THE HIDDEN DIMENSION OF THE SECULAR

Rethinking Humanism in an age of Religious Revitalism

HENK MANSCHOT &
CAROLINE SURANSKY

Colophon

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Caroline Suransky, Hilde van 't Klooster and Ute Seela

Editors of the *Pluralism Working Paper series*

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Editor's preface

As the authors indicate in their introduction of this working paper 'there is a special relationship between modernity and humanism, particularly since the Enlightenment'. They share many basic values such as autonomy, civil equality before the law and democracy. They both defend the separation of church and state and advocate the existence of a secular public sphere and of public morality as solid foundations of society. However, in the past decennia, the project of modernity has increasingly come under siege internationally and its key values are challenged from many perspectives. There are philosophical and theological critiques, as well as challenges from the field of political theory. Throughout the globe, fundamental questions have been raised about the meaning and impact of modernity from within diverging political and religious movements, particularly from non-western locations. With modernity heavily in dispute, modern humanism too seems challenged to rethink its own relationship with modernity. The authors argue that this is particularly so in terms of the separation of church and state and with regard to the incongruity of the secular and the religious, something that modern mainstream humanism so far has considered to be fundamental for modern societies.

The idea for this paper originated under special circumstances in the context of the international Promoting Pluralism Knowledge Programme. For several reasons, the relationship between the state and religion became a prominent issue in the regional programmes of India and Indonesia. Prompted by this development, we invited the prominent scholar Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im to participate in a seminar in May 2009, to discuss his ideas on Islam and the secular state with the participating academics and practitioners in the Knowledge Programme[1]. In our deliberations, An-Na'im reiterated the significance of critical debate not only *between* different religious and other world view communities, but also *within* these networks themselves, in order to enrich the quality and complexity of internal debates. He therefore challenged scholars from other religious and world view traditions to critically examine their own particular relationship with the secular as well.

Convinced by the value of this challenge, the authors, who both work at the University for Humanistics in the Netherlands, endeavoured to study the relationship between Humanism, modernity and the secular. The authors work at the Kosmopolis Institute of the University for Humanistics in the Netherlands. This is a small, independent university, inspired by Humanist traditions. With their critical reflection on secularism and humanism, the authors want to contribute to an ongoing dialogue on secularism in the context of the international Promoting Pluralism Knowledge Programme, at the University for Humanistics and in a broader academic realm. However, in addition, they wish to encourage dialogue on these issues within the wider Humanist community, internationally as well as in the Netherlands. Internationally, secular humanism is often perceived to be anti-religious. The authors wish to rethink this position as they believe that by critically rethinking humanism, the Humanist community could possibly contribute more constructively to the ongoing global debate on the question of the secular.

Dr. Caroline Suransky,

Chief editor of the *Pluralism Working Paper series* for the Promoting Pluralism Knowledge Programme

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[1] For the contribution of Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im during this seminar, as well as the responses from prof. Sitharamam Kakarala and dr. Zainal Abidin Bagir, see working paper no 1: An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed, Sitharamam Kakarala and Zainal Abidin Bagir (2009). 'Rethinking the Secular', *Pluralism Working Paper series* no 1.

The Hidden Dimension of the Secular

Rethinking Humanism in an age of Religious Revitalism

Henk Manschot and Caroline Suranksy

Introduction

Modernity and humanism have been blood relations, particularly since the Enlightenment. They share the same basic values such as autonomy, civil equality before the Law and democracy. Both defend the separation of church and state and advocate a secular public sphere and public morality as solid foundations for a peaceful society. Modern humanism and secularism seem to presuppose and legitimize each other reciprocally. However, in the past decennia, the project of modernity has increasingly come under siege and its key values are challenged from many perspectives. There are philosophical and theological critiques, as well as challenges from political theory. Fundamental questions have been raised from within diverging political and religious movements, particularly from non-western locations. Some already argue that there is a need for a post-secular society (see Habermas 2006, Abeysekara 2008).

With modernity in dispute, modern humanism too seems indeed challenged to rethink its own relationship with modernity. This is particularly so in terms of the separation of church and state and the incongruity of the secular and the religious, something that modern humanism so far has considered to be fundamental for modern society. In this article, we wish to contribute to a critical reflection on these issues and propose to rethink the relationship between secularism and humanism.

Post-modern secularism? Situating the debate

A steady flow of studies of the secular that appeared in the last few years[2] suggests that the relationship between religion and politics is undergoing fundamental changes. This proposition is nourished by critical debate from at least three different angles.

The first debate is both historical and sociological. Here it is argued that religion plays an increasingly significant role in politics, global or otherwise. The scale and intensity of this phenomenon appears to surprise many. Habermas for instance, concludes that 'the Occident's own image of modernity seems (..) to undergo a switchover: the 'normal' model for the future of all other cultures suddenly becomes a special-case scenario.' (Habermas 2006, 2)

In a global context, Europe appears to be the exception, rather than the norm. Habermas believes that this 'gestalt switch' therefore forces Europe to critically reconsider modernity's key concepts and their contemporary interpretations. The generally accepted opinion that assumed that modern and rational mentalities would gradually gain more momentum and restrict religious influence towards the personal and private sphere, can no longer be maintained. Thus, the need to rethink the meaning of religions and secularism has become necessary.

The nature of the second debate is more political and fed by Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies. As the name Postcolonial indicates, these studies are concerned with the development of a critical perspective on the current situation from a postcolonial viewpoint. Key concepts which stem from modern paradigms are critically reconstructed by asking to what extent these concepts are interwoven with the colonial tyranny that was the flip side of Enlightenment modernity. In the name of

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[2] See a selective list of publications at the end of this article.

secularity, the Western politics of domination and exploitation could be pursued without receiving serious criticism. This entwinement must be reconstructed if we are to understand the meaning and function of the modern distinction between the secular and the religious, and the modern concept of separating church and state.This is all the more important because in the battle for postcolonial political independence, many developing countries have called upon these values, when they opted for instance for a secular state and its related principles such as constitutionalism. However, these values were often given different meaning and significance in its postcolonial implementation. Over time many complex layers of meaning beneath the terms secular and secularism have been defined. It is essential that we understand these differences, and expound on them in order to judge them on their own merit in different contexts.

The third debate is intertwined with the Philosophy of Science and the criticism of Metaphysics. In modernity, the separation of the secular and the religious was considered strongly connected to the breakthrough of scientific knowledge. Scientific development fed the conviction that a universal knowledge of reality was possible. It was therefore considered possible that one could formulate and legitimate structural principles for the organization of society that would be unambiguous and convincing to every rationally thinking human being. Scientific rationalism provided the philosophical legitimacy for political secularism. This modern claim has been addressed in a variety of ways through philosophical reflection on the nature and impact of scientific truth. Currently, the status of scientific knowledge is considered more complex and diffuse than was previously assumed in scientism. Furthermore the role that science can play in establishing generally accepted political principles has changed as well. The modern defence of the separation of church and state and the antithesis of the secular and the religious will have to come up with other arguments in order to legitimize these claims. The assumption that the secular and the scientific go hand in hand and serve to reinforce each other seems no longer tenable. In this context the term 'post-secular' refers to philosophical debates on the possibility or impossibility of universal truth. John Rawls' statement that there can be no universally agreed basis – whether secular or religious - for political principles to be accepted in a modern heterogeneous world was the starting point of a new theory of justice (Rawls 1973). The conviction of modernity that morality and truth could be based on a universally accessible foundation lost its ground. Philosophy has recognized that it cannot make absolute claims about basic, universal foundations. The 'End of Metaphysics' and 'the Death of one moral God' has liquidated the philosophical basis of atheism as a quasi-scientific position. (Habermas 2006; Vatimo 2002).

In sum: the reality of diversity and the growing presence of religions in the public sphere worldwide; the debate about the value of the western related modern concepts of the secular for non-western, postcolonial states; and the philosophical debate around the impossibility of one overarching universal framework seem to indicate that the growing conviction that the modern framework of the relation between the secular and the religious should be rethought and redefined.

These debates on the secular-religious divide all circle around what Talal Asad has called the 'project of modernity' (Asad 2003). Modernity, he says, can best be defined as a project, or, even better, as a 'series of interlinked projects that certain people in power seek to achieve. The project aims at institutionalising a number of sometimes conflicting and often evolving principles of constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of the market and secularism' (Asad 2003, 13). In Asad's view, modernity as an historical epoch includes modernity as a political-economic project. He concludes by saying: 'I believe we must try to unpack the various assumptions on which secularism – a modern doctrine of the world in the world – is based.' (Ibidem, 15). In this article we will try to 'unpack' one such assumption that is related to the value of the secular, an assumption that came to play a crucial role in the conceptualization of modernity and the identification of humanism with secular humanism.

Two meanings of the secular? The European roots of the secular–religious divide

The current debate on the post-secular cannot be understood without a brief overview of the birthplace of the secular–religious divide. This birthplace is in pre-modern Europe, in an era that was characterized by religious wars and quarrels between, as well as within, the three monotheistic religions that were present in Europe at that time: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In order to overcome their religious impasses and dogmatic violence, a new discourse came into existence, a discourse that needed to be able to create common ground, thus enabling people from different religious orientations to live together. The key pillars of this new system were the creation of a neutral nation-state, based on constitutional law, the definition of citizenship as an equal quality for all the inhabitants in the defined region and the creation of a public domain controlled by the state. The historical experience of religious wars thus created the insight that within the domain of religious discourse there were no common values about peaceful coexistence. New non-religious qualifications and standards were elaborated, standards that in their eyes could be acceptable for every reasonable person. 'Secular' became the term to qualify these standards.

In the modern paradigm the qualification 'secular' refers to two distinct but related meanings. First of all, secular refers to the quality of the common, the public as an inclusive space for all citizens regardless of their religion or worldview. In this sense, the secular became connected to values of universality, neutrality and reasonableness. Secondly, secular is the opposite of religion. This meaning became connected to scientism and rationalism. Under their influence, the distinction between the secular and the religious became a value-loaded opposition, in which the secular represented the positive, and the religious the negative value. An a priori negative connotation became part of the meaning of religion.

The entwinement of these two meanings of the secular created not only confusion on a theoretical level, it worked out that in the nineteenth and twentieth century secularism became a worldview, even the intellectually most attractive and academically dominant worldview (Taylor 2007). The identification of both meanings, nourished the idea that being secular meant that the state in its governance and regulation of the public sphere should take a negative, restrictive and distant attitude toward religious traditions and communities, and should free the public domain from religious interference. The secular as neutral became more and more identical with a secular worldview that criticized the religious phenomenon itself. Religious traditions and communities were often seen as archaic relics of pre-modern societies, as 'false conscience', 'illusions', or 'opium of the people'. Nietzsche resumed all these different criticisms of religion (scientist, rationalist, Marxist, etc.) at the end of the nineteenth century in his famous phrase: 'God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!' (Nietzsche 2001, section 125). This phrase is often wrongly interpreted as a triumph of the secular worldview over the religious one.

One of the central topics of the secular – post-secular debate circles therefore around the following questions: Is it possible to separate the two meanings of the secular: the secular as quality of the public domain defined as a neutral space for coexistence, from the secular defined as an ethical or comprehensive non-religious worldview? And can the secular as 'common' or 'inclusive' be consistently disengaged from the secular as non or anti – religious, commonly referred to as secularism?'[3]

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[3] The post-secular debate offers different solutions to overcome this confusion. Many authors try to work out new distinctions, for instance between ethical and political secularism (Bhargava 1998). Comparable notions are 'weak' or 'inclusive secularism' (Parekh1994), or moderate secularism. But even then the problem remains that the word 'secular' continues to evoke inevitably the secular-religious opposition and cannot get rid of it despite all kinds of precautions (Bader 2007). The opposition itself cannot privilege at first glance secular values and connotations over religious ones. Again and again the criticism starts therefore by affirming that 'far from being open to all, secularism closes the doors to many communities of faith'. (Rothschild cited in Bader 2007, 104). Hence the suggestion (formulated by Veit Bader and others,) to abandon the notion of the secular as the value of the public sphere, and to replace it by the value that a large majority of political philosophers of all stripes indicate as the central pillar of a sustainable decent human society: the value of democracy. 'The right kind of distinction is not between secular and religious but between fanatics of both kinds, on the one hand, and liberal, democratic and pluralistic views, on the other.' (Bader 2007, 102).

Modern humanism and the debate on the secular

The interconnectedness of the two meanings of the secular attributed to it being characterized by the modern paradigm, is reflected to a great extent in what has come to be called modern humanism. Within modernity, humanism increasingly became the philosophical position and world view in which the values of humanity and human dignity became detached from religious connotations. From a philosophical viewpoint, humanism has grown to become dominant in modernity and seeks its support in the aforementioned criticism of religious consciousness. In the political domain it supports the interpretation of the separation of church and state in which religion is to the greatest possible extent barred from public life. It lends expression to the assumption that human values that apply equally to all human beings must be separated from individual world views, particularly from religions. To put it briefly, in the previous centuries a natural affinity has evolved between the basic principles of secularism and humanism. Modern secular humanism has therefore appointed itself, as a philosophy of life, and as the natural pendant of a secular public morality.

However, now that secularism is subjected to criticism from various sources, humanism can no longer evade the question of the extent to which this criticism also challenges the basic assumptions of secular humanism itself. Firstly, how does secular humanism respond to the fact that, as opposed to expectation, religions are not losing their power and influence but are actually gaining in significance and attractiveness? Shouldn't secular humanism recognize that, with the advent of globalization, a new situation has come into existence with regard to worldviews and religion? It has been suggested by all sides that there are noticeable changes in the form of religious consciousness worldwide. Secondly, how does secular humanism take into account the fact that the global diversity of religions and new spiritual movements in our times, is much larger and more heterogeneous than the European monotheism that served as the basic model for humanist criticism of religion? Nowadays, the umbrella term for religion also includes worldviews and religious denominations such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism and many expressions of 'indigenous cultures' that seek recognition. Finally, the aforementioned philosophical debate about the possibility and impossibility of absolute universal truths, also confronts secular humanism with new questions about the validity of the own absolute atheist standpoint.

In the light of these recent developments, various philosophers are calling upon secular humanism to reconsider its own position. The philosopher Habermas acts as a spokesperson for many when he defends the idea that secularists should disengage themselves from the idea that religions occupy a second-class position with respect to public morality. 'Religious traditions have a special power to articulate moral intuitions, especially with regard to vulnerable forms of community life.' (Habermas 2006, 10). According to Habermas, recognition of the new situation requires 'a change in mentality' and 'a self-reflective transcending of a secularist self-understanding of Modernity' (Ibidem, 15). Now that many religious and philosophical traditions and denominations encounter each other everywhere on a daily basis, they discover in daily practice that their support extends to multitudes. This situation demands a need to learn how to combine their own absolute truth claims with the right of others to conduct themselves accordingly. 'This reciprocity of expectations among citizens is what distinguishes a community integrated by constitutional values from a community segmented along the dividing lines of competing world views.' (Ibidem, 13). All philosophies of life, both secular and religious, will be required to embark on a learning process if they wish to respond adequately to current developments, according to Habermas. We fully endorse these recommendations and support the appeal to modern humanism that it should also undergo a process of fundamental rethinking with regard to the antithesis of the secular and the religious.[4]

In addition to this, we wish to pose another question. Can we go back in history to examine the ways in which humanism defended the values of inclusiveness? This was after all the first definition of the secular that was associated with the creation of a political and public space in which all people within a particular region could live together peacefully. In the historical context of European modernization this value gradually became associated with opposition to and the rejection of religions. This particular historically determined association now acts as an impediment to the very value of inclusiveness, and hinders it from being studied as a core value of the secular unfettered by the debate on religions. In the following paragraph we will return to the roots of this alternative definition of the secular. These roots also lie in pre-modernity. We wish to show that in the pre-modern period of the Renaissance movement, inclusiveness rather than opposition to religion was the topic that fed the issue of the secular.

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[4] At the University for Humanistic Studies in Utrecht the Netherlands, our colleague Peter Derkx elaborated on the idea of inclusive humanism as a set of values that can be part of secular as well as religious worldviews. (Derkx 2008; 2010).

The secular as the politics of inclusiveness: the dream of the European Renaissance

To trace the roots of the relationship between secularism and inclusion we will have to return once again to the pre-modernity of sixteenth-century Europe. This is the time in which regional cultures began to manifest themselves more emphatically. It is the time in which the first national ambitions began to emerge and conflicting denominations within Christianity began to gain ground. Simultaneously, the 'discovery' of the 'new world' – of America by Columbus, and China and the Far East by Marco Polo and Vasco da Gama – had a significant impact on the political and religious consciousness in these times. It was in this melting pot of opposing forces that war and peace, mergings and schisms, orthodoxy and heresy began to dominate daily life. It is also the time in which, in response to these developments, the cultural and political movement of the Renaissance was born: a movement that propagated a new perspective on humanity and society, and which called itself humanist.

Erasmus of Rotterdam was a key figure in this movement. He became the spokesperson of a philosophy whose aim it was to reconcile two seemingly opposing interests. On the one hand the call for recognition instigated by the upcoming 'national' identities in religious and political terms, and on the other hand, the need to maintain religious and political unity. Caught in the middle of this battle between these opposing interests, he developed a new philosophy about common humanity and human dignity, tolerance and Christian solidarity. This would allow the conflicting parties to follow the path of what he termed 'tolerantia civilis,' which means 'civic tolerance', as an alternative to violence, war and heresy. The basis for this philosophy stemmed from a rediscovery of the traditions of classical philosophy – particularly the tradition of stoic philosophy – which had played no role in the era of medieval Christianity.

Erasmus gained influence because he published these classic texts and in this way broached a source of new ideas that unleashed renewed enthusiasm and inspiration. 'Renaissance' as a term refers to the rebirth of these classical ideas. Based on this, Erasmus developed a 'humanist vision', one that in his opinion the world of his time needed desperately. He adopted, for instance, the central concept of *humanitas*, which links two important values which were embraced by Renaissance humanists. The unique dignity of each person on the simple grounds of being human is *humanitas* within its first meaning.[5] The idea that all people are members of a single human family, a fact from which they derive moral claims and duties is *humanitas* is its second meaning. The term '*inclusio*' or inclusiveness does not appear in the work of Erasmus, but it does not seem an incorrect assumption that it expresses perfectly the dual concept of *humanitas*.[6]

It is important to understand that to Erasmus and the succeeding generations of Renaissance humanists, including Montaigne and Rabelais*, humanitas* did not refer specifically to an ontological quality of the true nature of mankind. This notion refers in the first place to a moral dimension, namely the 'mission' that people, on grounds of being human, are obligated to develop a society in which they can live together peacefully. It cannot be emphasized enough, that to Renaissance humanists, the concept of *humanum* comprised neither a blueprint nor a definition of what it means to be human. *Humanum* refers to a morality that wishes to make such ideas as peace, solidarity, tolerance and *concordia* possible. No word appears as frequently in the written works of Erasmus as the stoic terms of 'tolerare' and 'tolerantia'. They are reiterated in Christian thought language and substantiated in Biblical language and integrated in many philosophical texts. Erasmus impressed upon the opposing parties that it was unacceptable for Christians to fight each other since they all

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[5] The idea of human individuality as an intrinsic value emerged at the beginning of the Renaissance, and was promoted particularly in the work of the Italian writers Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola.

[6] For his ideas see e.g.:
Erasmus, Desiderius (1517). 'Querela Pacis', in: *Opera Omnia* (A.S.D.). (1969 seq.). Tome IV - 2 (1977). French Translation: 'La complaisance de la Paix'. Translated by Jean-Claude Margolin. Published in *Guerre et paix dans la pensée d'Erasme*. Paris: Aubier-Montaigne. 1973.
Erasmus, Desiderius (1529). 'De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis', in: A.S.D. Tome I - 2 (1971). French Translation: 'Il faut donner très tôt aux enfants une éducation libérale'. Published in: Blum, Claude, André Godin, Jean-Claude Margolin et Daniel Menager (1992). *Erasme, Eloge de la Folie – Adages – Collogues – Reflexion sur l'Art,'l'Education, la Religion, la Guerre, la Philosophie – Correspondance.* Paris: Ed. Robert Laffont.
For the history of the reception of Erasmus' ideas in Europe from the XVIth century until today see: Margolin, Jean-Claude (1996). *Erasme, Précepteur de l'Europe*. Paris: Ed Julliard.

belonged to the same human race created by God. He coined the term of 'tolerantia civilis' as a practice that he recommended to cities where Lutheran or other Christian denominations deviating from Rome, acquired substantial support.

Erasmus was not looking for a universal truth with regard to 'humankind' or for a universal morality that was founded upon this concept and would apply equally to all people. Rather he sought to develop a new type of philosophy that expressed the idea of truth in terms other than orthodoxy and authority. He was convinced that differences in worldviews, and the interpretation of Christian truth, which he noted to be gaining in power, would only be capable to create a common space, a space of *concordia* and peace, through mutual consultation, tolerance, patience and dialogue. A new hermeneutic vision of the search for the interpretation of truth itself became part of this process. Erasmus recognized that this would be an essential principle if the process of *concordia* was to be given a chance of long-term survival. In retrospect, one could say that Erasmus and the Renaissance humanists advocated a form of communicative and deliberative ethics *avant la lettre*, including the central position accorded to hermeneutics, rhetoric and argumentation – *l'art de persuader* – as the right way to establish an absolute truth, applicable to the whole of society.

The adaptation of the stoic idea of *humanitas* as propagated by Erasmus does, however, have a flip side. In theory, this notion suggests that it embraces all people, but the fact is that Erasmus limited its implications and significance to the Europe of his own time, or better: his dream of a new Christian Europe. This notion would facilitate a European unity that would transcend the merely regional. It was given meaning within the dynamic of the emerging nationalisms and the search for a 'human' identity that would transcend the national. It was also in his personal life that Erasmus aimed to resolve these tensions. He called himself an 'Italian amongst Italians, a Frenchmen among the French and a German amongst the Germans, but above all, a citizen of the world: a world citizen'[7]. However, to Erasmus, the significance of the stoic term 'world citizen' did not extend beyond the European border[8].

This restrictive definition of the stoic idea of *humanitas* does not detract from the fact that in the turbulent period of pre-modernity a philosophy of society was introduced that would later serve as a framework for the politics of inclusiveness. The originally secular idea of *humanitas* became the ideal and guiding principle in a situation dominated by conflicting religious experience and opposing claims to absolute truth. One may very well be surprised that the qualification of secular is used here. We have noted, of course, that Erasmus 'Christianized' the expansive stoic notion of *humanitas*. It is true that a permanent field of tension between *humanitas* in the sense of philosophy and *humanitas* in the Christian political sense can be detected in his writings. However, in this paper we will not further explore these tensions in Erasmus' work, but rather emphasize his interpretation of *humanitas* as a philosophy of *inclusio*n, which originated in the Stoic tradition. Erasmus' idea of *humanitas* is one of deliberations, pluriformity and negotiations. The outcome of this is not limited by or dependent upon orthodoxy or the ontology of human nature. It is a deliberation in which all parties are assigned the status of participant. Erasmus proposed that a doctrine of war and peace in this world could only be a doctrine of civic tolerance.

[7] See: Erasmus, Desiderius. 'Letter to Ulrich Zwingli', in: A.S.D. Tome IV - 1. p. 75.
[8] For a concise description of Stoic Cosmopolitanism see Nussbaum, Martha C. (1997). *Cultivating Humanity. A classical defense of reform in Liberal Education.* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. Ch.2 and Nussbaum, Martha C. (1996). ' Patriotism and Cosmopolism', in: *For Love of Country?* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Modernity: a national and a universal version of inclusiveness

The idea of *humanitas* as an umbrella term occupies a crucial role in modernity. This does not imply however, that the course that was earlier pursued by the Renaissance humanists was continued. Indeed, history took a different turn.[9] Nationalist movements were given the upper hand and determined the balance of power in which religious controversies were battled out. The device: *cuius regio illius est religio* – religion follows political power - is the briefest synopsis of this reversal. Nevertheless, this development did not bring about peace. Not only did religious wars continue relentlessly, they grew more and more intense. The search for a neutral, inclusive public space took a different turn in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The secular idea of *humanitas* again came to the fore to serve as an inspiration to political philosophers. However, in this process the value of human inclusiveness became divided along two separate lines – a national and a universal one.

In political terms, the value of inclusiveness was subsequently predominantly shaped in the context of the development of the nation-state. The nation became the foremost basis of political sovereignty. National citizenship became the comprehensive identity that embraced and transcended other classifications in terms of class, gender and ethnicity within the State. *Inclusio* became exclusively confined to the members of a national community. Within the political domain, pre-eminence was assigned to rights above morality and to legislature above tradition. The sovereignty of the state implied that it was able to overrule tradition if it was considered irreconcilable with the constitution. In the political arena, a domain of national-political and juridical *inclusio* was created and reflected in the establishment of powerful national institutions. These included a legislature, a flourishing police system to maintain domestic order and a number of military institutions which served to defend the national borders as well as its interests abroad. This solid construction led to a strengthening of the idea of *inclusio* as a predominant national endeavour. Its impact was reinforced to an even greater extent when it fed into the development of national and patriotic ideologies in the nineteenth and twentieth century. At the same time, these developments also significantly strengthened national identity in the area of culture. It is clear that national inclusiveness gave rise to no less powerful forms of exclusiveness. The national borders became the borders of citizenship. Whoever did not own a 'passport' was not allowed to be part of the national community.

Parallel to this, a second notion of inclusiveness developed. This type of inclusiveness was not national, but instead, based on a universal morality which derived its form and foundation from the Enlightenment. In contrast to the nationalist view of politics, this alternative kind of morality claimed a universal validity that is set to transcend the national. This morality was claimed to be derived from human nature itself and therefore claimed to be called into existence for the benefit of all people. The subject of universal morality is humankind as a whole, no matter where human beings happen to live in the world. Humans are defined as free, reasonable and autonomous creatures, bearers of a Moral Law which had been so succinctly defined by Kant as to be inscribed in capital letters in the heart and intellect of each person. This kind of morality was inclusive in the sense that it embraced all people. It was also secular because it could be recognized by all people purely on the grounds of their susceptibility to reason (Kant 1966).

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[9] In his insightful book *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (1990), Stephen Toulmin, reconstructs a similar vision of the importance of the Humanistic ideas of the Renaissance. He demonstrates how the inclusive, cosmopolitan vision of the Renaissance was abandoned in the 17th century. A swift departure from humanism to rationalism and from practical cosmopolitanism to fanatical nationalism preoccupied by fashioning a new Europe of nations took place. The humanist insights regarding truth and knowledge were also abandoned, says Toulmin. 'The 17th century set aside the long-standing preoccupations of Renaissance humanism. In particular they disclaimed any serious interest in four different kinds of knowledge and promoted a shift in scope from oral to written knowledge, from the particular to the universal, from the local to the general and from the timely to the timeless.' (1990, 30-35). For this reason, Toulmin characterizes the 17th century as the period of the Counter Renaissance. (1990, Chapter 2).

In sum: in modern times, the secular ideal of *humanitas* became divided in two tracks. The first track was formed along the idea of *inclusion*, and was defined in terms of nation and state. This track became anchored in a broad palette of institutionalized practices. The second track was based on trans-national, 'universal' moral dimensions of human inclusiveness. In the late 18th and 19th century we witnessed the simultaneous development of the nation-state and the proclamation of a universal human morality. This was supported by a common idea of humanity which was defined by freedom, reason and individuality and which was to become the two-sided paradigm of modernity, which came into existence in Europe.

Let us now pause to reconsider the relationship between these two forms of inclusiveness. Both of these types of morality - the one in terms of nation-states and the other as a universal morality – coexisted as part of the same normative paradigm, however, the dynamics between them were very complex. From an institutional viewpoint their ways parted immediately. The nation-state derived its power from the authority it has gradually vested in its institutions. By contrast, universal morality had barely any institutionalization at its service. The discourse of universality exercised a certain power of attraction because it substantiated the moral principles of freedom, autonomy and truth which also happen to be the proclaimed moral pillars of the nation-state's institutions. By contrast, the morality of universality did not have powerful institutions at its disposal that could give it the necessary authority. For a long time, a universal morality was attributed no status other than that of a laudable idea. The national, introspective states however, showed barely any need for a universal morality in order to deal with their own domestic practices.

This situation changed however after Europe's national and secular states, after having conquered and annexed large parts of the earth, began to formulate their role in the colonies. The idea of universal morality now began to assume new political importance. The idea provided the perfect means to legitimize colonial domination by assigning itself the mission to transform 'primitive' peoples into civilized human beings. Universal morality established proof for the theory that the colonized people were not yet full-fledged human beings in the sense of this morality.[10] This conviction slowly grew to form the heart of the civilization offensive that was led by the enlightened bourgeoisie who considered themselves to be superior. In this context, the status of the indigenous colonized people with regards to citizenship became a difficult subject. Nevertheless, the practice of civilization appeared to work very well without this problem being resolved. However, other than by playing this 'nationalized' role, universal morality was actually little more than an enlightened idea. It lacked the power and ability to curb any violations of morality, other than by words alone. It is not surprising that in the nineteenth century Marx along other prominent critics, unmasked this kind of morality as the ideology of the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie. According to Marx, 'the ruling ideas are nothing but the ideas of the ruling class'. Universal morality was not immune to the reproach that it, consciously or unconsciously, had become the accomplice to capitalist domination and the nationalist State. In opposition to this bourgeois morality, Marx preached a new kind of universalism; the universalism of International Solidarity.

It was not until the twentieth century that universal morality became slightly more influential within the political domain, when after the disastrous experience of two nationalist-inspired world wars, people began to seek a means to escape nationalist violence. Until today, the establishment of the United Nations and the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute the most widely supported but not undisputed charter of a worldwide human morality.

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[10] A troublesome fact that in Kant's own work the strong articulation of a universal human morality goes hand in hand with a nationalist and sometimes even racist anthropology becomes a new source of critical suspicion in many post-colonial studies. See, for instance, the work of the African-American philosopher Emmanuel Eze (1997, 117-119). He extensively cites Kant's anthropological conviction that Americans, Amerindians, Africans and Hindus all share an incapacity for moral maturity attributed to their proximity to nature. In tune with the naturalist and philosophical discourse of his time, Kant claimed that inhabitants of the hotter zones of the world are in general idle and lazy and lacked motivational force: incapacities that can only be remedied by good governance, education and disciplinary force. These descriptions strongly contrast with Kant's description of the national qualities of the civilized nations of England, France and Germany which he mentioned in his work *Anthopologie im Pragmatischer Hinsicht (1797)* in a section entitled 'The characters of nations'. Walter D. Mignolo (2002) integrates these critical comments in his plea for a new, non-Eurocentric critical and dialogical idea of cosmopolitanism.

Conclusion

From this brief synopsis of modern history we can conclude that the value of inclusiveness led to complex and often contradictory dynamics within the context of modernity. In these dynamics, two domains were created that have come to be disconnected from one another: the nation-state as the matrix of political inclusiveness and universal morality as a matrix of moral inclusiveness. Under the manifest antithesis of the secular versus the religious that has been analyzed above, modernity hid a second and less discernable issue which was associated with the secular, namely the antithesis of political/national versus moral/universal inclusiveness. This dual development that has been assigned the value of *inclusio*n in modernity has come in desperate need of rethinking and re-evaluation. Against this background, we appeal to humanists to once again explore alternative meanings of the secular that express the values and politics of inclusiveness. In addition, we believe that we need to question the significance of the idea of the secular in our contemporary world, a world in which globalization, the emergence of new nationalist tendencies and the versatility of intercultural dynamics demand a new 'post-modern' culture and politics of inclusiveness.

If we take this alternative definition of the secular as a point of departure, we can start to re-imagine the role and contribution of religions to co-exist in diversity. The key question with regard to religion will no longer address the truth or untruth of religious worldviews. Rather the key question becomes: how can, within the context of globalization, world views – both secular and religious – contribute to the creation of a public space in which people from different cultures and world views can establish a society together in which they all can flourish. In this new form of secular humanism, dialogue and pluralism would be key values. In our new found proximity and interrelatedness, we also realize that diversity has the potential to become a source of conflict and aggression in every domain of human coexistence. By critically rethinking its roots, we propose that humanism can contribute to the debate on the secular and re-explore the interconnectedness between the tradition of the secular, and the tradition of the value of inclusiveness.

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