspect of the matter has not been placed before the Gram Sabha for their active consideration, but only the individual claims and community claims received from Rayagada and Kalahandi Districts, most of which the Gram Sabha has dealt with and settled". In this context, Government of Odisha conducted twelve meetings in the Niyamgiri region in Rayagada and Kalahandi districts.

### **Niyamgiri Gram Sabha**

Dispute resolution is a communitarian activity since time immemorial. However, it was the responsibility of few knowledgeable elders of the community in traditional societies. They strive for a peaceful and agreeable solution for all the people involved in the dispute. Gram Sabha is the similar mechanism. This is not only a reflection of the practices of people but also builds confidence in the statutory bodies of the country. In a way, it increases their participation in the activities of statutory bodies. Niyamgiri Gram Sabha (Niyamgiri Village Council) is a result of the long struggle by people, activists, institutions, non-government organizations and other voluntary agencies. Media played an important role in keeping the issue in public domain. The purpose of Gram Sabha is to examine the violations and restore the rights of people over land and resources. The people, guided by NGOs believe that the claims of Vedanta Mining Corporation on environmental impact assessment are totally false. It led to the resistance by people with the support of voluntary organizations. Saxena committee's report strengthened the claims of Kondhs and other traditional forest dwellers. The people participated in Gram Sabhas not because of fear and the huge presence of security forces, but because of the process itself. Many people explicitly mention that "Government came to our hamlets for the first time". The process of Gram Sabha aimed at putting the people first. But, the trust deficit between the state and forest dwellers still exists. The state must make efforts to fill this gap. However, it is not an attempt to say that the government is practicing the policy of exclusion but to emphasize the need to take up an inclusive policy which is meaningful to its people. Gram Sabha is definitely an effective tool to bridge this gap if it addresses the aspirations of people without prejudice.

All the Gram Sabhas were organized on time, at the designated places as displayed at panchayat office, schools, block office and other spaces of a village. The Gram Sabha was chaired by the *Sarpanch* (head of the village council) or ward members (member of the village council) of a respective village, the District Magistrate was the observer at every meeting and the documentation was done by the respective Gram Sevak. The primary school teachers of the nearest schools were the translators. A videographer appointed by the state

government to record the proceedings. The state police and Special Operations Group personnel were looking after security as the places are known for Maoist activities. Everyone is allowed to attend the meeting and observe the proceedings but the people in the voter list of the village were allowed to speak. After taking consent from the Sarpanch or ward member and magistrate, the gram sevak read out the objective and purpose of the Gram Sabha and the order of the Supreme Court of India to conduct the Gram Sabha. Later, voters of the village are invited by their names to share their concerns. All the voters of the village got the opportunity to speak. After detailed deliberations, every village adopted a resolution. Such resolutions are approved by every Gram Sabha with the signatures of all the voters of the village. A copy of the resolution was given to the villagers for their reference. The essence of the resolution is almost same in all the Gram Sabhas. The resolution is “We will not allow any organization to dismantle Niyam Raja for any purpose”.

The process is transparent and open to everybody. The situation at Gram Sabhas appear scary with the deployment of huge number of personnel for security. But, the people were very peaceful and co-operative. They have never disturbed or unnecessarily intervened in the proceedings. They have unanimously conveyed the message in all the Gram Sabhas. “This is our land...our Niyamgiri...and our deity, the Niyam Raja. He provides everything we need for a living. He (God) has created us but not this government. God is not asking us to leave this place. How can you (government) ask us to leave? Let our blood flow in Nagavali and Vamshadara, we will not leave this place”. This is the most repeated statement along with a discussion on the importance of several minor forest products available in the territory. There is no other opinion. They have unanimously resolved for retaining territory and deity by denying any encroachment by outsiders. The meetings have not probed into any other issue because of the limited objective and scope of deliberations.

The people are very much concerned about their cultural and religious rights and their deity Niyam Raja. They are afraid that the mining project dismantles their deity and disturb their eco-system depending on which they have been living for centuries. The Niyam Raja is their king, father and God and the entire Niyamgiri hill ranges considered sacred. They also believe that the government may relocate them to another place but not their God. They insist that they do not need any documents for their land because they have been living there from time immemorial but the Acts of Government are very new. They say, “We know how to live and conserve mother forest and we don’t need training from any agency”. They unanimously expressed anger upon insensitive encroachment in the name of development.

### **Conclusion**

The huge mining project in Niyamgiri escalated the fear among the Kondhs. Their primary concern is the demolition of deity and displacement from habitat. The people believed that their customary rights are ignored by the government and the mining industry. They have actively participated in the resistance against the establishment with the belief that they will be displaced from the habitat and their livelihoods will be devastated in the near future with the explorations for mines. The displacement often dismantles the connections between people, resources, knowledge and customary rights. If so, the knowledge of the people on resource use and territory remain as history. The dissociation with traditional knowledge forces people to depend on “the other”. Such dependency lands them in multiple vulnerabilities. Ironically, “the other” for development becomes the dependents on those who displaces them or representing the development. The other intersecting fact is that the indigenous peoples have a different worldview from those who displaces them. This worldview is the reflection of their social, political, economic, technological, and linguistic systems. The

displacement process displaces such worldview too. The advocates of investment mediated development argue that the people are displaced with better facilities to a place few kilometres away from the original habitat. Such argument forces to establish harmony among people, knowledge, and resources. But the fact lies in the socio-political system of the displaced community. The traditional boundaries of indigenous people confine their movement to specific parts in the forest. They can gather food only from a territory belongs to a hamlet or group of clans. They are left with nothing if they are displaced from their territory. Therefore, displacement; whatsoever kind it is, denies customary rights and dismantles the linkages between knowledge and resources. In fact, it may escalate intra-community conflicts.

The economic progress is very important in the contemporary scenario. But, the development at the cost of “the other” is a pity idea. A careful assessment is necessary before initiating a development project to avoid disastrous impact on people. The development would be meaningful and long lasting if the concerns of all stakeholders addressed without bias. Ignoring the sensitivities of people results in the resistance, wastage of time, money and other resources. The resistance in Niyamgiri reveals the importance of traditional belief systems and customary rights. It reminds the fact that the government as a collective cannot ignore the concerns of any of its components, either smaller or bigger. The damage caused by the state need to be addressed by the same. Therefore, it must make an attempt to understand the cultural practices, livelihood system and the relation between the people and environment to address their concerns. Another important aspect is to understand the political aspects of indigenous people. Traditionally, indigenous communities consider themselves as separate political entities. This idea sustains, if not in entirety, despite the implementation of the integration policies since colonial rule. They continue to resist the overwhelming presence of outsiders in their territories treating them as “the other”. The authority accompanied by the assertion of “the other” and the state continue to be the source of conflict. The integration of tribes with rest of the society or “mainstreaming” them in the name of development will not give desired results if it fails to address the aspirations of people. The people are afraid of the loss of identity with the influence of varied economic, political and ideological factors. Therefore, the development policy of India must be attentive to reduce the negative consequences on indigenous peoples.

### References

- ActionAid. (2007). *Vedanta cares? Busting the myths about Vedanta's operation in Lanjigarh, India*. Retrieved January 18, 2017, from [https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc\\_lib/vedanta\\_report.pdf](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/vedanta_report.pdf)
- Amnesty International. (2010). *Don't mine us out of existence: Bauxite mine and refinery devastate lives in India*. London: Amnesty International.
- Aparajita, U. (1994). *Culture and development: Dongrias of Niyamgiri*. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications.
- Apparao, T. (2012). *Ethnic identity, cultural diversity and processes of change: A study of the chenchus of Andhra Pradesh, India*. Hyderabad: University of Hyderabad.
- Fernandes, W., & Thukral, E. G. (1989). *Development, displacement and rehabilitation*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- International Labour Organization. (1989). *C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*. Retrieved December 15, 2016, from [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:312314](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314)
- Jena, M. K., Pathi, P., Patnaik, K. K., & Seeland, K. (2002). *Forest Tribes of Orissa: The Dongaria Kondh* (Vol. 1). New Delhi: D K Print World.
- Jena, M. K., Pathi, P., Patnaik, K. K., & Seeland, K. (2006). *Forest Tribes of Odisha: The Kutia Kondh* (Vol. 2). New Delhi: D K Print World.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social identity*. London: Routledge.

- Jenkins, R. (1997). *Rethinking ethnicity: Arguments and explorations*. London: Sage.
- Kirsch, S. (1997). Lost Tribes: Indigenous people and the social imaginary. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 70(2), 58-67.
- Kraemer, R., Whiteman, G., & Banerjee, B. (2013). Conflict and Astroturfing in Niyamgiri: The importance of national advocacy networks in anti-corporate social movements. *Organization Studies*, 34(5-6), 823-852.
- Ministry of Law and Justice. (2007). *The scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of forest rights) Act, 2006*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Mitra, K. R. (2009). Indigenous peoples' Forest Tenure in India. In J. Perera (Ed.), *Land and Cultural Survival: The Communal Rights of Indigenous People in Asia* (pp. 193-211). Philippines: Asian Development Bank.
- Nayak, R., Boal, B. M., & Soreng, N. (1990). *The Kondhs: A handbook for development*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute.
- Padel, F., & Das, S. (2010). *Out of this earth: East India Adivasis and the Aluminium Cartel*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.
- Patnaik, N. (1981). *The Kondhs of Orissa: Their Socio-cultural Life and Development*. Cuttack: Tribal and Harijan Research-cum-Training Institute.
- Rose, D. (2005). An indigenous philosophical ecology: Situating the human. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 16(3), 294-305.
- Roy Burman, J. J. (2009). Adivasi: A contentious term to denote tribes as indigenous peoples of India. *Mainstream*, XLVII(32), 1-7.
- Sarkar, H. S. (1981). *The Kutia Kondhs: A description of their lifestyle*. Bhubaneswar: NISSWASS.
- Saxena, N. C., Parasuraman, S., Kant, P., & Baviskar, A. (2010). *Report of the four member committee for investigation into the proposal submitted by the Orissa Mining Company for Bauxite Mining in Niyamgiri*. New Delhi: Government of India.
- Sundar, N. (2005). The construction and destruction of "Indigenous" knowledge in India's Joint Forest Management Programme. In R. Ellen, P. Parker, & B. Bicker (Eds.), *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives* (pp. 79-100). Australia: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Thornberry, P. (2002). *Indigenous peoples and human rights*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- United Nations. (2008). *United Nations declaration of the rights of indigenous people*. New York: United Nations.
- Vedanta. (2015). *The Lanjigarh development story: Vedanta's perspective*. Retrieved from <http://lanjigarhproject.sesasterliteodisha.com/The-Lanjigarh-Development-Story-Vedanta-Perspective.pdf>
- Wiessner, S. (2011). The cultural rights of indigenous peoples: Achievements and continuing challenges. *The European Journal of International Law*, 22(1), 121-140.
- Xaxa, V. (1999). Transformation of Tribes in India: Terms of discourse. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(24), 1519-1524.

# Poetic Religiosity in Brazilian Urban Peripheries

Marcos Henrique de Oliveira Nicolini  
UMESP: São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, Brazil

Starting from the observation of a greater religious pluralism of the Brazilian society, we ask ourselves, in the first instance, if it is a movement does not present itself as a paradigmatic change. That is, if as beliefs underlying social relations in a binary world of identity exclusions would not be in a process of weakening, allowing us to perceive new ways of latent arrangements. In a second instance, after recognizing that plurality requires recognition of the freedoms of belief and expression, we question the limits of such freedom point to a cosmopolitan ethics. For that matter, we take as reference in the non-religions in the Brazilian urban peripheries.

*Keywords:* pluralism, no religion, periphery

## Summary

Starting from the observation of a greater religious pluralism of the Brazilian society, we ask ourselves, in the first instance, if it is a movement does not present itself as a paradigmatic change. That is, if as beliefs underlying social relations in a binary world of identity exclusions would not be in a process of weakening, allowing us to perceive new ways of latent arrangements. In a second instance, after recognizing that plurality requires recognition of the freedoms of belief and expression, we question the limits of such freedom point to a cosmopolitan ethics. For that matter, we take as reference in the non-religions in the Brazilian urban peripheries.

## Introduction

The latest censuses conducted by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)<sup>1</sup> signalled a certain trend towards religious pluralism in Brazilian society, not only with the greater presence of evangelicals, but also rather remarkably, of those labelling themselves non-religious (atheists, agnostics and religious without institutional affiliation), in addition to the growth of spiritualists, of Jehovah's Witnesses and even those whose membership is indeterminate or who attest to multiple affiliations. Upon drafting the introduction, we can point out some numbers that allow us to indicate this greater religious (and non-religious) diversity in Brazil.

We must remember that at the beginning of the 20th century, almost the entire Brazilian population were said to be Catholic Christian, and that, according to the IBGE Census, in 2010 there were fewer Christians than there were Catholics in 1980, as shown in the Figure 1.

---

Marcos Henrique de Oliveira Nicolini, Ph.D., Science of Religion, UMESP.

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

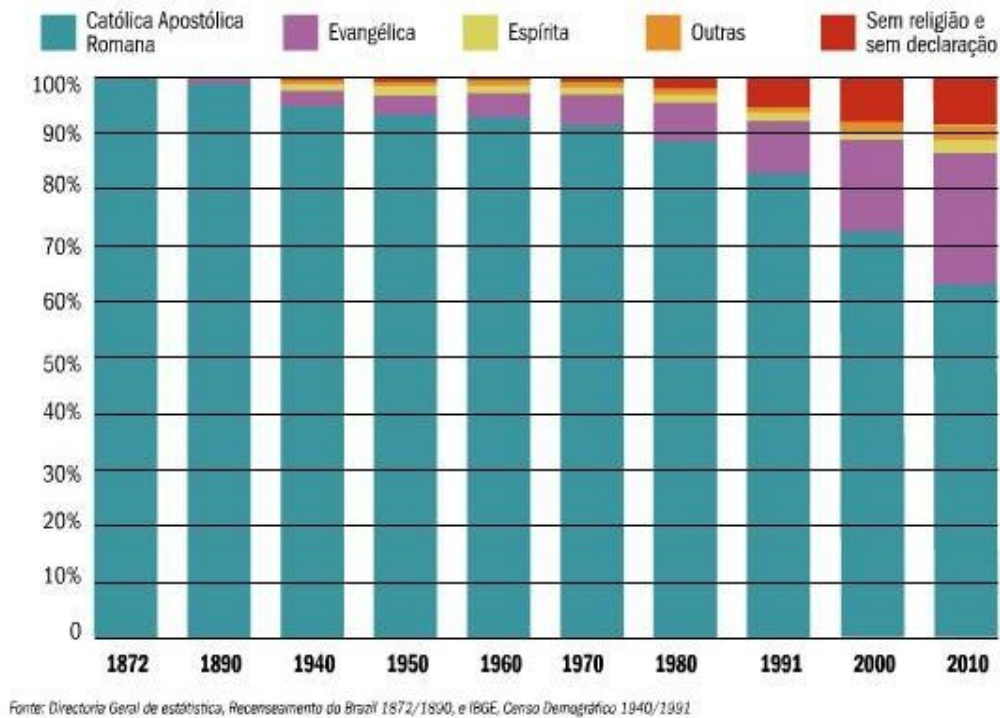


Figure 1. Religious census in Brazil: 150 years.

In more detail, we note data from the last two censuses conducted in Brazil, as shown in the Table 1.

In view of the Table 1, we can observe that while we observe a growth of Pentecostal Evangelicals, non-determined Evangelicals and other Christians, we also see a decrease in the participation of Christians in the entire Brazilian population. Christians totalled 89.44% in 2000 and added up to 86.92% in 2010. Not only can we see a greater diversity of Christian groups, but also greater religious diversity outside the frontiers of Christianity.

Concomitantly, we are faced with loftier public speech (political or otherwise) about religious bias. Presence is marked not only by the use of media, mass events (marches for Jesus, gospel shows, etc.), but also by political action, in elective disputes and in the governmental arena, with remarkable commitment referenced in their religious beliefs. Besides these means, we can verify the use of biblical names and terms in the appointment of institutions or companies (whose purpose is not necessarily to promote or market religious products), and the more frequent promotion of religious tourism, both in Brazil and to sacred places, such as Israel, Santiago de Compostela and Rome. These are some examples, but they do not exhaust the possibilities of pointing out the phenomenon of public presence<sup>2</sup>, of what was prescribed as withdrawn to the private realm. This public presence in the political field, has raised questions and criticism.

But before we dwell on issues pertaining to the conditions of religious presence potential in the public space, we must point out that diversity, as we know, is not restricted to religion. We must then note a certain movement that alters the fixity, interweaving within the production of identities and recognitions, of individuals

<sup>2</sup> We must highlight the extension of the concept of the public sphere, which goes beyond that which has restricted it to the political or to the State. Our enlargement is intended to encompass in the public sphere that which has public visibility, which has advertising, as the text of Norberto Bobbio (1986) allows us.



and groups. We can perceive a certain detachment, which is becoming more and more accentuated, from the duality of us-them, good-evil, truth-lie, enclosed in traditional references, and we turn to plural and less fixed forms of identities. For example, with respect to traditional identities from sexuality, we have abandoned the dualism that restricted it to the male-female couple (not only present in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also in the Greco-Roman tradition) and perceived a certain complexity. We allow ourselves diverse arrangements such as homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and non-sexuality, which implies new identities and struggles for recognition, which expand traditional configurations without a complete abandonment of those traditionally accepted identities.

Not only the question of sexuality requires new architectures, but also those related to the family, maternity and paternity, gender and women's issues, etc. We are not only faced with diversity, but also with the struggle for recognition of the demands of these new identities, which go through the freedoms of composing identities, exposing their preferences and seeing their demands recognised on an equal footing with other possibilities.

Table 1  
*Religious Census in Brazil*

	2000	2010
Roman Catholicism	73.57%	64.63%
Brazilian Catholicism	0.29%	0.29%
Orthodox	0.02%	0.07%
Evangelical Mission	4.09%	4.03%
Pentecostal Evangelical	10.37%	13.30%
Non-Determined Evangelical	0.96%	4.83%
Other Christian	0.14%	0.77%
Adventist	0.12%	0.12%
Jehovah's Witness	0.65%	0.73%
Spiritualist	0.02%	0.03%
Spiritist	1.33%	2.02%
Umbanda/Candomblé	0.31%	0.31%
Judaism	0.05%	0.06%
Buddhism	0.13%	0.13%
New Oriental Religions	0.09%	0.08%
Other Oriental Religions	0.00%	0.01%
Islam	0.02%	0.02%
Esoteric Traditions	0.03%	0.02%
Indigenous Traditions	0.01%	0.03%
Other religions	0.01%	0.01%
No religion	7.35%	7.65%
Atheist		0.32%
Agnostic		0.07%
Undetermined and Multiple Affiliations	0.44%	0.49%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Another example that we can mention brings with it national boundary issues, a traditional mark of identifying a population within a given territory, the brand of a nation, now confronted by globalisation. If at any given moment, the concept of globalisation sought to account for the flows of goods and capital between

the borders of countries, we can perceive that global issues require and imply recognition of the flows of people and cultures, as well as of risks that transcend national borders<sup>3</sup>. In this way, not only do we globalise goods and capital, but we realise that certain risks do not recognise traditional frontiers. From natural disasters (such as the one that caused a tsunami in Asia, reaching Africa), to disasters whose causes go back to the misuse of technologies (such as oil spills in the oceans), pollution caused by the greenhouse effect and global warming, as well as regional conflicts that promote flows of refugees, financial crises promoted by speculators who use legal flexibilities, as well as the extinction of jobs resulting from technological change and/or the transfer of industrial plants to other national domains, etc. All of these events have the globalisation of risk in common (Beck, 2010). Events such as these have caused new social and ecological, local and global guidelines to emerge.

Even at the core of the issues about the diversity and complexity of contemporary society, we can recall the flow of people and cultures through national borders. Certainly the flow of people is not a new fact, especially when we talk about Brazil. The new fact is not that countries such as Brazil receive immigrants, but the fact that these immigrants bring with them demands for recognition of their cultures and identities. Private cultures and identities that demand public recognition. The public space is no longer the space of homogenisation and becomes (what we might call) the post-Babel space, which seeks recognition of diversities.

These findings enable us to say that we would not only face greater religious diversity, but also facing diversity in societies (local diversity, but integrating global issues) and the emergence of new forms of recognition struggles in a more plural and complex world. The search for the homogenisation of civil society from an effective public power (the State) (by regulations and coercion), doesn't seem to respond appropriately to the agenda promoted by this complex plurality.

The supposed deficit of adequacy poses the question to us about the search for recognition, the publicity of the demands for the bias of the public presence of private values, beliefs and interests, the arrangement of which would take place in a secular and democratic society. Plural and complex societies are becoming strained by conflicting interests, coming from different groups, which seek to make their private demands public. The demands for recognition and the tensions arising from these claims are placed before us, as well as the way in which societies articulate and arrange such demands, which within a democracy are taken for granted. The case of religion is seen here as an example of arrangements that are accurate, in plural, complex societies, which have the fundamental political model in democracy. These societies value their secularism while understanding the ethical demand that the struggle for recognition requires.

In this sense, the plurality (here highlighted by religious diversity), which opens up the possibility of greater freedom of individual choice, and the organisation of religious institutions which arise in the field of advertising and even politics, taking the premise of freedom of expression, emphasise questions about secularism within a democratic State. From this common presence of diverse beliefs, we can perceive tensions arising from competing and co-present worldviews, religious and non-religious, sometimes with strong universalist biases. Tensions stemming from the presence of private beliefs (religious or philosophical) of a universalist nature, i.e., beliefs that, although private, specific to individuals or groups, have (community) as a premise to be valid for everyone, requesting the right, given as fundamental to these groups, to be observed by

---

<sup>3</sup> We remember here, the distinction proposed by Ulrich Beck between globalism, which involves the flow of capital, and globalisation, which indicates the flow of people, cultures, etc. (Beck, 1999).

all. Compounded by the fact that such beliefs are both competing, and often, colliding, which involves a non-agreement purported by rival frameworks.

Our work aims to face the dilemma between freedom of conscience and expression and the public presence of universal beliefs in plural and complex societies, whose tense encounter between individuals and groups with conflicting beliefs which seek recognition of their demands, requires social ethics that do not turn diversity into fragmentary and violent ruptures.

### **Secularisation, Democracy and Globalisation, a Difficult Arrangement**

Interested in the confirmation of the growing plurality of society and the public presence of religions in Brazil, we intend to address the resulting overlapping tensions with the concomitant presence of universalistic bias ideologies in plural societies that allow us to perceive both the legitimate freedom of conscience and expression of each group, as well as the possibilities of mutual recognition. We reiterate that religion is presented to us here as a privileged space for reflection, which aims to emphasise the mutual presence of conflicting ideologies (worldviews) within the same society and which are, at best, demanding of recognition. In addition, we should note that religion allows us to perceive two axes of tension: The first among beliefs, resulting from religious diversity, while they can elicit conflicts determined by the universalist pretension inherent in certain beliefs; the second between religious ideologies and metaphysics and those ideologies and metaphysics that intend to replace or eclipse the religious. In both axes, it is possible to note the tensions promoted by particular beliefs of universalist bias. The paradox occurs when a plural and democratic society encounters particular worldviews with universalist pretensions, whether religious or secular.

We recall that the passage from the pre-modern to Modernity, which brings with it the question of loss of the central role (peripherisation) of religion in the social order, aroused the watchful eye of philosophers and social scientists. Society (more precisely the public space: The State and Civil Society), the rule of which was founded upon the law of nature and this is in the Scriptures, which refer to the mysterious law of God, starts to seek its civil constitution in positive codes, without that sacred and divine reference. The civil power that rested on the ultimate divine foundation and civil society, which watches over the eternal Laws, seek another order, that which, presumably, would not be tributary to religion. If society begins to seek order without the sacred reference, religion, hitherto present in all customary norms and codes, would be displaced to the periphery, relegated to a private belief. On the one hand, the rationalisation of society and the affirmation of the norm, on the other hand, the peripherisation and the plurality of religious beliefs.

This movement of rationalisation (and affirmation) of society, the public-social, and privatisation of religious beliefs, has been conventionally called secularisation. Secularisation took on an air of inexorability, purging all of the sacred from the public sphere of society, privatizing it (Pierucci, 1998). The advance of the secularisation of the public (and to a large extent, of the private) has implied and carried out the privatisation, or even certain elimination of religion<sup>4</sup>. Atheism ceased to be an excrescence liable to political condemnation, as in John Locke, in some cases becoming the usual<sup>5</sup>, the norm.

---

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting the debate between Luc Ferry and Marcel Gauchet, in which each of the debaters advocates a model of secularisation. While the first defends the appropriation of religious language, abandoning the divine reference, the second advocates the abandonment of this heritage and the search for a language. Both, however, start from the premise of an inexorably reversible secularisation (Ferry & Gauchet, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> We bear in mind European and Asian countries, with a strong presence of atheists.

Even if we discard the hypothesis of a mechanical determinism for secularisation<sup>6</sup>, there would be the hypothesis of the permanence of the belief that it would be imposed irreversibly, irresistible in societies undergoing modernisation. In such societies, which would adopt modern values<sup>7</sup>, the cooling of the public presence of the religious and a certain homogenisation would be verified<sup>8</sup>, on account of modern rationality, in the legal and social order, as well as the scientific order. On the other hand, if we take the hypothesis that secularisation can be understood as the passage from the use of consecrated resources, things and individuals, destined for the religious, to the secular use (Marramao, 1997), we must be sensitive to the pre-modern idea of a Christian Europe, i.e., to those fundamental beliefs that sought to make societies homogeneous from the universalist character of the Christian faith. From such beliefs, however, their transcendental references would be expurgated, once exposed to an immanentist rationalism, maintaining its universalist and homogenising character.

Secularised societies sought to move the transcendent foundation (Christian, i.e., God), in view of the establishment of an immanent foundation, notably rationalism: modern reason. This movement, of the passage from a transcendent foundation to an immanent foundation, gave rise to a modern criticism of the foundation itself<sup>9</sup>, or perhaps to rationalist fundamentalism. In contradiction to this Archimedean point, the modern took democracy as a reference, which was desired as opposed to the monarchy<sup>10</sup>. Thus, not only have they failed to restore the expurgated foundation, but also reintroduced plurality to the West, as opposed to the power of one. We have already pointed out earlier that our societies, from the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, have become increasingly distant from those monistic, fundamentalist, universalist and homogenising beliefs, undermining not only theological metaphysics but also the metaphysics of secularisation. In a certain sense, secularisation still claims its own secularisation.

Secularisation, according to the perspective adopted and outlined above, can be understood as a movement based on and by reason (the metaphysical belief in the positivity of reason), which instigates a critique of the beliefs and values of religion, aiming at the autonomy and centrality of people, this is taken as the measure of all things. The transcendental-divine foundation would be replaced by the immanent rationality of people, preserving a certain requisite of homogeneity of society from a universal principle<sup>11</sup>. However, what can be verified in the second half of the twentieth century, is another arrangement, other than homogenisation from a universal principle.

Not only have societies pluralised within national borders, but differentiation in societies has become more evident: mutual presence and publicity as a demand for recognition. National borders have become more porous and the influx of people and cultures has broadened the diversity of societies. Globalisation does not only allow the flow of capital, but also the reduction of distances between cultures and mutual visibility. Plural

<sup>6</sup> According to the reading that Pierucci makes of Max Weber.

<sup>7</sup> From a certain immanent rationalism, in contrast to a logic founded on the transcendent, within a metaphysics, the ultimate foundation of which is the Law of God.

<sup>8</sup> Homogenisation on two axes: within the nation, within the borders of the nation State, determined by laws, language and certain habits; and commercial, marked by norms and management models of transnational companies, which requires both the homologous technical knowledge of its collaborators and legal adaptations in the countries in which they operate (Rondrik, 2012; Santos, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> We highlight here the critiques of Nietzsche and the nihilistic sense that it confers to modernity, as well as the critique of Max Weber (2004) to the intellectuals who seek a last plea to knowledge. We also highlight the work of Terry Eagleton (2016), which presents the fundamental work of modernity, aiming at a metaphysical anchorage, but which resulted in aporia.

<sup>10</sup> We underline the conflict between the power of one in opposition to the power of many.

<sup>11</sup> If reason leads to truth, which is one, the progress of reason leads to the uniformity of society, we might say.

societies, referenced within the democratic model, were confronted with the demands of recognition of groups that share the social space. When secular societies, which imply a certain homogenising bias from their universal reason, became democratised and globalised, they began to live with greater diversity and plurality, however, with the demand for recognition of these particularisms. The society, on the one secularised hand, which implies a certain prohibition of the public recognition of private beliefs (of those non-secular beliefs), and on the other democratic hand, based on freedom of conscience and expression, is strained by the sharing of a heterogeneous society, influenced by influxes and the presence of diversified cultures. This tension between the secular (homogenising) and the democratic (recognition of diversity) demands more complex models for the new local and global arrangements.

Secularisation articulated on the basis of political power and on social order, in democratic societies, found its limits when its ordering principle was faced with the plurality arising from globalisation. Secularisation, which brought with it the latent belief in the departure of religion from the public sphere, or even the withdrawal of religious belief from the private domain, was confronted with the question of the return of the religious and its demand for public recognition, its publicity<sup>12</sup> in plural societies. Secularisation, supported by the rationality of people, by the belief in the progress of knowledge and having the sense of its promises<sup>13</sup>, but confronted by the limits of reason, by nihilism, by the twentieth century and by globalisation, in democratic societies, found its verifiable limits in the return of the religious and in pluralism.

### **Democratic and Secular Society: A Possible Arrangement**

Some theories about secularism were proposed in order to establish local arrangements based on general principles that allowed us to go beyond the limits of monism. Leaving aside the idea that laicism is a French way of saying secularity (i.e., *laïcité*'esp pas secularización en français), Jean Bauberót and Micheline Milot (2011) proposed four articulable and interpretive principles for the secular State, namely: equality in the law, freedom of conscience, the wall of separation between Church and State, and the neutrality of the State vis-à-vis different religions.

Unlike the theories of secularisation, the architecture of which pointed to the inexorable homogenising universalisation given by means of a fundamental principle, such a theory of the secular State prioritises local arrangements based on the gravity conferred on each principle, i.e., on the privilege that each society confers on each one of these general principles. In some of these local arrangements, space can be offered to pluralities; therefore, such a society should arrange liberty with equality, neutrality with separation<sup>14</sup>. In this way, demonstrating both the differences between societies and their States, those differences can emerge resulting

---

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that one aspect of this religious advertising comes as a result of the modern propensity for knowledge. Research institutes, by arguing individuals about their beliefs and publishing the data in statistics, give visibility to the religion and make its presence public, albeit allegedly private. Say, to make it public that more than 22% of the Brazilian population claims to be evangelical, confers unprecedented political power to this social group. Let's say, it puts the evangelicals in the political game.

<sup>13</sup> We recall here the first few words of Erich Fromm in "To Have or To Be?" (1987).

<sup>14</sup> An example of these weights and measures that configure local secularities can be obtained in a society that greatly values equality and substantially reduces individual freedoms. In this case, we would be tending toward a secular State of totalitarian bias; on the other hand, if society overvalues individual liberty over equality, we tend toward liberal societies, the inequalities of which become increasingly unjust. The secular arrangements do not point us only towards relationships between civil and religious power, as it allows us to understand the multiple and complex current metaphysical clashes therein.

from pluralities and that enable the struggles for recognition within each State<sup>15</sup>.

The proposition of secular States, according to our reading of Bauberót and Milot, dialogues, with little noise, with contemporary plurality and enables local arrangements in which freedom of conscience may be interwoven with freedom of expression, so dear to democracy and cosmopolitanism. Not only are freedom of expression and freedom of conscience co-extensive, but freedom and equality will seek their measure of local equilibrium<sup>16</sup>. Not only having the freedom to believe, but also the freedom to publicly present beliefs and seek recognition of the values interwoven into these beliefs, with a view to the democratic principle of majority participation (statistics and what is desired to be expanded) in the drafting of legislation and in compliance with the agreed arrangements. Similarly, in a democracy, equality in the application of the law does not imply a passive position of the citizen, who is only called upon to obey the laws. Equality of treatment, according to the democratic tradition, is obeying the laws which participated<sup>17</sup> in its production, without any of the parties of civil society being prohibited. Democracy points to participation within the laws, to which the broadening majority agrees. In this sense, the democratic State does not privilege or neutralise any of the parties of civil society in advance, it regulates the political debate and ensures compliance with the agreement, which is required in the demand for equality in the application of the law, while guaranteeing the freedom to believe and to express the demands of recognition. The democratic State recognises the demands and fosters dialogues aimed at agreements, albeit precarious, among the debaters<sup>18</sup>.

Now, the secular democratic State, as we are describing here, is not arranged as a homogenised society, a possibility which may be present in the secularist theory that is articulated with the nation State and the sovereignty of political power. On the contrary, the democratic and secular State assumes plurality in the fact, as given. It is in the sensitivity to the tensions themselves, arising from the struggles for recognition that the State seeks its neutrality and distinguishes itself (separates itself) from the diverse groups (of private interests) within civil society. The concepts of secularism and democracy approach when we pay attention to the premise that within a secular State, legislators and officials will be imbued with their duty not to respond to the wishes of particular groups, seeking to take care of the public, by the will of the majority (Blancarte, 2008).

In addition, we can say that the effectiveness (so to speak) of democratic secularism would be in the plurality, which hinders the production of the majority which brings with it, the claim to enforce its particular worldview (beliefs and ideologies) upon others. Before being a risk factor, the plurality of society (social fragmentation) becomes the medium in which each party seeks to make their demands recognised and to find arrangements that are formed as more or less stable agreements. In this sense, democracy (the power of many) and secularism (the absence of privilege and the denial of the prohibition of parties) are realised in the

---

<sup>15</sup> In their work, both Bauberót and Milot demonstrate how the arrangements arising from privileges to one or more principles, can configure different secular States. Thinking about secularism is, as we understand it here, first of all realising the clashes over the conceptual semantics and the privileges of general principles. See Milot, 2008 and Bauberót, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> We can think of equality as acting as a centrifugal force of concentration and eradication of the differences in society, compressing everything into a hard and serious core. On the other hand, we can think of freedom as acting as a centripetal force of dispersion and social fragmentation, widening distances and hampering solidarity. Joint action would enable a certain cohesion with differentiations.

<sup>17</sup> It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the forms of political participation, or the distinction between direct and representative democracy.

<sup>18</sup> It is worth pointing out the work of Véronique Lecaros, which deals with the transition of Peruvian society from the monopoly of the Catholic religion in the late nineteenth century, to a plural society in which the State recognises diversity and adopts secular principles through democratic debate (Lecaros, 2012). Thus, we can say that the democratic State does not aim at consensus, but at compromises and agreements.

possibility of contiguity.

If on the other hand we cannot talk of a secular State, but of arrangements of general principles that configure each localised secular State, and on the other hand, the design of this, according to the local arrangement of general principles, must enable articulation, by contiguity, with democracy, i.e., as a democratic and secular society. Through a democratic and secular State, embedded within a secular and democratic society, as we indicate here, there is the possibility of an arrangement for the expansion of freedom of belief (religious and non-religious conscience) and to express such beliefs, with the expansion of equality under the law. That is, the recognition of demands and participation in agreements that affect the groups involved, this arrangement being mediated by the State. In mediation and in guarantee of agreements, isonomically distanced from the parties<sup>19</sup>, we found the potential conditions of a State that would correspond to a secular and democratic society. Such a society implies the recognition of its plurality and freedom of expression as a way to fight for recognition.

In principle and as a matter of principle, in a democratic and secular society, religions (and any other beliefs, ideologies and lifestyles) would not be excluded from public debate (even those beliefs, private ideologies and particular lifestyles of a universalistic character). However, their demands should be subject to the production of majorities<sup>20</sup>. It is the absence, a priori, of a majority in a pluralistic and complex society that must prevent particular beliefs of universal character from imposing themselves on everyone. Unlike the theory of secularisation, as we point out above, carrying with it the belief in a legitimate elimination of religious belief in the public space (or even any beliefs with a metaphysical basis), States in a democratic and secular society will mediate legitimate conflicts and demands, in accordance with rules that regulate the public debate, without exception, as a matter of principle, of any of the debating parties. Democracy, then, comes to be understood, not as the space of consensus, but of the contradictory and of the clashes of worldviews, under the aegis of freedom and equality, mediated by a State that contests conflicts and guarantees signed agreements: neutral, according to the laws, and contrary to privileges.

We are not facing societies devoid of conflict, but those in which such conflicts find room for agreements through dialogue. We are not facing societies where the “peace of the graveyard” reigns, but those in which social justice is given through the recognition of differences, of the freedom to believe and not to believe, expressing beliefs and in which the debate and participation in the search for agreements between parties is broadened<sup>21</sup>. What we want here is to highlight the urgency of the expanded recognition of demands with a view to equality in treatment and to the freedoms of conscience and expression, mediated by a State which contests conflicts and guarantees agreements, according to democratic rules. A third element that, according to the rules, contests debate and enforces agreements.

### **Secular Cosmopolitanism: Recognition of Demands**

Social changes take place, most of the time, due to movements in the periphery of society, although that

---

<sup>19</sup> What is meant by the separation between the State and Civil Society, as well as the denial of privileges to one group to the detriment of others.

<sup>20</sup> See Miller, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> At this point we should be able to distinguish between differentiation and fragmentation. Perhaps we should think of fragmentation as diversity arranged with incommensurability, the lack of recognition of the other, and differentiation as a diversity with recognition. It is the recognition of the other that allows us to foresee an ethical opening, a certain search for values that at the same time inhibit the centrifugal movement of freedoms and the centripetal movements of equalities. Nevertheless, it escapes us to the limits of this work, although it fits the record.

does not mean that only the periphery provokes changes, so Ian Shapiro (2016) proposes in an instigating but hyperbolic way. There are no guarantees, however, that such changes will bring benefits to growing amounts of individuals or groups of such a society. If we do not get guarantees here, we should ask ourselves whether other non-peripheral groups of a society can guarantee them and at what cost. The purpose of our work is not such discussion, but, taking into account that our society (Brazilian: plural and complex) is said to be democratic and points to a State referenced in a secular society, we intend to discuss the potential conditions of a plural society, in which the groups consider that the freedom of expression of their demands in the public space will be taken up and discussed under the aegis of equality under the law. A society in which the prohibitions of secularisation (which excluded all obscurantist lines spoken) are no longer imposed on its constituent parts. I.e., the unilateral determination that forbids the free expression of religious (or philosophical) beliefs in claims for public recognition no longer produces a subservient response in these groups. These groups, understanding the democratic rules and the norms of the public debate, legally and legitimately organise themselves and place themselves within this debate.

We should highlight this point: According to the secularisation thesis, we say original, the secular power takes ownership of the goods of religion (for sacred use) and operates them in a secular manner, for non-religious purposes. At the same time, religion is moved from the centre of society, passing to the periphery, thus talk thereof becomes private, finding no public resonance. In spite of this modern prescription for religion (and private philosophies), religious parties are gaining legitimacy, according to democratic rule, and expounding their beliefs publicly, whether in the political sphere, or in civil society and the market. Supported by freedom and equality, they refer to legal channels and occupy advertising space, without submitting to secularisation. The secular power is no longer recognised as sovereign. In a democratic society, there is no way to curb the speech of a Senator or a Federal Representative of the Republic, whether he/she is presenting demands of religious parties, of minorities, or of class interests, etc., that is to say a representative of any belief whatsoever.

The alleged prohibitions are sometimes particularistic understandings with universalist bias, namely, ideology with a universal claim founded on beliefs other than those of the speakers who oppose it and seek to prevent it. If we have hitherto pointed to democratic and secular values, their procedures, general principles and arrangements, we realise that recognition requires an ethical, extra-legal, but social opening. If plurality and complexity are given by society, in particular civil society, they are the ethical values in the same society that we should seek. Our work requires us to shift the State's gaze toward society, leading us to a legal and coercive movement, to the pedagogical and the intersubjective. Secularism, as the arrangement of principles which take the State as a standardisation space for the struggles for recognition that distances it from the parties in dispute, and democracy as the form of participation in the ordering of society through the production of majorities, still lack an ethical route.

We indicate above the possibility that social changes also occur due to peripheral movements in society, by a certain displacement of the centre of social gravity. As Sérgio Paulo Rouanet tells us, "(a) change is necessary in the case of materially underprivileged groups or groups governed by repressive rules and institutions, and (b) it must be conducted in such a way as to take fully into account the autonomy of the people concerned" (Rouanet, 1990, p. 131). In other words, the displacement of social sensitivity to a place far from the centre (of an alleged point of balance, towards the space of vulnerability and neediness, recognising such



characteristics), would encourage a certain movement in society: the movement of freedom of speech and equality under the law. On the one hand, this shifting promoter of change may alter the socio-political centre of gravity: from the preservation of a given social order that benefits established groups, towards change through recognition. Such a shift requires another code of ethics, which recognises both the peripheral demands and the public speaking ability and skill of these concerned populations<sup>22</sup>.

The new arrangements arising from this debate will legitimise the participation of those concerned, excluding any consent by coercion (Rouanet, 1990, p. 142). The issue is that in a democratic and secular society, the premise of freedom of expression is assumed without a priori prohibitions, while opposing the various facets of the impositions of particular, universalist and homogenising beliefs, while the ethical component invites us to shift the centre of social gravity. So at this point, we open our dialogue with cosmopolitanism.

Let's address cosmopolitanism, which contains a critique of the homogenising models of universalist particularisms, in its various forms: beliefs, ideologies, and lifestyles. That which criticises the moral and cultural arrangements that are no longer legitimate in pluralisms and demands for recognition, pointing to segregation and injustice. Such cosmopolitan people, as Anthony Appiah tells us, signal the value not only of "human life, but of human lives in particular, which means to focus on the practices and beliefs that give them meaning" (2008, p. 13). Cosmopolitan equality is not imposing a heteronomous identity on that which is different, but also recognising the differences and individualities. The particularities and differences are valued, while rejecting the homogeneity of universalised particularisms.

This cosmopolitanism is not a project the end of which is given *a priori*, an ideal, but "it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, such as national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence, dialogue, in its oldest sense, of human life together, of association" (Appiah, 2008, p. 16). Such dialogues articulate universal values (precarious and provisionally established in communications), with local values (p. 18), recognising the particular human lives and the humanity that transcends borders, in an always provisional and never imposing articulation, to be a dialogue (p. 22). Its actions are guided by values, "and values also shape thoughts and feelings (p. 40) and "our language of values is one of the main ways to coordinate our lives with each other. We appeal to values when we try to do something together (p. 42).

The basic values that are present and expressed in our everyday language allow us to outwardly seek understanding by means of dialogue, i.e., a certain communication of values that we intend to share and guide our common actions. The cosmopolitan person does not take the belief in common and aprioristic values for granted, but in the willingness to dialogue in order for us to share a space of dialogue that opens us up to mutual recognition. Cosmopolitan people understand that our vocabulary is malleable and flexible, and it is these elements that allow for adjustments and agreements, as opposed to universalists who seek a specific, shared, unique and semantic vocabulary (p. 68). Although the vocabularies are different, in the meanings and in the importance of the values involved, it is the difference and concordance with what we have to do that leads us to act (pp. 76-77). We return to the question of freedom and equality: the malleability and non-fixity of the vocabulary allow us to reciprocally recognise each other. We would be faced with freedom of expression and equality in building agreements, even in the extra-legal field.

---

<sup>22</sup> As Raymond Boudon points out, rationality and rational decisions are restricted to individuals or social groups, but they would be diffuse in society (Boudon, 2010).

Cosmopolitan people start from an observation: individuals within a society are different and society is plural, therefore “cosmopolitan people think that human diversity is important because it supports the need for cooperation and collaboration between people to live” (p. 109), thus “cosmopolitanism [...] begins with what is human in humanity” (p. 134). It is the difference, not the identity, that occupies a significant space in the cosmopolitan language, i.e., of cosmopolitan people:

They believe in human dignity beyond nations and live their belief. They share these ideals with others from around the world, speaking several languages. Like the good globalists they are, they make full use of the Internet. This brotherhood of men and women resists the frantic and growing consumerism of modern Western society. They also face the temptations of nationalism, the reducers of the nations from which they originate. They would never go to war on behalf of their country, but would be the first to engage in a campaign against any nation that was against universal justice. However, they flee from local submissions, reject traditional loyalties, are independent of their family clan. They are naturally opposed, because they believe in what is important to them: the building of an enlightened world community of men and women. That is why they discredit traditional religious authorities (and disagree with their obscurantism and condescension). They do not consider themselves totally anti-religious. Far from it in fact, but their faith is simple, clear and direct. They usually feel trapped between the fight against global demons and the discouragement of a hopeless struggle. However, they are always soldiers committed to making the world a better place. (Appiah, 2008, p. 137)

Secularism (not only the current idea of separation and neutrality of the State combined with the freedom and equality of individuals, but the shift of the maintenance of order away from the centre to the periphery which is demanding of recognition), democracy (the production of majorities through the struggle for recognition in civil society) and cosmopolitanism as the search for dialogue around ethical values recognisable in language, between individuals, allow us to glimpse potential conditions of sharing common spaces. A complex path that takes complex societies into account, but which recognises the individual as an ethical agent, i.e., an individual in plural societies.

### **Secular Religiosity in Plural Societies: Those Without Religion in the Brazilian Peripheries**

We start from the observation of a growing social plurality, exemplified in this work by religion. Such diversity on the one hand implies a greater array of opportunities for individual choices, collaborating with freedom of conscience, which brings freedom of expression with it in democratic societies. On the other hand, differences can produce tensions between the bearers of conflicting world views, who believe in universalist values, and who sometimes intend to create a homogenised society from their particular lifestyles. Such a plural society may tend to become fragmentary, and to glimpse Hobbesian hell in the distance: the war of everyone against everyone. Such a fragmentary, centrifugal bias was sought to be faced by centripetal models, which pointed to a foundation of secular order, that is, modern reason. In our case, we accepted the challenges posed by democracy and by secularism in plural societies, which led us to encounter cosmopolitanism as an ethical route, the recognition of legitimate differences and the effort of a common sharing of the social realm.

We recall that the criticism that modern secularism has laid on religion, that is to say, the order founded on a universal and metaphysical principle, returns to itself, by way of reflective criticism<sup>23</sup>. Resting on the sovereignty of universal Reason, the secularisation of people (abstract) as a measure of all things, seems to have found its Achilles tendon. Societies homogenised by a common theoretical conception of sovereign power and the nation State, ordered by positive institutions, as well as the homogeneity required by global enterprises, were confronted by the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Critical reflexivity, however, is not restricted to

---

<sup>23</sup> Giddens, Beck, & Lash, 2012.

that made by intellectuals, but extends to the ordinary individual. The critical reflection made in the squares and in the taverns does not, however, bring with it unanimity about the meaning of a return to the *Status quo ante*, to the order founded on the metaphysics of religion, which can find an echo in the modern metaphysics of immanence. Critical reflection is embedded in freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and equality in the application of the law, not in the theoretical sense, but on an individual basis. Critical reflection is shifted from the intelligentsia to the ordinary individual, or rather, as Julien Benda would say, from the clergy to the layperson.

The layperson we are referring to is not necessarily that which resembles the secular, and is not necessarily an individual who has moved from an order founded on religious beliefs to an order founded on Reason and radical immanence. The layperson here is the one who—following the etymology of the Greek word—has no part in inheritance, as opposed to the clergy—*klerós*, heir, proprietor<sup>24</sup>. Faced with political inheritance and economic inheritance, or even facing religious inheritance and secular inheritance, the layperson is what we could call the socially excluded third party, he/she is neither part of the power of the State nor does he/she have any share in the power of the market<sup>25</sup>, nor in belonging to Religion nor in modern atheism, while living in societies governed by law and in which mercantile exchanges take place, as well as free bricolage of religious beliefs and is opposed to doctrines and dogmas. The layperson is the recognition of this presence in a non-central place<sup>26</sup> within the balanced order of the world. Decentralisation is what causes changes. The layperson however, is not ignorant, but is no longer institutionally identified, as he/she establishes a reflexive criticism in a free and equal way.

In our work, we have sought to investigate, on the one hand, the exhaustion of religious and secular metaphysics, which sought an unequivocal foundation for order. Such monistic beliefs found their limits in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in plural societies. On the other hand, models that favour democracy as a space for the recognition of plurality, secularism as a space for the recognition of freedom and equality and cosmopolitanism as the ethical space, as a confrontation of centrifugal forces in favour of a common sharing of the social sphere. For that, we take religion and the growing Brazilian religious pluralism, for example. At this moment, we turn to the non-religious who live on the peripheries of Brazilian cities as an example of a certain cosmopolitan and democratic secularity. To do so, let us take up statistics on religion in Brazil.

Individuals who call themselves non-religious are those who say they do not identify with established religions, but who profess to believe in God, spirits, or immaterial forces. The presence of non-religious people in the Brazilian urban peripheries has been noticed by researchers, whose works allow us to punctuate not only the self-professed secular, but also their choices based on a free and equal reflection, as well as their ethical determination.

---

<sup>24</sup> As Telmo Verdelho tells us, *klerós* and *laikós* refer in ancient Greek to heirs, to property owners, those who exercised economic and political power in the Greek city, while the layperson meant an unqualified person, “the zero degree on the social scales” (Verdelho, 2004, p. 24).

<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben will call the people (2015) and Rancière (1996).

<sup>26</sup> Here, we can call this peripheral place non-central. According to Claudio Noronha, “the urban peripheries are characterised by being distant from urban centres. They have a great accumulation of deprivations and negative social indicators, caused, in large part, by the smaller presence of the State” (Noronha, 2012, p. 141).

Table 2

*Statistics on Religion in Brazil*

	1994	2000	2010 <sup>27</sup>	2016 <sup>28</sup>
Catholic	75.00%	73.57%	64.63%	50.00%
Evangelical	14.00%	15.42%	22.16%	29.00%
Others	6.00%	3.36%	5.56%	7.00%
No Religion	5.00%	7.35%	7.65%	14.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We highlight the research conducted with a group of young people between 14 and 21 years of age, on the outskirts of the Municipality of Juiz de Fora, in the State of Minas Gerais, residents of the neighbourhood of Don Bosco, a place called Chapadão, who were self-professed non-religious. Such young people seek to confront identity fragmentation and collective instability through a common, collective project (Stepham, 2013, p. 90). Contrary to what we might suppose, that of a community experience that comes from belonging to social institutions, such as church and school, they search for common arrangements recognised by themselves, ways of self-identification, resisting identity through religious and scholastic membership (Stephan, 2013, p. 93). Such young people seek mutual cooperation through a common musical project.

One of them says he has turned away from religion “because he does not like what happens in churches in terms of the speeches of the priests and the demands of the evangelical churches that do not let him do what he wants” (Stephan, 2013, p. 104). Another will say that religion has lost its priority her life and that in times of need (she had been arrested) she has not been helped by religion (Stephan, 2013, p. 105). If on the one hand the institutions are not useful, some claim to turn to God again when they find themselves in trouble, or seek help from among close friends (p. 126). They are far from the interests of religion and they distance themselves from it, while turning to a certain sharing of the common good. Finally, according to the researcher, “...some adolescents even live without religions, others are indifferent, others do not speak of their religious leanings because they do not have religious language” (Stephan, 2013, p. 130). Moreover, to understand that in the absence of a language which accounts for these singular and shared heterogeneous experiences, perhaps “declaring oneself non-religious can be thought of as a protest and resistance” (Stephan, 2013, pp. 133-134).

Another work on the non-religious was produced in Baixada Fluminense, in the State of Rio de Janeiro. According to the research, we can say that to deny the self-declarations of these individuals is to deny them their own citizenship, i.e., it is to restrict their autonomy and authenticity, the freedom to compose their own biography, being hostage to heteronomically imposed identities. In addition, there would be two distinct groups of non-religious people: atheists and agnostics, unbelieving or doubtful of belief in the transcendent, and those non-religious people “with religious leanings”, those who are far removed from religious institutions but who retain some form of religious belief, who shift their religious leanings to the intimate sphere and detach themselves from institutional beliefs and practices (Rodrigues, 2012, pp. 1135-1136).

The striking feature of non-religious people is the distance from institutions. Atheists and agnostics reject or doubt some remaining belief, while others seek to maintain a certain religious leaning. What is configured here is a crisis of credibility of the institutions and an individual freedom to compose their beliefs (Rodrigues,

<sup>27</sup> The data corresponding to the years 2000 and 2010 were obtained from data from the IBGE and presented on page 1 of this work.

<sup>28</sup> The data corresponding to the years 1994 and 2016 were obtained from the São Paulo Datafolha Institute: extracted from <http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2016/12/1845231-44-dos-evangelicos-sao-ex-catolicos.shtml> on 01/05/2017.

2012, p. 1142). Finally, it should be noted that, for Rodrigues:

In general, one who changes systems of meanings also changes social relations, redefining their identity according to the other, to a subculture. So, a specific context for approval of a particular lifestyle becomes indispensable, which can be referred to in the case of non-religious people, whose dynamic environment of high reflexivity makes their detachment from religious institutions possible. (Rodrigues, 2012, p. 1144)

Non-religious people, by means of a criticism of the religious institution, promote a movement out of the institution, without abandoning their religious leanings, thus turning to the community and to values that integrate and articulate those which may also be those of the religion. They criticise institutions, not only the religious ones, as they turn to the immediate community, articulating values that surpass it. A community that turns to the sharing of the common good.

To the south of the São Paulo Metropolitan Region, in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, we can also find individuals who call themselves non-religious. It is possible to verify, in these peripheries, “practices of reciprocity of material and symbolic goods of the residents (of favelas, or vulnerable communities)”. Such practices “find their effectiveness in kinship, neighbourhood, place of origin and migrant networks, as well as in social and religious networks” (Rivera, 2012, p. 25). Relationships in these social spaces are based on mutual credibility, on mutual trust. The research points to the fact that it is becoming increasingly common in these peripheries and communities, when faced with the question about religious belonging, to hear in response: “‘I have no religion at the moment’, ‘I do not go to any church’, ‘I would, but now I am quiet’, ‘I have never been a member of the church’, and ‘I believe in God, but I do not go to any church’” (p. 50). The relationship between belonging and believing dissolves in the face of authenticity as shared freedom.

To the north of the city of São Paulo, in the neighbourhoods of Cidade Tiradentes and José Bonifácio, in the East Zone, a periphery of São Paulo, other research does not allow recognition of non-religious people. For these, the belief in God allows them to say that “if not for God we do not live” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 487). Another will say that God is the one who hears prayers and prays in times of uncertainty (Nicolini, 2014, p. 491), or even that God is “a greater force [...], a creative force” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 492). For some, the community and the recognised presence of friends tells them that “God... this is it here! It is the air, God is love” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 502).

If on the one hand the beliefs in what they call God vary widely, without this creating doctrinal intensification around dogmas, it is the permanent conflict between religious people<sup>29</sup> and the lack of commitment among religious people, between the morals that they proclaim and the actions that do not always correspond, that determines the criticism and remoteness of the Church. These non-religious people appeal to religious and social tolerance as a counterpart of differences in beliefs. The criticism of religion still goes through the belief that “He is not in the Church, He is within me” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 490), while another youth tells us that going to church is “filling the sack [...] the people only talk, she prays” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 492).

There is a belief in God and a criticism of religion, and the overcoming of this contradiction takes place around an intimate identification as a child of God. But this belief is not a mystical faith, rather pragmatic, which allows them to identify each other with equal human dignity and the freedom to “put up a fight” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 503), i.e., to face one’s own difficulties of living in Brazilian urban peripheries. This

---

<sup>29</sup> In the terms of our text, we would say that this clash takes the version of an ecclesial communitarianism, i.e., each community perceiving itself to be the bearer of truth and legitimates itself in the right to fight against lies, heresies and deviations.

movement of internalisation of human value and dignity from shared belief, cooperates, in the words of the non-religious, with a pragmatic movement to turn to action. However, it is not any action, because, according to their testimony, they turn against possessive individualism, the accumulation of the benefits of this divine inheritance for themselves. Non-religious people were unanimous in demonstrating their belief that evil is this closing in on oneself, this accumulation of goods for individual benefit.

It is in this sense that they turn against the churches, because the dogmatic defences go beyond strengthening the truth against the lies; rather, they seek to determine the exclusive truth for themselves, beyond which everything is a lie, and within which there is the exclusivity of salvation. The rich and the churches, which accumulate for themselves, are the expression of evil, while the good, those who practice being the children of God every day, the ones who go to the struggle, it is the sharing of resources and needs. Whether it is in participation in political-trade union movements, in social movements, or within communities and families, there is an ethic of the common good, which turns against the ethics of accumulation and individualism.

Non-religious people criticise the empowerment of truth, promoted by the institutions, the Church and the religion. However, they find the same human dignity in their divine affiliation that aids them in their ethics of sharing the common good. They transpose the ethical values on which they are founded beyond the local community. Their political, social and community (and family) struggles do not aim at a personal good, but refer to those values that they believe should be defended, many of which they inherit from their own religion. Values that permeate the community, but which are extrapolated within it.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the observation of the existing plurality in societies such as Brazil, evidenced by religious diversification, our work seeks to criticise the possible contiguity of religious metaphysics from the premise of secularisation, and to point to a secularism that is already interwoven into the diversity of societies and their local arrangements of general principles. In view of such plurality and the methods of arranging secularism, we therefore emphasise the democratic claim to freedom of conscience and expression, as well as equality. We aim for the ethical demand that such a society carries, which led us to cosmopolitanism. A secular, democratic, cosmopolitan society, as opposed to the secular nation State and founded on sovereign power.

In such secular, democratic and cosmopolitan societies, there would be no a priori exclusion of private discourses with a universalist claim, as is the case with certain religious and secular metaphysical beliefs, but rejection thereof when they do not form majorities. Dissent would be an inhibiting factor in the imposition of these discourses, while recognition of the demands would fuel the debates, broadening the perception of minorities. In democratic societies, secularism would not exclude religion from public debate, but this would require the formation of majorities.

Modern criticism of religion has enabled us to perceive the reflexive critique of modernity, and its fundamental discourses, its metaphysics of modern Reason. Reflective criticism is closely tied to the pluralism of societies like Brazil, while modern values such as freedom to believe and not to believe, as well as to express beliefs, or to keep them quiet, which ensure and establish formal equality, encourage and update the criticism. Such critical reflexivity, present in the ordinary individual, leads to self-production (we could say: *autopoiesis*) of beliefs.

Our last step was to move the sense of secularism closer to that of the periphery in order to exemplify this self-production of belief without identifying with religion. Maintaining reference in freedom and equality,

articulated with cosmopolitanism, we present research that points to this poetic religiosity of the non-religious in the Brazilian urban peripheries. Far from producing religions of individuals, the non-religious are seeking an equal dignity in divine affiliation and turning to the recognition of the other as the privileged place of social action.

### References

- Agamben, G. (2015). Formas de vida (Lifestyles). In *Meiossemfim: notassobre a política (Endless media: Notes on politics)*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.
- Appiah, K. A. (2008). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers*. Lisbon-PO: Europe-America Publications.
- Bauberót, J. (2015). *Le modelofrançais de laïcité n'existe pas, ou, les six laïcitéfrançaises (The French model of secularism does not exist, or the six French secularists)*. Retrieved from <http://historieengange.ca/?p=4068>
- Bauberrot, J., & Milot, M. (2011). *Laïcité sans frontières (Secularism without borders)*. Paris: Seuil.
- Beck, U. (1999). *O que é globalização? Equívocos do globalismo, respostas à globalização (What is Globalization? Misconception on globalism, responses to globalization)*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra.
- Beck, U. (2010). *Risk society*. São Paulo: Ed.
- Blancarte, R. (2008). *Reason for a secular state: The (in) in defence of secular freedoms*. Porto Alegre: Livraria do Advogado.
- Bobbio, N. (1986). A grande dicotomia: público/privado (The great dichotomy: Public/private). In *Estado, governo, sociedade: Para uma teoria geral da política (State, government, society: Towards a general theory of politics)*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Boudon, R. (2010). *Relativismo (Relativism)*. São Paulo: Loyola.
- Eagleton, T. (2016). *Culture and the death of God*. São Paulo: Record.
- Ferry, L., & Gauchet, M. (2008). *After religion: What will become of humankind after religion no longer dictates the law?*. Rio de Janeiro: Difel.
- Fromm, E. (1987). *Ter ou ser? (Have or be) (4th ed.)*. São Paulo: LTC.
- Giddens, A., Beck, U., & Lash, S. (2012). *Modernização Reflexiva: Política, Tradição e Estética na ordem social moderna (Reflective modernization: Politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order)*. São Paulo: UNESP.
- Lecaros, V. (2012). *L'Église Catholique face aux évangéliques: Les cas du Pérou (The Catholic Church in the face of Evangelicals: The Peruvian case)*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Marramao, G. (1997). *Heaven and earth*. São Paulo: UNESCO.
- Miller, N. R. (1983). Pluralism and social choice. *The American Political Science Review*, 77(3), 734-747.
- Milot, M. (2008). *La laïcité (Laicity)*. Montreal, CA: Novalis.
- Nicolini, M. H. O. (2017). *Religião e poder civil, arranjos e resistências: autenticidade da religiosidadelaicanas periferias. (Religion and civil power, arrangements and resistances: Authenticity of religious religiosity in the peripheries)*. Curitiba: CRV.
- Noronha, C. (2012). Religião e redes sociais pentecostais no município de Rio Grande da Serra no Grande ABC Paulista (Religion and pentecostal social networks in the Municipality of Rio Grande da Serra in the Grande ABC Paulista). In *Evangélicos e periferia urbana em São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro: Estudos de sociologia e antropologia urbanas (Evangelicals and urban periphery in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro: Urban sociology and anthropology studies)*. Curitiba: CRV.
- Pierucci, A. F. (1998). Secularisation in Max Weber: On current usefulness of re-accessing that old meaning. *São Paulo: Brazilian Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(37), 43-73.
- Rancière, J. (1996). *O desentendimento (The disagreement)*. São Paulo: Editora.
- Rivera, D. P. B. (2012). Religião e desigualdades sociais no Município de São Bernardo do Campo: estudo comparativo de grupos de dois bairros de condições sociais e econômicas opostas (Religion and social inequalities in the Municipality of São Bernardo do Campo: A comparative study of groups from two districts of opposite social and economic conditions). In *Evangélicos e periferia urbana em São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro: Estudos de sociologia e antropologia urbanas (Evangelicals and urban periphery in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro: Urban sociology and anthropology studies)*. Curitiba: CRV.
- Rodrigues, D. D. S. (2012). Os sem religião nos censos brasileiros: sinal de uma crise do pertencimento institucional (Those without religion in the Brazilian censuses: Sign of a crisis of institutional belonging). *Revista Horizonte*, 10(28), 1130-1153.
- Rondrik, D. (2011). *The globalization paradox: Democracy and the future of the world economy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- rouanet, S. P. (1990). Ethics and anthropology. *Advanced Studies*, 4(10), 110-150.

Santos, M. (2011). *Por uma outra globalização (For another globalization)*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.

Shapiro, I. (2016). *Politics against domination*. New York, USA: Belknap Press.

Stephan, A. M. (2013). Deslocamento da religião do discurso dos adolescentes (Displacement of adolescents' speech religion). In *Adolescentes e a poética das religiosidades: Reflexões sobre (des)crenças e invenções (Adolescents and the poetics of religiosities: Reflections on (dis) beliefs and inventions)*. Juiz de Fora: Tese de Doutorado apresentada ao PPG-CR da UFJF.

Verdelho, T. (2004). Clérigo/Leigo: nota filológica (Cleric/Layman: philological note). In *Variações sobre o tema anticlerical (Variations on the anticlerical theme)*. Aveiro, PO: Universidade de Aveiro: Centro de Línguas e Cultura.

Weber, M. (2004). *Ciência e Política: duas vocações (Science and politics: Two vocations)*. Rio de Janeiro: Cultrix.



# Addressing Religious Issues at UAE Schools in Times of Global Changes

Ameera Ahmed Almessabi

United Arab Emirates University, Al Ain, UAE

After the era of globalization, religious diversity increases in most of the countries all over the world. Therefore, the main goal of this article is to discuss the necessity of teaching pupils about the different religions at schools in order for increasing their religious awareness about their own religion as well as improving their sensitivity towards other religions. Hence, such awareness and sensitivity may contribute to open the channels of dialogue among the new generations and prevent more violence from happening, as a result. In doing so, it will display the level of religious diversity around the world and the number of expected religious groups by 2050 as found by Pew Research Center (2015). It will also briefly review the Islamic principles that are related to dealing with other religious groups. Moreover, it will present possible ways of how multiple religions can be taught in schools in order to transform pupils from religiocentric phases to religiorelative stages.

*Key words:* UAE schools, postmodern era, globalization, diversity, religions, extremist groups, Islamic principles, tolerance

## Introduction

Living in the postmodern era which is characterized by a fast-changing concept of time is so confusing and unpredictable. The whole world becomes one small village and its people share many similar aspects of life and are affected by shared problems. To illustrate, globalization's spoon mixes the different races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, socioeconomics, and religions in each single country. All of these elements of diversity should be handled wisely to avoid conflicts and contradictions among humans. This paper deals with religious diversity to address religious issues in UAE schools and the necessity for teaching students about the major religions in order to prepare this generation with religious awareness that makes them learn better about their own religion and at the same time respect other religions. Consequently, such awareness will open the window for dialogue among the new generations and as a result may contribute to save the world from the current wars and violence which stem initially from religious extremism. This position paper is undertaken to provide a critical discussion of key aspects of the definition and interpretation of religion and religious diversity. A presentation of justifications for why and how diverse religions should be taught in UAE schools is also presented. A brief discussion of Islamic principles that relate to religious diversity and tolerance is discussed as well.

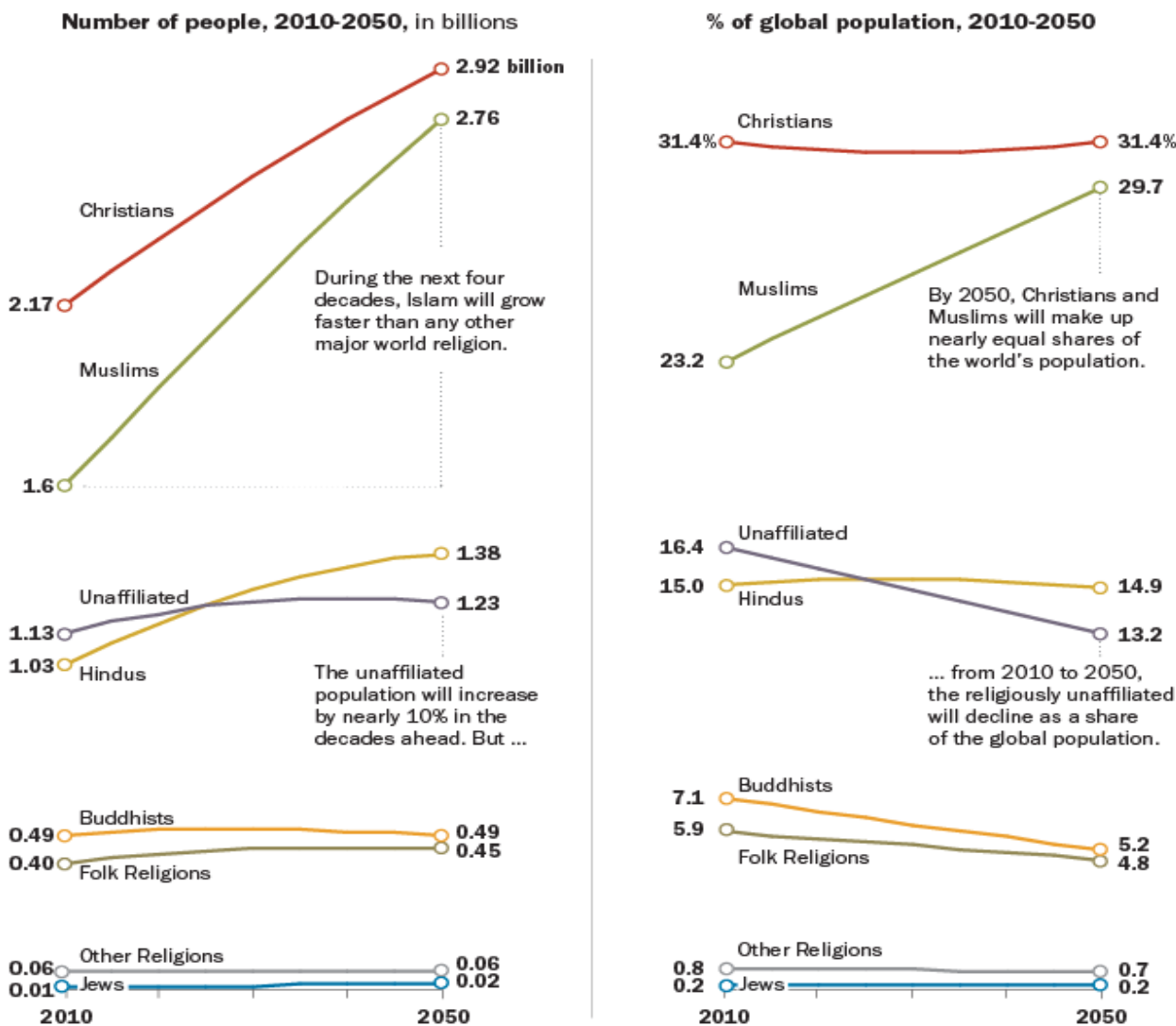
### **Religion and Religious Diversity**

There are many definitions for the word religion and some of them are general and can be implemented to all religions, while the other are so unique to specified religions. For instance Geertz (1993) in his book *religion as a cultural system*, he defines religion as cultural system of practices, sacred texts, common views, morals, ethics, holy places, behaviors, and a rationale to humans for their existence. Similarly, Yinger (1970) argues that religion is a set of practices and beliefs of a group of people that derive their behaviors. James (1902), in his book *the varieties of religious experience*, defines religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (p. 31). On the other hand, Durkheim (1969) defines religion in a specific way as (Christianity) as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church (sic), all those who adhere to them” (p. 46). Generally speaking, most definitions of religions agreed on the concept of deity, norms, sacred beliefs that shape the human behaviors and practices. In other words, religious beliefs and principles determine and shape the culture of a group of people including their way of eating, clothing, getting married and so forth. After the era of globalization, religious diversity increases in most of the countries all over the world. However we are here in UAE do not have many religions as other countries might have, for example, USA and European countries. The great majority here in UAE are Muslims, however, because of globalization, the whole world might witness dynamic changes in religions’ diffusion during the coming years (see Figures 1 and 2).

Therefore, all countries including UAE need to prepare its generations for being aware about these religions in order to strengthen their faith about their own religion as well as increase their respect towards the other religions. As a result, that will open the communication channels among people from different religions and, in consequence, will decrease the number of wars all over the world. That can be reached when countries are able to raise the level of interreligious sensitivity among its citizens. Following the same categories as Bennett (1993) used in his developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, Morgan and Sandage (2016) created their Interreligious Competence model IRC (see Table 1). Likewise, Abu-Nimer (2001) proposes that denial is represented by religious tenets that negate the humanity of those outside the creed. While defense, in his model, is interpreted as the belief of an individual who values his/her own religion and at the same time devalues all the others. Finally, he describes the religiocentric perspective of minimization as when individuals “begins from their own beliefs and see the same beliefs among others” (p. 500). Moreover, Abu-Nimer (2001) describes the shift from religiocentric to religiorelative view as an arduous task: “participants in the training workshops, regardless of their faith, had difficulty applying the developmental model in the religiorelative stages when religion was substituted for culture” (p. 699). He repeats discussing this enigma in Abu-Nimer (2004) when he states that “possibility of developing a religious pluralist consciousness is rejected by most of the interfaith dialogue groups, because it raises the fear of conversation and the loss of one’s perceived authentic religious identity” (p. 503). Therefore, he suggests that acceptance might be the highest point of growth for religious people because any further stage might be interpreted as bargaining their own faith. Although, the acceptance stage can be so helpful in opening the window among the different religions, our role as parents and educators is to help our children to reach it and move beyond to the adaptation and integration stages.

### Projected Change in Global Population

With the exception of Buddhists, all of the major religious groups are expected to increase in number by 2050. But some will not keep pace with global population growth, and, as a result, are expected to make up a smaller percentage of the world's population in 2050 than they did in 2010.



Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. Projected change in global population (Number of expected religious groups by 2050) (Pew Research Center, 2015).

### Size and Projected Growth of Major Religious Groups

	2010 POPULATION	% OF WORLD POPULATION IN 2010	PROJECTED 2050 POPULATION	% OF WORLD POPULATION IN 2050	POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2050
Christians	2,168,330,000	31.4%	2,918,070,000	31.4%	749,740,000
Muslims	1,599,700,000	23.2	2,761,480,000	29.7	1,161,780,000
Unaffiliated	1,131,150,000	16.4	1,230,340,000	13.2	99,190,000
Hindus	1,032,210,000	15.0	1,384,360,000	14.9	352,140,000
Buddhists	487,760,000	7.1	486,270,000	5.2	-1,490,000
Folk Religions	404,690,000	5.9	449,140,000	4.8	44,450,000
Other Religions	58,150,000	0.8	61,450,000	0.7	3,300,000
Jews	13,860,000	0.2	16,090,000	0.2	2,230,000
<b>World total</b>	<b>6,895,850,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9,307,190,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,411,340,000</b>

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 2. Size and projected growth of major religious groups (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Table 1

Summary of Developmental Model of IRC by Morgan and Sandage (2016, p. 143)

Denial	This orientation has difficulty acknowledging religious differences beneath those that are apparent, and acts with a general avoidance or dismissal of religious others
Polarization	Orientations that construe religious differences through rigid either/or categories based on superiority/inferiority
Defense	An orientation that idealizes one's own religious position with in-group loyalty and denigrates religious others through stereotyped prejudices and often with a sense of being threatened by out-groups
Reversal	The inverse of defense, this mindset adopts a globally critical view of one's own religious tradition, often with shame, and idealizes religious others
Minimization	This orientation subsumes other's categories into familiar religious ideas (e.g., "All religions are saying the same thing"). This emphasis on similarity often obscures recognition of important religious differences
Acceptance	Through increased cognitive complexity and emotional Flexibility, this orientation permits frame-shifting to recognize and appreciate religious differences while remaining self-aware of one's own religious preferences and perspectives.
Adaptation	Beyond the frame-shifting of acceptance, this orientation also includes the capacity to behaviorally code-switch, i.e., act in respectful and appropriate ways across religious differences.
Integration	An orientation that involves "living out" adaptation and commitments to inter-religious relationships in healthy ways amidst the stress and marginality that it often comes with those commitments.

### Religious Diversity in UAE's Community

After the bull market in UAE because of discovering the oil, the components of UAE community has been changed to contain other nationalities. To illustrate, 20% of the UAE's population are Emiratis (Ministry of Economy Consensus, 2005). While, the rest of them are non-nationals with 80% came to UAE for seeking of employments' opportunities (see Table 2). According to the most recent Ministry of Economy census of United Arab Emirates (2005), 76 percent of the total population is Muslim, 9 percent is Christian, and 15 percent is "other", including Hindu and Buddhist.

Table 2

*Percentages of People From Other Nationalities Live in UAE*

Other Arabs (e.g., Yemenis, Jordanians, Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis,...).	23%
East and South East Asian (e.g., Indians, Pakistanis,...)	50%
Other expatriates (Westerners)	7%

### **Islamic Principles Related to Other Religions**

Here in UAE, the official religion is Islam. Yahya (2000) argues that Islam has the highest degree of tolerance in permitting other people of other beliefs to practice their religious values, regardless of the high level of contradictions between these faiths and Islam. Islam urge Muslims to view the case of others sympathetically, respectively, and justly. That can be manifest in this verse from holy Quran “God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them, for God loves those who are just” (Al-Mumtahnah: 8). Moreover, Allah also says: “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills—let him believe; and whoever wills—let him disbelieve” (Al-Kahf: 29). Therefore, Muslims are asked to respect other religions, whether these religions are in agreement or disagreement with their beliefs.

Tolerance helps humans to live together in harmony and that is highly needed during globalization which is characterized by different mixes of cultures and religions. Accordingly, living in peace requires from us as humans to respect all of these differences, instead of covering our eyes and avoid tackling these sensitive issues. Frankly speaking, such avoidance is the main reason behinds wars and conflicts which are currently happening all over the world. Extremist groups are formed from the lack of understanding of other religions and then people believe that there religion is the only right faith in the world. Allah says “God knows best what you are doing; God will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters in which you differ” (Al-Hajj: 68-69). However, unfortunately, extremists may go beyond this belief and they initiate some extreme illegal groups which destruct countries and fight mistakenly in the name of religion. The worst is that these extreme groups utilize the new technology in the postmodernity in inviting other people to adopt their ideas and faiths in order to make them their soldiers. In consequence, we suffer as humans from wars and their negative consequences in many countries in the world. We as Muslims should represent that tolerance by addressing the issues of religious diversity among us. Basically, it is a shared responsibility among homes, schools, and media to save the world and stop these wars which are practiced in the name of religion. The following paragraph discusses the role of school to do so.

### **Curriculum and Pedagogical Issues Related to Teaching about Religions**

There are many scholars and intellectuals argue for involving religious discussions and teaching about religions in schools to enrich the students’ knowledge about these different religions by presenting them in full neutrality (Uphoff, 1993; Haynes & Thomas, 2001; Cushner, McClelland, & Stafford, 2011; Slattery, 2013). This neutrality is for fostering discussion and inquiry with avoiding evangelism. Educators can do so through multiple ways to present the diverse beliefs and the most effective one is to include religious issues in the curriculum (Whittaker, Salend, & Elhoweris, 2009). Moreover, In a book called *Religion in the Public Schools* (1964), the American Association of School Administrators argues that religious issues cannot be avoided in designing curriculum because it is an integral part of an individual’s culture which must be included (cited in

Uphoff, 1993, p. 95). According to Cushner, McClelland, and Stafford (2011) it is worthwhile to study at schools about the various religions and their influences on the world civilization.

Generally speaking, teaching about religions can take a form of a separate subject matter that specified in presenting neutrally the main principles for each religion of the five worldwide religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hindu. Moreover, religious issues can also be included in other subject matters such as history, social studies, math, geography, art, and so forth, in order to either present the influence of religions on particular elements of these subjects or use examples from religions to facilitate teaching these subjects (Douglass, 2002; Haynes, 2005; Whittaker, Salend, & Elhoweris, 2009; Cushner, McClelland, & Stafford, 2011). For example, a math teacher can use different types of architecture of houses of worship in teaching geometry (Whittaker, Salend, Elhoweris, 2009; Cushner, McClelland, & Stafford, 2011). It is worth mentioning that curriculum materials and resources should be closely supervised to avoid extreme bias, however, with maintaining a level of bias for the aim of asking students to critically analyze the texts and figure out the types of bias and prejudice towards different religions in order for reducing some stereotypes and myths about those religions (Cushner, McClelland, & Stafford, 2011; Slattery, 2013). This criticizing and analyzing for different literature of multiple religions foster knowledge construction and critical thinking (Banks, 1988). In other words, critical analysis for these religious stories and texts will liberate the students' minds and, as a result, it will help societies to prepare a generation of independent and autonomous citizens (Greene, 1974; Freire, 1984).

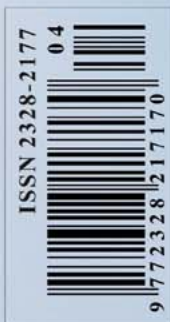
### Conclusion

As a successful country, we have to be aware that we live in an open world. Therefore, most of the world's countries have similar aims, interests, fears and may be destinies. It is undoubtable that the whole world becomes one place that has a mix of different races, ethnicities, languages, values, norms, social classes, genders, cultures, and religions. Typically, all countries all over the world search for ways to prepare their generations for successful participation in a global economy and at the same time to maintain their own cultural identity. Living in peace demands us as humans to address these issues of diversity and deal with them so sensitively and wisely. Unfortunately, today we witness destructions and wars in many countries in the name of religion. Researchers predict that future may witness more level of diversity and that can be a real challenge for us to deal with. Therefore, to avoid more conflicts and aggressions, we need to appreciate all types of diversity and open discussions among the new generations to learn about their own faith and at the same time be informed about the other religions. As a consequence, these students will strengthen their faith as well as be immune and indomitable from the extremists who use new technology in postmodern era for spreading their extreme beliefs and establishing destructive groups to destroy the world.

### References

- "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050". (2015). Pew Research Center, Washington, D. C. Retrieved from [http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/pf\\_15-04-02\\_projectionstables8/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/pf_15-04-02_projectionstables8/)
- Abu-Nimer, M. (2001). Conflict resolution, culture, and religion: Toward a training model of interreligious peace building. *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(6), 685-704.
- Abu-Nimer, M. (2004). Religion, dialogue, and non-violent actions in Palestinian-Israeli conflict. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 17(3), 491-511.
- Banks, J. A. (1988). *Multicultural education: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In M. Paige (Ed.), *Cross-cultural orientation* (pp. 27-69). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Cushner, K., McClelland, A., & Stafford, P. (2011). *Human diversity in education: An intercultural approach* (7th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Douglass, S. L. (2002). Teaching about religion. *Educational Leadership*, 60(2), 32-37.
- Durkheim, E. (1969). The social foundations of religion. In R. Robertson (Ed.), *Sociology of religion*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Freire, P. (1984). Education, liberation, and the church. *Religious Education*, 79, 524-45.
- Geertz, C. (1993). Religion as a cultural system. In G. Clifford (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (pp. 87-125). Fontana Press.
- Green, C., & Oldendorf, S. (2005). Teaching religious diversity through children's literature. *Childhood Education*, 8(4), 209-218.
- Greene, M. (1974). Literature, existentialism, and education. In D. E. Denton (Ed.), *Existentialism and phenomenology in education* (p. 75). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Haynes, C. C. (2005). Living with our deepest differences: Religious diversity in the classroom. In D. A. Byrnes & G. Kiger (Eds.), *Common bonds: Anti-bias teaching in a diverse society* (pp. 25-35). Olney, MD: Association of Childhood Education International.
- Haynes, C. C., & Thomas, O. (2001). *Finding common ground: A guide to religious liberty in public schools*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center.
- James, W. (1902). *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature*. New York, London: Longmans, Green, and Co.
- Morgan, J., & Sandage, S. J. (2016). A developmental model of interreligious competence: A conceptual framework. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 38, 129-158.
- Preliminary Results of Population, Housing and Establishments Census. (2005). Ministry of Economy. United Arab Emirates.
- Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Slattery, P. (2013). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era: Teaching and learning in an age of accountability* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.
- Uphoff, J. K. (1993). Religious diversity and education. In J. A. Banks, & C. A. McG Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Whittaker, C., Salend, S. J., & Elhoweris, H. (2009). Religious diversity in schools: Addressing the issues. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44(5), 314-319.
- Yahya, H. (2000). *The basic concepts in the Quran*. New Delhi, India: Goodword Press.
- Yinger, J. M. (1970). *The scientific study of religion*. New York: Macmillan.



## **Cultural and Religious Studies**

Volume 5, Number 4, April 2017

David Publishing Company

616 Corporate Way, Suite 2-4876, Valley Cottage, NY 10989, USA

Tel: 1-323-984-7526, 323-410-1082; Fax: 1-323-984-7374, 323-908-0457

<http://www.davidpublisher.com>, [www.davidpublisher.org](http://www.davidpublisher.org)

[culture@davidpublishing.org](mailto:culture@davidpublishing.org)