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# Christianity, Democratisation and Secularisation in Central and Eastern Europe*

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## Introduction

An initial glance suggests that it is difficult to generalise about relationships between religion and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In the former Yugoslavia, for example, religion may be associated on the one hand with Serbian antidemocratic ethno-nationalism and on the other with Bosnian Muslim appeals to Ottoman Islam as a model of pluralism and religious toleration – features which may be considered among the prerequisites of democratic development.[1] In Poland the same Roman Catholic Church which acted as an ideological and institutional force in support of democracy against state socialism appears in the postcommunist period as an opponent of democracy when it seeks to bypass parliamentary procedures to ensure that its own position is enshrined in legislation on abortion and religious education.[2]

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the process of making sense of this confusing evidence by developing an interdisciplinary approach to the interaction between religious traditions and processes of democratisation. In particular, I would like to bring phenomenological and sociological insights to bear on the political science framework within which democratisation is usually considered. One of my contentions is that this process has been significantly hampered by assumptions about secularisation found in many analyses of democratisation, which have led either to neglect or to poor conceptualisation of the role of religion, and hence to failure both to explain existing evidence adequately, and indeed to gather appropriate evidence in the first place.

I use the term secularisation in two senses. First, I use it to refer to a prereflective assumption about the declining significance of religion in modern societies. Here, I am concerned not with the truth of this proposition, but with its social consequences, specifically the neglect of religion as a possible factor in democratisation. Second, I use it in the sense explicitly formulated by sociologists. However, the latter is only one factor contributing to the former, and both reflect wider cultural and historical forces. For example, Casanova has shown how church-state relations in northern Europe in the eighteenth century shaped 'the Enlightenment critique of religion', which has in turn influenced the development of secularisation theory.[3] As a result, Mestrovic argues, 'most social theories derived from the Enlightenment [have] held

that religion would disappear from the face of the earth with the advent of modernity'.[4]

Sociologists differ significantly in their analysis of the causes, processes and necessity of secularisation, but there is substantial agreement over its definition as 'the process in which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance' as a consequence of modernisation.[5] This definition corresponds quite closely to the popular, prereflective understanding noted above. What are likely to be lacking in popular conceptions are some of the more subtle caveats, such as Bruce's view that 'modernisation undermines religion except where the latter finds important work to do other than mediating the natural and supernatural', work which he summarises under the headings 'cultural transition' and 'cultural defence'.[6] Thus, using Bruce's categories, one might interpret the work of religion in facilitating the transition from state socialist to free market democratic societies, for example in Poland, as 'cultural transition', whereas the work of religion in legitimating the struggle for a greater Serbia would be seen as 'cultural defence'. Secularisation properly understood, it might be argued, does not lead to neglect of the role of religion in modern societies.

However, I suggest that even such a nuanced account of secularisation has diffi-culties in explaining certain features of the interaction between religion and modernity. For example, while Bruce states that religion can function both as a dependent and as an independent variable, he emphasises the former.[7] Thus he writes that the 'basic proposition' of secularisation theory is that 'modernisation causes problems for religion', but he does not investigate whether religion may provide solutions to modernity's problems.[8] Yet while societal differentiation presents problems for religion it also presents problems for modern political forms – such as democracy, which is challenged by the increased autonomy of the economic sphere from political (and ethical) control. Here religion, alongside other social movements, may provide a partial solution to modernity's problems by reintegrating economic and political spheres through ethical discourse.[9] My suggestion is that the relation-ship between religions and societies in general and in CEE in particular cannot be understood unless one is open to the possibility that religion can, as Milbank writes, 'be so "fundamental", that one cannot get behind it to either society or private experience'.[10]

Such a position need not compromise scholarly impartiality by entailing a commit-ment to the truth of any particular religious tradition, but rather requires a sensitivity to the ways in which religion may constitute, at a basic level, people's understanding of themselves, society and the world in which they live. An important illustration of this approach would be to highlight the role of religion in the self-understanding of dissident intellectuals who played a significant role in Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution and Poland's Silent Revolution. In contrast, contemporary Anglo–American sociology of religion[11] tends to concern itself only with the analysis of popular belief, rather than with its intellectual manifestations, probably on the assumption that only the former is socially consequential. It is ironic that in his major study of secularisation Bruce relates Weber's account of the social consequences of Reformation theologies, but fails to investigate contemporary analogies.[12]

The possible social and political consequences of inadequate social scientific theory are thrown into sharp relief in the work of Mestrovic, who charges modernisa-tion theories from Fukuyama to Giddens, as well as postmodernisms, with complicity in the West's failure to respond effectively to developments in CEE in general and to the crisis in Bosnia and Kosovo in particular. He argues that these theories have

contributed to a cultural climate of naive optimism and blasé indifference, especially in their failure to take 'religion and its cultural derivatives seriously'.[13] Mestrovic himself digs back into the work of Durkheim and other social theorists from the previous *fin de siècle*, arguing that their affective and collective emphases are a necessary corrective to the voluntaristic and associational models of most contemporary social theory, exemplified in Giddens' 'modernism Lite'.[14]

Beckford's review[15] of theories of the relationship between religion and advanced industrial society highlights neo-Marxist approaches which give prominence to the analysis of culture, and which may also help towards a better conceptualisation of the role of religion in democratisation. Analyses of the New Social Movements (NSMs) are particularly promising, because they suggest new understandings of and locations for democratisation as well as religion. In what Scott Lash calls the 'semiotic society'[16] culture has become a prime location for political contestation, and the struggle for democracy has extended beyond the goal of participation in the traditional institutions of industrial societies. Instead, ecological, feminist and other movements challenge the nature of relations which underpin these institutions, whether social, economic or political. However, most of these neo-Marxist theorists exclude religious groups from the category of NSM, an exclusion that Beckford rejects, and which can be connected with various kinds of secularisation assumption.

Among these theories Beckford includes Habermas' interest in NSMs, especially as developed in his *Theory of Communicative Action*.[17] Habermas' interest in NSMs can be seen as part of his career-long concern with participative democracy. This feature of his work, especially his account of the genesis and conditions of a discursive public sphere, has been developed by Jose Casanova in his *Public Religions in the Modern World*. In *Theory of Communicative Action* the ideal speech community displaces the sacred altogether, but Casanova and others[18] have argued that Habermas' concept neglects important dimensions of the sacred, and therefore challenge his account of secularisation. In particular, Habermas wrongly limits the possible roles of religion in supporting the public sphere. Instead, religion need not be confined to a rearguard action against the encroachments of modernity, nor religious morality to the conventional, in Kohlberg's terms. Rather Casanova shows that in Polish, Brazilian and American contexts religion in the guise of post-Second Vatican Council Catholicism has aided the transition from conventional to post-conventional thinking through its advocacy of the universalistic moral discourses, especially human rights. In these cases Catholicism acts as a witting agent of rationalisation without undercutting its own cultural basis, as Protestantism does unwittingly in Weber's account of rationalisation.[19]

In the light of this perception, Casanova develops a modified, differentiated version of the secularisation thesis, which is compatible with according religion a significant role in cultural and intellectual life, and hence in aspects of democratisation. Integrating this with an account of the emotional and collective dimensions of social life highlighted by Mestrovic, and the new role of culture in advanced industrial societies explored by Beckford, I hope to sketch the outlines of a sociology of religion which can help to make fuller sense of the relationships between religion and democratisation in CEE.

## Three Theories of Democratisation, and Four Roles of Religion in the Democratisation of CEE

The first stage of the argument is to outline three theories of democratisation, and to

show how while religion has tended to be neglected in their application, evidence from CEE suggests it has played and may continue to play a significant role. In their wide-raging comparative study of democratisation[20] from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth centuries Potter and colleagues outline three major theories: modernisation, elite and structural.

Roughly, according to modernisation theories, once a certain level of principally economic development is achieved, democratisation will come about. However, as Lewis argues in the same volume, while there is a correlation between social and economic development and pace of democratisation in CEE, modernisation theory fails to uncover a causal link to explain this.[21] Furthermore, only weak correlations between levels of social and economic development and democratisation are found elsewhere in the world, and during other periods of history.

Transition theories argue that the actions of political elites at key moments or crises best explain democratisation. Lewis finds more evidence in CEE to support this view,[22] but stresses that under conditions of globalisation international events play a larger role than either of these models permits, since these models are predominantly based, as is much political and social theory, on the analytic unit of the nation-state.

The structural theory emphasises the importance of social, economic and political developments over a long period of time. Arguably, this can provide a more nuanced account of democratisation, since it can accommodate a diversity of interacting factors in varying historical and cultural circumstances, in contrast to the linear trajectory with its possibly ethnocentric assumptions of unreformed modernisation theory. Together with transition theory, structural theory can help us understand why, given long-term historical conditions, democratic transitions occur at particular times.

In the volume by Potter and colleagues, *Democratization*, religion receives brief consideration in three contexts. First, in relation to Muslim societies, second, as a factor in societal cleavage, and third, in passing, as a factor in participation in the Polish general election of 1991. In the first two cases religion is seen as a negative factor in democratisation, in the third, positive, but in neither the second nor the third case, which are most relevant to CEE, is any exposition of the substantive content of religious traditions given, nor of why this should relate either positively or negatively to democratisation. In the third, the Polish case, religious practice and local church organisation are mentioned as positive factors in electoral participation, but there is no discussion of why religious tradition might play this role: it is simply mentioned as a rather puzzling and specific institutional factor. In short, religion receives little attention. Fine, if religion is not important: but in fact other scholars contest this. Patrick Michel writes of the whole region that 'religion made a significant contribution to the long process whereby Eastern Europe emerged from communism'.[23] Jan Kubik states specifically of Poland that 'all opposition groups recognised Catholic Christianity as the highest moral authority and constructed their discourses on its foundation'.[24] And Cornelia Heins argues in an East German context that 'neither punishment nor scorn, atheism nor new rituals ... could stop the democratising influence of the church, which since 1957 the SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands] had called the "last organised enemy"'.[25] The complete lack of recognition of these arguments in *Democratization* suggests that the authors operated on a fairly robust assumption that religion could not be of any great political significance, and could therefore safely be ignored.

In other cases, religion may be considered as contributing to the process of democ-

ratisation, but the substantive content of religion is ignored, on the assumption that the accidental location of religion in a particular society provides sufficient explanation of its involvement: this might be termed the 'empty vessel' approach. Sometimes such approaches make an explicit commitment to secularisation theory, for example Weclawowicz's survey of religion in Poland: 'If the imposed communist system, together with urbanization and industrialization, created the first phase of secularization of Polish society, the last years of transformation to democracy could be treated as a second phase of secularization.'[26] I shall respond to this argument by outlining four ways in which religion contributed to the development of civil society in the late communist period which argue against the 'neglect' and 'empty vessel' approaches. The argument begins in this period because an adequate account of the postcommunist period should be able to explain continuities and discontinuities with the communist period.

First, religion contributed to the development of civil society by providing an institutional space in otherwise totalitarian societies within which it was possible to organise various forms of opposition to the communist state. An example here would be the role of Lutheran churches in the GDR.[27] The East German case provides a strong counterexample to any general thesis of CEE religious revival, as falling membership and attendance seems to be a well established postwar pattern, reversed only briefly, in terms of attendance in contexts associated with political protest, in the late communist period. This is supported by evidence that citizens' movements increasingly organised independently of the Church once public space opened up.[28] But even here, the fact that the Church was in a position to provide such space in the first place requires explanation, and should not be treated as accidental. The fact that the Church was the one institution which the ruling SED found it impossible to absorb within the state's monopoly on public life may be connected to the Lutheran 'doctrine of the two kingdoms',[29] the culturally specific form of the general Christian witness to a perspective which implies judgment on the existing political order, however deferred.

Second, religion provided a symbolic resource, or fund of collective memories, which were mobilised to oppose or subvert state-imposed communist ideologies. An example here is the role of Christian symbolism in the opposition movements in Poland. Jan Kubik has described the pope's visit on 8 May 1979 in these terms, and the subsequent impact of Catholicism on the symbols and imagery of Solidarity.[30] In this role religion permeates the symbolic structure through which political reality is interpreted. Once a crude positivism is rejected, and it is accepted that we can understand social reality only through narratives and symbols, then there is no reason to relegate religion to the status of dependent variable in this context.

Third, religion fluctuated as an institutional and ideological connection with an international order, which stretched beyond both the state and the communist bloc. This is particularly evident in the case of the Catholic Church in Poland, but also relevant to the East German case where links between Lutheran churches East and West persisted despite their organisational separation in 1968, and blossomed into peace movements on both sides of the Iron Curtain.[31] In the case of the Churches, such connections are not merely international but claim to transcend time, linking past and future in an eschatological narrative reenacted at each religious service: Pope John Paul II's open-air masses in Poland provide powerful examples.

Fourth, religion functioned as an intellectual force from which opposition thinking and identities could be self-consciously constructed. Here one can point to the influence of Catholic intellectuals on KOR (the Workers' Defence Committee) in

Poland,[32] or on the members of Charter 77.[33] Even where intellectual engagement does not result in conversion in a conventional sense, it may be argued that aspects of religious thought were not merely accidentally related to but substantially constitutive of opposition thought. The Czech leader Václav Havel provides a possible example of this, for there is both external evidence of the influence of Catholic intellectuals on the group which produced Charter 77, and internal evidence in Havel's writings of the influence of the Catholic tradition of natural law. For example, Havel opposes moral relativism in the name of 'perennial' values.[34] He further states that these values are not entirely effaced by their systematic neglect, but rather that 'under the orderly surface of the life of lies ... slumbers the hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of hidden openness to truth'.[35] He contends that opposition action required a belief in the intrinsic value of standing up for the truth, which makes no sense on the kind of calculating approach to life-decisions implicit in utilitarian or rational choice theories, arguing that 'it is difficult to imagine a reasonable person embarking on such a course merely because he or she reckons that sacrifice today will bring reward tomorrow'.[36] Indeed, Havel directly invokes metaphysical reasoning in his legitimisation of opposition political action:

> It [the world] owes its internal coherence to something like a 'pre-speculative' assumption that the world functions and is generally possible at all only because there is something beyond its horizon, something beyond or above it that might escape our understanding or grasp, but, just for that reason, firmly grounds this world, bestows upon it its order and measure, and is the hidden source of all the rules, customs, commandments, prohibitions and norms that hold within it.[37]

Regardless of the philosophical merits of his position, it is of social significance insofar as it influenced Havel, who became politically influential in the Velvet Revolution and the democratisation of Czechoslovakia. As we have seen, transition theories emphasise the role of political elites, and in the absence of widespread long-standing popular protest movements, except in Poland, these assumed a particularly important role in the initial democratic transformation of CEE. Furthermore, there is some evidence that, in Poland and the Czech Republic at least, religious thought had substantial impact on these elites in the late communist period.[38] But it is also possible to argue that the churches functioned as networks for the transmission of elite ideas to the masses, which in turn enabled opposition mobilisation.[39]

Having summarised these four functions, which indicate a significant though varied role for religion in CEE in the late communist period, I shall now return to Weclawowicz's analysis of the secularisation of contemporary Poland. He points to a 1992 survey indicating that 82 per cent of Poles rejected the involvement of the Church in political life as evidence for this view. However, this evidence needs to be read alongside other indices of public opinion, such as a 1993 survey which found the Church consistently ranking alongside the army as Poland's most trusted institution, and a 1994 survey which indicated that the Church was widely perceived as the most influential institution in Polish society, ahead of parliament, the media or big business, and that opinion fairly was evenly divided as to whether this represented too much or about the right amount of power for the Church.[40] One possible interpretation of this range of evidence is that the 1992 rejection of the Church's involvement in political life represented a reaction against authoritarian action by the Church in attempting to bypass public debate and to persuade either government or people to act directly in its interests – for example on issues of religious education and

abortion, and on which political parties to vote for. It also shows that the desire for less power for the Church occurs in the context of a belief that the Church is very powerful: as a voice alongside others in a civil society, it may not be so unpopular. However, this kind of survey evidence does not enable one to make fine judgments between different aspects of political involvement. For a more adequate conceptual-isation we need to turn to Casanova's refinement of the secularisation thesis, which in turn draws on Habermas' work on the public sphere.

**Habermas and Casanova: Religion and the Public Use of Reason**

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1961)[41] Habermas argued that certain institutions[42] in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century metro-politan Western Europe gave birth to the idea of an inclusive public space, or bour-geois public sphere, in which private individuals, regardless of status, could engage in debate about matters of political, social or cultural concern. The outcome of such debates was to depend solely on the quality of argument, and not on the prestige or influence of the individual. Habermas recognised that this ideal was never achieved in practice, but held that these institutions provided a first historical intimation of a participative, egalitarian democracy based on the public exercise of reason. However, as evidence mounted of an alternative, proletarian public sphere, and of the structural dependence of the bourgeois public sphere on the exclusion of women, Habermas gradually concluded that this fading empirical ghost was too slight a basis on which to found a theory of participative democracy, and abandoned it in favour of the more philosophical analysis ultimately represented in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987). Habermas' earlier theory has nevertheless been taken up and developed particularly by feminist political theorists, who argue that something like a theory of semi-autonomous public spheres is necessary both normatively and empirically to explain the contribution of civil society to democracy.[43]

One sociologist of religion who has taken up Habermas' idea of the public sphere is José Casanova. However, in his *Public Religions in the Modern World* Casanova disputes Habermas' exclusive association of religion with conventional morality: that is (following Kohlberg) with morality governed by conformity to society's conven-tions, which lacks the autonomous reflection characteristic of postconventional morality. In fact, Casanova's empirical work shows that through its support for the development of civil society across the world in recent years religion has shown itself able to promote the kind of rational public discussion which is a prerequisite for the development of postconventional morality. This is evident particularly in the Catholic Church's advocacy of human rights discourse in Latin America, South-East Asia and CEE. Casanova then uses an account of multiple public spheres developed from Habermas to produce a new differentiated account of secularisation.

In *Public Religions in the Modern World* Casanova argues that secularisation consists of three related but distinct processes: first, the differentiation of modern societies into semi-autonomous spheres, involving the freeing of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms; second, the decline of religious beliefs and practices; and third, the marginalisation of religion into a privatised sphere. He argues that while societal differentiation is an inevitable part of the process of modernisation, the decline and privatisation of religion do not necessarily follow from it, but are contingent consequences which are dependent on other conditions, including the response of religious traditions themselves to differentiation. In this way he restores agency to religion. Empirically, he argues that in the United States,

Brazil and Poland decline has not followed from differentiation, although in Spain it has. Decisive here seems to be whether the Churches learn to embrace differentiation, indicated by support for democracy and acceptance of a new role as one voice amongst many in the public sphere. Alternatively, religion may choose the 'caesaro-papist' path of a close alliance with the state and an attempt to control the public sphere. The latter would appear to be the path to decline, followed historically by most of the Churches of Western Europe, and indeed there is evidence that the Polish Church may be moving in this direction.[44]

Casanova also differentiates the public sphere into state, political society, and civil society. He argues that church power in the first two is ultimately incompatible with democratic modernity. This is demonstrated by the collapse of the Dutch pillar system at the level of political society, and by the redundancy of establishment of the Churches in Scandinavia at the level of the state but a public role in civil society appears to be sustainable, as the reemergence of the Protestant and Catholic Churches in public debate in the USA during the 1980s suggests. In particular, the American Catholic example suggests that the best way for the Church to maintain its credibility may be to mobilise nonpartisan universalist discourses in the public sphere in support of marginalised sections of the population and human rights issues, and to strengthen pastoral and voluntary revivalist activities to support its public voice with private credibility.[45] In such a situation, a strong public voice for the Church may be one of few witnesses to the possibilities of human community and solidarity in the face of commercial and administrative pressures.

As we have seen, Casanova argues that religion can promote postconventional morality and hence democratisation, but this scheme of moral development, derived from Kohlberg, has itself been criticised for failing to account adequately for the role of emotion and culture in moral life.[46] Similar criticisms have been made of Habermas' theory as a whole in its account of moral, social and political life, especially from Durkheimian perspectives within sociology.[47] Philosophers have also made similar criticisms, J. M. Bernstein arguing that Habermas relies too much on Peirce's model of the ideal community of natural scientists, ignoring important distinctions between the natural and social worlds. In particular, whereas the natural world is rightly assumed to be indifferent to human interests and thus 'disenchanted', the social world is not, and always contains conventional and contingent elements, without which community is wrongly 'imaged as without bonds of solidarity'.[48] Bernstein also argues that Habermas misreads Durkheim's account of the sacred, since for Durkheim the sacred not only legitimates the coercive enforcement of rules in the absence of rational legitimisation, but also creates bonds, which legitimate rules apart from coercion. Thus Habermas' model can account for the logic of moral action, but not for the motivation to act in accordance with this logic.[49]

These relational and motivational difficulties centre on conceptions of human solidarity. Here an understanding of religion can help. Through its many and varied symbolic forms religion witnesses to and mediates this fundamental sense of solidarity, both diachronic and synchronic. In CEE, it is striking that it was exactly this question of the source of human solidarity that led opposition intellectuals in the late communist period to reconsider religion.[50] Mestrovic and Beckford both provide pointers to resources which can help make good the cultural and affective deficits in Habermas' account, and hence to make more sense of the relationship between religion and democratisation in CEE.

**Religion, Emotion and the Cultural Bases of Democratisation: Mestrovic, Durkheim and Beckford's Analysis of Post-Marxist Cultural Theory and New Social Movements**

Mestrovic argues that contemporary sociology in general attends too little to emotion and culture, and that these elements must be addressed in order properly to understand both the roles of religion and the prospects for democracy in CEE. Following de Tocqueville and Durkheim he argues that democracy is a tradition which needs to be 'nurtured by cultural "habits of the heart" that are found in religion, family, the community and other cultural institutions based upon compassion'.[51] In particular, whereas Weber portrays Catholicism mainly in negative contrast to the dynamic virtues of Protestantism, Mestrovic argues that 'Catholicism has a *positive* function, that it preserves culture, community and nonutilitarian individualism'.[52] However, following Lasch and Raskovic, he argues that both the West and postcommunist societies in CEE have also been influenced by modernist cultures of narcissism which breed indifference rather than compassion, and thus may in the long run be unable to sustain tolerance. He writes:

> Far from it being obvious that anti-cultural modernism can sustain tolerance, it seems that the opposite might be true: the sustained modernist contempt for tradition and culture is itself highly intolerant, and signals the contours of the postmodern future in which intolerance will be disguised as tolerance.[53]

Specifically in relation to media representations of the war in the former Yugoslavia, he describes one effect of information globalisation as 'postemotionalism', a 'neo-Orwellian mechanism ... [by] which the culture industry markets and manipulates dead emotions from history that are selectively and synthetically attached to current events'.[54] Thus compassion-fatigued viewers, unable to respond to the satellite-mediated victims of catastrophe beamed into their living rooms from across the globe, are consoled that their emotional and moral responses remain intact by their responses to Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. The cries of these victims no longer threaten, unlike those of the current victims of genocide in Kosovo. But they can interfere with our reaction to the latter, as when Serbian aggression in the 1990s is rationalised as a defensive response to atrocities committed by Nazi-supported Croatian fascists in the 1940s; or even by Ottoman Turks in the fourteenth century. There is a danger that religion, or more precisely religious essentialism, attributing stereotypical unchanging features to religions, can be invoked in this postemotional sense – as is apparent in post-Cold War rhetoric of a new global struggle between Islam and the West.

   Indeed Mestrovic himself seems to be in danger of this when he contrasts the cultural foundations of communism in Eastern Europe with those of capitalism in Western Europe. For example, in 'Explaining war in the land of Medjugorje' and *The Road From Paradise* he draws on Freud and Fromm to develop contrasts between the Virgin/mother/goddess/feminine Catholic and Orthodox cultures of Eastern Europe and the Father/Jesus/masculine Protestant cultures of Northern and Western Europe. Thus he asks:

> Could it be that communism took root in formerly Catholic and Orthodox regions of Europe precisely because of cultural affinity with the civil religions that are involved? Catholicism, the Orthodox religions, and communism all favor compassion and sympathy to a much greater extent

than will be found in the self-reliant, Protestant West. Similarly, despite
all the efforts made by the communists to outshine capitalism, in the end
communism could not change the passivity and dependency that preceded
it. In addition, the tendency towards emotion and indulgence, in the
absence of a strong super-ego, holds the potential for degeneration into
brutal violence.[55]

Aside from difficulties with Fromm's application of Freud's already problematic
psychodynamic categories to culture, and the implausibility of a cultural thesis
competing seriously with a straightforward economic explanation of communism's
economic collapse, the gross cultural stereotypes here are hard to accept, especially
the description of an entire cultural block as 'passive and dependent'. Nonetheless,
the social networks and means of communication and expression, both cognitive and
emotional, which are associated with specific cultural formations, whether shaped by
religious traditions or habits of the communist system, remain worthy of investiga-
tion, even if they are more difficult to quantify and more controversial than other
factors.

Beckford also considers approaches that place culture at the centre of social
analysis, and hence open the possibility of a richer consideration of religion. He
observes that, after Gramsci, some post-Marxist analyses of society assign a new
importance to culture, and in particular to the contestation of meaning through
culture. He argues that culture has attained this new significance for theories of social
change because in advanced industrial societies the balance of forms of production
has shifted. Work linked to the administration and reproduction of social relations
now outweighs work linked directly to material reproduction, and indeed has become
central to increasing the latter's efficiency. Thus struggles for political participation
(citizenship), higher standards of living and improved working conditions (labour)
are being eclipsed by new conflicts concerning 'the meaning and value of the social
system as a whole'.[56] These new struggles are mediated not primarily through
political parties or trade unions, but rather through new social movements (NSMs).
These he defines as 'forms of collective action and sentiment which are based on
feelings of solidarity and which engage in conflict in order to break the *meanings* of
the system of social relations in which they operate'.[57] Some examples of such new
social movements are new developments in women's movements, which have
increasingly challenged the structure of social relations and the dominant values in
society, rather than simply demanding equal rights for women. Other examples
include environmental movements, and, at least until 1989, peace movements.
Touraine has also analysed the Solidarity movement in Poland in these terms.
Touraine identifies further characteristics of NSMs as engaged in producing and
maintaining holistic diagnoses of society's problems, identifying clear opposition
groups, and developing distinctive identities.

Habermas distinguishes between two kinds of movement. First, those with an
essentially reactive role, engaged in the defence, in Habermas' terms, of the tra-
ditional 'lifeworld' against the incursions of instrumental rationality. Habermas links
these to property.[58] Second, those movements concerned not only to resist and secure
boltholes of alternative meanings, but also to challenge the terms of public debate: 'A
defence that already operates on the basis of a rationalized lifeworld and tries out
new ways of cooperating and living together'.[59] Habermas allows religion to play
only the former role. Touraine and he also deny religion an emancipatory function,
Touraine because he sees religion as not truly self-directed, but appealing to external

sources of authority, Habermas because he sees religious movements as inward-
looking rather than concerned to transform society. Yet none of the grounds used to
distinguish between religion and emancipatory NSMs is tenable as a general
principle. As we have already seen with Casanova, even a highly traditional religious
institution like the Catholic Church can function as a witting agent of rationalisation,
specifically in the transition from conventional to postconventional morality. A
simple identification of religion with propertied interests is no longer tenable either,
in spite of the importance of disputes between churches and state authorities in CEE
over the return of confiscated  property. As regards Touraine's category of internal/
external authority, two points need to be made. First, it is not clear that New Age
spirituality or that of some New Religious Movements (NRMs) can be seen as
oriented to external authority, in the sense of conceiving of the ultimate source of
authority as external to human agency. Second, it is not clear that there is a funda-
mental distinction between the way in which religious traditions appropriate sources
of authority, through hermeneutics and in metaphysics, and the way in which, for
example, deep green environmentalists or other NSMs do. Indeed, all social move-
ments tend to canonise certain texts and to give intellectual and emotional priority to
certain values. Thus, as Beckford argues, 'It seems almost arbitrary and perverse for
Touraine to deny that such movements as Christian evangelicalism, liberation
theology or Islamic fundamentalism could qualify as social movements.'[60] It seems
that these analysts display another manifestation of a secularisation bias, in which
religion is seen as necessarily conservative, defensive and incompatible with
modernity. They have failed to break away from the old church-sect typology, and to
build upon Gramsci's insights into the relationship between consciousness, ideology
and will formation. This failure is significant for our discussion, because if these
analysts are correct that NSMs mark a new phase in democratisation then they are
missing a possibly significant category of agents in this process – religious move-
ments, institutions and ideas. But what evidence is there that religion is in fact
playing the role of NSMs in challenging the 'grammar of life' in CEE?

One could point to the growing vitality of NRMs, ranging from the neo-Hinduism
of Krishna Consciousness to the Jehovah's Witnesses, and to Protestant evan-
gelicalism. Partly because of both new and continuing discrimination against them,
however, such groups can on the whole be appropriately categorised as inward-
looking and privatised, seeking to absorb members into their network of meanings
and communities of hope, rather than to transform the wider society, although the
latter maybe a long-term goal. Certainly, they remain numerically small. Rather it is
from developing forms of traditional religions that such challenges seem more likely
to come.

Writing from a Hungarian perspective, Tomka points to a new conflict between
churches and technocratic political orientations, reporting that the 'technocrats ...
were shocked when churches started to reclaim moral norms, and emphasised social
arguments in addition to economic and technical rationality'.[61] According to Tomka,
technocrats reacted with the slogan 'religion is a private matter'; but others came to
see the Churches as advocates for the less fortunate and powerful, especially in
supporting higher taxation for the winners of economic transition to pay some of the
costs to the losers. He writes: 'such self-limitation and philanthropy is ... against the
world-view of the new self-made men. They insist upon their exclusive right to the
earnings they worked hard for.'[62] These arguments suggest that the distributive
sources of social conflict in industrial society are far from finished, and that religion
may have a significant political role in such struggles. But they do not suggest a

challenge to the meanings of the system of social relations.

Let us then consider the case of the Catholic Church in Poland. It has already been suggested that the opinion poll evidence from the early- to mid-1980s shows that the Church remained a widely trusted institution and one which was perceived to be influential – certainly compared with democratic political institutions – and this even after the evaporation of 'the "spiritual community" and militant optimism evident ... up to the first truly general and direct presidential elections in 1990'.[63] The Catholic Church in Poland is not a monolithic entity: from the early communist period its strength has been built on its institutional and philosophical pluralism.[64] In particular, unpopular and undemocratic actions by the church hierarchy may not closely relate to the popularity of the Church or its support for democratisation. The importance of local churches for democratisation is suggested by Markowski's 1992 study of participation in national elections in 1991.[65] The preceding period of rapid political change and confusion can be seen as the premature beginning of Polish disenchant-ment with democracy. Yet Markowski found both Catholic practice and local church organisation to be positively associated with participation; indeed the association with the latter was so strong that the 'critical factors affecting turnout were ... church influence and, negatively, the level of unemployment'.[66] On this evidence, the democratising influence of the Church did not disappear with the collapse of com-munism. This study suggests, albeit in relation to a measure requiring low levels of commitment, the role of local Catholic churches in mobilising democratic partici-pation. But the Church may also be credited with contributing to higher levels of commitment. For example, Taras credits radical priests like Father Jerzy Popieluszko of Warsaw, martyred under martial law, with sustaining the underground Solidarity movement during the 1980s, after Cardinal Glemp distanced the official Church from it following the declaration of martial law in 1981. Taras quotes Casanova, summarising the activity of such radical parish priests: 'By recreating sacramentally, in the Durkheimian sense, the collective effervescence of the original experience of Solidarity, they were helping to maintain alive the movement as well as its social values.'[67] It is in this form that religion comes nearest to the role of the NSM in Poland. Thus we have seen that religion can provide the social network and the symbolic and institutional resources for the partial actualisation of solidarity necessary for democratisation, for the freedom of liberalism not to collapse into the hostile indifference of narcissism.

## Conclusion

Questions remain about the possibility of sustaining this solidarity under post-communist conditions. Can it be mobilised only by repressive opposition; can it survive the progressive commodification and privatisation of civil society under capitalism? There is some evidence to suggest that it can, and on Casanova's analysis whether it continues to do so would seem to be largely in the hands of the Churches. If they choose to take the 'caesaropapist' authoritarian path, it seems likely that rapid decline will follow. However, if they choose to take the path of a public voice in civil society in contexts where widespread decline is not already in evidence, and combine this with private piety, pastoral support and social action, they may be able to contribute to human solidarity in a way in which few institutions in advanced capitalist societies are able to do. In particular, if Mestrovic and others are correct that democracy itself is not self-sustaining, but requires cultural and affective bases in collective life, then where secular conceptions of community have been dis-

credited by the experience of communism, religion may yet take on more significance in democratisation.

## Notes and References

1   Stjepan Mestrovic (ed.), *Genocide After Emotion* (Routledge, London, 1994), p. 24.
2   Kasia Gilarek, *Coping with the Challenges of Modernity: the Church of England in Great Britain and the Catholic Church in Poland*, paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Religion and Churches in Central and Eastern Europe, Kraków, 12–14 December 1997.
3   José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1994), pp. 30–35.
4   S. Mestrovic, *The Balkanization of the West* (Routledge, London, 1994), p. 8.
5   Bryan Wilson, 'Secularisation', in N. Abercrombie *et al.*, *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Penguin, London, 1994), p. 372.
6   Steve Bruce, 'Modernisation, religious diversity and rational choice in Eastern Europe', in this issue of *Religion, State and Society*, pp. 265–75, originally a paper presented at the conference 'Religions in Europe in the Twentieth Century' at the Open University, Milton Keynes, April 1997.
7   Steve Bruce, *Conservative Protestant Politics* (OUP, Oxford, 1998), p. 217.
8   *loc. cit.*
9   José Casanova, 'Global Catholicism and the politics of civil society', *Sociological Enquiry*, vol. 66, no. 3, August 1996, pp. 356–73.
10  John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990), p. 140.
11  This seems to be less the case for continental sociology: see Luhmann for example. This may spring from the closer institutional proximity of sociology of religion to confessional theology in Anglo-American university systems.
12  S. Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996), pp. 12–18.
13  Mestrovic, *The Balkanization of the West*, p. 8.
14  'Giddens, like many contemporary social theorists, assumes that religion is a matter of self-conscious identification and "activity" pertaining to a church. ... But the cornerstone of Durkheim's understanding of religion is that it involves the absolute heterogeneity of the categories sacred and profane, and in that sense, religion never declines – it is merely transformed into new categories of sacred and profane association.' (S. Mestrovic, *Anthony Giddens: the Last Modernist* (Routledge, London, 1998), p. 96.)
15  James Beckford, *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society* (Unwin Hyman, London, 1989).
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17  Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Polity with Blackwell, Cambridge, 1987).
18  For example Jay Bernstein, *Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994).
19  S. Mestrovic, 'Explaining war in the land of Medjugorje', in S. Mestrovic, S. Letica and M. Goreta (eds), *Habits of the Balkan Heart* (Texas A and M University Press, Texas, 1993), pp. 108–30.
20  Here 'democratisation' is understood as the processes which bring about democratic government, comprising (minimally) universal suffrage, representation through the elected candidates of freely formed political parties, and the rule of law implemented by an independent judiciary.
21  'It was the more socially and economically developed countries in Eastern Europe that democratised more rapidly. It is nevertheless difficult to identify any "modernization theory" that actually explains this'. Paul Lewis, 'Democratization in Eastern Europe', in

David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margaret Kiloh and Paul Lewis (eds), *Democratization* (Polity/Open University, Cambridge, 1997), pp. 399–420, here p. 414.

²² *ibid.*, pp. 418–19.

²³ Patrick Michel, 'Religious renewal or political deficiency: religion and democracy in Central Europe', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 20, nos. 3/4, 1992, pp. 339–44, here p. 339.

²⁴ Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: the Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 103.

²⁵ Cornelia Heins, *The Wall Falls: an Oral History of the Reunification of the Two Germanies* (Grey Seal, London, 1994).

²⁶ Grzegorz Weclawowicz, *Contemporary Poland: Space and Society* (University College, London, 1996), p. 112.

²⁷ Detlef Pollack, 'Post Wende citizen's movements', in E. Kolinsky and S. Wilsdorf (eds), *Between Hope and Fear: Everyday Life in Post-Unification East Germany, A Case Study of Leipzig* (Keele University Press, Keele, 1995), pp. 101–22, here p. 102; Beth Cantrell and Ute Kemp, 'The role of the Protestant churches in eastern Germany: some personal experiences and reflections', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 21, nos 2/3, 1993, pp. 277–88; Cantrell and Kemp, 'East Germany revisited', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1995, pp. 279–89.

²⁸ Pollack, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–4.

²⁹ Günter Krusche, 'The Church between accommodation and refusal: the significance of the Lutheran doctrine of the "two kingdoms" for the churches of the GDR', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1994, pp. 324–32.

³⁰ Kubik, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–238.

³¹ John de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), pp. 193–205.

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³⁴ Vaclav Havel, *Living in Truth* (Faber and Faber, London, 2nd edn, 1987), p. 137.

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 62.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 137.

³⁸ Alan Suggate, 'Personal responsibility: Hayek and Havel in a Christian perspective', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 20, nos 3/4, 1992, pp. 303–319; Philip Walters, 'Who are the poor? Theology of liberation in Eastern Europe under communism', *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1993, pp. 53–70.

³⁹ Casanova, *Public Relations ...*, p. 232.

⁴⁰ Irena Borowik, 'Institutional and private religion in Poland 1990–1994', *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe* (Nomos, Kraków, 1997), pp. 235–55.

⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Polity, Cambridge, 1989) (originally published 1962).

⁴² English coffee houses, Parisian *salons* and German table societies.

⁴³ Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy', in C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Massachusetts, 1993), pp. 109–42; S. Benhabib, 'Models of public space: Hannah Arendt, the liberal tradition, and Jürgen Habermas', *op. cit.*, pp. 73–98.

⁴⁴ Gilarek, *op. cit.*; Paweł Załęcki, *The Biggest and the Oppressed: the Roman Catholic Church in Contemporary Poland*, paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Religion and Churches in Central and Eastern Europe, Kraków, 12–14 December 1997.

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49 MacIntyre attacks the whole tradition of postenlightenment ethics at this point. See for example Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Rationality and the explanation of action', in his *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (Duckworth, London, 1971), pp. 244–59.
50 Disillusioned with the class-based solidarity and facing repressive systems which seemed in their later years to have generated the social conditions for widespread apathy (Walters, *op. cit.*, p. 61), a figure such as Jan Patočka, though himself not a Christian, found in the historic role of Christianity and the philosophical culture of ancient Greece a possibility for a self-critical 'solidarity of the shaken' (Andrew Shanks, *Civil Society, Civil Religion* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1998), pp. 115–36), rooted in historical tradition. A similar argument can be made for Havel, who was influenced by Patočka (Suggate, *op. cit.*) and in the Polish context for Adam Michnik (Walters, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–65).
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52 Mestrovic, 'Explaining war ...', p. 109.
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56 Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
57 *loc. cit.*
58 Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, p. 394.
59 *loc. cit.*
60 Beckford, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
61 Miklós Tomka, *Church–State Relations in the Context of Post-Communist Reconstruction*, paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Religion and Churches in Central and Eastern Europe, Kraków, 12–14 December 1997, p. 4.
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