IT'S ALL ABOUT IDENTITY, STUPID

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AFTER TWO CENTURIES OF ENLIGHTENMENT
AND THE MORE RECENT PROGRESS OF
SECULARISM, RELIGION HAS AGAIN REARED
ITS HEAD AS ONE OF THE MORE
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN EUROPE

Since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 established the EEC and initiated the ongoing process of European integration, Western European societies have undergone a rapid, drastic and seemingly irreversible process of secularisation. In this respect, one can talk of the emergence of a post-Christian Europe. At the same time, the process of European integration, the eastward expansion of the European Union and the drafting of a European constitution have triggered fundamental questions concerning European identity and the role of Christianity in that identity. What constitutes ‘Europe’? How and where should one draw the external territorial and the internal cultural boundaries of Europe? The most controversial and anxiety-producing issues, which are rarely confronted openly, are the potential integration of Turkey and the potential integration of non-European immigrants, who in most European countries happen to be overwhelmingly Muslim. It is the interrelation between these phenomena that I would like to explore.

The progressive, though highly uneven, secularisation of Europe is an undeniable social fact. An increasing majority of the European population has ceased to participate in traditional religious practices, at least on a regular basis, while still maintaining relatively high levels of private individual religious beliefs. In this respect, one should perhaps talk of the unchurching of the European population and of religious individualisation, rather than of secularisation. Grace Davie has characterised this general European situation as ‘believing without belonging’. At the same time, however, large numbers of Europeans, even in the most secular countries, still identify themselves as

Poland 1991: celebrating the visit of Polish Pope John Paul II. Credit: Rex Features
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‘Christian’: ‘belonging without believing’, as Danièle Hervieu-Léger puts it. ‘Secular’ and ‘Christian’ cultural identities are intertwined in complex and rarely verbalised modes among most Europeans.

The most interesting issue sociologically is not the fact of progressive religious decline among the European population, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularisation paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a ‘secularist’ self-understanding that interprets the decline as ‘normal’ and ‘progressive’, that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a ‘modern’ and ‘enlightened’ European. It is this ‘secular’ identity shared by European elites and ordinary people alike that paradoxically turns ‘religion’ and the barely submerged Christian European identity into a thorny and perplexing issue when it comes to delimiting the external geographic boundaries and to defining the internal cultural identity of a European Union.

Four ongoing controversial debates – the role of Catholic Poland, the incorporation of Turkey, the integration of non-European immigrants and the place of God or of the Christian heritage in the text of the new European constitution – illustrate the way in which religion has become a perplexing issue in the constitution of ‘Europe’.

The fact that Catholic Poland is ‘re-joining Europe’ at a time when Western Europe is forsaking its Christian civilisational identity has produced a perplexing situation for Catholic Poles and secular Europeans alike. Throughout the communist era, Polish Catholicism went through an extraordinary revival at the very same time that Western European societies were undergoing a drastic process of secularisation. The reintegration of Catholic Poland into secular Europe can be viewed therefore as ‘a difficult challenge’ and/or as ‘a great apostolic assignment’. Anticipating the threat of secularisation, the integralist sectors of Polish Catholicism have adopted a negative attitude towards European integration. Exhorted by the Polish Pope, the leadership of the Polish Church, by contrast, has embraced European integration as a great apostolic assignment.

The anxieties of the ‘Europhobes’ would seem to be fully justified since the basic premise of the secularisation paradigm, that the more modern a society the more secular it becomes, seems to be a widespread assumption also in Poland. The Polish episcopate, nevertheless, has accepted enthusiastically the papal apostolic assignment and has repeatedly stressed that one of its goals once Poland rejoins Europe is ‘to restore Europe for Christianity’. While it may sound preposterous to Western European ears, such a message
has found resonance in the tradition of Polish messianism. Barring a radical change in the European secular zeitgeist, however, such an evangelistic effort has little chance of success. Given the loss of demand for religion in Western Europe, the supply of surplus Polish pastoral resources for a Europe-wide evangelising effort is unlikely to prove effective. The at best lukewarm, if not outright hostile, European response to Pope John Paul II’s renewed calls for a European Christian revival points to the difficulty of the assignment.

While the threat of a Polish Christian crusade awakens little fear among secular Europeans confident of their ability to assimilate Catholic Poland on their own terms, the prospect of Turkey joining the European Union generates much greater anxieties among Europeans, Christian and post-Christian alike, but of a kind not easily put into words — at least not publicly. Turkey has been patiently knocking on the door of the European club since 1959, only to be told politely to keep waiting, while watching latecomer after latecomer being invited first in successive waves of accession.

The EEC always made clear that candidates for admission would have to meet stringent economic and political conditions. Ireland, the United Kingdom and Denmark formally applied for admission in 1961 but only joined in 1973. Spain and Portugal were unambiguously rebuffed as long as they had authoritarian regimes, but were given clear conditions and definite timetables once their democracies seemed on the road to consolidation. Both joined in 1986. Greece, meanwhile, had already gained admission in 1981 and with it de facto veto power over Turkey’s admission. But even after Greece and Turkey entered a quasi-détente and Greece expressed its readiness to sponsor Turkey’s admission in exchange for the admission of the entire island of Cyprus, Turkey still did not receive an unambiguous answer, being told once again to go back to the end of the waiting line.

The fall of the Berlin Wall once again rearranged the priorities and the direction of European integration eastward. In 2004, 10 new members — eight ex-communist countries plus Malta and Cyprus — joined the European Union. Practically all the territories of medieval Christendom — that is, of Catholic and Protestant Europe — are now reunited in the new Europe. Only Catholic Croatia and ‘neutral’ Switzerland are left out, while Orthodox Greece as well as Greek Cyprus are the only religious ‘other’. Orthodox Romania and Bulgaria are supposed to be next in line, but without a clear timetable. Now, finally, in October this year, Turkey has been given the go-ahead for negotiations promised for 2005. There is still
no timetable, but the prospect of Turkish membership has again unleashed the familiar rhetoric from the rest of Europe.

The first open discussions of Turkey’s candidacy during the 2002 Copenhagen summit touched a raw nerve among all kinds of European publics. The widespread debate revealed how much Islam, with all its distorted representations as the ‘other’ of Western civilisation, was the real issue rather than the extent to which Turkey was ready to meet the same stringent economic and political conditions as all other new members. About Turkey’s eagerness to join and willingness to meet the conditions there could be no doubt now that the new, officially no longer ‘Islamic’ but ‘Muslim Democrat’, government had reiterated unambiguously the position of all the previous Turkish secularist administrations. Turkey’s publics, secularist and Muslim alike, had spoken in unison. The new government was certainly the most representative democratic government in Turkey’s modern history. A wide consensus had seemingly been reached among the Turkish population, showing that Turkey, on the issue of joining Europe and thus ‘the West’, was no longer a ‘torn country’.

The dream of Kemal Atatürk, ‘Father of the Turks’, of begetting a modern Western secular republican Turkish nation state modelled after French republican laïcité has proved not easily attainable, at least not on Kemalist secularist terms. But the possibility of a Turkish democratic state, truly representative of its ordinary Muslim population, joining the European Union is today for the first time real. The ‘six arrows’ of Kemalism (republicanism, nationalism, secularism, statism, populism and reformism) could not lead towards a workable representative democracy. Ultimately, the project of constructing such a nation state from above was bound to fail because it was too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis and too Turkish for the Kurds. A Turkish state in which the collective identities and interests of those groups that constitute the overwhelming majority of the population cannot find public representation cannot possibly be a truly representative democracy, even if it is founded on modern secular republican principles. But Muslim Democracy is as possible and viable today in Turkey as Christian Democracy was half a century ago in Western Europe. The still Muslim, but officially no longer Islamist, party in power has been repeatedly accused of being ‘fundamentalist’ and of undermining the sacred secularist principles of the Kemalist constitution which bans ‘religious’ as well as ‘ethnic’ parties, religion and ethnicity being forms of identity that are not allowed public representation in secular Turkey.
Illustration from the Library of the Crusades (Gustave Doré 1877): an earlier phase of the Christian–Muslim heritage in Europe. Credit: Ken Welsh / Bridgeman
One wonders whether democracy does not become an impossible game when potential majorities are not allowed to win elections, and when secular civilian politicians ask the military to come to the rescue of democracy by banning these potential majorities which threaten their secular identity and their power. Practically every continental European country has had religious parties at one time or another. Many of them, particularly the Catholic ones, had dubious democratic credentials until the negative learning experience of fascism turned them into Christian Democratic parties. Unless people are allowed to play the game fairly, it may be difficult for them to appreciate the rules and to acquire a democratic habitus. One wonders who are the real ‘fundamentalists’ here: Muslims who want to gain public recognition of their identity and demand the right to mobilise in order to advance their ideal and material interests, while respecting the democratic rules of the game; or ‘secularists’ who view the Muslim veil worn by a duly elected parliamentary representative as a threat to Turkish democracy and as a blasphemous affront against the sacred secularist principles of the Kemalist state? Could the European Union accept the public representation of Islam within its boundaries? Can ‘secular’ Europe admit ‘Muslim’ democratic Turkey? Officially, Europe’s refusal to accept Turkey so far is mainly based on Turkey’s deficient human rights record. But there are not too subtle indications that an outwardly secular Europe is still too Christian when it comes to the possibility of imagining a Muslim country as part of the European community. One wonders whether Turkey represents a threat to Western civilisation or rather an unwelcome reminder of the barely submerged yet inexpressible and anxiety-ridden white European Christian identity.

The widespread public debate in Europe over Turkey’s admission showed that Europe was actually the torn country, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European unity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilisation or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism. Publicly, of course, European liberal secular elites could not share the Pope’s definition of European civilisation as essentially Christian. But they also could not verbalise the unspoken cultural requirements that make the integration of Turkey into Europe such a difficult issue. The spectre of millions of Turkish citizens already in Europe but not of Europe, many of them second-generation immigrants, caught
between an old country they have left behind and their European host societies unable or unwilling fully to assimilate them, only makes the problem more visible. Guest workers can be successfully incorporated economically. They may even gain voting rights, at least on the local level, and prove to be model or at least ordinary citizens. But can they pass the unwritten rules of cultural European membership or are they to remain strangers? Can the European Union open new conditions for the kind of multiculturalism that its constituent national societies find so difficult to accept?

Throughout the modern era, Western European societies have been immigrant-sending countries, indeed the primary immigrant-sending region in the world. During the colonial phase, European colonists and colonisers, missionaries, entrepreneurs and colonial administrators settled all the corners of the globe. During the age of industrialisation, from the 1800s to the 1920s, it is estimated that c85 million Europeans emigrated to the Americas, to Southern Africa, to Australia and Oceania, 60 per cent of them to the US alone. In the last decades, however, the migration flows have reversed and many Western European societies have become instead centres of global immigration. A comparison with the United States, the paradigmatic immigrant society (despite the fact that from the late 1920s to the late 1960s it also became a society relatively closed to immigration), reveals some characteristic differences in the contemporary Western European experience of immigration.

Although the proportion of foreign immigrants in many European countries (United Kingdom, France, The Netherlands, West Germany before reunification), at approximately 10 per cent, is similar to the proportion of foreign-born in the US, most of these countries still have difficulty viewing themselves as permanent immigrant societies or viewing the native second-generation as nationals, irrespective of their legal status. But it is in the different ways in which they try to accommodate and regulate immigrant religions, particularly Islam, that European societies distinguish themselves not only from the US but also from one another. European societies have markedly different institutional and legal structures regarding religious associations, very diverse policies of state recognition, of state regulation and of state aid to religious groups, as well as diverse norms concerning when and where one may publicly express religious beliefs and practices.

In their dealings with immigrant religions European countries, like the US, tend to replicate their particular model of separation of church and state
and the patterns of regulation of their own religious minorities. France’s *étatist* secularist model and the political culture of *laïcité* require the strict privatisation of religion, eliminating religion from any public forum, while at the same time pressuring religious groups to organise themselves into a single centralised church-like institutional structure that can be regulated by and serve as interlocutor to the state. This follows the traditional model of the concordat with the Catholic Church. The UK, by contrast, while maintaining the established Church of England, allows greater freedom of religious associations, which deal directly with local authorities and school boards to press for changes in religious education, diet, etc, with little direct appeal to the central government. Germany, following the multi-establishment model, has tried to organise a quasi-official Islamic institution, at times in conjunction with parallel strivings on the part of the Turkish state to regulate its diaspora. But the internal divisions among immigrants from Turkey and the public expression and mobilisation of competing identities (secular and Muslim, Alevi and Kurd) in the German democratic context have undermined any project of institutionalisation from above. The Netherlands, following its traditional pattern of pillarisation seemed, until very recently at least, bent on establishing a state-regulated but self-organised separate Muslim pillar. Lately, however, even the liberal, tolerant Netherlands is expressing second thoughts and seems ready to pass more restrictive legislation setting clear limits to the kinds of un-European, un-modern norms and habits it is ready to tolerate.

If one looks at the European Union as a whole, however, there are two fundamental differences from the situation in the US. In the first place, in Europe immigration and Islam are almost synonymous. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in most European countries, the UK being the main exception, are Muslims and the overwhelming majority of Western European Muslims are immigrants. This identification appears even more pronounced in those cases where the majority of Muslim immigrants tend to come predominantly from a single region of origin: Turkey in the case of Germany, the Maghrib in the case of France. This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of ‘otherness’ that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socio-economic disprivileged ‘other’ all tend to coincide.

In the US, by contrast, Muslims constitute at most 10 per cent of all new immigrants, a figure that is actually likely to decrease given the strict restrictions to Arab and Muslim immigration imposed after 9/11 by the increas-
ingly repressive US security state. Of the estimated 2.8–8 million Muslims in the US, 30–42 per cent are African-American converts to Islam, making more difficult the characterisation of Islam as a foreign, un-American religion. In addition, the Muslim immigrant communities there are extremely diverse in terms of geographic region of origin, discursive Islamic traditions and socio-economic characteristics.

The second main difference has to do with the role of religion and religious group identities in public life and in the organisation of civil society. Internal differences notwithstanding, Western European societies are deeply secular societies, shaped by the hegemonic knowledge regime of secularism. As liberal democratic societies, they tolerate and respect individual religious freedom. But due to the pressure towards the privatisation of religion, which among European societies has become a given characteristic of the self-definition of a modern secular society, those societies have much greater difficulty in recognising some legitimate role for religion in public life and in the organisation and mobilisation of collective group identities. Muslim-organised collective identities and their public representations become a source of anxiety not only because of their religious otherness as a non-Christian and non-European religion, but more importantly because of their religiousness itself as the ‘other’ of European secularity. In this context, the temptation to identify Islam and fundamentalism becomes the more pronounced. Islam, by definition, becomes the ‘other’ of Western secular modernity. Therefore, the problems posed by the incorporation of Muslim immigrants become consciously or unconsciously associated with seemingly related and vexatious issues concerning the role of religion in the public sphere, which European societies assumed they had already solved according to the liberal secular norm of privatisation of religion.

By contrast, Americans are demonstrably more religious than Europeans and therefore there is a certain pressure for immigrants to conform to US religious norms. It is generally the case that immigrants in the US tend to be more religious than they were in their home countries. But even more significantly, today as in the past, religion and public religious denominational identities play an important role in the process of incorporation of the new immigrants.

But US society is entering a new phase. The traditional model of assimilation, turning European nationals into American ‘ethnics’, can no longer serve as a model of assimilation now that immigration is literally worldwide. The US is bound to become ‘the first new global society’ made up of all
world religions and civilisations at a time when religious civilisational identities are regaining prominence at the global stage.

At the institutional level, expanding religious pluralism is facilitated by the dual clause of the First Amendment. This guarantees the 'non establishment' of religion at the state level, and therefore the strict separation of church and state, and the genuine neutrality of the secular state, as well as the 'free exercise' of religion in civil society, which includes strict restrictions to state intervention and to the administrative regulation of the religious field. It is this combination of a rigidly secular state and the constitutionally protected free exercise of religion in society that distinguishes the US institutional context from the European one.

As liberal democratic systems, all European societies respect the private exercise of religion, including Islam, as an individual human right. It is the public and collective free exercise of Islam as an immigrant religion that most European societies find difficult to tolerate precisely on the grounds that Islam is perceived as an 'un-European' religion. The stated rationales for considering Islam un-European vary significantly across Europe and among social and political groups. For the anti-immigrant, xenophobic, nationalist right, represented by Le Pen's discourse in France and by Jörg Haider in Austria, the message is straightforward. Islam is unwelcome and unassimilable simply because it is a 'foreign' immigrant religion. Such a nativist and usually racist attitude can be differentiated clearly from the conservative Catholic position, paradigmatically expressed by the Cardinal of Bologna when he declared that Italy should welcome immigrants of all races and regions of the world, but should particularly select Catholic immigrants in order to preserve the Catholic identity of the country.

Liberal secular Europeans tend to look askance at such blatant expressions of racist bigotry and religious intolerance. But when it comes to Islam, secular Europeans often reveal the limits and prejudices of modern secularist toleration. One is not likely to hear among liberal politicians and secular intellectuals explicitly xenophobic or anti-religious statements. The politically correct formulation tends to run along such lines as 'we welcome each and all immigrants irrespective of race or religion as long as they are willing to respect and accept our modern liberal secular European norms'. The explicit articulation of those norms may vary from country to country. The

'One veil = One voice' Paris January 2004: French Muslim women from schools and government offices march against the law banning the Islamic headscarf.
Credit: Abbas / Magnum
Un voile
=
1 voix
controversies over the Muslim veil in so many European societies and the overwhelming support among the French citizenry, including apparently among a majority of French Muslims, for the recently passed restrictive legislation prohibiting the wearing of Muslim veils and other ostensibly religious symbols in public schools, as ‘a threat to national cohesion’, may be an extreme example of illiberal secularism (see p117). But in fact one sees similar trends of restrictive legislation directed at immigrant Muslims in the liberal Netherlands, precisely in the name of protecting its liberal, tolerant traditions from the threat of illiberal, fundamentalist, patriarchal customs reproduced and transmitted to the younger generation by Muslim immigrants.

Revealingly enough, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, in his address to the French legislature defending the banning of ostensibly religious symbols in public schools, made reference in the same breath to France as ‘the old land of Christianity’ and to the inviolable principle of laïcité, exhorting Islam to adapt itself to the principle of secularism as all other religions of France have done before. ‘For the most recently arrived, I’m speaking here of Islam, secularism is a chance, the chance to be a religion of France.’ The Islamic veil and other religious signs are justifiably banned from public schools, he added, because ‘they are taking on a political meaning’, while according to the secularist principle of privatisation of religion, ‘religion cannot be a political project’. Time will tell whether the restrictive legislation will have the intended effect of stopping the spread of ‘radical Islam’ or whether it is likely to bring forth the opposite result of radicalising further an already alienated and maladjusted immigrant community.

The positive rationale one hears among liberals in support of such illiberal restriction of the free exercise of religion is usually put in terms of the desirable enforced emancipation of young girls, if necessary against their expressed will, from gender discrimination and from patriarchal control. This was the discourse on which the assassinated politician Pim Fortuyn built his electorally successful anti-immigrant platform in the liberal Netherlands, a campaign that is now bearing fruit in new restrictive legislation. While conservative religious people are expected to tolerate behaviour they may consider morally abhorrent, such as homosexuality, liberal secular Europeans are openly stating that European societies ought not to tolerate religious behaviour or cultural customs that are morally abhorrent in so far as they are contrary to modern, liberal, secular European norms. What
makes the intolerant tyranny of the secular liberal majority justifiable in principle is not just the democratic principle of majority rule, but rather the secularist teleological assumption built into theories of modernisation that one set of norms is reactionary, fundamentalist and anti-modern, while the other set is progressive, liberal and modern.

Strictly speaking, modern constitutions do not need transcendent references, nor is there much empirical evidence for the functionalist argument that the standard integration of modern differentiated societies requires some kind of 'civil religion'. In principle, there are three possible ways of addressing the quarrels provoked by the wording of the preamble to the new European constitution. The first option would be to avoid any controversy by relinquishing altogether the very project of drafting a self-defining preamble explaining to the world the political rationale and identity of the European Union. But such an option would be self-defeating in so far as the main rationale and purpose of drafting a new European constitution appears to be an extra-legal one: namely, to contribute to European social integration, to enhance a common European identity and to remedy the democratic deficit.

A second alternative would be the mere enumeration of the basic common values that constitute the European 'overlapping consensus', either as self-evident truths or as a social fact, without entering into the more controversial attempt to establish the normative foundation or to trace the genealogy of those European values. This was the option chosen by the signatories of the Declaration of American Independence when they proclaimed *We Hold These Truths As Self-Evident*. But the strong rhetorical effect of this memorable phrase was predicated on the given belief in a Creator God who had endowed humans with inalienable rights, a belief shared by republican deists, Establishmentarian Protestants and radical-pietist sectarians alike. In our post-Christian and post-modern context it is not that simple to conjure such self-evident 'truths' that require no discursive grounding.

The final and more responsible option would be to face the difficult and polemical task of defining through open and public debate the political identity of the new European Union: Who are we? Where do we come from? What constitutes our spiritual and moral heritage and the boundaries of our collective identities? How flexible internally and how open externally should those boundaries be? This would be under any circumstance an
enormously complex task which would entail addressing and coming to
terms with the many problematic and contradictory aspects of the European
heritage in its intra-national, inter-European and global-colonial dimen-
sions. But such a complex task is made the more difficult by secularist prej-
udices that preclude not only a critical yet honest and reflexive assessment of
the Judaeo-Christian heritage, but even any public official reference to such
a heritage, on the grounds that any reference to religion could be divisive
and counterproductive, or simply violates secular postulates.

The purpose of my argument is not to imply that the new European
constitution ought to make some reference either to some transcendent
reality or to the Christian heritage, but simply to point out that the quarrels
provoked by the possible incorporation of some religious referent in the
constitutional text would seem to indicate that secularist assumptions turn
religion into a problem, and thus preclude the possibility of dealing with
religious issues in a pragmatic sensible manner.

First, I fully agree with Bronislaw Geremek that any genealogical recon-
struction of the idea or social imaginary of Europe that makes reference to
Graeco-Roman antiquity and the Enlightenment while erasing any memory
of the role of medieval Christendom in the very constitution of Europe as a
civilisation evinces either historical ignorance or repressive amnesia.

Second, the inability to recognise Christianity openly as one of the
constitutive components of European cultural and political identity means
that a great historical opportunity may be missed to add yet a third impor-
tant historical reconciliation to the already achieved reconciliation between
Protestant and Catholics and between warring European nation states: an
ded to the old battles over Enlightenment, religion and secularism. The
perceived threat to secular identities and the biased overreaction to exclude
any public reference to Christianity belies the self-serving secularist claims
that only secular neutrality can guarantee individual freedoms and cultural
pluralism. What the imposed silence signifies is not only the attempt to erase
Christianity or any other religion from the public collective memory, but
also the exclusion from the public sphere of a central component of the
personal identity of many Europeans. To guarantee equal access to the
European public sphere and undistorted communication, the European
Union would need to become not only post-Christian but also post-secular.

Finally, the privileging of European secular identities and secularist self-
understandings in the genealogical affirmation of the common European
values of human dignity, equality, freedom and solidarity may not only
impede the possibility of gaining a full understanding of the genesis of those values and their complex process of societal institutionalisation and individual internalisation, but also preclude a critical and reflexive self-understanding of those secular identities. David Martin and Danièle Hervieu-Léger have shown that the religious and the secular are inextricably linked throughout modern European history; that the different versions of the European Enlightenment are inextricably linked with different versions of Christianity; and that cultural matrices rooted in particular religious traditions and related institutional arrangements still serve to shape and encode, mostly unconsciously, diverse European secular practices. The conscious and reflexive recognition of such a Christian encoding does not mean that one needs to accept the claims of the Pope or of any other ecclesiastical authority to be the sole guardians or legitimate administrators of the European Christian heritage. It only means to accept the right of every European, native and immigrant, to participate in the ongoing task of definition, renovation and transmission of that heritage. Ironically, as the case of French laïcité shows, the more secularist self-understandings attempt to repress this religious heritage from the collective conscience, the more it reproduces itself subconsciously and compulsively in public secular codes.

The four issues analysed here – the integration of Catholic Poland in post-Christian Europe, the integration of Turkey into the European Union, the incorporation of non-European immigrants as full members of their European host societies and of the European Union, and the task of writing a new European constitution that both reflects the values of the European people and at the same time allows them to become a self-constituent European demos – are all problematic issues in themselves. But unreflexive secular identities and secularist self-understandings turn those issues into even more perplexing and seemingly intractable ‘religious’ problems.

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