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publicly funded, or what the broader aims of a national education system should be. The legitimate entry of religion into these debates results in the creation of modern "hybrids": the principle of structural differentiation – according to which religion, economy, education, and science are located in autonomous social spaces – no longer holds.'

[3] Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching*, 1010. This translation is not wholly adequate, but it does not distort Troeltsch's intention.

[4] In this regard, it is important to note that contemporary psychology of religion takes the social-cultural dimension into account and focusses on the ways individuals relate to their social-cultural environment and appropriate religious tradition; cf. J.A. [van] Belzen (ed.), Hermeneutical *Approaches in Psychology of Religion* (Amsterdam 1997).

[5] The 'theological' character of philosophy of religion is, to be sure, not beyond discussion, but from the Dutch perspective it makes sense to include it within the theological disciplines (since philosophy of religion is primarily located within the theological faculties).

[6] This article is the revised version of the paper I presented at the 13th Biennial European Conference on the Philosophy of Religion, held in Järvenpää (Finland), August, 25–28, 2000.

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Tracy, Hermann Timm, John Clayton, Theo de Boer, and others. In this contribution I myself have made the attempt to engage in a dialogue with scholars of history, social philosophy, and sociology who rethink the (re)locations of religions in modernity.

I would like to conclude with a quotation of a philosopher of religion who was aware of the problems addressed in this essay and clearly ahead of his time, Ernst Troeltsch. He pleaded for a fruitful influence of the study of religion (including philosophy of religion) upon confessional theologies with a liberal outlook ('free theologies'), but also knew that, with regard to the real issues at stake, scholarship was rather powerless. He saw a religiously motivated critique emerging of the capitalistic, technological alienation of human beings:

What the future will develop out of this is still unknown to us. Yet the science [including philosophy, ALM] of religion can at least make an important contribution in clarification and orientation... The essential work will be that of the religious life itself which, after the collapse of the old dogmatic churches in ruins and the rapid advance of secularisation (*Verweltlichung*), is slowly gathering itself for a new profundity. (Troeltsch 1977: 82–123, es 120)

This sounds rather hopeful. Troeltsch was aware of the fact that change – however painful it may be for those involved – is not identical to decline. Troeltsch's own solutions are, to some extent, outdated, but for me it seems important not to forget the way he approached the issue of religion; especially when one considers how devastating the influence of twentienth century theologies which defined themselves in opposition to the other branches of the study of culture and religion was for Troeltsch's way of thinking. [6]

Notes

[1] Quoted in J. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (New York etc. 1970):1.

[2] Casanova, *Public Religions*: 231; cf. 41–42. For a critique of this view, see Talal Asad, 'Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,' in: Peter van der Veer & Hartmut Lehmann (eds.), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton 1999): 178–196, es 179: 'When religion becomes an integral part of modern politics, it is not indifferent to debates about how the economy should be run, which scientific projects should be

territory. I would also plead for a philosophical approach which does not focus solely on the propositional content of religions, but which tries to analyze religious phenomena as a whole in a particular context. We do not have to leave the exploration of the socio-political dimensions of religion to social philosophers and historians. Intellectual problems with the theistic tradition have lead philosophers to explore the 'mystical' dimension of religion. (Tracy 1994: 302–319, es 314–316; De Vries 1992: 441–477) One attempt to do justice to our changed predicament is represented in Peter Byrne's book on religious pluralism. He describes his own position as a mitigated scepticism and 'preaches' 'an agnosticism which makes the possibility of absolute truth in one of the confessions too unlikely to serve as a basis for interpreting religion as a whole.' (Byrne 1995: 202) The distinction between first-order religious life and the second-order reflection on it is constitutive of this enterprise.

It is not my intention to claim that this is *the* privileged way to deal with phenomena such as the pluralization and dispersion of the religious, but Byrne's book shows that we cannot continue along the old-trodden ways. But we do not have to devote all our attention to one – admittedly important – type of modern religion. There are other forms of modern religion and other dimensions than the experiential. The institutional aspects and the societal location of religion are equally important. The attention devoted to the cognitive dimension of religion may have been enhanced by the awareness of the decline of institutional religion in the West and the loss of the plausibility of the conceptions of traditional (theistic) religion, which makes it much harder to 'justify' it philosophically, but to focus exclusively on this kind of problems leads easily to short-sightedness.

Why should philosophy of religion be primarily concerned with questions about religious truth claims and so on? Is the preoccupation with epistemological and ontological topics not a last remnant of its historical origin in natural theology? Most of the times, philosophy in general is not identified with metaphysics, but allows space for social, political, and aesthetic topics as well. However, I do not want to suggest that contemporary philosophy of religion is exclusively concerned with the cognitive dimension of religion. Language, symbols, metaphors, and the ethical, social, and aesthetical dimensions are explored by thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, David

velopment is that religious believers have more options to choose from. Elements from various traditions are brought together, and it is not difficult at all to find Christians in our multicultural and multireligious societies, who also believe in reincarnation. Furthermore, the process of differentiation is undercut by counter-tendencies, whereby religious elements are wandering into other domains such as politics, economics, or aesthetics; or into the scientific, the ethical, or the symbolic realms. In some cases this proces of dispersion makes it hard to distinguish the domain of the religious. There is a tendency among scholars of religion to redefine their subject of study. Terms such as 'religiosity,' 'spirituality,' or even 'world views' and 'ways of giving meaning to life' are introduced to broaden the field of study. (Hervieu-Léger 1999: 73-92) Recently, the branch of religious studies in the Netherlands has been officially renamed – with the awkward term: 'the study of religions and life views' (*Lebensanschauungen* – as the Germans would say).

5. Philosophy of Religion in a New Key

The transformations of religion in modernity confront the scholar – including the philosopher – of religion with new issues. In my view, the philosopher of religion is well-advised to keep in touch with scholarship on religion in the (post)modernity. The field of the study of religion is currently very exciting. Scholars from various provenances – (social) philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, to mention just a few – are interested in the topic of religion. And it would be unwise for the theological disciplines (including philosophy of religion) [5] not to take advantage of this situation. If we do not do this, a real danger exists that non-theological scholars will take over 'our subject' (whatever that may be; but personally I would consider it strategically and scholarly unwise to tie our field too closely to the established forms of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and so on).

Philosophy of religion ought to loosen the old bonds with classical metaphysics and Christian dogmatics, and focus more on the plurality of religions and religiosities. If philosophy of religion chooses to be the handmaiden of dogmatics, it will be marginalized together with the old churches which seem to be too preoccupied with their old properties to see what is going on outside their carefully guarded

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religion. From a religious perspective, the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, wich is the period from which these quotes are taken, was a productive time. The complaints are merely indicative of the fact that religious traditions were changing, that the markets of religion and Weltanschauung were growing progressively diverse, and that religious individuals had to build their own world view. Religion in modern Western European societies has become more and more an option of personal choice. It is evident that religion and its relation to society have changed in modern times, and this process continues. But to make my point once again: we should not confuse our own Western European experiences with worldwide trends nor interpret these (fairly recent) changes solely in terms of 'privatization' and 'individualization' of religion. In my view, it is highly improbable that the future of religion will be exclusively for New Age or related individualistic forms of religiosity. Religious groups, whether established or not, will continue to claim their say not only in the sphere of belief and personal ethics (for instance, the Pope on contraception) but also in the public arena of politics.

In the foregoing discussion I have stressed the public character of religion in the contemporary world. This is, to be sure, not the only important fact for religious studies, but it is a fact which certainly should not be neglected. Other recent developments, such as the globalization which allegedly takes place, can be related to it. The role of the media is crucial to some transformations of (post)modern religion. Religion is broadcasted and can be sold as a commodity. (Moore 1994) The material aspects of religion, the ways it is 'mediatized,' could become more important in our world, in which 'images' tend to become at least as influential as 'words.' In this context the term 'iconic turn' has been phrased by Hermann Timm to capture the postmodern predicament. The traditional Protestant focus on texts and its iconoclastic tendencies could become much more of a problem than before. It is no coincidence that attempts are being made to 'recatholicize' Protestant religion – for instance, the introduction of the Lent – to catch up with contemporary needs.

The process of globalization concerns also the expansion of religious markets and it offers new opportunies, especially for 'global players' like the Catholic Church. Another consequence of this de-

like religious narcissism are used in this context to indicate the alleged loss of a transcendental point of reference. Troeltsch has tried to capture this type under the heading of 'mysticism in the broad sense of the word,' which is characterized as the insistence upon a direct inward and present religious experience. But this does not mean that we should define religion in a Jamesian way as 'the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.'(James 1902: 31) Troeltsch knew better:

[Mysticism] takes for granted the objective forms of religious life in worship, ritual, myth, and dogma; and it is either a reaction against these objective practices, which it tries to draw back into the living process, or it is the supplementing of traditional forms of worship by means of a personal and living stimulus (*Erregung*). (Troeltsch: 170-31)

Inner experience, faith, or however one would like to describe the 'inner' core of religion is always conditioned and shaped by religious practices and communities. Even the most interiorized and 'privatized' religiosity presupposes an exteriority: piety does not exist in a social vacuum. The religious will not evaporate in complete inwardness. Religious studies includes more than only psychology of religion. [4] Moreover, many forms of religion resist the 'secularist' attempt to lock them up in the private sphere. The recurrent debates of Muslim girls claiming the right to wear the traditional headscarf in schools or orthodox Dutch Christians who claim the right not to work on Sundays demonstrate that religion, in many cases, is also about other spheres, notwithstanding all kinds of differentiation processes. The scholarly study of religion, including philosophy of religion, should take notice of this fact.

4. Further Transformations of Religion: Globalization, the conic Turn, and the Dispersion of the Religious

A historical approach to religion has the advantage of avoiding an over-dramatic view of religious history. The talk of a 'crisis' is an integral part of this history. The complaints of a 'loss of sense,' 'alienation,' 'modern hectic,' 'transcendental homelessness,' and a 'parcelling of the soul' accompany modern religious history. (Graf 2000: 185-228) Such remarks do not add up to a factual decline of

ern people are *choosers* faced by identity problems in need of coun-
selors. (Bauman 1998: 55–78, es 68) This problem also concerns
(post)modern religious believers who have to shape their religious
identity themselves. The rise of Western modernity means that reli-
gion is principally no longer something that is handed down in an
authoritative fashion; rather, it has to be appropriated by the religious
believers themselves. This change corresponds to the overthrow of
the confessional state (which located religion in a visible, hierarchi-
cal order) by the nation-state (which located religion in the inner
selves of the moral community of the nation). The young Friedrich
Schleiermacher was one of the first to articulate a concept of religion
as primarily concerned with inner experience which was apt for the
new situation. 'Schleiermacher stresses that only the individual, in-
ner experience justifies objective, external structures. Consequently,
he favoured the separation between church and state.' (Van Rooden:
182) By this, he departed from the classic conception of Augustine
who believed that Christian selves had to be created by discipline
and coercion. (Brown 1962: 236-240)

This relocation, no doubt, poses a problem for the established
churches. Ernst Troeltsch, for instance, claimed that the 'mystical'
type of Christianity was the truly modern form of religion. Since
this type 'arose out of the failure (*Brechung*) of the real ecclesiastical
spirit, it finds it difficult to establish satisfactory relations with the
churches, and with the conditions of a stable and permanent organi-
zation.' (Troeltsch 1931: 997; Molendijk 1996) In Troeltsch's view
the churches are 'shell institutions,' as Anthony Giddens would call
them (Giddens 1999): the outside has remained the same, whereas
the inside has fundamentally changed. Troeltsch described his ideal
of a 'flexible' church institution as follows: 'The home which was
constructed by compulsion and relentless insistence upon rigid con-
formity to a uniform type of doctrine and organization can thus be
inhabited by finer spirits and especially by souls of very varied types;
they will then, it is true, have to guard the spirit of mutual tolerance
within certain wide limits.' [3]

The thesis can be defended that one admittedly important and in-
fluential type of modern religion is individualized religion, which is
located primarily in the inner selves of the believers who build their
own religious identity out of the brickstones of tradition(s). Terms

whereas we are principally looking forward to act. 'Risk isn't the same as hazard or danger. Risk refers to hazards that are actively assessed in relation to future possibilities. It comes into wide usage only in a society that is future oriented – which sees the future precisely as a territory to be conquered or colonised.' (Beck 1992) The ideas of the engineerability of the future and the necessity of permanent change are a threat – and perhaps a new opportunity as well – to tradition, whether religious or not. Since not all contingencies are manageable, the understanding of religion as the caterer for the 'ultimate contingencies' (*Kontingenzbewältigungspraxis*), above all death, could gain popularity. (Giddens 22)

Any analysis of our (post)modern predicament tends to be one-sided. In classical sociological theory, the emergence and the ever-growing influence of the capitalistic way of production and the bureaucratic state were mentioned as specifics of modernity. Norbert Elias spoke of the lengthening of the chains of action: the capacity to organize differentiated forms of action in an integrated way and to control complex processes of production, administration and mass-communication has increased enormously over the last century. Franz-Xaver Kaufmann discerns four long-term master trends (which reach over centuries):

1.the – economic – mobilization of goods, capital, and labor, and the expansion of exchange networks into the global world markets of our days;

2.the liberation from the bonds of serfdom, i.e., the growth of collective and personal rights which must be respected by everyone ('democratization');

3.the evolution of functionally-differentiated interdependence in the modern world (cf. Elias);

4.transformation of the habits of life, the spheres of family (the couple replaced the 'family'), sex roles, and intimacy – a transformation which 'seems to be related to growing self-control and growing opportunities for individual choice.'(Lübbe 1975)

This description complies with my view that modernity and postmodernity are best perceived as being in line with each other. This does not mean that more recent labels such as 'globalization' or 'pluralization of life styles' are of no use for specifying the situation with which we have to cope. According to Zygmunt Bauman, postmod-

Moreover, the secularization thesis overlooks important developments, even in the Western world. Historically speaking, the most ponderous argument against many theories of secularization is that fairly recent developments are accounted for in terms of centuries-old processes. Thus, the role of the 'Enlightenment' is sometimes depicted as the greatest villain in the mega-story of worldwide religious decay. If 'postmodernity' refers to the 'end of the great metanarratives' and to the importance of perceiving difference, this should warn us to be suspicious not only of religious and ideological, but of 'scientific,' *grands récits* as well.

3. Modernity and Postmodernity

The labels 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' carry a lot of analytical baggage, which is not easily examined in one article. Taking these labels as pointers to real political, economical, societal, and intellectual changes, I would prefer to see them more or less as twin terms: together they express the Janus face of our predicament, since we became aware of the 'dialectics of the Enlightenment.' The growing uneasiness about the project and the alleged blessings of modernity, which accompanied it almost since its beginnings, is radicalized by introducing the term 'postmodernity.' But if we define modernity by saying that it is structurally the legitimation of permanent change by human intervention, it is hard to see how 'postmodernity' could be something radically new compared to the old situation. Change always has its price because it implies the destruction of whatever was there before. 'And since the restless change that characterizes civilized society is inherently unstable, costs continue to mount, and our niche in earth's economy becomes ever more precarious even as it also, in accord with human wishes, becomes larger and larger.' (McNeill 2000: 5) The term 'reflexive modernization' has been introduced to capture the growing uneasiness: modern society is undercutting its own formations of class, sex roles, and nuclear family; and technological progress can have catastrophic results. (Beck1994) We are getting out of control and living in a 'runaway world' or a 'risk society.' (Giddens 1999)

The term 'risk' is significant in and of itself. In premodern societies concepts of fate, luck or the will of the gods were used where we tend to substitute risk. One was looking backwards to understand,

from TV programs which 'publicize' stories of intimacy and sexuality which, in former times, were kept 'private.' The implications of these transformations for religion are hard to fathom. But anyhow, the old thesis, that religion and the values pertaining to it are, typically, 'irrelevant to institutional contexts other than the private sphere' (Berger 1967: 133) seems too bold. What is more, the dissemination of the religious is no coincidence. Speaking about recent Polish history, Casanova concludes that neither church nor state could agree on a marginalization of religion to a private sphere. 'Neither Catholic principle nor Polish tradition could be easily reconciled with a conception of religiosity borrowed from bourgeois Protestantism and restricted to the private and unmediated relationship between the individual conscience and God, adorned at most by an Orthodox conception of ceremonial ritual, spiritually edifying but restricted to sacred places. Neither could Soviet socialism recognize in earnest the right of an autonomous sphere to exist, where "antisocialist" that is, antisystem norms and values, could develo' (Casanova: 96)

The modern predicament is not aptly described by the formula 'Religion is a private affair.' By this I am not claiming that this formula makes no sense at all. As far as Western modernity is also a process of differentiation, we see that secular spheres emancipated themselves from ecclesiastical control. Furthermore, the formula can be taken to point to religious freedom in the sense of freedom of conscience—which in turn is related to the right of privacy, to the modern institutionalization of a private sphere free from governmental and ecclesiastical control. Yet, it would be a gross misunderstanding to conclude that the only proper place for religion in the modern world is the private sphere. Modern religion is also very much part of the public sphere.

This is not to say that modernity – or perhaps better: its multiple varieties – makes no difference to religion, or that organized religion in Western Europe has not declined enormously during the last decades. The question is whether these changes can be best explained by referring to an alleged world-wide process of secularization, which started with the Enlightenment. This type of explanation lacks specificity and is simply too global to be of much hel It also suggests a glorious religious past in which all men and women were truly pious and observant of their religious duties. This, of course, is untenable.

out the importance of a public sphere as a central feature of modern (liberal) society. It is described 'as a common space in which the members of society meet, through a variety of media (print, electronic) and also in face-to-face encounters, to discuss matters of common interest; and thus be able to form a common mind about those matters.' (Taylor 1995: 257–287, 308–310, es 259) In contrast to 'the opinion of mankind,' public opinion is meant (1) to be the product of reflection, (2) to emerge from discussion, and (3) to reflect an actively produced consensus.(Taylor 261) The public sphere transcends topical spaces, and the debates in this 'metatopical' space are relevant to the process of political decision-making. The newness of the public sphere is further clarified by pointing to its 'radical secularity.' It stands in contrast not only 'with a divine foundation for society, but with any idea of society as constituted in something that transcends contemporary common action.'(Taylor 267) The constitution of the public sphere in modern society is thus perceived as a radical secular event.

The 'secularization of the state' – as Ernst Troeltsch puts it (Troeltsch 1909: 624-25)– can be viewed as one of the crucial facts of Western modernity, without implying that religion is completely privatized and gradually looses its public role. Phenomena such as Dutch 'pillarization' or religious mass mobilization in nineteenth century Europe point in the other direction. 'Society'- that middle ground and intermediary between state and individual, then, is the space *par excellence* for the social dimension of religion. One has to be careful, however, to identify the public sphere (even if it is conceived to be 'secularized') with a 'neutral' space of free debate. Power structures are at work here, too; not everyone has equal access to the media, to give just one example.

The distinction between the public and private sphere is framed in various ways and is more complex than the above sketch suggests.(Casanova: 41-2) There is no clear-cut distinction: the private can have a political dimension, as Karl Marx already noticed. Some of the terminological disagreements may be due to the difficulties of fitting the reality of modernity, which has been known to be tripartite – family, civil or bourgeois society, and the state – into the binary categories of 'public' and 'private.' Furthermore, remarkable changes are currently taking place, as is evident, for instance,

2. Public Religion in the Modern World

In his balanced study of public religions in the modern world, José Casanova has drawn attention to the phenomenon of 'deprivatization' of religion, to religious (religiously inspired) movements which challenge the legitimacy of the primary secular spheres of the state and the market economy.(Casanova 1994) The theory of secularization, in Casanova's view, is made up of three 'very different, uneven and unintegrated propositions: secularization as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere.'(Casanova, 211) Casanova accepts only the first proposition.[2] But the establishment of a public sphere in the Enlightenment period, he argues, does not forbid a *public* role of religion; instead, it opens up new opportunities. Modern churches can adapt themselves to the new liberal paradigm by evolving from state-oriented into society-oriented institutions. 'The active role of the Catholic church in processes of democratization in Spain, Poland, and Brazil marks the passage from a nonmodern etatist (Spain), representational (Poland), or corporatist (Brazil) form of publicity to the modern public sphere of civil society.'(Casanova 221) As Casanova himself acknowledges, this is not 'deprivatization' in the strict sense; a structural change in the *type* of being public is concerned. The choice for this term is probably still influenced by the theory he wants to refute or, at least, correct. Properly speaking, Casanova considers the concept only appropriate for cases such as the public mobilization of Protestant fundamentalism or the public interventions of Catholic bishops.

Casanova's study owes much to the Habermassian view of modernity. He distances himself from this view insofar as it would exclude a public role of religion within modernity. In Habermas's model, conventional religion ought to be superseded by postconventional secular morality, whereas Casanova sees a role for religion (to the extent that it accepts the principles of the modern liberal state) in reconstituting the public sphere. Casanova's analysis is compatible with the view that the public sphere in modern liberal societies is basically secular. This last point is elaborated by Charles Taylor, who – also drawing heavily on Habermas's work (1962, 1989) – spells

lished itself runs the danger of turning the secularization thesis into a strong normative theory which is, to a great extent, immunized against critique.

The secularization thesis is in serious trouble: it lacks discriminatory power. Peter Berger has revoked his earlier views and speaks about the desecularization of the world. (Berger 1999) One of its most prominent contemporary defenders, Steve Bruce, accommodates the theory by allowing for two exceptions by which religion can retain its social relevance: cultural defence and cultural transition. (Wallis & Bruce 1992) This seems to be a strategy of immunization. It would be hard to point to instances in the modern world where one can not find one of these two processes. Because of its enormous range, it is virtually impossible to falsify the secularization thesis. If one only takes a look at the entry 'secularization' in Joachim Ritter's *Historical Dictionary of Philosophy* (Marramao 1992), one is already impressed by the huge variety of concepts and theories of secularization that is presented in this relatively short overview. Should one determinable aspect be refuted, there are countless other aspects or elements of the thesis to quickly take its place.

A large part of Western thought on modernity and religion can be captured under the heading of secularization. My hunch would be that this is the case because 'religion' is essentially the problem and, to some extent, even the creation of modernity. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was probably the last major occasion at which public reference was made to the *Respublica Christiana*, the 'Christian Commonwealth.' This understanding was gradually replaced by the notion of Europe. (Davies 1996). ('Religion,' then, became the concept which was used to capture the basic tenets or 'essence' of confessionalized Christianity in a functionally differentiated society. The realm of religion had to be separated from that of economy, polity, and science. (Kaufmann 1989:1997) The modern nation-state apparently relocated religion from the visible social and hierarchical order to the inner selves of the moral community of the citizens. (Van Rooden 2000: 169–188, es 181) This process of transformation, along with the obvious dechristianization in Western Europe, is probably the principal factor that gives the secularization thesis its *prima facie* plausibility. But is privatization and marginalization really the fate of all (Christian) religion? Is not this scheme too simplistic?

future (some 18,500 members in 2010). Amsterdam is, for sure, not representative of the Dutch situation as a whole. But whereas in the early 1960s the Dutch were probably the most churchgoing of European peoples, the Netherlands is nowadays one of the most secularized nations of Europe. We are told that the decline will level out in a few decades. At that time, according to rough estimates, only 20% to 30% of the Dutch population will belong to a church.(Becker 2000; Becker 1994; Van Rooden 1997)

The experience of dechristianization and of the rapid decline of church membership is, of course, not confined to the Netherlands, but includes other Western European countries as well. It has shaped the views of many Western intellectuals and scholars on the future of Christianity and religion in general. 'Religion is on the wane.' The explanation is mostly sought in a theory of secularization, in which these fairly recent developments are viewed as the result of centuries-old processes of modernization: societal differentiation and the ever-growing dominance of a scientific rationality have marginalized religion. Then, questions arise like the one already posed by Reinhold Niebuhr in the late 1960s: 'why has religious faith persisted for three centuries after the first triumphs of modern science?' [1] At the same time, the 'Postmodern Return of the Sacred' has to be accounted for. In my view, this is not a very helpful way to address the vicissitudes of religion in modernity. More precise and contextualized approaches are needed to explain the particular changes that happen in particular places at particular times.

We should not take our own Western European experience of the diminishing influence of religion for a global truth. Not only do statistics show that a large majority of the world population views itself as belonging to a religion, but there are countless examples of religious 'resurgences' all over the world. In parts of Latin America a stunning growth of Pentecostalism is going on. In the United States religion is alive and well; an amazing variety of Christian groups in the USA succeed in raising approximately 1% of the GNP as voluntary gifts. Moreover, religion in the USA would be inadequately conceptualized as being located exclusively in the private sphere. Further examples could be adduced to illustrate that religion has not lost its social significance in modernity. The riposte that where religion is not socially declining 'modernity' has not yet – fully – estab-

losophy is a major area at the moment; thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor write extensively on the social and public dimensions of religion. I don't see why philosophers of religion should neglect these. To leave this subject to social philosophers, historians, and sociologists of religion would be unwise and betrays a truncated view of religion and, thereby, of philosophy of religion. There is more to religion than its cognitive and moral aspects.

In order to understand the social aspects of religion one has to look at the developments of religions in modernity. Fundamental and dramatic transformations have taken place in modern religious history, at least since the period of the Enlightenment, which have to be taken into account by philosophy of religion. I cannot argue for this extensively here, but I will try to show in the course of this essay that a historical awareness and historical approach are fruitful, and in my view even indispensable, for philosophy of religion.

Any discussion of recent religious history has to start with the main theoretical vehicle which claims to explain it: the secularization thesis (2). After a critical examination of the thesis I will point to processes of deprivatization of religion in modernity and the role religion still plays in the public domain (3). Subsequently, the dichotomy between modernity and postmodernity is touched upon – and relativized – (4). This does not mean that there are no significant transformations in recent religious history (5), but if modernity is defined by saying that it is structurally the legitimation of permanent change by human intervention, it is hard to see how 'postmodernity' is something fundamentally different. Finally, I will argue that the transformations discussed call for an integral philosophy of religion, which takes the place of religion in society as a serious topic for philosophical reflection (6).

1. The Power of Theory: Secularization

In the December 9, 1999 edition of the Dutch national Protestant newspaper Trouw, the headline read: 'Financial Troubles Lead to Job Rotation of Amsterdam Ministers.' The two main Protestant churches (which cooperate closely at the moment) counted some 26,000 members in Amsterdam in 1999, less than 4% of the population of the Dutch capital. In 1973 they still had approximately 100,000 members; one predicts a considerable decrease in the near

A Challenge to the Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

The present essay calls for a readjustment and extension of the field of philosophy of religion as it is conceived by most of its practitioners. Philosophy of religion should not only pursue its old objectives of epistemology, ontology, and philosophy of religious language, to name just these examples, but consider religious phenomena in their entirety, including social and public dimensions. Social philosophy is a major area at the moment. Thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor write extensively on the importance of the public sphere in modern societies, and they even address the role of religion in this sphere. To leave the exploration of the social dimension of religion to social philosophers, historians, and sociologists of religion would be unwise and betrays a truncated view of religion and, thereby, of philosophy of religion. There is more to religion than its cognitive and moral aspects. This essay is an attempt to engage in a dialogue with modern scholarship on religion which rethinks its (re)location in (post)modernity. It is simply not true that the only proper place for religion in the modern world is the private sphere. The emergence of a public sphere since the Enlightenment offers also new opportunities for religion. Philosophers of religion ought to reflect about this kind of transformations.

Introduction: Prospective and Retrospective

The aim of this essay is rather broad. I will explore some of the vicissitudes of religion in the modern Western world and argue that these developments call for a readjustment and extension of the field of philosophy of religion as it is conceived by most of its practitioners. In my view this is a necessary step, if philosophy of religion is to stay in touch with relevant neighbour disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology of religion, and religious studies in general. Philosophy of religion should not only pursue its old objectives of epistemology, ontology, and philosophy of religious language, to name just these examples, but consider religious phenomena in their entirety. As I will show in this contribution, the social and public dimensions of religion merit philosophical study as well. Social phi-