ULRICH BECK

THE RETURN OF THE GODS AND THE CRISIS OF EUROPEAN MODERNITY

TURIN NOVEMBER 19TH, 2010

There is no doubt, right wing populism is the fastest growing party across Europe, reshaping the continent's politics by ruthless exploitation of the themes of immigration, Islam and native identity. Should these parties make more progress, it may prove difficult for governments to contain the damage that risks being inflicted on Europe's image and interests in the wider world.

These risks are amplified by the rising cost of the financial crisis, with Ireland and Portugal under such pressure in bond markets that they may need bail-outs – and by the Asia-Pacific region and to countries such as Brazil and Turkey. It seems that the EU now needs Turkey more than Turkey needs the EU.

The European house is cracking but its inhabitants seem unwilling or unable to stop the rot. A lot has already been said about those under its roof: Angela Merkel appears more concerned about her ring-fenced German garden; Nicolas Sarkozy about his unwelcome Roma neighbours; David Cameron is mostly on vacation when it comes to EU reform work; and let's keep quiet about Silvio Berlusconi. As widely noticed, together with housekeeper Herman Van Rompuy and many other fellows, it is the centre-right family which is currently in charge and no charismatic European politician like Spinelli, Churchill, de Gaulle, Adenauer etc. is in sight. Why is this so?

To answer this question I – firstly – shall introduce the concept of 'Cosmopolitan Europe'; secondly, I then shall explore the religion's contradictory potentials, patterns of individualization and group identity, and the relation of the religion to the 'crisis of European modernity'.

I.   Why do national categories of thought make the thought of Europe impossible?

The national point of view sees two ways and two ways only of reading contemporary European politics and integration. It sees it either as federalism, leading to a federal super state; or as intergovernmentalism, leading to a federation of states. Both models are empirically inadequate. They fail to grasp essential things both about present-day Europe and about the nations that make it up. But they are both also, in a deep-structural sense, anti-European. They deny the goal most worth attaining: a Europe of diversity, a Europe that helps diversity to flourish. This is obvious when it comes to the idea of a federation of states which are seen as defending their sovereignty against the expansion of European power. From that perspective, European integration can only be seen as European self-colonization. But it's just as true in the conception of a federal super state. That is how Europe looks when it is filtered through the exclusive categories of national thought, which can only understand it in one way: as a huge ethno cultural nation state. This makes no sense, as its opponents point out. Such a nation is improbable, unwanted and un-European. But rather than faulting their conception, they fault

reality. It never occurs to them that maybe Europe isn't properly conceived of as a nation state writ large.

Both the federation of states and the federal super state describe the same zero-sum game from different angles. Either there is one single state of Europe (federalism), in which case there are no national member states; or else the national member states remain Europe's rulers, in which case there is no Europe (intergovernmentalism). Within this framework of Thought, whatever Europe gains, the individual nationals lose. And this is true whether one is for a given option or against it. This is what it means to say that national categories of thought make the thought of Europe impossible. Caught up in the false alternatives of the national viewpoint, we are given the choice between no Europe – or no Europe! The same two sides of one dead-end are as prominent as they have ever been in the current debate about European financial risk governance.

The world has become cosmopolitan not by option but by condition. The global Other is in our midst. The Other, the stranger, whether of another nationality or religion can no longer be excluded. The German Chancellor Merkel shortly declared 'the death of multiculturalism'. But this doesn't make any difference to the reality of super-diversity: in Germany, for example, one third of the children under five years old live in bi-national families; in kindergartens little ones who speak more than 18 different languages are quite common. What does the rhetoric 'multiculturalism is dead' mean facing this reality? Such viewpoint suggests something that no longer exists, but which has become a widespread illusion in a globalized world: the backward-looking fiction of the national gaze.

The EU is not a club with an exclusively Christian membership, nor is it a transcendental community of common descent. The only human and cultural landscape that deserves the label 'European' is one that is non-essentialist, radically open, that is determined by procedure – in other words is politically pragmatic. The crunch point comes with the question 'Where do you stand on European Muslims?', which has become the sixty-four billion dollar question of European politics.

All of a sudden, a European discourse of origins is on everyone's lips. Those who would keep the Muslims out discover that the roots of Europe lie in the Christian heritage, the Christian West: only those who have always been a part of this 'common occidental destiny' belong with 'us'. The others are Europe's *excluded* Others. Accordingly to this view of the world, each person has a single homeland, their own: they cannot choose it, it is innate to them; and it accords with the geography of nations and the stereotypes built into them.

This kind of awful, wrong-headed and indeed dangerous territorial understanding of culture haunts even the well-meaning notion of cultural dialogue: as if Islam and the West each existed in its own exclusive space and needed to seek dialogue with the other. Where in all this is 'Londistan' –

the capital city of Islam outside the Islamic world? Where are the European Muslims, the American Muslims, the Arab bourgeoisie, the Oriental Christians, the Israeli Arabs and the kindergarten kids speaking 18 different languages? Those who would reinvent the Christian West in order to erect barriers around Europe are making Europe into a religion, indeed virtually a race, and are turning the project of European Enlightenment upside down. The notion 'Cosmopolitan Europe' can be understood as precisely the negation of this sort of territorial social ontology, which would seek to barricade all paths to the future.

For one thing, the term 'cosmopolitan Europe' is empirically significant, as it opens our eyes to the 'entangled modernities' (Shalini Randeria) in which we live: including for example, the fact that the Turks the European majority want to keep on the outside are already inside and have been for a long time! NATO, trading partnerships, transnational way of living – Turkey arrived on the European scene a long time ago. And large parts of Turkey have become Europeanized. To those people who live in the capital cities of the Islamic world such as Istanbul, Beirut or Teheran and who belong to the middle classes, the customs and values of an Anatolian villager are no less alien than they would be to the middle-class Parisian or Berliner. And if one wanted to cling to the illusion that clear boundaries could be drawn between the European world and the Muslim world, one would have to attribute a monopoly on 'Europeanness' to the EU and completely ignored the overlapping domains of identity constituted by Europe, the Atlantic community and NATO. To allow a principle of descent based on the Christian West to be resurrected from the mass graves of Europe is to fail to recognize Europe's *inner cosmopolitanisation*. For one thing, it is to deny the reality of the roughly seventeen million people living in the EU who are unable to accept this ethnic-cultural heritage of Europeanness on account of being Muslims and/or people of colour, but who nonetheless understand and organize themselves culturally and politically as Europeans.

For another, however, it is to fail to recognize Europe as a microcosm of global society. In the world of the 21st century there is no longer a closed-off space called the Christian West. In the face of growing transnational interconnections and obligations, Europe is turning into an open network with blurring boundaries, where the outside is always already inside.

There is no doubt that the current state of the EU is deserving of critique, maybe a severe critique of the Brussels model of Europe. But where should one look to find the standards for such a critique? In national self-images, in lamentations over the loss of national sovereignty? No. The concept of a Cosmopolitan Europe enables a form of critique of EU reality to emerge that is not nostalgic and not national but instead is, as it were, radically European. This critique says: much about the current state of the EU is un-European. That is why Europe is paralyzed. The diagnosis of the crisis is '*too little Europe*'

– and the therapeutic cure, *'more Europe'* – understood correctly, namely cosmopolitically! And that goes both for Europe internally as well as for its relations with those outside .

For example, it is utterly un-European to equate and thereby reduce Muslims to Islam. It is precisely because European values are European that they are not tied to any particular religion or heritage. No one would say: this person is a Catholic and comes from Turin and so therefore they cannot be a democrat, yet in the eyes of many nationalistic Europeans, being a Muslim is still a totalitarian determinant that excludes the possibility of 'really' being a democrat. In this sense, the national Western view is a fundamentalist view, one that paradoxically fits rather well alongside the anti-modern fundamentalism of an Osama bin Laden and serves to confirm it reciprocally in a dangerous way. 'Europeanness', by contrast, means being able to combine in one existence those things that appear logically to be mutually exclusive in the small-mindedness of ethnic thinking: it is, after all, possible to be a Muslim and a democrat, a socialist and a small businessperson, to love the Bavarian landscape and way of life *and* to belong to an anti-foreigner organization. Radical openness is one essential characteristic of the European project and is the real secret of its success.

The political union that is Europe must be conceived as a cosmopolitan union – in opposition to the false normativity of the 'national'. It is an exclusionary Europe that shows the seed of disappointment from which hatred springs.

II. The two faces of religion

For all the humanity of religion a totalitarian temptation is inherent in it. Out of the universalism of religion there arises a fraternity which transcends class and nation, but also demonization of religious others throughout history – fault lines that go back about two thousand years to the origins of the monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam. God can equally civilise and barbarise human beings.

If we want to understand religion in the modern world we have to understand the *globalization-paradox of religion*: religion is *not* just incidentally global in extent, a by-product of the globalization of more powerful structures like mass media, capitalism and the modern state. Rather the formation and global spread of religion in general, and the monotheistic religions in particular, is an essential defining characteristic of those religions from their beginnings. Indeed, some religions have been "global players" for more than two thousand years. Thus, in order to understand the meta-power game that redefines power in the global age, we have to take into account, besides global capital, civil society movements, state actors and international organizations, the role of religions as modernizing or anti-modernizing forces in the coming post-secular world society.

For religion one feature is absolute: Faith - measured against it all other social differences and oppositions are unimportant. The New Testament says: "All men are equal before God." This equality, this annulment of the boundaries separating people, groups, societies, cultures is the social foundation of (Christian) religions. A further consequence, however, is this: A new fundamental distinction and hierarchy is established in the world with the same absoluteness that social and political distinctions were annulled: the distinction between *believers* and *non-believers*. The non-believers (likewise in accordance with the logic of this duality) are denied the equality and dignity of human beings. Religions can build bridges between people where hierarchies and borders exist; at the same time they create new religion-determined chasms where there were none before.

It was Paul, a Hellenistic Jew who, more than any other figure in the Jesus movement, turned Christianity from a Jewish sect into a global religious force with a universalistic vision. He pulled down the walls: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female."

The humanitarian universalism of believers is based on the identification with God - and on a demonization of the opponents of God who, as Paul and Luther put it, are "servants of Satan". This ambivalence of tolerance and violence is part of history and presence as well – 'where do you stand on European Muslims? - can be broken down into three elements: World religions

a) overcome given hierarchies and boundaries between nations and ethnic groups; they are in a position to do so, to the extent that

b) they create a religious universalism, in the face of which all national and social barriers become less important; there simultaneously arises, however, the danger

c) that instead of ethnic, national and class barriers, barricades are now raised between believers in the right faith on the one hand and believers in the wrong faith and non-believers on the other.

The history of European colonisation is of course the primary historical example of how the category of unbelievers, who were to be converted for the sake of the salvation of their own souls, permitted unimaginable atrocities and acts of violence and cruelty to be carried out and "legitimated". Columbus expressed it with quite undisguised brutality. To him the spreading of the faith "and the enslavement of the non-believers were indissolubly linked".

But the demonization of the religious other can also be effectively illustrated by the "mixed marriages war" between Catholic and Protestant Christians which raged in the long 19th century and into the 20th century. With the establishment of national equality the boundary of hate and contempt between Catholic and Protestant Christians of the same nationality - who, contrary to all declarations of

love within marriage, family, parenthood, attacked and excluded one another as "false faith communities of heretics" - had again and again to be proclaimed with fiery words and actions.

That is the fear that's spreading: That the reverse of the failure of secularisation is the threat of a new dark age. Religion kills.

III. Secularization – a European special path?

The return of the religions at the beginning of the twenty-first century breaks with the conventional wisdom that has prevailed for the past two hundred years up to the 1970s: the further and faster the modernization process has advanced, the more obvious the disempowerment of the gods has become – in other words, what we have witnessed with growing clarity is the victory of scientific and technical rationality and the demolition of the structures underpinning the plausibility of religious belief.

Secularization theory is based on two assumptions; first, that modernization as it emerged in the European context (Max Weber called it 'occidental rationality' a century ago) is a *universal* process which leads to similar developments all over the world; and second, secularization is *inseparable* from modernization and is as irresistible. The collapse of secularization theory is, therefore, of far greater significance than, for example, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. After all, it does not 'just' affect individual geopolitical empires; it threatens the entire architecture of fundamental assumptions and basic institutions and hence ultimately the future of European modernity. Secularization is (or was?) a constitutive premise of both democracy and modernity. It is surely to the credit of Jürgen Habermas (2005, 2007b) that he should have raised this taboo-laden question. What then is the meaning of a '*post-secular' modernity in Europe*?

If we take the frequency of churchgoing as an index of secularization, then the decline in the regular practice of religion in some countries in Western Europe since the end of the First World War has assumed truly catastrophic proportions, whereas elsewhere this is a more recent development. 'In only three European countries (Ireland, Poland and Switzerland) does a majority of the population regularly go to church. In the majority of European countries it is under 20 percent and in eastern Germany and Scandinavia the numbers that go are in single figures. Conversely, in Poland, Ireland, Switzerland and Portugal, fewer than ten percent never go to church, while in France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and eastern Germany – on a rising scale – this is true of over fifty percent.' (José Casanova 2007: 326)

Thus, whereas in Western Europe (although with considerable variations) the Christian churches are emptying at an almost spooky rate (so providing evidence in support of secularization theory), the opposite picture emerges at a global level where outside Europe we see the revitalization of

religious belief, especially of Christianity. In fact, at present we are witnessing one of the strongest phases in the expansion of Christianity in its entire history.

Astonishingly, many commentators (Samuel Huntington, for example), observe the demographic trend only in connection with the global development of Islam, but not with that of Christianity. And yet many of the fastest-growing nations are either entirely or strongly Christian in orientation. We need think only of Brazil, Uganda or the Philippines, where the population has almost doubled since 1974. Some of these countries will see their population at least double again by 2050, and this will result in major changes in the ranking of the countries of the world according to population. But equally, demography is not the only factor in the rapid expansion of Christianity throughout the world. Contrary to the expectations of the critics of colonialism, who regarded Christianity as a Western implant which had no future in an alien environment, Christianity only began its rapid expansion in Africa after the end of colonial rule, partly through mass conversions.

Thus Christianity as such is by no means on its last legs. It is merely that European Christianity is confronted with a rapid decline in church attendance in some of its national bastions, including Germany. What secularization theory has to say is, if framed in general terms, false. Looked at regionally, it amounts to the assertion that Christianity is in the process of being *de-Europeanized*. Christianity is thriving outside Europe; European Christianity is fading away (even though there are fresh shoots here too).

But this diagnosis has to be specified. An important finding is the fact that orthodox and conservative branches of existing religious communities are everywhere gaining ground. This is as true of Hinduism and Buddhism as of the three monotheistic religions. What is striking above all is the regional expansion of these established religions in Africa and the countries of East and South-East Asia. One factor in such missionary success is evidently the mobility of the forms of organization. The multicultural universal church of Roman Catholicism is better equipped to exploit the trend towards globalization than the nationally based Protestant churches, which turn out to be the great losers. Most dynamic of all are the decentralized networks of Islam (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa) and the evangelical churches (above all, in Latin America). Their distinguishing feature is the ecstatic religiosity that is ignited by individual charismatic figures. It is the fastest growing religious movements, such as the Pentecostalists and the radical Muslims, that are best described as 'fundamentalist'. Their cults combine spiritualism and imminent expectations with rigid moral codes and a literal interpretation of the Bible. (Habermas 2007b: 2f; Martin 2002; 2005)

IV. The authority principle underlying the revival of faith is the sovereign self

It has become almost a truism to point out that the concept of religion itself has a *Eurocentric bias* (Haussig 1999). That is to say, as the product of Western mind, it is projected onto the religious life and experience of other, 'alien' cultures and continents. The very question, 'what is religion?' presupposes an understanding of communities clearly distinguishable from religion and to which one either does or does not belong. This finding is strengthened by reflecting on the choice of words: *religion* is treated as a *noun*, which implies a clearly demarcated social set of symbols and practices that constitute an either/or. You have only the choice of believing or not believing them, and, as a member of a faith community, you cannot belong to another such community at the same time.

This background understanding of 'religion' is doubtless *monotheistic*, i.e. it is based on the premise that each person can choose one God and one God alone, and must exclude all others. Such exclusivity, however, was alien not just to the religious views of the ancient world; it is also inapplicable to non-monotheistic religious traditions in Africa, Japan and Latin America today.

For this reason it is essential and also meaningful to maintain a distinction between *religion* and *religious*, between religion as noun and as adjective (Simmel 1922; Esposito, et al. 2006: 5f.) As a noun, 'religion' organizes the religious field according to an either/or logic. The adjective 'religious', by contrast, organizes it according to a 'both-and' logic. To be religious does not presuppose membership (or non-membership for that matter) of a specific group or organization; it signifies a specific *attitude* towards the existential questions of man in the world. The noun 'religion' starts from the image of one of the separate spheres of action with clearly defined boundaries (economics, science, politics and even religion itself). The adjective 'religious' takes account of the amorphousness and absence of boundaries of the religious sphere, and hence enables the *syncretist alternative* to the monotheistic noun 'religion' to enter our purview.

The key to the 'revitalization' of religion in Europe is the decoupling of religion from religiosity. Secularization does not mean the demise of religion and faith, but instead the development and massive dissemination of a religiosity that is based increasingly on individualization. This process is part of a larger trend to revive faith in a society in which religious influences overlap and interpenetrate and whose fundamental preconditions include the artificially created uncertainty of a modernization that modifies its own premises (see 'reflexive modernization').

This phenomenon can even be seen where many people would suppose it is least likely to be found, namely among American Jews, a fact revealed by Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen (2000).

American Jews speak of their lives, and of their Jewish beliefs and commitments, as a journey of ongoing questioning and development. They avoid the language of arrival. There are no final

answers, no irrevocable commitments…. The 'first language' that our subjects speak is by and large one of profound individualism…. Community – though a buzzword in our interviews, a felt need, even a real hunger for some – is a 'second language,' subordinate to the first…. The more committed and active among our sample told us repeatedly that they decide week by week, year by year, which rituals they will observe and how they will observe them…. The 'sacred canopy' (Peter Berger's famous term) no longer overarches existence, and so the demand to choose and re-choose identity (which Berger called the 'heretical imperative') is inescapable. Nowhere have these processes been more evident than among Jews. (Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen 2000: 2, 7)

To put the matter differently and more fundamentally: if it is true that a life of one's own is another name for the *contingent* and *reflexive* nature of that life, what form of individually internalized, practical and natural religiosity and spirituality remains open? Two options present themselves here. The first appeals to the *intractable*, unbending nature of any given religion, both historically and individually, and hence accepts the closed system of church, God and individual. This option denies the reality of religious plurality, denies individualization and, in the light of the irrevocable historical pressure in favour of individual religious commitment and choice, takes refuge in dogmas of faith that are incompatible with individualized experiences and ambivalent feelings. The decision to believe (or not to believe) that is required of individuals faced with the plurality, comparability and availability of religions, heresies and forms of atheism, expects – as Peter L. Berger provocatively puts it – an attitude of self-deception on the part of individualized individuals. This is Sartre's *mauvaise foi*, in other words, the denial of one's ability to choose and one's own responsibility.

This option fails to acknowledge the religious origins of individualization in Christianity. Individualization and the manifold confusions this leads to on every side is misinterpreted as an individual process to be ascribed to individual excesses – the frothy hunger for experience, inflated expectations, manic egoism and the declining readiness to see things through, to fit in and to make sacrifices. But that is erroneous. For in reality the religious forms assumed by the 'God of one's own choosing' symbolize the *victory* of church doctrines according to which the subjective freedom of belief and conscience is indispensable. The individual uses his religious experiences to construct his individual religious shelter, his 'sacred canopy'.[1] The individual makes decisions about his faith, and no longer merely or primarily defers to his origins and/or the religious organization he was born into.

Religious individualization and committed churchgoing are not mutually exclusive but may well reinforce each other. In the tentative search for the connections between a reflective religious belief and a personal relationship with God, individualization may force us to choose, and thus to compare, migrate, or to flirt with heresy, atheism, or conversion. Religious individualism is another term for doubt, the brother of faith whose narratives thread their way through the history of religion from St Augustine's

Confessions – always relevant and now once again highly topical – down to Mother Theresa's confession that she was almost driven to despair by God's silence. Individualization is a *contingent* process and for that reason it is *highly ambivalent* in its consequences.

Thus at the start of the twenty-first century we come back to the question raised by Ernst Troeltsch a century ago, but this time in a new, more radical form: To what extent will a Christianity that has undergone an inner renewal be able to open its mind to the individualization specific to the modern age so as to gain a new religious vitality?

V. Is there a type of tolerance whose goal is not truth but peace?

Assuming that the expectation of secularism - more modernity means less religion - is mistaken, then the question arises: How will a type of inter-religious tolerance become possible, in which brotherly love does not mean mortal enmity? I mean a type of tolerance, whose goal is not truth but peace?

Anyone who asserts truth as the supreme goal of tolerance may be striving for consensus and harmony, but is simultaneously damning all those who do not wish to bow to this "truth". If, on the other hand, the goal of consensus and harmony is regarded as being neither realistic, nor even worth striving for at all, then that inevitably throws up the question: How does - beyond the revealed truths of the religions - a "cosmopolitan tolerance" become possible? And what possible, active contributions can the world religious actors and movements themselves make? Are there models, starting points, in the history of religion which can be drawn on today?

This is indeed the case, as Jan Assmann explains with reference to the model of "double religion" that arose from the European reception of Egyptian religion in the 18th century. "From the news of an Egyptian written culture the 18th century put together the idea of a 'double religion', having the generally accessible exterior aspect of a polytheistic popular religion and, accessible only to initiates, the interior aspect of a philosophical monotheism. While the populace paid homage to the many gods who, it was believed, kept watch over the observance of the laws, rewarding and punishing, and protected the state both internally and externally, the initiates dedicated themselves to the hidden, sole deity, on whose seated statue in the temple at Sais was written, according to Plutarch: 'I am all that was, is and shall be and my veil no mortal could ever uncover.' (...)

This acute awareness of a double membership, as citizen of the state and citizen of the world, Catholic and philosopher, corresponded to the intellectual situation of an age of a first breakthrough of globalisation, [an age] which was learning to think along cosmopolitan lines and to see the peoples of the earth as one community. (...) At the very moment of the birth of the first 'world religions', Judaism and Christianity, based on the profession of the one name alone, there formed as a counter-movement

a world religion in the true sense, which admittedly could never exist as religion, but only as cosmopolitan wisdom as to the secret convergence of all religions."

The idea of a double religion was later taken up by Mahatma Gandhi and turned into world-changing politics. To him double religion means practising a kind of "passing over" into the religion and culture of the others, in order to be capable of seeing the world, including the world of one's own religion, through the eyes of others. Gandhi's biography provides an example of this adventure of "methodological conversion". As a young man Gandhi went to England to study law. The "detour" by way of a heartland of the Christian West didn't alienate him from Hinduism but deepened his understanding and avowal of it. Because it was in England, on visiting a friend, that Gandhi began to read the *Bhagavad Gita*, in an English translation by Edwin Arnold with the title *The Song Celestial.* It was to prove an illuminating experience for him. Only subsequently did he begin an intensive study of the Hindu text in Sanskrit. He was also deeply impressed by Arnold's book *The Light of Asia* which recounted the life of Buddha. So it was through the eyes of his Western friends that he was moved to discover the spiritual wealth of his own Hindu tradition.

The German writer Lessing wrote the play *Nathan the Wise* (1779) in which the question of tolerance between Christianity, Judaism and Islam is of central importance. In the play's famous "Ring Parable" he, in a way, further develops the model of double religion. Lessing profoundly distrusted the dream of One Truth, which the philosophers have dreamed throughout history. Because when it comes to truth it's never just truth alone which is at issue, but much more, that is, *humanity*, or as we would have to say today: *peace*.

Lessing already recognised the conflict between the One Truth and a cosmopolitan acknowledgment of the truths of many religions. But the "wisdom" of Nathan is based on the ruse of pursuing both priorities at the same time - the absolutist truth of religion *and* that of peace.

So no one should be in possession of the *one* ring! That would be the Devil's victory. So two things must exist: the One Ring *and* the many rings, which every son, who inherits this ring from his father, must take to be the One Ring. Every ring, therefore, is the "Only" Ring, which doesn't exist. Consequently no one can ever know which is the True One Ring. But all know that there are many One Rings, and that they possess one of the many One Rings.

If Lessing had been forced to choose between the One Ring and no ring, he would certainly have chosen to have no ring. His Ring Parable was constructed in such a way, that the One Ring, if it ever existed, has been lost forever amidst the indistinguishability of the many One Rings, which the religions of humanity evidently need.

The "problem" of Islam in a "post"-secular Europe is being heatedly debated. Yet the "ruse" of co-operation is being ignored: It is possible - in accordance with the idea of double religion, Gandhi's

"methodological conversion" and Lessing's Ring Parable - to distinguish between *orthodoxy* and *interaction*. This can be observed in action in certain localities, let's say in London and Turin, but above all in the United States, in particular in the big cities. Although there's a great deal of talk of the deadly hostility between religious fundamentalisms, and this talk is repeatedly given mass media currency by spectacular actions, it is evident, that an everyday pragmatism of *inter-religious cosmopolitan common sense* is at work here as the basis of a co-operation which transcends boundaries. And that is because its usefulness convinces all those involved. This is true of educational projects as it is of issues of the care of the poor, the protection of minorities or those relating to (illegal) migrants.

Groups may be intolerant with respect to the theology of the others, but at the same time work creatively together in order to promote shared public concerns - the Ring Parable applied. The endlessly disputing theological guardians of doctrine could learn from this "*Vernunft* of double religion". Is this separation of dogma and practice possible not only locally, but also on the world stage? Do world religions effectively cooperate to look for pragmatic answers to the challenges of world risk society - the danger of nuclear war, climate change, global poverty?

Today the question, to what extent truth can be replaced by peace, is a crucial one for the continued existence of humanity. But is the hope for a Christian-Christian and Christian-Muslim brotherly (and sisterly) love without demonization of the religious other not the most improbable, naive, foolish, absurd thing one can hope for? Or to put it this way: where is the voice of the Pope acknowledging and defending the religious human rights of European Muslims?

---

[1] To cite the famous formula of Peter Berger (1980) to whose book I am also indebted for the following idea.