

"Secularism is a Fundamentalism! The background to a problematic claim",
in *Telos* 148 (Fall 2009), 39-53

Secularism is a fundamentalism!

The background to a problematic claim

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These years, the claim in the title of this article is heard more and more frequently. It often comes from religious persons who are themselves target of attacks for fundamentalism. They feel the urge to pay back in the same currency. People claiming secularism also, so they claim, stick to a point of view and this is in itself deemed fundamentalism, the religious person claims. It plays no role which character the point of view in question has – the very fact that it is claimed is sufficient to denounce it as fundamentalism. This is a smart strategy – for if it is fundamentalism merely to have a point of view, then a pleasant darkness is constructed in which all cows become grey – where alle points of view become equally legitimate. "Fundamentalism" ceases to mean anything precise – and thus the criticism of certain radically religious points-of-view become diluted. For in that case, we are all fundamentalists to the extent that we seriously mean anything at all.ⁱ

It is only possible, however, to claim that secularism is a fundamentalism by closing your eyes for basic differences. Fundamentalism refers to a specific type of religious practice according to special holy writings a non-negotiable status where the text must be read and followed in practice in a literal way. Groupings of this kind are well known from Christianity and Islam – they often appear in rather recent currents in these old religions, currents which see their own religious tradition as desolate and devoid of spirit. For that reason, tradition needs to be revived by means of a return go sources and a new, more literal and faithful belief in the writings. In Islam we know, e.g., wahhabists and salafist, none of which go back more than a couple of centuries (the Muslim Brotherhood, e.g., dates from 1928); in Christianity, many of the American fundamentalist sects are not much older than a century ("Dispensationalism", for instance, dates from late 19. century). Thus, it is a normal part of extensive, old text religions that they now and then give rise to reformist fundamentalist currents insisting på a firm and faithful new reading of the holy texts.ⁱⁱ These holy writings are most often strongly heterogeneous texts, comprising claims about the existence of sacred beings, narratives about the origin and ontological status of world and mankind along with directives for human life of very differing degrees of generality, ranging from general demands for faith and prayer and to very specific demands of juridical and moral kinds, e.g. types of food, dress, actions not permitted, inheritance laws, punishments, treatment of non-believers, etc. If you claim that all these different aspects of your holy text must be understood and obeyed literally, then you are a fundamentalist.

It follows from this that secularism cannot possibly be a fundamentalism. Secularism does not point to any body of sacred writings, it does not refer to revealed knowledge, and it has no claim about the existence or non-existence of gods, demons, or other suprasensible beings. It has no ontological claims about the deepest fundament of

the world. It does not provide detailed behavioral codices for any congregation. Secularism, in general, has no congregation. Secularism is merely a social, political doctrine which has certain claims about how society can be formed so that different believers and non-believers may live together. It claims that this is optimally possible if the political system is not, in itself, religiously motivated and is not constructed after the directives of any of the competing deities. Secularism therefore only demands a very little, but decisive contribution from the citizens living in a secular society – namely that they tolerate the existence of widely different forms of belief and non-belief which shall coexist.ⁱⁱⁱ Secularism may even be said to be supported by a certain amount of empirical evidence – religions tensions in the democratic societies which have experimented with secularism during the recent centuries have lessened considerably compared to the same societies before that. Secularism is thus a political principle whose pragmatism effects are supported by a certain empirical material.^{iv}

It is thus very important to understand that secularism does not support any doctrine about the existence or non-existence of gods or related beings. It can not make any claims about that. It only pronounces about the political structuring of modern societies – it has no idea about whether the world is created or not, whether revealed, sacred texts exist or which values individuals may chose to orient their lives after. In a certain sense, secularism is a meta-value or a meta-principle which deals with the regulation of the meeting between different values. It does not demand any specific type of behavior but provides a frame only for the meeting between different values and behaviours.

This is why it is basically wrong to put secularism and fundamentalism on equal footing. Even if you support secularism very firmly, you do not become a fundamentalism for that reason. But how have things developed in a way such that classical Enlightenment positions – just like that of the Danish daily *Politiken* – suddenly find themselves called to claim that secularism and religion is the same thing?

My hypothesis is that it has its roots in the spreading of a specific notion of *culture* in public debate. Take a look back on the political left and its many analyses of societies, ideologies, and politics 20-30 years ago. Then, the talk was about economics, ideology, politics, social structures, history, geography, resources and much else in its strivings to understand situations – but only rarely "culture". In our days, this has tipped completely. Now the talk is almost only about different groups, countries or even civilizations in terms of their "culture" – and if other aspects are involved, "culture" is most often given priority in the explanations. The concept of "culture" has achieved status as the deepest level of explanation when the thoughts, ideas, motives, habits, and acts of peoples are described.

How in the whole wide world has this happened? Nowhere on the political left has there been a large debate during the last 30 years opposing proponents for "society" and "culture", respectively, and where the latter ended up victorious. The concept of culture has ever so slowly sneaked into the discussion and bodysnatched large part of the once so critical left. Now, "culture" is probably one of the most ambiguous words in language and it is well known that it may mean almost anything from yeast over agriculture to habits, the arts, personal and refined behaviour. But the use of the word which has perverted the debate is a specific one. Here, culture refers to a group of human beings sharing a set of values which determines their access to the world. The

grammatical form "a culture" is characteristic for this use of the word and is used as if it is a given thing that such groups exist and are easily distinguished from one another. Culture in this sense of the word is supposed to form homogeneous bubbles where the individuals trapped in one bubble share the same fundamental values and view of the world. In this understanding of culture you can only understand and access world and society when you shape them through the optics of your culture. Thus, culture is more basic than the individual, and culture thus faces other cultures forming similar closed bubbles, homogeneous inside and heterogeneous outside. There is no place outside of culture from where the different cultures may be compared or judged, and for this reason their "set of values" are incommensurable and equally valid. The celebration of human sacrifice, war, stoning and hands cut off is one set of values, the striving for art, science, and democracy is another, and it is impossible to claim one is superior to the other. This concept of culture thus also claims the unchangeable character of culture – both as a fact and as a norm. It exaggerates dramatically the differences between cultures, outward, and diminishes the differences within culture, inward. Cultural change is thus seen as degeneration, and it is presumed natural that cultures exert mechanisms which must prevent individuals from changing culture, mixing it with others or jumping to another culture. This concept of culture thus agrees with the most conservative forces in a given culture, claiming the right to call individuals to order who belong to the group but does not practice the culture correctly, sufficiently consequent or to a sufficient degree.^v

It is an important task for the history of ideas to trace the development of this concept of culture. It has, of course, an obvious root in Herder and his idea of the nation as an organic being and a fundamental destiny, and the romantic nationalisms of the 19th century constitutes a strong variant of this notion of culture. The political history of nationalism is rather well-charted, cf. Gellner 2006. The concept also has, however, a left wing version which is more recent and less well known – but which is informed, among other influences, by a certain variant of the anthropological concept of culture. Anthropology and ethnology had, it is well-known, to turn away from the tendency of the discipline to evolutionism and the claim that the white man was the end of evolution and all other societies correlatively to be seen as more or less primitive earlier stages and where the concepts of "race" and "culture" were used interchangeably. Instead, a sober methodology was assumed where the field worker should strive to bracket his or her own prejudices and neutrally chart and analyze the findings. In the study of different societies, this method naturally showed to be a great progress. In certain parts of anthropology, this sound methodology was given, however, an ontological interpretation: cultures are necessarily fundamentally autonomous, unique, and incommensurable. From Radcliffe-Brown and structure-functionalism a tradition for radical holism has been thriving in parts of anthropology claiming that cultures are organism-like, self-organizing structures, closed around themselves. In certain periods, other cultures might even play the role of utopian ideals as a basis for criticism of one own's culture – famous is Margaret Mead's use of Oceania for attacking Western sexual mores in *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Mead's friend Ruth Benedict framed the anthropological concept of culture in her highly influential *Patterns of Culture* (1934) which has been reprinted in numerous circulations to this day and enjoyed the status of a standard text book.^{vi} The book had the noble aim of arguing against contemporary racism – but like many others she ended up, arguing against the idea of the roots of culture in racial biology, absolutizing the

differences on the cultural level instead. Cultures were "cultural patterns", each culture had its own distinct "personality" which may only be understood on its own premisses. The absolute differences between races claimed by racism were replaced with equally absolute differences between cultures. Zygmunt Bauman has fruitfully pointed to the similarities between racism and this new doctrine about the absolute cultural difference between people. The latter may suitably be called "culturalism".

On the Western left, there has always been a number of different ideas about the basis of criticism – one was Marxism in its communist and social democrat variants which in different forms saw the economical issue of distribution as the decisive point. A constant undercurrent, however, of culturalist and vitalist alternatives tended to see economics as less important and chose to focus instead upon cultural issues of life forms. The vitalist critique of bourgeois society did not attack the basic economical and political structures like Marxism – instead it attacked the bourgeois life style, the bourgeois "culture". Doing this, it was strongly related to conservative criticism which also attacked bourgeois values – both assumed the decisive issue was not to see the bourgeoisie as the class responsible for capitalism as an economical system – but to attack the very bourgeois culture and life form to replace it with another. Bourgeois life was supposed to be shallow, superficial, one-dimensional, inauthentic – and a more authentic life should be the basis of critique rather than the mere redistribution of wealth. This idea came to the fore on the left in the years around 1968 where the working classes of the West enjoyed the benefits of an unprecedented economic boom and economical issues thus might seem less relevant. It is well known how Marxism in the decades after that withered away as intellectual framework, both in its university variants in the West and as "realized socialism" in most countries around the globe. And what was left for the left other than the concept of "culture"? The baby boomers had experimented with a "counter culture" which primary aim was not a political or economical struggle but rather a vitalist struggle in terms of dress codes, food habits, consumption, life style, travels, music, metaphysics – exactly all these "set of values" described by anthropologists.^{vii} The counter culture of the baby boomers had disappointingly little real political impact but rather provided a new set of Bourdieuan "distinctions" for a new academic elite whereby it was possible to distinguish oneself from ordinary, inauthentic people, while capitalism developed further without any hindrance.^{viii} This implies, however, that when Marxism along with a whole body of sophisticated theory withered away, only this vulgar version of the anthropological concept of "culture" was left on the left – without any similarly refined body of theory, it must be added. It seems like this concept of culture slowly took over the place of Marxism during the 80's and 90's without it being explicitly discussed or noticed to any larger extent.

This is how the left gradually became "multicultural"^{ix} which led it to embrace a long series of anti-enlightenment ideas which it had earlier attacked fiercely. But it is a decisive peculiarity without which the actual political tensions may not be understood, that this concept of (multi-)culture has exactly the same structure as that of reborn right-wing nationalism and its ideas of national culture. Both celebrate the idea of culture as the homogenous set of values which comes before the individual and which has the right to lead and punish the individual if it does not conform. The right-wing version of this concept of culture is a revival of 19. century nationalism and conceives of the bubble of culture as something fitting a group of people inhabiting a territory – typically a nation

state. The left wing version celebrates the very same homogenous cultural bubbles, only claiming that they may be smaller and can and must thrive in parallel on the same territory but without in any way to accommodate to the presence of other such bubbles. That is, without any secularism providing a framework for their coexistence. Quite on the contrary, this version of (multi-)culturalism may celebrate the pluralizing of law so that the single group must have the possibilities of introducing its own law and courts holding for the group members only,^x just like the principles of enlightenment and human rights are not universal but must be shaped to fit culturalist demands. These rights pertain to individuals, but in culturalism, the rights of cultures are seen as more basic than individual rights which must consequently yield in cases of clashes between the two. In Denmark we heard such demands in the debate around the Danish caricatures of Muhammed where it was claimed that the constitutional freedom of speech (paragraph 77 in the Danish constitution, corresponding to the American First Amendment) must be restricted because of Islamist demands.^{xi} In such cases, it is not the enlightenment and secularist principle of toleration which is maintained. Here, the party supposed to tolerate other parties is the one which might otherwise be shocked by the strange customs of other parties. Instead, a principle of "respect" is invoked, according to which other persons and cultures may be forced to respect central rules and ideas in the single culture – such as the muslim prohibition against pictures of the prophet. Here, the party supposed to show "respect" is not the party which may otherwise be shocked, but the party with other parties might see as shocking. The tolerant party must inhibit its own tendency to be shocked – the respectful party must yield to the demands of other easy-to-shock parties. This is why toleration and respect are not the same thing, even if they are often identified in the passing when people try to find an easy cure against religious and cultural tensions. Toleration is a demand to the party which might otherwise be shocked – respect is a demand to the party which might otherwise cause other parties to be shocked. This is why the demand of toleration is intimately connected to the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech – while the demand for respect, quite opposite, is connected to demands for limits to the freedom of speech and of religion. For the time being, radical versions of islam is most aggressive regarding this "respect" – thus, in the Rushdie case, the Theo van Gogh case in Holland, the Mohammed crisis in Denmark, the Pope case in Germany and Italy – but also the Christian fundamentalism in the States and its demand of "creation science" being taught in biology classes has the same character.^{xii}

It is very important to emphasize that the concept of culture maintained on the Nationalist Right^{xiii} and on the multiculturalist Left are very closely related. In both cases, culture is seen as preceding individuals, culture is seen as something essentially static, it is seen as something venerable to be protected, and it is seen as an entity which should in itself form the basis for the allocation of political rights and privileges on group level. The difference between the two merely pertains to the distribution of cultures on the territory. In both cases the basic counterargument is: one group's privileges is another group's repression. The tension between the two types of culturalism, national culturalism and multiculturalism, is a war between brothers and does not constitute the basic opposition in actual politics. That opposition, instead, is to be found between the culturalism of these two parties (mono or multi) on the one hand, and political liberalism and its emphasis on the individual and democratic institutions, on the other hand. Both of these culturalist currents are thus in a deep sense of the word conservative and aimed

against individual human rights. None of them are concerned with the decisive issue of apostasy – which even relatively mild versions of Islam is prohibited and is punished in severe ways, ranging from loss of rights to imprisonment and, in extreme cases, death. The human rights principle of freedom of religion is thus silently reinterpreted so as to cover the right of groups – “cultures” – to cultivate their religion (including forcing individuals to submission with different means) – while it no longer concerns the right of individuals to choose, change or even abandon religion. In this Newspeak reinterpretation, widespread in the debate, freedom of religion means exactly the opposite: the freedom of religious authorities to repress individuals.

In culturalism on both political wings, human rights and democracy are not seen as universal and “thin” structures which only furnish a frame for the life and choices of individuals – quite on the contrary, they are seen as a deplorable Ersatz religion which sanctifies human beings instead of God. Such a doctrine may be found in very different religious groups, such as right wing Christian groups on the one hand and al-Qaeda on the other. The left wing version of these attacks on human rights is that human rights and democracy are merely particular “Western values” which imperialist West seeks to force onto other cultures – thus making universalism and totalitarianism one and the same thing. The connection to the anthropological concept of culture can be seen from the fact that none other than the American Anthropological Association protested in 1947 against the preparation of the 1948 United Nations Human Rights Charter with culturalist arguments (Harrison 2006, p. 8). The protest was aimed at the UN Human Rights Commission and claimed that “It must also take into full account the individual as member of the social group of which he is a part, whose sanctioned modes of life shape his behavior, and with whose fate his own is thus inextricably bound.” (American Anthropological Association 1947). As is evident – “inextricably” – this claim does not include the possibility for the individual to leave or change his culture. In these years, a similar campaign is waged in the UN to change the Human Rights Charter by the addition of a paragraph which criminalizes critique of religions. The conference organization of the Islamic countries OIC has through many years repeatedly proposed such a paragraph. The instrumentalization of the Danish caricature crisis by the Arab world must be seen in this context: that crisis was instrumental in the campaign for such a prohibition. Related demands are now seen in the cross-religious “high-level” initiative *Alliance of Civilizations* initiated by former UN general secretary Kofi Annan including Christians, Muslims, and Jews, led by former Iran president Khatami (who as a president supported death penalty for homosexuality). The group presented a much-discussed report of the same name Nov. 13th 2006 claiming that the actual tensions between Islamic and Western countries are purely political and has nothing to do with religion.^{xiv}

The vulgar version of the anthropological concept of culture is dangerous because it tends to depoliticize issues which are essentially political. Political ideologies are necessarily partial – liberalism, conservatism, social liberalism, social democracy, socialism, etc. are posed against each other – even if they (as a rule) stand together on a more basic level where they turn against fascism, communism, Islamism, and other totalitarianisms. But if a political current is categorized as “culture” it is immediately preserved and protected against criticism – it is no longer seen as one, partial and debatable point of view among others. Because according to culturalism, cultures are organic, irreducible entities worthy of protection. Thus, cultures have right to exist, they

must be respected, they can claim privileges, and they have the right to unchanged survival. This is, in fact, the tourist's descending gaze on the natives which must be there to supply an experience of "difference", "authenticity", and "otherness" – the tourist busily forgetting them when the post card has been mailed and he is safely back home. If, for instance, a political current like Islamism (which in all its different reformist, revolutionary, and terrorist variants agree on claiming a society constructed on Islamic political principles) is categorized as "culture", then it becomes immediately exempted from critique.^{xv} Hence, political criticism of islamism may be discarded as "Islamophobia" or "racism" because it does not "respect" a "culture". Nazism attempted something similar, claiming to continue an age-old Germanic culture, but at that time, left wing critics were better equipped to look through the nonsense. Now extreme islamist currents like wahhabism, salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood (with its direct influences from the European fascisms) may be preserved with the "culture" argument: these currents are not political programs but rather "cultures" which must not be attacked. But as soon as "culture" enters the field of politics, it becomes exactly as debatable and open to criticism as any other organization, grouping, party, or current which makes political demands. And priests, clerks, imams of all sorts do not have a single grain more demand for respect than any other person, just because they use divine curses in their political discourse.

Religiously motivated policies may use this escape to avoid criticism because the vulgar anthropological concept of culture has a certain affinity to religion. In many of the societies studied by classic anthropology, the different distinctions, institutions, and modularisations in later high cultures were unknown – such as the distinctions between religion, politics, science, arts, etc. In these societies, most often one single world picture prevailed where religious ideas occupied central position (even if the tendency of anthropology to homogenize intracultural differences probably was not always without effect). This gave rise to the idea that religion constitutes the very basis for the culture of a given society, so that other cultural levels only mirror that of religion – so to speak the mirror version of the vulgar Marxist idea of the economic basis of society. If you buy the vulgar anthropological concept of culture, religious ideas have a privileged status and are particularly apt to be preserved as "culture", no matter which horrible ideas, demands, and consequences are implied by them. A sober understanding of societies would rather stop seeking for one basic level which everything else reflects – and face the much more complicated issue of trying to grasp the interplay between sociology, politics, religion, culture, economics, science, language, history, biogeography, etc. – which may vary considerably from one society to another.

The sneaking religiousification of political discourse by means of the vulgar anthropological concept of culture may be seen quite directly in some cases. Very often, the argument is made that the problem of the West is that we are unable to meet "the Other" or even "the radically Other". Now I have never encountered the "radically Other", and I seriously doubt it exists anywhere in the universe. All known cultures are created by human beings which possess a large biological uniformity – even if an impressive cultural variation has indeed been developed. You can easily meet something other – other ways of eating, governing, exchanging and dressing – but never anything "radically Other". The awe-inspiring capital O is telling – the very concept of the "radically Other" is imported from science of religion and from theology. The concept

originates in the German Rudolf Otto in the 1910's and his interpretation of religion as such as built on the encounter with "das ganz Andere", the "radically Other" – the sacred, the divine, the holy^{xvi}. This "radically Other" is an example of modern syncretism between religions (it holds for all religions, in Otto's doctrine) and shows how religious the thoughtless idea of "respect" for "other cultures" is – in contradistinction to the Enlightenment idea of toleration.^{xvii}

The new emphasis on religion and culture in the explanation of the behaviours of human groups constitute a decisive step backwards, also in terms of science. By the phrase "set of values" it is often presupposed that no matter which combination of value ideas some group might decide to fancy, it would give rise to a viable culture. It is as if politics did not possess its own structures and constraints, not reducible to "culture"; it is as if economical relations and laws did not play a central role in the understanding of a society and its possibilities. The proponents for the hard concept of culture thus presuppose that politics, economy, sociology and so on are nothing but a freely variable surface to the basic choice of religious "values" in a society – a strongly idealist hypothesis, in fact. For that reason, the hard concept of culture tends to occult completely the fact that different "cultures" may be compared after criteria such as whether their economy, politics, bureaucracy, production of knowledge functions – criteria which are not themselves "cultural". Maybe certain cultural patterns participate in preventing certain societies to become democratic, wealthy, and enlightened – a Weberian thought which for the time being is investigated by the "Culture Matters" project in the US. Here, culture in the anthropological use of the word *does* mean a lot for a society – but without the vulgarizations of culturalism and its ideals of the closedness and relativism of cultures. Quite on the contrary, it may be researched which aspects of culture support economical and political development and which do not.

The basic, actual, political issue in this context is of course the growing fundamentalism in many different religious groups and the threat against basic democratic and enlightened principles they constitute. But an acute higher-level problem among intellectuals of the West is that culturalism in politics, both in its right wing and left wing variants, accept fundamentalisms on the basis of the vulgar anthropological concept of culture. Culturalism completely lacks intellectual tools to distinguish so different currents as fundamentalism and secularism. It can not distinguish faith and knowledge, religion and science. It can not distinguish between democratic and totalitarian politics. All in all, it constitutes a major political step back which threatens to erode 250 years of Enlightenment and open the door to neverending religious wars.

As to this particular concept of culture, the conclusion must be: Down with Culture!

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ⁱ This rhetorical trick corresponds to the argument that science is but another form of belief: the concept of science is diluted, and sooner or later any claim can pass for being equally scientific. The leading Danish daily *Politiken* – formerly an Enlightenment bastion – as also produced this argument, presented by the former rationalist Peter Wivel in the so-called "Politiken comment" January 3rd 2007 under the title "Science rests on belief". Here theory, hypothesis, and faith are made into one and the same thing – of course under the headline of "faith". Thereby all differences between literal belief in revelations and holy books on the one hand and critical construction and investigation of hypotheses and theories on the other hand are obliterated – just like the difference between the corresponding institutions, churches and universities, is swept away.

ⁱⁱ This is also why fundamentalists may portray themselves as adherents of "reform" of religion – without this indicating any movements towards democracy and secularism, quite on the contrary. A prominent example on this strategy is the "reformist" "Euro-islamist" Tariq Ramadan, see Fourest 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ Thus secularism is closely connected to the Enlightenment tradition for tolerance as well as to democracy and human rights (especially freedom of belief and freedom of speech). The very notion of "secularism" is due to the Englishman G.J. Holyoake who uses it for the first time in the 1840's and subsequently develops the concept in *The Principles of Secularism* (1860) and *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* (1896). Holyoake supposed "... the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism or the Bible." (1860, p. 17).

^{iv} Just like secularism is not atheist – it has no stance on that issue – it does not in any way preclude public religious manifestations. In the current anti-secular crusade it is often claimed that secularism demands that religions withdraw from the public sphere. This is not correct. In a secular state, religions may, just like any other social group, organize demonstrations, make publicity, publish books, magazines and newspapers, participate in public discussions. They may even form parties (like the European Christian Democrat Parties) running for democratic elections. In a Danish context, theologians have in many periods played very central roles in public debate. Secularism has nothing to say against this – what it claims is that religious arguments have no privileged role at all and that public space and the norms for behaviour in that space can not be dictated by any religion.

^v Thus, it is a conception of "cultures" which systematically overlooks how societies and groups of human beings are constantly in a some degree of evolution, internal

disagreement, exchange, and hybridization. The inherent conservatism in this notion of culture has, it is strange, not led the political left to find it inedible.

^{vi} See for instance the following judgment in the charting of the history of anthropology: "While Tylor's definition [of culture, fs] has remained at the heart of considerations of culture in the abstract, the perspective which emerged as most crucial to its position as the quintessential anthropological concept was that of Ruth Benedict. The key text is her *Patterns of Culture ...*" (Barnard 2000, 102)

^{vii} The 68 icon Herbert Marcuse incarnates this turn. As a hybrid between Heidegger and the Frankfurt school, he left Marxism behind to the benefit of a criticism of "one-dimensionality" in the culture of Western societies.

^{viii} As described by Heath and Potter in *Nation of Rebels*.

^{ix} This unfortunate concept is almost as unprecise as the notion of culture. Does it mean that different cultures may co-exist if they assume the rule of law, democracy and secularism as a common frame, then it is a completely different claim than the ideas that cultures may co-exist unmodified and without such a framework. The latter is the idea of "strong" multiculturalism and it is that version which is discussed here.

^x It requires a considerable amount of political naivety not to see the dangers in a juridical pluralism of this sort. Obviously, it will lead to different rights for different individuals in the same society (cf. the muslim ideas of half inheritance for women only, prohibition of interests, the husband's legal right to marital violence, and the prohibition and punishment of apostasy). Even more problematic than that, any system of law courts of course presuppose the existence of a police force to grant that the decisions of the courts are kept. A pluralization of law necessarily implies the pluralization of the police force and consequently the partitioning of the state's "monopoly of violence" (Weber) and its sovereignty on its territory. Islamist groupings have realized this and have begun to argue for and in some cases to create a religious police supposed to grant the observation of islamic norms in certain immigrant neighborhoods in Western Europe. In situations of tension it is hardly a good thing that different groups of citizens thus will have access to each their standing armies of militias. The implications of such policies in peacetime can be seen in Malaysia with a segregation bordering to apartheid. In wartime you can look to the example of Bosnia.

^{xi} Even if such claims from islamic countries were numerous through the crisis, and even if the 12 draughtsmen must hide in protection against death threats, most of the Danish left wing, including the traditionally Enlightenment daily *Politiken* claimed the case was not at all about freedom of speech. Instead, the case was seen as a purely Danish issue, and the main point was PM Fogh's tackling of the case and the stance pro or con him – as if it was not rather unimportant on a larger scale who is PM in a country the size of half of London. This should be mentioned here, because it shows how a culturalist focus on Denmark only makes the international, cosmopolitical aspects of the case vanish. Just like the extreme Danish right, obsessed with Denmark only, the Danish left saw the case in a purely Danish perspective and thus missed the principal, international aspects of the case: pro or con freedom of speech. The American press, however, is not blamefree – its scared refusal to reprint the caricatures is a shameful case of not living up to the principal issues of Western democracy.

^{xii} "Respect" is also a case of polysemy. "Respect" may mean a recognition of a person or a group having achieved something prizable – and it may mean a fear that you feel toward a person or group with the ability to hurt you. The kind of "respect" which is called for in connection to the different islamist threats of course has the latter character and thus has nothing to do with real recognition. It is more related to mafia "respect" arising from offers you can not refuse.

^{xiii} In Denmark, e.g., by the so-called "Danish People's Party", part of the parliamentary basis of the actual government and appealing to 10-15% of the electorate.

^{xiv} It is too rarely emphasized that the pressure on Denmark and the burning of Danish embassies in Islamic countries around February 1st 2006 coincided with a fateful vote in the British House of Commons. January 31st, the Blair government was on the brink of confirming a radical prohibition against many kinds of religious criticism, the so-called "Racial and Religious Hatred Bill", effectively delimiting freedom of speech in a very radical manner – and supported by radical British islamists. The House of Lords had changed the bill to avoid free-speech implications – but the majority in the House of Commons seemed to agree in voting against these changes. Blair went home early, convinced the vote was safe. He and his party's so-called "whip" had not, however, counted on a group of Labour back-benches who decided to vote against the law which fell with just one – 1 – vote. Had that bill been passed in England – the country of origin for free speech – the implications might have been disastrous in the EU, if not worldwide. The caricature crisis must be seen in this wider context – a decade-long controversy over Free Speech between islamists on the one hand and democratic principles on the other, ranging from the Rushdie case and including also the Theo van Gogh murder, the muslim campaign against the Pope, and, of course, the OIC pressure to truncate the UN Human Rights Charter.

^{xv} It is a widespread defense among non-terrorist islamists to point to the many different versions of islamism – which have different strategies for the islamization of society and also differing ideas about which domains of society should be subjected to shariah. The overall goal of islamists maintain the same principal character, however, to make (islamic) religion a basis for society instead of democracy. In the same way, there was also many different political strategies in Nazism – Hitler's (winning) strategy, it is well known, was the mildest, reformist strategy which refrained from revolution or terror but sought nazification through democratic elections. This does not, of course, make of nazism as such a democratic movement. The very existence of different strategies, among them strategies using democracy, does not prove that islamism as such can be democratic. The decisive issue is not whether you will make use of democracy to achieve your goal – but whether you will dismantle democracy or preserve it when you achieve power.

^{xvi} The revival of the concept in the identity politics context of the 1990s seems to be due to an argument by Jacques Derrida: the sacred pertaining to "le tout autre" is generalized to comprise everywhere this "tout autre" appears, including the encounter with other cultures (Derrida 1992).

^{xvii} A good example of how this meta-religious syncretism thrives within the science of religion provides Mensching's history of the science of religion (1948). He sees the whole of the development of the science of religion as one great struggle to overcome its

origins in Enlightenment and its criticism of religion. The one scholar who after all succeeds in fighting Enlightenment is exactly Rudolf Otto who decisively pushes through irrationalism in the science of religion (p. 87) by focusing on the very object of religion: the sacred (*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*). The religious scientist must, in this account, be a believer himself (otherwise he has no access to this object of religions), but at the same time his faith must aim at the sacred as such – beyond the different religious orthodoxies. Both rationalism and the orthodoxies of the single religions are, so Mensching – opponents to the religious scientist. This religious tendency within the science of religion is, of course, highly problematic and may with its antimodernity approach fascism (as in the case of Mircea Eliade).