

“... in favour of secularism, correctly understood.”

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Abstract: *The question of religion in the public sphere is an important issue in many Western countries today that is characterised by disintegration of Christian hegemony (secularization), and by the emergence of religious diversity. The starting point for the discussion in this paper is the new relations between Church and State in Norway, i.e. how the connection between them is considerably weakened in the Norwegian Constitution at the same time as other religions and Christian denominations than Lutheran Christianity are becoming more visible in the public sphere. The new Constitutional wording is a result of a search for possible common values across religious affiliations in a post-Lutheran state. I argue, with references to important strands of thought in the discourse of religion and secularism, for the importance of having a unifying values base and a key strategy for future social integration in today's societies, where religious minorities including the Catholic Church are recognized and supported.*

Keywords: Church, State, religion, multicultural society, secularism, secularization

As of 21st May 2012 The Norwegian Parliament made two important amendments to the Constitution of Norway. First Article 2 was changed from: “All inhabitants of the Realm shall have the right to free exercise of their religion. The Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same” to: “Our values will remain our Christian and humanist heritage. This Constitution shall ensure democracy, a state based on the rule of law and human rights.” Secondly, a new law was introduced that would guarantee that the Norwegian Lutheran Church remains economically supported by the state.¹ From this decision the Evangelical-Lutheran religion no longer counts as the official state religion, and thus Christian hegemony has been formally broken, although the state undertakes to finance and keep up the Norwegian Lutheran Church in the future. There has been surprisingly little public debate about these constitutional changes in Norway. The leadership of the Norwegian Lutheran Church was positive to finally being “head of their own household” and pointed to the fact that the new Constitution is based on “our Christian” heritage, hence there is in their opinion a strong level of continuity between the old and the new formulated Constitution.² There was also a broad political agreement behind these changes among the parties represented in the Norwegian Parliament, more than strictly required for constitutional changes.

¹ *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway* (LOV 1814-05-17 nr 00: Kongeriget Norges Grundlov, given i Rigsforsamlingen paa Eidsvold den 17de Mai 1814). Accessed 16.6, 2014 from <https://www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-Storting/The-Constitution/The-Constitution/>

² <http://kirkeaktuelt.no/ikke-lenger-statskirke/> (Accessed 23.8.2014).

Another important amendment to the Constitution was made on 13th May 2014. From now on Article 110 c states that it is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to respect and ensure international human rights. This article prescribes that specific provision for the implementation of treaties on human rights may be determined by law. This power is used first and foremost through the 1999 Act Relating to the Status of Human Rights in Norwegian Law, which incorporates a number of important treaties on human rights into the domestic legal system on a general basis.³

The amendments of the Norwegian constitution involve a formal secularization and result from prolonged cultural processes of change that Norway, as in much of the western world has undergone, and which has accelerated in the post-war period. This is then a matter of institutional secularization, i.e. the tendency that social institutions are no longer justified by reference to religion.⁴ Still nearly 83% of Norway's populations are members of a Christian denomination, where the Norwegian Lutheran Church is the largest, having about 79% of the population as its members. And despite the fact that only about 7% of the population is active or practicing Christians, i.e. attending masses or other Christian services at least monthly, about one out of three inhabitants confesses Jesus as their personal Saviour and believes in a life after death.⁵ Approximately 3.5% of the population are members of the Roman Catholic Church, mostly immigrants. Even though there have been many Christian immigrants to Norway, both secularization and immigration have changed Norwegian society and contributed to placing the Christian heritage under pressure. In fact most of the immigrants with Christian affiliation are Catholics. But the Lutheran heritage, whose quantitative foremost representative is the Norwegian Lutheran Church, is preserving its special status guaranteed by a separate law. The British sociologist James Beckford refers in a recent essay to the "long and complex intertwining of the monarchy, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, Parliament, and the major institutions of the state such as the armed forces, health services, emergency services, and prison."⁶ Something similar could be said about the Norwegian society, as shown not the least in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Oslo and Utøya 22th of July 2011, when the King and his family, the Prime minister and leading politician all took part in the ceremonies of the Church, along with thousands of common citizens.⁷ The issue concerning religion in the public sphere is complex in Norway, as in most Western countries.⁸

³ <https://www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-Storting/The-Constitution/The-Constitution/> (Accessed 16.6. 2014).

⁴ Bryan Wilson, "Salvation, Secularization and D-moralization," in Richard K. Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) 39-51. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Individualism, the Validation of Faith, and the Social Nature of Religion in Modernity," in Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion* 161-175. Also Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007). Jocelyn Maclure & Charles Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011) 3-4.

⁵ Pål Ketil Botvar, "Endringer i nordmenns religiøse liv," in Pål Ketil Botvar & Ulla Schmidt (eds.), *Religion i dagens Norge. Mellom sekularisering og sakralisering* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2010) 11-24. Also Ulla Schmidt, "Norge: Et religiøst pluralistisk samfunn?," in Botvar & Schmidt (eds) *Religion i dagens Norge* 25-43.

⁶ James A. Beckford, "Public religions and the postsecular: Critical reflections," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 (2012): 1-19.

⁷ See Pål Ketil Botvar, Ida Marie Høegh, & Olaf Aagedal (eds.), *Den offentlige sorgen* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2013).

⁸ See Schmidt, "Norge: Et religiøst pluralistisk samfunn?," in Botvar & Schmidt (eds), *Religion i dagens Norge* 25-43. Lars Trägårdh, "Statist Individualism: On the Culturality of the Nordic Welfare State," in Øystein

The fact that Norway during the past few decades has become an increasingly more multicultural society has led to an ongoing discussion of the place of religious and cultural diversity.⁹ There is a clear tendency for representatives from immigrant communities that account for a significant proportion of Norway's population, particularly in the largest cities, to demand their place in the public sphere on their own religious and cultural terms.¹⁰ The immigrant population accounts for 13 per cent of the Norwegian population as a whole, with backgrounds from more than 200 different countries.¹¹ By immigrant population here is meant persons with two foreign-born parents: first-generation immigrants who have immigrated to Norway, and persons who were born in Norway of two foreign-born parents. Around two thirds of these people have backgrounds from non-Western countries, of which approximately half came to Norway as refugees. In Oslo approximately every fourth inhabitant has an immigrant background. This relatively new diversity has led to a search for common values across cultural affiliations and the new wording in the Norwegian Constitution could be seen as an effort in this search.

In the following I will present sketches from a discussion on the role of religious heritage and tradition in Europe, namely the discussion between the Italian philosopher and statesman Marcello Pera and the German theologian now Pope emeritus Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger). I will also refer to the discussion between Ratzinger and the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, and engage the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's concept of secularism. They all represent distinct positions regarding the role of religion and Christianity in the public sphere in today's societies. The recent published document *Theology Today* from the International Theological Commission points out that the Church "carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times [*signa temporum perscrutandi*] and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task."¹² The German journalist Peter Seevald asks the following question in an interview with Benedict XVI:

If Christianity in the West is losing its power to shape society, who or what is replacing it? A non-religious "civil society" that no longer tolerates any reference to God in its constitution? A radical atheism that vehemently fights against the values of Judeo-Christian culture?¹³

This paper intends to be a small contribution to this discussion from a theological point of view.

Sørensen & B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997) 253-285.

⁹ See Olav Hovdelien, *Dem multikulturelle skolen – hva mener rektorene?* (Kristiansand: Universitetet i Agder, 2011).

¹⁰ This is an international trend, for example, Maclure & Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* 41-52.

¹¹ Statistisk sentralbyrå. Innvandring og innvandrere. Accessed 21.8.2013, from <http://www.ssb.no/befolkning?de=Innvandrere>.

¹² *Theology Today. Perspectives, Principles and Criteria* (Vatican: International Theological Commission, 2011) n.51. *Gaudium et Spes*, n.4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (Accessed 7.8.2014).

¹³ Peter Seevald, "Preface," in Benedict XVI, *The Light of the World. The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times: A Conversation with Peter Seevald* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010).

SECULARIZATION AND PLURALIZATION AS 'SIGNS OF THE TIMES'

Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives. And this will also likely mean that at least in certain milieux, it may be hard to sustain one's faith. There will be people who feel bound to give it up, even though they mourn its loss. This has been a recognizable experience in our societies, at least since the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴

Taylor writes this in his broadly conceived historical presentation in *A Secular Age*. This quotation can be linked to two concepts which together express key features of the developments which many other Western countries have undergone during the post-war period.

Firstly, the quotation can be linked to the concept of *secularization*, a social process whereby religion and religious institutions gradually lose their dominant role in society when it comes to expressing collective beliefs in the broadest sense of the word, defining values, and contributing towards forming the identity of the individual. Taylor links his understanding of secularization to the classical expression of a secularization thesis such as that found in Peter Berger's book *The Sacred Canopy*, first published in 1967.¹⁵ This secularization thesis deals with, among other things, a marginalization of the influence of religion on public institutions in society, which no longer seek religious legitimacy, at the same time as religion is being relegated from the public to the private sphere. In this respect, many western countries have some significant features in common: support for churches and organized religion has weakened considerably during this period, at the same time as religious faith has become a more private and more individualized affair. Secondly, secularization has also occurred at the individual level in that religious understandings of reality now have less significance for a growing number of people. Taylor's term for secularization at society level in *A Secular Age* is *Secularity 1*, while secularization at individual level is referred to as *Secularity 2*.¹⁶ Thus far Taylor's thinking adds nothing new, a fact of which he is of course aware. What is new, as we will soon see, is the category he calls *Secularity 3*.

The quotation by Taylor cited above can also be linked to another cultural analytical concept, namely *cultural pluralization*. According to Taylor, it would be difficult in today's society not to realise that there are alternatives to one's own religious and philosophical conceptions. This applies just as much to fundamental existential questions as to questions of how we justify our choice of values. Our realisation that others think differently to us, when it comes to fundamental existential and value questions, will lead many of us to question our own way of thinking or perhaps make us open and inquisitive about how others view their lives. Viewed in this light, this openness has to do with radical changes in our empirical universe from the 1500s up to the present day.¹⁷ It is this observation which Taylor associates with the concept of *Secularity 3*, and this concept can therefore be said to point to an interesting connection between cultural pluralization and secularization.

¹⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age* 3. Also Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections. Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011) 167-168.

¹⁵ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

¹⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age* 2-20.

¹⁷ See *ibid.* 11.

The title of the book *A Secular Age* can also be directly tied in with the concept of *Secularity 3*, since the awareness that it is fully possible to subscribe to alternative religious and philosophical conceptions is precisely what Taylor has in mind when he says that those of us living in modern Western society are living in a secular age.¹⁸ This also brings us to an essential point in this part of Taylor's philosophy: according to him, this awareness of the existence of alternatives to our world view unites us across religious and philosophical affiliations and represents a form of shared experience to which it is possible for us to subscribe in the search for a common, socially integrated, cultural framework. Or put more simply: an awareness of diversity suggests the necessity to also have something in common. Moreover, this is where his concept of "secularism" fits in.

We have already touched on Taylor's concepts of three different forms of secularity that represent a kind of temporary standstill in the secularization process undergone by the West. It may seem a little confusing, but Taylor has also used the concept of secularism in connection with related topics in other accounts.¹⁹ A recent book by Taylor, written in co-operation with Jocelyn Maclure, provide a clearly reasoned, articulate account of two main principles of secularism: equal respect and freedom of conscience. Here the authors point to the separation of Church and State, and State neutrality vis-à-vis religions as two operative modes of secularism.²⁰ This is in line with Taylor's earlier distinction between the secularism concepts discussed in his paper entitled "Modes of Secularism" from 1999. Here he draws a distinction between two main types of strategy on which to base the concept of secularism. He calls the first of these strategies the *common ground strategy*. This is a strategy that emphasizes peaceful coexistence and political order. Today this can be linked to natural law and to a political doctrine that emphasizes human rights or constitutional rights.²¹ The idea is that these rights could make it possible to agree on normative values in a multicultural society, across religious or philosophical affiliations. Moreover, this could be achieved without this affiliation being regarded as irrelevant for public life and politics and without one particular religion or philosophical tradition becoming dominant. Such a *soft* secularism supports state neutrality with respect to different religions and their practitioners, with an appropriate divide between state and religion/Church.²²

Taylor calls the other strategy the *independent political ethic strategy*. This strategy requires the state to distance itself from all forms of religion and to refrain from giving religious expressions any form of official status.²³ Such secularism could be criticized for representing a world view which in itself is based on a secular understanding of reality. It

¹⁸ The connection to Taylor's theory of secularization is made on the basis that Taylor has stood as a central secularization theorist in the West in recent decades and has published a number of publications in this field. There are of course alternatives to Taylor, such as the theories developed by Habermas and Asad, the latter of whom criticised Taylor for being overly Western-oriented in his understanding of the concept of secularization (see Sindre Bangstad, *Sekularismens ansikter* [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2009] 51-96).

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford (USA): Oxford University Press, 1999) 31-53.

²⁰ Maclure & Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* 9-26.

²¹ Taylor, "Modes of secularism" 33.

²² A similar concept is found in the British sociologist Tariq Modood's theoretical development. Modood's term is "moderate secularism," i.e. a secularism that includes "anti-discrimination measures in areas such as employment, positive action to achieve a full and just political representation of Muslims in various areas of public life" (Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism. A Civic Idea* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007] 85).

²³ Taylor, "Modes of secularism" 33.

would be possible to show a connection between the strategies for establishing the concept of secularism in such a way that those who can be described as philosophical secularists would most probably also want secularism understood as a political doctrine to have an impact on all of society's public institutions. On the other hand, it would be possible to claim that secularism as a political doctrine could be expedient, without any philosophical or ideological consequences being drawn.

MARCELLO PERA: THE WEST MUST NOT FORGET ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Pera and Ratzinger held lectures respectively at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome on 12th May and the Capital Room of the Italian Senate on 13th May 2004 to examine and reflect over, among other things, the situation of Christianity in today's Europe. The lectures given in Rome were published in a book and later translated into English.²⁴ In the paper "Relativism, Christianity, and the West", Pera starts with the notion that the values, in which the Western civilization and the modern science are based, are universal values:

Modern science, for example, is a Western invention that has a universal value. So, too, are liberalism, separation of civil society and state or church, the rule of law, the welfare state, democracy, as well as the "universal" conventions, declarations, and bills of rights. These and other institutions originate in and are characteristic of the West, particularly Western Europe.²⁵

No serious attempt to account for the great moments in history "has ignored the contribution of Christianity—direct or indirect, casual or concomitant, determinant or auxiliary, supportive or critical—thereby confirming that Christianity has been the greatest force in Western history."²⁶ Today however, the idea of western values are under attack from schools of thought that argue that it is just a manifestation of power based cultural arrogance to claim that the western civilization values and the Christian heritage, including the democratic form of governance and human rights thinking, represents universal values. As Pera points out:

According to this way of thinking, if a person maintains that the West *is* better than Islam—or, to be more specific, that democracy is better than theocracy, a liberal constitution better than *sharia*, a parliamentary decision better than a *sura*, a civil society better than an *umma*, a sentence by an independent tribunal better than a *fatwa*, citizenship better than *dhimma*, and so forth—then he or she *ought* to clash with Islam. This is an error of logic that compounds the error of believing that our institutions have no right or basis to be proclaimed as universal.²⁷

As examples of such schools of thought he mentions postmodernism, "weak thought", and deconstructionism. All these have in common that they are relativistic, and Pera uses a lot of space in his argumentation to demonstrate that this is untenable on logical terms. He uses the example of democracy as a universal value that is developed in the West, and points out that today there are many who oppose attempts to export

²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger & Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) xvi. For an extended argument, see Marcello Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies* (New York/London: Encounter Books, 2011).

²⁵ Marcello Pera, "Relativism, Christianity, and the West" 1-2, in Ratzinger & Pera, *Without Roots* 1-50.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 9.

democracy to other parts of the world. "Instead they argue that exporting democracy would amount to imposing one form of life on other equally legitimate, worthy, respectable forms of life, which would make the operation *violent*."²⁸ A self-inflicted political correctness seems crippling to any serious discussion about these things, he says, hence this way of thinking must be rejected.

Pera takes "multiculturalism for granted both as a fact and as a problem."²⁹ He does not believe in political multiculturalism as meaning the recognition of cultural groups' rights. For him this means embracing relativism, and that is just what the West has done. According to Pera the West has failed to recognize both their Christian and rationalistic inheritance. Theologians are thus about to fail their *extra verbum nulla salus*.³⁰ He continues:

Relativism has debilitated our Christian defences and prepared us for surrender. It has convinced us that there is nothing worth fighting for or risking. It does not even object when others attempt to remove the crucifix from our schools (this happened in Italy). It presumes to see itself at the foundations of the secular state while it actually changes (or deconstructs) into a secular state religion of the state that prohibits Muslim girls in a European country from wearing the *hijab* to school (this happened in France). It shirks the educational burden of true integration, and one fine day it decides to separate these same boys and girls of Islamic faith from other boys and girls in a scholastic ghetto (this also happened in Italy).³¹

According to Pera it is high time that we "start rubbing our eyes and wake up."³²

It is not entirely clear what Pera means by "true integration", but his argumentation displays a distinctly different view on contemporary Western societies than Taylor's view.³³ Pera's argument is ethnocentric. "Better': Are we allowed to use that word?", Pera asks polemically in his book *Why we should call ourselves Christians*. For him "western values" are philosophically better values than those found in non-western cultures. That is why they should be promoted. Everyone will benefit from this.

The sketchy presentation of Pera's reasoning given here does not do total justice to his thought and philosophical arguments, but his political view is perhaps easier to grasp. For Pera Christianity is the common heritage and tradition in Europe, and should be defended both against relativism in today's multicultural European societies, and the influence of other religions, in particularly Islam. For Pera this is a battle to re-establish a lost Christian cultural hegemony. To sum up: Pera's respect for Christianity is a respect for Christian values and culture, it is recognition that any successful culture must have an

²⁸ Ibid. 4.

²⁹ Marcello Pera, "Multiculturalism and the Open Society," Popper Memorial Lecture, London School of Economics, 10 February 2004. Accessed 7.8.2014 from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/publicEvents/pdf/20040210Pera.pdf>. See also Pera, *Why we should call ourselves Christians* 119-125.

³⁰ Pera, "Relativism, Christianity, and the West" 25. Also Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004). See also Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, "Zur Mission kirchlicher Hochschuleinrichtungen," in Elżbieta Szczurko et al (Hrsg./eds.), *Logos et Musica. In Honorem Summi Romani Pontificis Benedicti XVI* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012) 19-29.

³¹ Pera, "Relativism, Christianity, and the West" 38.

³² Ibid. 49.

³³ See Pera, "Multiculturalism and the Open Society" 5-7.

absolute moral core, and he sees Christianity as the only possible core for a European identity. To quote Pera's critique of "rainbow societies," "Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that such societies are stable and peaceful."³⁴

JOSEPH RATZINGER: WE ARE IN FAVOUR OF SECULARISM, CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD

Ratzinger's paper in response to Marcello Pera had the title "The Spiritual Roots of Europe: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."³⁵ He starts with the questions "What is the true definition of Europe? Where does Europe begin, and where does it end?" His own answer is that Europe is a cultural and historical concept rather than geographic. But, he adds, today something is missing in Europe:

At the hour of its greatest success, Europe seems hallow, as if it were internally paralysed by a failure of its circulatory system that is endangering its life, subjecting it to transplants that erase its identity. At the same time as its sustaining spiritual forces have collapsed, a growing decline in its ethnicity is also taking place.³⁶

No doubt, this quote could also have been Pera's. But even if they agree about the illness, they don't agree so much about the cure and the role of Christianity and the Church in this. Ratzinger argues that Christians need to accept that they are a minority, and with reference to the British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee, start being "creative minorities" in today's European culture:

Today state churches throughout the world are characterized by their fatigue. Moral force—the foundation on which to build—does not emanate from either the religious bodies subservient to the state or from the state itself.³⁷

The Church should not try to retain lost privileges in the public sphere, and its cultural hegemony. In the question of values, Ratzinger argues that the solution for the West is to re-join secular rationality with its religious heritage in a respectful dialogue.³⁸ Therefore he looks to the American model of secularism, with its separation between Church and state. "We are in favour of secularism, correctly understood", Ratzinger said in an interview with the French journal *Le Figaro*.³⁹

Obviously Ratzinger does not want to establish a form of theocratic government. He looks towards the oldest tradition, to Christianity as it was handed down through the Apostles Peter and Paul. This implies, according to him, a healthy approach to the state, without any attempt of "deifying" the Church's role. On the other hand, this way of thinking does not imply that the government should disregard revealed moral truths. The role of the state is not only to be an instrument of power, it should also have as its task to ensure citizens' rights and welfare for all, Ratzinger points out. He refers to the meeting

³⁴ Ibid. 4.

³⁵ Joseph Ratzinger "The Spiritual Roots of Europe: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in Ratzinger & Pera, *Without Roots* 51-80.

³⁶ Ratzinger, "The Spiritual Roots of Europe" 66.

³⁷ Ratzinger, "The Spiritual Roots of Europe" 69-70.

³⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, "That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State" 69, in Jürgen Habermas & Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization. On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) 53-80.

³⁹ Quoted from Pera, "Relativism, Christianity, and the West" 96.

between Jesus and the Roman state power as described in the New Testament, where Jesus acknowledged state power and Pontius Pilate, but at the same time also put limits on its authority. That is how the relationship between Church and state power should be.⁴⁰

In the discussion with Habermas in Munich in 2004, Ratzinger points out that science and reason alone have proved insufficient as an ethical foundation for society. Ratzinger argues in the essay “That Which Holds the World Together The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State” that the West needs to anchor its values in Christianity.⁴¹ Ratzinger’s starting point is that it is a characteristic feature of today’s societies that they are subject to rapid change, and that the process of globalization affects an ever greater degree of inter-dependence. Modern technology offers the potential for hitherto unknown ways of positive creation, as well as destruction. This, as he says, gives rise in different cultures to the need for discovering an ethical basis which moves co-existence in the right direction and facilitates the formulation of a common legal structure which can restrict and regulate the exercise of power.⁴² For example, science and reason have not been able to offer adequate protection for the weakest in society. That is why a binding, normative value-basis, illumined by certain principles, is indispensable in order to maintain a society which is both free and good. Both reason and genuinely authentic religious belief are necessary for the maintenance of the moral bulwark of society, according to Ratzinger. Reason and science alone will not suffice. Scientific technocrats need a corrective.

So where might this pre-political corrective be found? Ratzinger argues that the solution for the West is to join together secular rationality with its religious heritage in dialogue, but in other parts of the world it may be necessary to find other underlying principles. He writes:

Today, we ought perhaps to amplify the doctrine of human rights with a doctrine of human obligations and of human limitations. This could help us to grasp anew the relevance of the question of whether there might exist a rationality of nature and, hence, a rational law for man and for his existence in the world. And this dialogue would necessarily be intercultural today, both in its structure and in its interpretation. For Christians, this dialogue would speak of the creation and the Creator. In the Indian world, this would correspond to the concept of “dharma”, the inner law that regulates all Being; in the Chinese tradition, it would correspond to the idea of the structures ordained by heaven.⁴³

Ratzinger is, in other words, keenly aware of the necessity of being alert to the intercultural dimension which must be included, if we are to discuss the foundational principles for human existence today. Such a discussion can take neither Christianity nor the Western tradition of rationality as its exclusive reference point, even if both of these world views consider themselves universal. These two traditions must reconcile themselves to the fact that they are acknowledged as valid only by parts of the human population. Western culture must retain its anchoring in Christian foundational values.

⁴⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006) 57-60. Also J. Christopher Paskewich, “Liberalism Ex Nihilo. Joseph Ratzinger on Modern Secular Politics,” *Politics* 28 (2008): 169–176 at 172.

⁴¹ Ratzinger, “That Which Holds the World Together.”

⁴² *Ibid.* 55.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 71-72.

There must be an on-going dialogue about what values should form the basis for society between the secular position, such as represented by Habermas, and Christian thinking, as expressed for instance in the concept of natural law. However, with regard to non-Western cultures, Ratzinger seems to be of the opinion that these should develop with close attention to the great religious traditions on which they were originally founded. He expresses these thoughts in greater detail later in the paper:

It is important that both great components of the Western culture learn to *listen* and to accept a genuine relatedness to these other cultures, too. It is important to include the other cultures in the attempt at a polyphonic relatedness, in which they themselves are receptive to the essential complementarity of reason and faith, so that a universal process of purifications (in the plural!) can proceed. Ultimately, the essential values and norms that are in some way known or sensed by all men will take on a new brightness in such a process, so that that which holds the world together can once again become an effective force in mankind.⁴⁴

There are common values shared by all religions, including Christianity, and society ought to be founded upon these values, in Ratzinger's opinion. Human rights should be upheld because they represent true values. Thus a considerable degree of consensus has been reached between the two speakers in Munich. They both enunciate the concern that religious and secular rationalities must enter into a necessary and mutual process of dialogue, with a view to learning from each other. This is the only way humankind can be protected from the destructive potential in a separation of religious belief and scientific faith in rationality. It is only natural that a Catholic thinker such as Ratzinger should emphasise the role of reason, with its scientific and technological manifestations, whilst maintaining that it must always be held in check by a system of values.

Herein lays an implicit rejection of the thought that scientific pursuit should be exempt from the world of values, a position which was championed a few generations ago in the aftermath of Weber, but which no longer is considered valid. This way of thinking has not been able to withstand the criticism of the idea of a value-free realm levelled at it by Habermas and his fellow philosophers of the Frankfurt school. The rejection of the positivist ideal for scientific pursuit has been too conclusive. Thankfully, fewer social scientists today remain unconvinced that in order to claim that something is true, it must appear to someone and something, in concrete contexts. Perception of reality is not something external, something additional to "facts", but is rather something which is there from the beginning as knowledge develops.

Crucial for Ratzinger's view on secularization and relativism is the conviction that truth (*Logos*) is accessible to us not only through revelation, but also through reason, which enables us to know the truth. Revelation needs reason as much as reason needs revelation. Truth is what unites people in society, what gives meaning and the source of joy.⁴⁵ Another way of expressing this is by calling Christianity a *logos*-religion. In the lecture given in Italian in the convent of Saint Scholastica in Subiaco, Italy, the day before

⁴⁴ Ibid. 79-80.

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance* 242. Also Pablo Blanco Sarto, "Logos and Dia-Logos: Faith, Reason, (and Love) According to Joseph Ratzinger," *Anglican Theological Review* 92:3 (2010): 499-509; Joseph Lam Cong Quay, "Porta Fidei: The Year of Faith: The Faith of Joseph Ratzinger," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 20.1 (2013): 60-70.

Pope John Paul II died, Ratzinger/Benedict XVI explained this very central part of his theology in a concise way:

From the beginning, Christianity has understood itself as the religion of the *Logos*, as the religion according to reason ... It has always defined men, all men without distinction, as creatures and images of God, proclaiming for them ... the same dignity. In this connection, the Enlightenment is of Christian origin and it is no accident that it was born precisely and exclusively in the realm of the Christian faith ... It was and is the merit of the Enlightenment to have again proposed these original values of Christianity and of having given back to reason its own voice ... Today, this should be precisely [Christianity's] philosophical strength, in so far as the problem is whether the world comes from the irrational, and reason is not other than a 'sub-product,' on occasion even harmful of its development—or whether the world comes from reason, and is, as a consequence, its criterion and goal ... In the so necessary dialogue between secularists and Catholics, we Christians must be very careful to remain faithful to this fundamental line: to live a faith that comes from the *Logos*, from creative reason, and that, because of this, is also open to all that is truly rational.⁴⁶

At the same time, the idea that it is possible to relate the Church to the present situation without rejecting the doctrines of the Church is central to Ratzinger's political philosophy. His main interest has always been to criticize the tendency towards relativism and the modern propensity to be progressive without taking into account the human costs this entails. For Ratzinger, relativism is a political problem that leads to an undermining of human dignity. He writes:

the values of human dignity, freedom, equality, and solidarity should be inscribed in the European Constitution alongside the fundamental principles of democracy and rule of law. The image of man, the moral option, enshrined in these rights should not be taken for granted. It should instead be recognized as crucial to European identity.⁴⁷

Ratzinger's answer is therefore that western culture must retain its anchoring in Christian foundational values, but without wanting to dominate this culture in a political way. The ideal is an on-going dialogue about what values should form the basis for society between representatives of different positions, as expressed in the concept of natural law. There are common values shared by all religions, and society ought to be founded upon these values. Human rights should be upheld because they represent true values. According to Ratzinger, everyone will benefit from this, regardless of religious or secular affiliation. As he later pointed out in the office as Pope: "Today especially the Pope is obliged to stand up for human rights everywhere—as an intrinsic consequence of his belief that man is made in God's image and has a divine calling."⁴⁸

DIALOGUES OF "SOLIDARITY AND RESPECTFUL AFFECTION"

The changes of the Norwegian Constitution in 2012 and 2014 was the result of larger social trends, as it would have been difficult and perhaps undesirable, arguably for democratic reasons, to maintain the old Constitution with a state Church in a secularized society characterised by religious and cultural diversity, combined with religious

⁴⁶ Benedict XVI "Christianity: 'The Religion According to Reason'," 2005. Accessed 11.8.2014 from <http://www.webcitation.org/62Dl6ltQP>.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, "The Spiritual Roots of Europe" 76.

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, *The Light of the World* 20.

privatizing and low Church attendance. The new §2 in the Constitution, will in practice probably be understood to the effect that the state should be based on the values that are common to the abovementioned Christian and humanistic traditions as long as these comply with human rights. Religious freedom is both a human right of most importance and a central part of the teaching of the Catholic Church today, as expressed in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965):⁴⁹

This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as these dignities is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. (2) This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.

Based on the premise that Norwegian society is marked by secularization and pluralization, active Christians, including practicing Catholics, constitute religious minorities whom both need and are entitled to recognition and protection in the form of religious freedom. In the Norwegian context, freedom of religion should follow from the government's emphasis on the human rights, which also are implemented in Norwegian law. Clearly the Catholic Church also benefits from this emphasis on religious freedom.

In Taylor's typology of secularisms, he draws a distinction between two types of secularism: The "common ground secularism" that emphasizes peaceful coexistence and political order (*soft secularism*).⁵⁰ Today this can be linked to natural law and to a political doctrine that emphasizes human rights or constitutional rights. The idea is that these rights could make it possible to agree on normative values in a multicultural society, across religious or philosophical affiliations. Such secularism supports state neutrality with respect to different religions and their practitioners, with an appropriate divide between state and religion/Church. This project avoids the danger that any one particular religious tradition comes to occupy a dominating place.⁵¹ It goes without saying that when Ratzinger is in favour of secularism, correctly understood, this is the type of secularism he is talking about. The "independent political ethic secularism" requires the state to distance itself from all forms of religion and to refrain from giving religious expressions any form of official status (*hard secularism*). This could lead to the risk of secularism becoming the dominant philosophical tradition at the expense of others, as it presupposes that the state distances itself from all forms of religion, including Christianity, and refuses to grant religious expressions any form of official status within the wider society. This would be unacceptable from the perspective of human rights, since it would be intolerant of other religious and philosophical traditions than one specific secular philosophical tradition, and imply a bad situation for all religious minorities. As Taylor points out: "The state can be neither Christian nor Muslim nor Jewish, but at the same time it should also be neither

⁴⁹ *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965): http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html. Accessed 19.08.2013.

⁵⁰ Taylor, "Modes of Secularism" 33.

⁵¹ See Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections* 309.

Marxist nor Kantian nor Utilitarian.”⁵² Ratzinger also warns against “hard secularism”: “It is the clash of two spiritual worlds, the world of faith and the world of secularism ... This great struggle pervades the whole world today.”⁵³

If we try to apply some of the ideas from the referred discussions to Norwegian conditions, it appears that they point to two distinctly different ways of thinking about Christianity as a values base for today’s society. Pera and Ratzinger are, however, keen to defend the Christian heritage, but on different terms. Pera advocates a kind of cultural re-Christianisation program, while the key concern of Ratzinger is to identify unifying values in an era of pluralism. If we take for granted that the kind of re-Christianisation program Pera is referring to as desirable, it will be a long shot in a country like Norway, where the monthly Church attendance is approximately 7%, and where a privatized personal form of Christianity as something that is not talked about in public is the norm. It is also worth reminding of what Ratzinger/Benedict XVI made clear in his speech to the German Bundestag on 22 September 2011,⁵⁴ referring to the fact that “Christianity never has proposed a revealed law to the State and to society, that is to say a juridical order derived from revelation. Instead, it has pointed to nature and reason as the true sources of law – and to the harmony of objective and subjective reason, which naturally presupposes that both spheres are rooted in the creative reason of God.”⁵⁵

Ratzinger suggestion implies that Christian and other values should be held together and he defends religious freedom as a basic value. This attitude of dialogue can be said to be a natural continuation of the premises laid down by the Second Vatican Council. The Council supported the notion of human rights, where the position of the Church in society is rooted in the right to freedom of religion as a central human right. Furthermore, the Council encouraged dialogue and co-operation with all men of “good will.” Dialogue is not just about convincing the other party, it is also about learning to know each other and learning to live in the same society in “solidarity and respectful affection.”⁵⁶ This implies Church support for what Taylor calls “common ground secularism.” It is a core concept in Catholic thought on human societies that it is possible for the Church to open itself to today’s situation, without rejecting received faith and doctrine, but also to support religious freedom.

A key component of Ratzinger thought is that Christianity’s basic values can also be found in other cultures’ values, and that dialogues across cultural affiliations are possible. In addition, he emphasizes that it is necessary to lay weight on both secular rationality and science as sources of knowledge needed to live in today’s society. Even if Pera is right when he points out that “the only thing worse than living without roots is struggling to get by without a future”,⁵⁷ it does not imply that Christianity should strive to become a

⁵² Ibid. 321.

⁵³ Benedict XVI, *The Light of the World* 57. Also Maclure and Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* 14.

⁵⁴ Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) “The Listening Heart. Reflections on the foundations of law,” 2011. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin_en.html. Accessed 1.08.2013.

⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011).

⁵⁶ See *Theology Today*, 1. See also Taylor’s reference to the Rawlsian concept of “overlapping consensus” in Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections* 105.

⁵⁷ Marcello Pera, “Foreword,” xii, in Joseph Ratzinger & Marcello Pera, *Without Roots*.

politically dominant force in society.⁵⁸ There is no simple formula to be made for the interaction between rationality based on handed down religion and modern secular rationality, but criticism must be raised against a potentially arrogant ideologically based scientism, leading to hard secularism. Even Habermas has defended religion as an alternative rationality which should be respected and listened to in the public debate, as long as the religious arguments are “translated” into a secular language.⁵⁹ This would certainly be worth reminding the hard secularists in Norway and elsewhere.

Hopefully the amendments of the Norwegian Constitution from 2012 and 2014 and its implementation on human rights and religious freedom, will give space for both the religious and the secular in the future. Although it is unlikely that the Norwegian model, with its relatively strong state control, and its social democratic Nordic model, would have universal application, it could serve as an interesting case for further discussion on the role of the modern liberal democratic state in social integration, and the role of religion and the Christian heritage and tradition has in this situation.⁶⁰

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⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, *The Light of the World* 9. Also Maclure and Taylor, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience* 2.

⁵⁹ Jürgen Habermas, “Pre-political Foundations of the Democratic Constitutional State?” in Habermas and Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization*. See also Virgil Nemoianu, “The Church and the secular establishment. A philosophical dialog between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas,” *Logos* 2 (2006): 16-42 at 17. Olav Hovdelien, “Post-Secular Consensus? On the Munich-dialogue between Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 18.2 (2011): 107-16.

⁶⁰ I would like to thank two anonymous peer-reviewers for their constructive comments on this essay.