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Introduction: Citizenship, Religion and Moral Values

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Most academic and specialist books deal with either citizenship or religion alone. Recently, some authors have tried to bring the two aspects together (e.g. Nyhagen and Halsaa 2016). Citizenship and religion may combine in different ways. They may cooperate, each one strengthening the other; positively, when the members of a church find in their religion good reasons for taking care of their fellow citizens; negatively, when they make an alliance against a third party, for instance the alliance between the church and the army in the colonisation process. They also may fight

Tom Storrie was deceased at the time of publication.

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each other and citizens may have good reasons to believe churches are taking an excessive part in the affairs of the city. Should we consider secularism as being often at risk to act religiously (Baubérot 2012) their quarrel is in a way an extension of religion wars.

The authors of this book have met regularly for a couple of years, confronting how the issues related to citizenship and religion are taken into account in their respective countries. A first step was a publication in French (Storrie and Blanc 2018). Now this book examines the relationship between these two key social issues, as what Tom Storrie calls a single ‘double problematic’ (meaning the unification of two previously autonomous problematics). This problematic is ever more burning in today’s world. It has become profoundly important for the wellbeing as well as the security of all peoples across the world. Far from witnessing the predicted ‘death’ of religion in a post-modern world, the authors observe the ‘return’ of religion to centre stage in recent decades.

In the first stage, each of the six co-authors wrote a chapter included in Part I. Intended as a personal account, these chapters present how every author understands the relationship between citizenship and religion in the light of his/her personal experience over time with his/her own particular historical and cultural background. Part I is intended to establish a basis of mutual understanding among the co-authors, from which each may then undertake to write a second chapter (in Part II), allowing everyone to take issue with this or that point of view put forward by another or others.

In the second stage, the co-authors had to rethink their chapters in the light of all previous contributions and to produce either a chapter on a new issue (such as the training of future Islam teachers in German state schools, ‘Supermuslim’ women in Algeria etc.) or an updated and more developed version of their initial thoughts. The contributors hope the readers will join them in this conversation and enlarge it.

The analytical distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘religiosity’ is very useful here. A religion is an institution with its rules of entrance and exclusion; linguists suggest two Latin origins: religare, meaning to bind together, and relegere, meaning to read again and/or to re-interpret. Religiosity is the subjective feeling of a personal dialogue with a supra human being. What is more, many adherents of different religions across
the world appear to have an increasingly fundamentalist and intolerant outlook, which has strongly contributed to outbreaks of deadly violence, which may now explode at any time or place in our global village.

Tzvetan Todorov describes the trap in which we all are ensnared: The West and the predominantly Islamic countries are often seen as standing cruelly opposed to each other. Western fears are pitted against the resentments and anger of the Other:

Fear of the barbarian is what risks turning us into barbarians. The evil that we do can far outdo that which we feared at the start. History teaches that the remedy can be worse than the evil itself. [...] The United States incarnates in exemplary fashion this reaction following the attacks of 11th September 2001 either by intervention directly or by encouraging intervention in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon. (Todorov 2010)

Overcoming this reciprocal fear is a major challenge. In the Oxford Research Group, Abbott et al. (2007) rightly argue: ‘(i) Terrorism is not the greatest threat in the world. (ii) The “war on terror” is failing and actually increasing the likelihood of more terrorist attacks. (iii) Climate change is a major security concern; fortunately, we have the means to address it, but it is an urgent issue.’ These three issues do not concern national states only but also the citizenry as a whole.

Citizenship takes two forms, which are complementary to some extent: either a statutory citizenship, formally granted by the state, or an active citizenship, inviting citizens to play their part and to take care collectively of their common good. In this sense, citizens become the main actors committed to sustainable development preparing a better future for both the planet and humanity. An enlarged democracy is a necessary precondition (Ben Rhomdane 2007). However, when they use the rhetoric of ‘active citizenship’, governments tend to cover their own weaknesses:

[UK Prime Minister] Thatcher’s ‘active citizen’ is based on the idea that an individual has obligations rather than rights and that the vessel for the exercise of these obligations is civil society rather than the state or welfare state. [...] Margaret Thatcher simply proposed to reduce the role of the state. (Espiet-Kilty 2016)
For her, an ‘active citizen’ is an individual alone and not a member of a citizenry. He/she practices charity with the poor, that is, a form of solidarity between unequal partners and without reciprocity (Simmel [1908] 1999). Similarly in France, during the 2020 confinement period, President Macron invoked active citizenship for solving problems created by irrelevant state policies against coronavirus.

1 Our Struggles with Citizenship, Religion and Secularism

The aim is to picture the common ground among the group, taking into account the irreducible disagreements at the same time. It appears all of the co-authors were educated in religion, either Catholic, Protestant or Muslim. However, they all are now against religious sectarianism and open to a tolerant secularism. The initial instruction received different interpretations: some co-authors put the emphasis on their family education, others on the role of peer groups when they were teenagers and/or young adults and others on the historical context in their respective countries.

Tom Storrie was an educationist. He presents two events that played an important part in his conceptualisation of the relationship between citizenship and religion: one is positive, the end of the murderous religious war between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; the other is negative, the Salman Rushdie Affair. In Northern Ireland, the 2007 Peace Treaty was the opportunity to create a government including the ex-enemies and was able to develop a fruitful cooperation. By the end of the 1980s, the Salman Rushdie Affair presents a good example of ‘a single double problematic’: how was an Iranian Ayatollah (both a religious and a political leader) able to condemn to death a British writer without any fair judgement, simply for being ironic and critical about Islam? Here, the religious fully absorbs the political, raising the issue of the links and the borders between citizenship and religion.

In France, both Maurice Blanc and Bruno Michon received a Catholic education. They are sociologists and became unbelievers (or atheists, the
distinction is very unclear) when they were young adults. For the first one, the youth rebellion in May 1968 was a catalyst. For the second, it was the election for the first time of a Socialist President in France, François Mitterrand, in 1981. France claims to treat every religion on an equal footing. However, as in George Orwell’s *Animal farm*, ‘some religions are more equal than others’! Secularism takes many forms and is ambiguous: a first form is against any religion, the truth coming from science and not from religion; an opposite form is tolerant towards every religion: it is a private matter and the best the state can do is to keep hands off and not to interfere. A new form of secularism recently emerged: tolerance with old established Christian religions but not with Islam, presumed culturally too different for being acceptable (Baubérot 2012). Such a ‘secularism’ also appeared in the United Kingdom and in Germany.

Cherifa Bouatta is a clinical psychologist in Algeria, a country which—after its Independence War which ended in 1962—is formally a Democratic and People’s Republic. But the alliance between Government and Islamic Conservatives is catastrophic for women. The Family Code contradicts the democratic principles mentioned in the Constitution and women remain ‘second class citizens’. Algerian feminists used to be, and still are, victims of many discriminations. The word *feminist* is controversial and often rejected, as coming from Western countries. The women’s movement includes both feminist (secular) and feminine (Islamic) groups; they may sometimes work together, but often against each other. However, women are very active in the current movement against the military regime (called *Hirak* in Arabic) and some hope appears.

Bilal Shafei is a Palestinian linguist who lived in Jordan during his childhood. He describes in a very sensitive way how his Palestinian identity suffered from his Jordanian status: his formal citizenship was far from his affective citizenship. Now, although Palestine is a country with a great religious diversity and a formally secular government, Shafei shows how—as in Algeria—a conservative Islam remains very influential, fuelled by the impact of Israeli occupation.

Julia Droeber is an anthropologist. She has a Catholic father and a Protestant mother; this duality produced for her many tensions as a young child in German cities and schools. As a young anthropologist, she lived for long periods in different countries around the world. As a
foreigner coming alone, she felt isolated and entered local religious communities, either Protestant or Orthodox, in order to meet people and be acquainted with them. Affiliation into a religious community is a driving force in the socialisation process into a local community.

For Storrie, ‘religions have their legitimate place in the public domain (as does any other social association) but within the framework of the social state’. Every author of this book supports this global view, offering his/her own answer, according to his/her specific understanding.

2 Is Religion a Resource or a Barrier for Active Citizenship?

The relationship between citizenship and religion is rooted in history and its transformation is a very slow process. The famous image of Karl Marx [1852] presenting the revolution as a mole is relevant here: ‘we recognize our old friend, our old mole, who knows so well how to work underground, suddenly to appear: the revolution’. The mole makes a subterranean destruction of the roots of the capitalist system before surfacing at an unexpected place and time. A revolution needs a long preparation and a longer follow-up. It is very true in the field of ‘citizenship and religion’: cultural changes have a long temporality. Using Orwell’s words again, a ‘New Speak’ may emerge accompanied by cosmetic changes in practice. A radically new rhetoric may go along with a hidden conservatism. In a similar way, when modernity fails, traditional practices may re-appear. Examples coming from the religious field in Palestine, Algeria and the European Union are analysed here.

Storrie shows how, at the beginning, the Protestant Reformation was emancipatory in England and Scotland: it introduced freedom of conscience and democracy. However, the institutionalisation of the Reform gave birth to a new theocratic power as rigid as the Catholic one. Improvements are always fragile and provisional. Storrie is critical of the culture of institutions (churches included): they develop a strong inertia and tend to resist change. He believes in the value of 'prophetic' actions
by individual citizens, such as whistle-blowers, raising the issue of individual versus collective citizenship.

In his Palestinian university, Shafei tries to develop a critical thinking among his students. When he presents them with the articles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, everyone agrees with their relevance and admits freedom of religion as a fundamental value. However, when the question becomes more concrete: ‘Is a Muslim free to adopt another religion?’ most students answer ‘No’: a non-Muslim is free to become Muslim, but not the reverse! Because of the historical influence of either Britain or France in the ‘Middle East’, Shafei shows how the concepts of citizenship and religion are mainly translations from French (also from English) into Arabic, but with religious connotations that alter their meaning. The issue of translation is a major one, in the field of everyday life and not simply in international conferences.

Today, Algeria is going through a major political and social crisis and its outcome is unpredictable. As said earlier, Algerian women’s movements disagree between political feminists claiming for equal rights and ‘Islamic feminists’ who claim a female-friendly interpretation of the Koran. However, a new Islamic women’s group is emerging with unexpected claims: a few Algerian women advocate a return to a ‘pure native Islam’ expressed by women and against male domination, but sexist and conservative at the same time. Bouatta calls them ‘Supermuslim women’, using the psychoanalytical concept of ‘Supermuslim’ created in France by Fethi Benslama (2016). For him, a ‘Supermuslim’ is mainly a young male leaving France in order to experience a full implementation of Islamic values, including fighting against the Syrian dictatorship as a form of solidarity with his Muslim brothers. Bouatta transplants this concept in Algeria to young females seeking a return to a pure original Islam. In doing so, she changes the original meaning of this concept: she emphasises the implementation of Islamic values and not the call to a ‘holy war’. For her, ‘Supermuslim women’ are no real ‘Islamic feminists’: they reject the Islam practiced today in Algeria as no true Islam because many elements of pre-Islamic religions are still incorporated.1 Their claim for ‘Islamic purification’ is rigorous, conservative and out of reach, but they

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1 For historians of religion, such a religious mixing is permanent.
try to impose it onto their families and friends and are sometimes suc-
cessful. Adversely, many women are involved in the current protest move-
ment emerging from civil society, called Hirak in Arabic. It fuels hopes
for a better future, with more equality and justice between Algerian men
and women. However, in May 2020, the military regime still resists to
gender equality, many male opponents also, and ‘SuperMuslim’ women
as well; the future is uncertain.

Michon wrote his doctoral dissertation on the representations of
democracy and religion among French and German teenagers. He pres-
ents here the main results, which are interesting and unexpected, with a
focus on the French side. He found an opposition between ‘Republicans’
and ‘Democrats’ (unrelated to the political parties in the United States);
Since the French Revolution, the Republican pole considers the central
state as responsible for the emancipation of all its citizens from any form
of particularism. The distinction between a Republican and a Democratic
pole is recent and takes into account the recognition of cultural diversity,
which is an impossible challenge for the monolithic and centralist tradi-
tional Republican model. However, there is no significant difference
between young Muslims and other young people on most issues. When
the values of the peer group differ from family values, most teenagers
tend to adopt the peer group (and host society) values, but of course not
everyone does.

Blanc looks first at the radicalisation process in France and in Europe.
Jihadism often appears as coming from foreign and barbarous countries.
However, an important part of ‘hard-core Jihadists’ are new converts
coming from local middle classes and not from a far country. Dealing
with Jihadists is complex. Prisons appear as ‘schools of crime’; are they
also becoming ‘schools of Jihadism’? In jails, should Jihadists be dispersed
among other prisoners? Or isolated together in specific units? Institutional
(top down) answers are unfitting and cooperation with civil society (bot-
tom up) is a necessity for long-term solutions.

Droeber is a German and Christian anthropologist. She is in the para-
doxical situation of teaching Islamic theology to future teachers of Islam
in German state schools in a complex political context. On the one hand,
the far right has an increasing influence and is strongly against the
‘invasion’ of ‘Christian Germany’ by Islam. On the other hand, in most Länder (region-state), the Department of Education wants to introduce the teaching of Islam in state schools in order to reduce the influence of a traditionalist Islam taught (in Arabic or in Turkish) by imams paid by the Embassies of Saudi Arabia or Turkey. In Germany (also in France), an ongoing debate is about the content and meaning of religious education: is it a specific education for the believers of each religion or a global approach of religions for believers and non-believers as well? In the United Kingdom, religious education is for all, regardless of the religious or ideological background of the students (except for denominational schools, of course). Droeber believes a global approach towards religions is a long-term aim. In Muslim families living in Germany, most children have a rather sketchy knowledge of Islamic precepts; therefore, a first stage is required: they need a better knowledge of their own religion before confronting it with others.

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