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Seekers or Dwellers? Social Character of Religion in Hungary

Edited by
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Dweller on the Gallows Additives of a Central European Anti- Communist Desecularization Theory

ÁKOS LAZÁR KOVÁCS

Several forward-looking actions have taken place in post socialist countries as well as in Hungary in the past 25 years with regards to their self-introspection about religion and religious phenomena. And yet, we notice a kind of self-restraint in formulating a broad generalization when describing our own situation.¹ Two aspects of self-restraint are apparent: Within Europe, the first emerges out of the secular salvation doctrines, one of the aberrations of the 19th-20th century, that we used to call communism and still do, or its more accessible variant socialism that endured the longest in Eastern Europe. This self-restraint or reservation will be important over the next few years, as the players of this absolutely brutal and ruthless dictatorship still play a crucial role in Europe and the world. Politicians acting in Brussels, who call themselves communists, representing a salvation² doctrine of this world that so far claimed over 100.000.000 innocent lives. For a person living in a post socialist country believing according to the Church's teaching (not considering spiritual or individual seeker-dweller religious experiences) this is the same as if a western citizen was seeing members of the Nazi Party in the European Parliament.

The religious intelligentsias when viewed from the outside are dwellers whose situation was clear and easy to see. Whereas the situation of those religious people who did not consider the Church a

¹ Further excellent analyses among others not discussed here: Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe. A Memory Mutates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Agincourt: The Book Society of Canada, 1978); David Martin, *On Secularization. Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005); David Martin, *The Future of Christianity. Reflections on Violence and Democracy, Religion and Secularization* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011).

² J. B. Metz, *Zum Begriff der neuen Politischen Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1997), pp. 163-185.

desirable partner³ in the post socialist countries during the oppression was far from that simple for being openly religious was punished. (E.g.: for participating in liturgy) What is the situation of those religious people who do not consider the Church a desirable partner in the different public spheres of post Socialist countries? What message does this situation send to western European people? Can we talk about it? Do we have to talk about special post socialist, post secular phenomena? In my opinion, yes, we can and we have to. What's more without understanding this fact it is not worth listening to the experimental thoughts arriving from Central-Eastern Europe. It is difficult to make sense of the arrogance of the small post socialist countries towards the West: It seems that they had enough of boisterous movements or "consultative circles" constantly "enlightening" us. We hope that the lack of resources and money and being plundered in itself does not make us mentally and emotionally handicapped. It seems to us that the West demands that we get over these experiences and instead of self pity and complaining we keep up with Europe's progressive, developing half. (And at the same time there is a continuous external and internal need for integrating in our shared heritage the pain and suffering of the World War caused by the Nazis.)

The suffering that we had experienced requires us to work through them from which the West is constantly trying to protect us – as if it was their interest that the Eastern part of Europe does not recover too early from its current grievances causing its helplessness. We are made to feel ashamed when bringing up the crippling wounds of communism, while the pain caused by the Nazis is mandatory. We feel that Europe only wants to deal with the atrocity of one of its freaks and does not want to talk about the other freak. Is it possible that the experiences of the East of Europe are not important in the common work of memory and recollection. The unresolved past, or the constant belittling of our endeavors causes frustration and as a result we become emotionally overstrung, so that the political and scientific intelligentsia from the East sooner or later go too far if they want to voice their opinion in various white

³ K. Rahner, "Zur Situation des katholischen Intellektuellen," *Schriften zur Theologie VII* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1966), pp. 368-385. See also Z. Hidas, *Im Bann der Identität. Zur Soziologie unseres Selbstverständnisses* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014).

collar circles in a manner that can be taken seriously. Europe is not interested in its communist demon that was born of her or that those crippled by it to remind her of this monster.

The other reason for avoiding expressing any of our religious experiences is the ignorance that can be described as the east-central-european, inorganic culture and reality. The self-reflection of democratic nations in relation to their own religiosity results in a democratic culture that economically, socially and culturally has achieved a very high standard. Religious experience will become incomplete⁴ without other areas of culture (art, science, politics, etc) the same way as the arts or politics is incomplete in the event of not being able to encounter anything within its religious circle that can be interpreted culturally as well.⁵

Communism was specifically striving to separate the fields and accomplishments of religion from that of culture, and so a modern synchronization of culture and religion could not develop. Thus our handicapped culture and religion cannot use the appropriate register in its exchange with the West. It is seemingly an antiquated way of thinking to split Europe into East and West – even the life and deeds of John Paul II was the symbol of this great schism. Currently Eastern and Central Europe is only capable of reading and studying the conclusions of Western European intelligentsia and thinkers and to try to reflect candidly in the light of it all. The scientific approach of modernity in its own positivist and pragmatic way has penetrated the Western European way of thinking, this is one of the reasons for its impartial success. So we have to reflect with this way of thinking here in Eastern Central Europe too, even if it is not entirely ours. It's important to understand the Western religious-cultural tradition, but at the same time it is important that we do not give up in the name of this "understanding" our own traditions, especially as we not only believe but also understand that Europe's "lung" is comprised of two parts. In this sense, no matter how incomplete the self-reflection of Eastern Central-Europe, its integration is essential for the intellectual reunion of Europe. The science of theology (as the only way of thinking that solely demand universality) also abides by the

⁴ See more details in R. Schaeffler, *Religionsphilosophie* (Freiburg i. Br.: München, 2002).

⁵ See more details in T. S. Eliot, *Religion and Literature. Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp. 388-401.

norms of the prevailing scientific paradigm and abandons the areas indicated, kept and reserved by it, the thought systems, conclusions and assertions. In Eastern/Central Europe the prohibition of communism relating to dialogues resulted in the isolation of not only the theological tradition, but other thought systems as well. At the same time this heritage even if handicapped, is alive. This is what we have to compare with any thought and reflections arriving from the West.

We cannot add anything significant to the debates of the discourse terrain affecting us, we falter – our voicelessness cannot find an adequate way of expressing how to face up to, accept and internalize our experiences, nor of using the cultural, scientific language we do have to use in order to get our confusion across. This makes us seem mostly like we are making a fuss about what we would like to communicate, even if a bit stumblingly to the West.

Those without sound, language, without any listeners, must develop such methods of expression, chattering-like language that will attract attention towards their thoughts. Inorganic religiosity is only part of East and Central Europe's confusion that is of a cultural nature; our scientific, economic, cultural life is similarly inorganic. Those western institutions that support conducting research regarding ourselves are at a loss faced with so much ignorance, incomprehension and at the same time feelings of aggression that stems from inferiority. The occasional people who shed a light to current events, their partial criteria from the East is able to break through the circles of muteness and offer a few realizations and insights for integration to the listening West.

As the rapid changes of economic, scientific, religious, and cultural processes do not favor the recollection work that is already delayed. Just like an autistic person, who spends long hours between perception and the interpretation of perception, and reacts in a delayed fashion. Suddenly, hours after the event we get a fright that a truck has loudly driven past nearby us.

In the following paragraphs we will endeavour to employ some criteria arriving from the West in an Eastern Central European fashion.

It was exactly a decade ago that Hans Joas – adding his brief comments – presented Charles Taylor's views on the relationship between Catholicism and modernity, faith and reason. In his short

essay,⁶ he makes noteworthy observations about the status of religious discourse in present day social sciences. Similar to Charles Taylor, who was influenced by the pioneering approach of William James – his concept of placing religious experience in the center of his theory was ground-breaking at the time – Hans Joas denotes self-transcendence as the relevant starting point for the analysis of religion. As a European follower of American pragmatism his position is unique⁷ in the sense that he bases his theory of value not on the active choice of values but on the passive spiritual experience and the concept of self-transcendence.⁸ There is one distinction he makes concerning Taylor's theory in his 1996 lecture *A Catholic Modernity?*⁹ Taylor is opposed to the dichotomy that defines, as the starting point of the discourse on religion either, the simple existence of Christian aspects in a secularized society or, modernity's opposition to Christianity and its push towards secularization. He highlights that secular culture – although representing a break from Christianity – has numerous elements that do a better job at representing the evangelical cause than had the so called Christian centuries, with their long standing Church establishments. Meanwhile, Hans Joas makes no attempt to deny that secular humanism performs a *spiritual lobotomy* on the masses, extinguishing people's inherent spiritual inclinations.

From our perspective, Hans Joas's detailed theory of what is presented in *Secular Age* is of less relevance; we focus on his observation that Taylor's optimistic evaluation of secularity, which regards a return to human transcendence as feasible without the reemergence of faith in secular society, could be applied to primarily Western European societies. Evidence seems to point to certain differences in the secularization process of post-communist countries, "where it would be quite impossible to consider present

⁶ H. Joas, "Eine katholische Moderne? Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Wissen bei Charles Taylor," *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), pp. 96-107.

⁷ See also S. Schößler, *Der Neopragmatismus von Hans Joas. Handeln, Glaube und Erfahrung* (Münster: LIT, 2011).

⁸ H. Joas, *Die Entstehung der Werte* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997).

⁹ J. L. Heft, ed., *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

day value concepts as pertaining to the secular humanistic credo." In these countries "we are met with new forms of religionlessness and anti-religiosity that cannot be considered a continuation of previous Christian factors. While secular humanism facilitates the consensus in accepting certain values, human rights being an example, in these countries the situation is more complicated. Believers constitute a minority often attacked and ridiculed; dialog between Christianity and Enlightenment can easily seem eccentric."¹⁰

These remarks are noteworthy because they substantiate a distinct anti-communist paradigm of secularization – with its own historical background, personal and collective experiences, cultural and social aspects and constellation of general value concepts – which distinguishes Eastern and Central European processes from those in other parts of Europe. Some attempts have been made to better understand¹¹ the paradigm of secularization in these post-communist countries, so far these can be considered little more than initial or preparatory steps to substantial research. It appears that within the paradigm reflecting on post-communist countries further light has to be shed on the special denominational dimension of the public presence and public sidelining of Christianity, as well as on the political aspects and political instrumentalisation of religion, and the links between national and religious identity. David Martin, focusing on the distinct Eastern European brand of secularization, considers this last question to have a particularly Hungarian character: "In Hungary, however, there is a certain ambiguity in the relation of Catholicism to national identity, partly because the national myth has important roots in Calvinist Protestantism, which after the Counter-Reformation was restricted to a minority, largely in the east of the country. This has resulted in conflicting cross-currents and a relatively weak religiosity."¹² The list of questions could easily be continued, but we shall only revisit them in detail at the end of this paper.

¹⁰ H. Joas, "Eine katholische Moderne? Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Wissen bei Charles Taylor," p. 101.

¹¹ A. Máté-Tóth and P. Mikluscak, *Nicht wie Milch und Honig. Unterwegs zu einer Pastoraltheologie Ost(Mittel)Europas* (Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag, 2000).

¹² D. Martin, "An Eastern European Pattern of Secularization?," *The Future of Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), pp. 135-148, p. 136.

There are two phenomena which indisputably prove that in Hungary even the most basic exploratory phase of the research considering these issues still waits to be undertaken. First, that newer secularization theories are inaccessible to Hungarian readers and Hungarian social sciences and religious theory have nothing substantial to say about these thought experiments. Without a familiarity with Charles Taylor's main work,¹³ David Martin's revised secularization theory¹⁴ and José Casanova's discourse provoking book¹⁵ it is hard to even try to approach these complex questions. Closely related to this factor is the "foreignness" of these thought experiments, which can only partly be explained by the physical distance between Europe – Western Europe – and North America. It is as though this foreignness – this Eastern European disinterest toward such ideas and theories – is rooted in cultural and religious aspects that could have resulted from the same, above mentioned post-communist experiences. Secondly it is quite telling that in Hungary the newer reasonings – following the famous speech of Jürgen Habermas in 2001 – examining the coexistence of religious and secular citizens, and the public relevance of religious content in a new light – have yielded little to no reaction. Several works of Habermas – newer ones included, like his great essay on European constitution – can be accessed in Hungary, titles like the *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*,¹⁶ which constitutes a turning point, his dialog with the Jesuits of Frankfurt¹⁷ or the second volume of *Nachmetaphysisches Denken*¹⁸ – a book dedicated primarily to questions of religion – have never become part of Hungarian public philosophical and religious discourse. To be fair, it is also true that it

¹³ Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ D. Martin, *On Secularization. Towards a Revised General Theory*.

¹⁵ J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁶ J. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion. Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005).

¹⁷ M. Reder and J. Schmidt, eds., *Ein Bewußtsein von dem, was fehlt. Eine Diskussion mit Jürgen Habermas* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2008).

¹⁸ J. Habermas, "Ein neues Interesse der Philosophie an Religion. Ein Interview von Eduardo Mendieta," *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2012), pp. 96-120.

would be useless to search for Jürgen Habermas's name in David Martin's writings, even Charles Taylor – in his monumental work – only dedicates a few references to *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (compared to this, Habermas is overrepresented in Hungary). Another slight mystery for those examining newer secularization theories from the post-communist vantage point is their lack of references to Johann Baptist Metz – an author who is relatively well known in Hungary. From this perspective, it would seem likely that the post-communist paradigm mentioned by Hans Joas could contribute valid theoretical recommendations to the debate on secularization, by integrating the reflections of Johann Baptist Metz for example, while at the same time acknowledging the need to learn from the past two decades of primarily American and British research.

After these introductory remarks, I would like to examine two issues in a more detailed fashion. First, I will offer an overview of the main components of the various secularization theories – this, I believe is an area where the post-communist secularization paradigm has to be developed further. Next, I will examine a few theories – associated with Jürgen Habermas's and Johann Baptist Metz's more recent concepts – that could have a potential to contribute to the foundations of a post-communist, post-secularist perhaps desecularist viewpoint. We must take up this task and hope that our results will bear significance for countries that have no first-hand experience of communist type totalitarian oppression. There is a general view of secularization that holds it should be examined in the framework of, and in relationship to modernization, which shows that the theoretical reflection's horizon has changed little since its formulation at the turn of the 19th century. Questions of secularization were integrated into the study of modernization by both Max Weber and Émile Durkheim. The central question was aimed at ascertaining how changes in religiosity were connected to, or could be differentiated from Western society's experiments and processes of modernization. Some detected a close link between the development of the science of sociology and the evolution of secularization theory, as though sociologists were the ones keeping secularization theory alive. An interesting dimension of the question is the possible connection between the "sociologists' enthusiasm" for the potentially existing phenomenon of secularization and their

theoretical aversion¹⁹ to the universal demand for theological phrasing. In the end, Max Weber designates the process of rationalization and Émil Durkheim the process of individualization as the driving force behind changes in religion. Weber's theory draws a straight line from the Jewish prophets and Greek sciences to the anti-magical stance such that monotheistic religion becomes obsolete altogether. Yet according to some observations, at the turn of the millennium exactly the opposite processes were taking place with modern science and culture mythicizing medial content and technically constructing alternative mythical worlds, in turn contributing to the re-enchantment of reality.²⁰

In the last few years the theory that the importance of religiosity linearly declines with modernization has proven to be problematic in at least three aspects. First, José Casanova has shown that secularization theory – or secularization thesis as it is often called due to its lack of consistence – was considered so intuitive by the vast majority of social scientists that detailed exposition or in-depth analysis was neglected as unnecessary by mostly everyone.²¹ For a century this statement stayed dominant without being subjected to critical review; social sciences grounded in a tradition of critical examination were trapped by their own lack of criticism. For this reason, since the publication of Casanova's book more attention has been directed towards those authors who were exceptions in their approach to the secularization theory. In today's more problem conscious, more critically inclined reality, Hans Joas considers "Alexis de Tocqueville, William James, Jacob Burkhardt, Ernst Troeltsch and Max Scheler,"²² – especially Ernst Troeltsch (integration, compromise, mystic), who was not just a friend but also a rival of Max Weber – as those authors who could offer a newly fertile connection point. Troeltsch's descriptions of European

¹⁹ J. B. Metz, *Zum Begriff der neuen Politischen Theologie*, pp. 143-147.

²⁰ These contra-Weberian processes are emphasized in for example G. Ward, "The Future of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74, 2006, pp. 179-186.

²¹ J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, p. 17.

²² H. Joas, *Glaube als Option. Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentum* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013), p. 31. Joas's book's title can be considered a research program in itself: the main title of the book undoubtedly refers to the central convictions of Charles Taylor's main work, while the subtitle references Ernst Troeltsch book titled *Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Glaubens*.

processes in the Early Modern Time have shown themselves to be more reliable than the Weberian analyses that were dominant in the past century.

The second aspect can similarly be linked to the works of Casanova. He considers secularization a phenomena encompassing at least three other concepts: the decline of the importance of religion; a decline of religiosity's presence in the public spheres; and the liberation of other domains of society from the control of religion. Casanova claims that in the Western world the deprivatization of religion is an unquestionable fact,²³ essentially coinciding with the process of desecularization. In other words, Casanova rightly detects a strong link between the internal problems of the secularization theory and the concept of deprivatization. In opposition to this, the advocates of secularization, following a Durkheimian tradition argue that religion's steadily lessening importance follows the increase in significance of other areas of society. These critiques are dominantly Western European and refuse to contemplate the growing importance of global religious phenomena, and they resort to a mechanic repetition of their views – almost as though they constituted articles of faith. Steve Bruce exemplified this approach by his constant defense²⁴ of the secularization theory, a theory being increasingly questioned today.

Thirdly, opinions diverge concerning the concept of deprivatization and many attempt to describe explicitly opposite processes. Let just one, more recent polemic experiment stand here as an example of the wealth of supporting and opposing opinions available when deprivatization is concerned. Jens Köhrsen²⁵ – who argues with Casanova – claims that newer approaches – labeled under public religions – make three types of assumptions: religion is empirically present in the public sphere, this presence is gaining weight and strongly affects public debate. In essence, these same factors are considered by both those welcoming and lamenting the growing

²³ P. L. Berger, *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999).

²⁴ S. Bruce, *Secularization. In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁵ J. Köhrsen, "How religious is the public sphere? A critical stance on the debate about public religion and post-secularity," *Acta Sociologica* 2012, Vol. 55, pp. 273-288.

presence of religion in our age. Köhrsen questions what criteria qualify a public manifestation as particularly religious in nature. Is it enough if a comment is made in one arena or another of mass communication in association with some event related to religion? Or if a person with religious identity speaks about a public issue? What criteria can be used to differentiate between the religious and non-religious communication of a person with religious identity? Köhrsen considers the excessively wide and indefinite concept of religion to be the main reason behind the perceived increase in the presence of religion. In his opinion, only those acts of communication should be regarded as explicitly religious in nature that refer to transcendent realities. But since the “religious news” in mass media does not channel transcendent concepts, it cannot be considered as religious in nature. Furthermore, representatives of religions seldom use religious reasoning – referring to transcendent realities – in public debates because they adopt the secular logic of the secular public.²⁶ Hence the perceived presence of religion has nothing to do with the true substance of religion.

After examining the ambiguous concept of secularization and the semantic consequences of the secularization theory paradox, the uncritical use of it in the critically inclined sciences, we will look at the second problematic aspect of the secularization theory. Discourse on the theory is substantially shifting due to the changing opinions concerning the European situation. What is happening exactly? It is becoming increasingly obvious that the concept and theory of secularization was founded on only a few incidental European experiences, and is thus unsuited to explain global connections and processes.²⁷ It is possible that even in the case of the European processes – which have again become the focus of historical analysis²⁸ – it could prove insufficient insight. Even if we temporarily

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 281-282.

²⁷ J. Zachhuber, “Die Diskussion über Säkularisierung am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts,” in Chr. von Braun, W. Gräb and J. Zachhuber, eds., *Säkularisierung. Bilanz und Perspektiven einer umstrittenen These* (Münster etc.: LIT, 2007), pp. 11-42.

²⁸ More recently the secularization theory’s historical applicability was examined by K. Gabriel, Ch. Gärtner and D. Pollack, eds., *Umstrittene Säkularisierung. Soziologische und historische Analysen zur Differenzierung von Religion und Politik* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2012).

accept the validity of the connection between modernization and secularization, we still have four questions to answer according to Hans Joas: 1. Can the secularization theory provide ample explanation for the European exceptions to the secularization formula; 2. Exactly how should the grand “exception,” the United States be evaluated; 3. How would choosing a non-European-centered perspective affect our view of the big picture; 4. How does earlier European religious history manifest in the secularization theory.²⁹ This area calls not only for the analysis of complex historical processes – examining for example, whether in the United States where modernization and religiosity go hand in hand, the flourishing religiousness is a result of only the puritan tradition or due only to immigrants, but also an overview of whether an integrated religious scene – in the European model of big Churches – or religious plurality – the characteristic religious segmentation of the United States – contributes more to secularization. Charles Taylor for example, links the probability of religious presence to the plurality of choice. It should be mentioned here, that citing Dipesh Chakrabarty, José Casanova warns that Europe should be “provincialized” and we should “turn the European theories of American exceptionalism upside down.”³⁰ In other words, the United States cannot be viewed as an exception from the secularization paradigm. In global comparison it is exactly the Western European secularization processes that constitutes an irregularity, and it would be an error to force theories founded on these processes upon other parts of the world.³¹

After examining the semantic and global aspects of secularization the third relevant problem is markedly retrospective in nature: when talking about secularization, we make a prior assumption that at a certain time a non secularized social context existed. Let us note here, that although incorrect, a resilient modern myth still holds that Europe was once fully purged of Christianity. We can ask what

²⁹ H. Joas, *Glaube als Option*, p. 34.

³⁰ J. Casanova, “Westliche christliche Säkularisierung und Globalisierung,” *Europas Angst vor der Religion* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2013²), pp. 83-119, 103.

³¹ An early warning can be found in Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion. Discipline and Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

claims can be made about a prior Christian golden age, in relation to which secularization could have taken place by enlightening the masses. It is sufficient to invoke Charles Taylor's essential work³² that strives to prove the continuity of religion's presence in society. At the same time, we can state that taking into consideration this continuity and the precarious nature of the secularization theory; it is quite problematic to talk about some sort of desecularization. From the perspective of the question relevant to us presently, it is sufficient to reference the words of Johannes Zachhuber: "We must be wary if those, who disillusioned in their expectations, directly conclude the existence of a social dynamic. Put differently: if people working in the churches feel that Christians are reluctant to contribute dedicated work to the congregation does this necessarily mean that they were more eager to make commitments in the past? Or could this simply imply that the expectations toward commitment have risen?"³³ Overall there is place for serious doubt when contemplating whether Christianity can be extracted from Europe to the degree that the secularization theory suggests, after all "in many regards Europe was saturated only superficially and defectively with Christianity and often permitted pre-Christian forms."³⁴ For this reason the secularization theory must be questioned; there never existed a homogenous religious environment that could have been subjected to secularization.

In the next segment of the essay our goal will be to analyze the situation of Central-European dwellers using the findings introduced in the previous section. We assert that Central-European identity studies will not yield substantial insight without first taking into account the historical facts: between 1945 and 1990 religious people living in these areas were often subjected to violence and bloody persecution which claimed lives, humiliated and ridiculed them. This was especial true for those who expressed their church affiliation. From this perspective Karl Rahner's words hold special bearing: "The intellectual, the scientist who – in accordance with his conscience – wishes to embrace Catholic Christianity cannot dismiss church preaching or teaching as an arbitrary partner ("nicht

³² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

³³ J. Zachhuber, *Die Diskussion über Säkularisierung am Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, p. 20.

³⁴ H. Joas, *Glaube als Option*, p. 41.

beliebiger Partner”),”³⁵ (...) “he must submit to them.”³⁶ His subjection elevates this to the status of public act; his belonging to the Church in this case is not partial but is based on the community. The dweller who visibly embraced his affiliation with the Church, because of this submitting factor was subjected to the persecution of the Church and religious people. In this sense, dwellers in today’s societies from Egypt through Saudi Arabia and Syria to Iraq share in their Churches’ fates. Here our present aim is to understand what happens when a Christian who considers the Church to be a “non-arbitrary partner”³⁷ (such Christians are referred to as dwellers) cannot and refuses to evade the most basic question of his existence embedded in historical circumstances; or what are the consequence of him – for reasons of fear, greed, survival instinct or any other – trying to waive these questions.

It might be of value to refer to Johann Baptist Metz’s comments – perhaps somewhat rarely cited in English language literature – related to this. Johann Baptist Metz points to evolutionism (aptly calling it Euro-Darwinism) – a belief contrary to Enlightenment and one that misinterprets its concepts – as an underlying factor in today’s European postmodern practice. Euro-Darwinism – in our case it could be white man’s Euro and USA Darwinism – a narrative of the winners of history, of those who cast the stories and cries of the suffering innocents into oblivion and relegate their recompense into some obscure never to be had future – a future attained through fictional evolution, a new form of communism, the dreams of liberal democracy, or the reemergence of shady national myths. Widening its implications, we find that Metz’s thoughts provide an exact account of the present day situation of Central-European dwellers who consider the Church as a non-arbitrary partner in their lives. In our opinion the postmodern concept of Darwinism comfortably distances itself from the very real deprivation of the third world,³⁸

³⁵ Karl Rahner, “Zur Situation des katholischen Intellektuellen,” pp. 368-385.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ We must note here, that often post-socialist countries also see themselves in the position of third world countries. Not only can they not speak without prior permission, but they are also silenced if they mention the communist atrocities of the last few decades. It is obviously an uncomfortable position for Western Europe and the USA to have to admit that they liberated Central-Europe from

and refrains from earnestly examining its historical experiences and the resulting consequences – its suffering, the muted, voiceless reality of its defeated position.

We stop here to introduce two more fitting concepts from Metz: Euro-aestheticism and Euro-provincialism. Euro-aestheticism describes the state where Europe renounced the postulate of the endpoint of time, abandoned metaphysics and historical philosophy and in their place – starting with Nietzsche – adopted aesthetics and psychology; instead of an end of time it promises and infinite future. From here, a straight path leads to the belittling of perspectives and concepts pertaining to religious consciousness. Simultaneously, (Western) Europe – Eastern and Central Europe are not even drawn, or could not be redrawn on the map – aestheticizes and psychologizes its own (and other's) identity and relates to non-European cultures through aesthetic and psychological concepts as well, this way – out of cluelessness – impeding any possibility of intercultural exchange. Europe pays no attention to outside sources. Omitting and removing grand universal concepts for example, results in what Metz calls Euro-provincialism: "Nietzsche predicted that due to the death of God the entirety of the European moral system will collapse. Was he not right? Are we not witnessing today the depletion of European morality? Hasn't the moral worldview yielded its place to an aesthetic one in our intellectual culture for some time now? Why do our ethical discourses seem so strained and troubled?"

Moral thinking in Europe fluctuates between the expressed intention of abandoning all ethical considerations and the less substantial morality of the postmodern paradigm. Small morality constitutes a system of minimalized and freely selectable moral

the Nazi demon in alliance with the other European demon, the communist Soviet Union, and they allowed half the population of Europe to go from the execution chambers of national socialism to those of international socialism; still, in spite of this, it would be worth to start a new, democratic discourse about these experiences. If the question is not debated from the perspective of the falsely piteousness of suffering-nostalgia, meaning that we do not expect special treatment and attention (from Western-Europe and the USA) for our many decades of futile suffering, then it would be important to finally hear the "silent screams" of half of the continent that was left crippled by the communist demon. Nothing highlights the relevance of this question more than Russia's cynical rampage in present day in Ukraine.

guidelines; morality ceased to be long term, there are no lifelong loyalties; freedom to self-realization is advocated even if risks are high; freedom of choice is upheld in all forms of commitment. Generally speaking, it is a morality where all conflict takes place at an individual level; it is indifferent towards comprehensive consensus and distrustful of all universal concepts. Today the European spirit seems to prefer the small. It is enchanted by a novel dream of innocence. Its dreaming manifests itself in an enthusiasm for the mythical and the romantic, things that can be expressed with its back turned to a history filled with suffering. The new European spirit truly appreciates this moral unburdening which shifts the world we inhabit into the realm of the mythical and the literary and numbs our alertness to catastrophe. The European small morality is the morality of the satisfied majority, a majority that lacks all concern for the disgruntled minority, for the suffering of others.”³⁹ We believe that here lies the moral dilemma of the postmodern thinkers defending secularization theory; Steve Bruce – to mention an example – still envisions the end of religion in different context but much the same way as did Nietzsche or Marx.

During his arguments with Jürgen Habermas Metz separated to an ever greater degree Europe’s secularist and secular or laicist and secular projects.⁴⁰ Phrased more accurately, it is the question of the practical and theoretical attitude behind the – in itself fortunate and welcome – intellectual atmosphere emphasizing Europe’s neutral worldview. The non-laicist interpretation of neutralism does not banish religion from the public sphere “but forces the public to contemplate the existing plurality of religions and worldviews.”⁴¹ The laicist model – in contrast to pluralistic neutrality – clearly and ruthlessly privatizes religion, relegating it to the private sphere. In reality, it is not neutral towards religion, “while underlining its neutrality, it forcefully expresses its preference towards a negative

³⁹ J. B. Metz, *Memoria Passionis. Ein Provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2006), p. 102.

⁴⁰ Post-secularism is one of the most heavily debated concepts among thinkers pertaining to the school of the new political theology; for more on the topic see J. Reikerstorfer, *Weltfähiger Glaube. Theologisch-politische Schriften* (Münster: LIT, 2008)

⁴¹ J. B. Metz, *Memoria Passionis, Ein Provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*, p. 198.

freedom of religion."⁴² Instead of granting freedom to religion it emphasizes one-sidedly the guarantee of independence from religion. In other words, the laicist, secularist neutrality-model can be considered fundamentally antipluralist; it could even be described as fundamentalist in its quest to purge all forms of public treatment of religion that do not coincide with its own thought structures. Johann Baptist Metz and others who question simple narratives do not believe the laicist Europe-model will continue to gain ground. Metz is convinced that laicism can only be backed by an approach which is blind to the contradiction burdened conflicts of the historical processes of a "one dimensional Enlightenment." To simplify this, we can also say that the secularist approach can only make its aforementioned fundamentalist demands once it has distanced itself from its own historical formation story, which integrates religion. It must disregard the well-established fact – that would be hard ignore since the contributions of the Frankfurt School – that the linear program of the Enlightenment was and is being fragmented by polemics.

At the same time, Metz fundamentally criticizes the Habermasian program aimed at the dialectic of Enlightenment – partly because of the neglected anamnesis so characteristic of Habermas, partly due to the not sufficiently explored dialectic of secularization.⁴³ Although Metz is aware that conflicts and wars in European history were mostly the result of harsh and painful national recollections, his memory theory aims to supply the pluralist public space with a thought model which ensures that the "mandatory criteria of consensus and coexistence – required of all parties, and which manages to reflect reality in this sense – is met."⁴⁴ In a less than surprising manner, he essentially designates the dignity of those suffering as the inevitable criteria of inter-European and external cultural contact; this dignity can be regarded as the central installation of the history of the European spirit. The European ethos is impossible to define without the historical

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See also J. Reikerstorfer, "Postsekularität – oder die verdrängte Dialektik der Säkularisierung?," *Jahrbuch Politische Theologie. Band 5: Politische Theologie – gegenlesen* (Münster: LIT, 2008), pp. 269-273.

⁴⁴ J. B. Metz, *Memoria Passionis, Ein Provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*, p. 201.

recollection of its development, and this cannot disregard Europe's historical and cultural deep structures – as Metz emphasizes: “democracy is rooted in consensus, but the ethos of consensus stems, for the most part, from memory.”⁴⁵ For this reason, we believe that religion must not be eliminated from the democratic public space; instead a transformation must take place towards a pluralistic public space from religious and world view perspective – towards a public space that facilitates the very real practice of religious freedom.⁴⁶ In turn, Metz is convinced that Europe was the birthplace of a certain kind of universalism – in this sense Casanova's plan to provincialize Europe can easily be comprehended – which at core is strictly anti-Euro-centered and provincializes Europe from the start. This universalism is represented by political enlightenment despite the fact that its universalism often does not extend beyond the semantic level, and its practical manifestations are mostly malformed or inadequate. The hermeneutic and communicational culture outlined by political enlightenment – to quote Metz's frequently employed phrase – is based upon the recognition of the right to freedom and dignity of each individual. It is precisely this universalism – rooted in European culture – of human rights that guarantees that the cultural pluralism resulting from the expansion of the World does not disintegrate into mere relativism.

Unfortunately, in the context of a global World, the communication and seriousness of Europe's universalism in relation to rights is just as flawed as the European implementation of enlightened universalism. A simple example can help to demonstrate this: advanced industrialized countries would be quite surprised if it was not just their prerogative to intervene – in defense of human rights – in the lives of developing countries, and developing countries could also claim the right to influence the global politics of developed nations. And this is where we reach the basic question of this essay's post-communist paradigm – the question Hans Joas also reflects on in this quote we have already cited above: “it seems impossible to consider the dominant value concepts as pertaining to the creed of secular humanism,” since in these countries “we are met with new

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ In relation to the third world: J. B. Metz, “Die Dritte Welt und Europa. Theologisch-politische Dimensionen eines unerledigten Themas,” *Stimmen der Zeit*, Vol. 211, 1993, pp. 3-9.

forms of religionlessness and anti-religiosity that cannot be considered a continuation of previous Christian factors. While secular humanism facilitates the consensus in accepting certain values – human rights being an example, – in these countries the situation is more complicated. Believers constitute a minority often attacked and ridiculed; the dialog between Christianity and Enlightenment can easily seem eccentric.”⁴⁷

Finally, instead of presumptuously wishing to present a comprehensive “theory,” we attempt to supplement the above mentioned arguments with anti-communist additions. Taking Hans Joas’s theory seriously, we wish to highlight a few aspects of our present day post-socialist “much more complicated situation.” We would argue that using the term anti-communist instead of post-socialist is more fitting, because we are not yet capable of disregarding the fundamental effect of historical communism on the present day situation of this region. Often we are tempted to think otherwise, but reality overrides our wishes. We would also like to state, that in our view “it is unnecessary to first transfer Christian faith to the political sphere; there is no need to find a secondary use (...) that will ensure its substantive significance. The Christian faith is not confined to politics. At the same time its political relevance is never lost. It is rooted in a remembrance capable of self-criticism and self-destruction, its memory of the defeated and the victims stays vivid and inspires the believers to enforce their perspective.”⁴⁸ Today’s post-socialist, anti-communist dweller – a Christian who regards the Church as a non-arbitrary partner and who submits to the teachings to Church teaching – cannot fully immerse himself into any worldly discourse be it cultural, economic, political or scientific. He must – in an eschatological sense – hold onto his reservations⁴⁹ and impede⁵⁰ all discourse that, through arguments of evolution,

⁴⁷ H. Joas, “Eine katholische Moderne? Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Wissen bei Charles Taylor.”

⁴⁸ J. Drumm, “Hoffnung für das Haus Europa. Das christliche Potential und seine Wahrnehmung,” in Walter Fürst and Wolfgang M. Schröder, eds., *Ideen für Europa. Christliche Perspektiven der Europapolitik* (Münster: LIT, 2004), pp. 489-494, 489.

⁴⁹ Cf. J. B. Metz, “Politische Theologie,” *Sacramentum Mundi. Theologisches Lexikon für die Praxis*, Bd. 3 (Freiburg i.Br., 1996), pp. 1232-1240.

⁵⁰ See more about the concept: T. R. Peters, *Johann Baptist Metz. Theologie des vermißten Gottes* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1998), 46ff.

revolution or worldly salvation, aims to extinguish the eschatological prospects of an imminent and always definite end. He cannot immerse himself unconditionally into worldly discourse, and must examine them continuously from an eschatological perspective. His outsider position provides him the opportunity to preserve his integrity in the seemingly omnipotent discourses; this outside position presupposes the existence of a separate authority – one suffering, dying and resurrecting – to which he can compare himself to, which in turn liberates him from having to give into any form of worldly salvation. In effect, it was this eschatological perspective and personal reservation against the notion of a communist paradise that communist secularization attempts were most disgruntled with.

A second study would be required to examine who were the ones broken and with what methods for continuously relativizing communist salvation theories – by holding onto a clear spiritual perspective – and intercepting communist paradise dreams. This perspective and reservation holds a similar problem for Western-Europe when it attempts to pacify Central-Europe according to its own taste; a spirit accustomed to oppression does not necessarily make distinctions between the rule of money and the rule of tanks. The more so, since a mind raised on theoretical atheism is perceptive to the implications of practical Western-European atheism; which tries to seem Christian while refusing to be branded as one-sided (rightfully) for any adherence to the eschatological perspective or personal reservation. This in turn leads to practically losing all potential to play any role in society. They strive to align their terminology with a terminology we refer to as detranscendentalized – Jens Köhrsen also touches upon this – and they refuse to risk the unpopularity that would arise from mentioning eschatology or the “shocking perspective.”⁵¹

With this, comes the obviously uncomfortable consequence of the dweller’s eschatological position – he does not wish to forget what happened to him. This seemingly rigid one-sidedness could even alienate the dweller from other Christians – those who consider the Church an arbitrary partner for one reason or another – or from any

⁵¹ J. B. Metz, *Memoria Passionis, Ein Provozierendes Gedächtnis in pluralistischer Gesellschaft*, pp. 215-258.

type of seeker. Still, the “confirmed one-sidedness”⁵² that characterizes the dweller in any kind of professional or other type of debate warrants that he will not wish to or be unable to disregard Church tradition and the concrete historical experience of all humankind. This one-sidedness is the result of a commitment that the post-modern spirit avoids; after modernity’s grand historical movements and narratives turned out to be complete dead-ends, from the post-modern perspective all narratives became suspect. Since Christianity does not preach an actual doctrine of salvation, compared to concrete (worldly) narratives it is capable of incorporating endless semantic and historical complexity. In this sense, it maintains an organic and fertile connection with the culture of its time.⁵³ The always concrete Christian and Christianity are forever the (one-sided) witnesses of the eschatological reality⁵⁴ open to the future. In opposition to the modern, procedural rationality model of official expertise,⁵⁵ religion as a form of non-procedural rationality – with its “foreignness” and anamnestic rationality built on remembrance – becomes recognizably one-sided in today’s theoretical discourses.

Of course, knowledge of the Church’s historical role constitutes part of the historical self-perception of dwellers. The “double face of religion”⁵⁶ highlights the precarious relationship between the Church and society. In addition to remembering the atrocities committed by the Church and Christians strictly adhering to Church teachings, it is also essential that victims are not forgotten. From a general religious viewpoint what are the defining features of a public political testimony – of traditionally defined martyrdom in the broad sense of the word?

- One of the most fundamental problems of public (political) testimony is that – since broadly interpreted politics is often

⁵² D. Wiederkehr, “Spektrum kirchlicher Existenztypen,” *Mysal*, Vol. IV. No.1. 385 (Zürich: Benziger, 1969).

⁵³ Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Religion and Literature. Selected Essays*.

⁵⁴ Tiemo Rainer Peters and Johann Baptist Metz, *Theologie des vermißten Gottes* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1998), p. 46ff.

⁵⁵ Harold Perkin, *The Third Revolution. Professional Elites in the Modern World* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁵⁶ For further details see also Hans Maier, *Das Doppelgesicht des Religiösen. Religion – Gewalt – Politik* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004).

narrowed down to a particular political issue – it can easily find itself embroiled in the conflict of several competing truth claims. To avoid truth related particularism which is the byproduct of political particularism, the correct path for the political martyr or political testifier – instead of advocating the interest of one party – is to fight not for the particular interests of the participants of a particular political clash, but for universal principles: human rights, human dignity, the positive human content that is inseparable from religion.

- During the totalitarian rule of communism and National Socialism political testimony for universal causes differed from previous forms of testimony in that “communists and national socialists strived not only to break the resistance, but also to confine it to anonymity, isolate it, drive it to a place where it can no longer affect society, where it will remain unnoticed. The basis for Early Christian martyrdom was testimony on a public trial: Nero’s circus and the Colosseum were public venues. Contrary to this, most 20th century martyrs died nameless, unrecognized and lonely.”⁵⁷ They were tortured, mutilated and killed in a seemingly irrational manner – lacking meaning or significance.

- So while post-totalitarian martyrdom is once again played out directly in the public eye – especially particular forms of martyrdom like in the case of Islamic acts of terrorism – the martyrs who were subjected to the power mechanisms of totalitarian systems suffered their fate not in the historically public manner, but were martyred hidden from public view – more precisely, this was witnessed by the living body of the Church’s public sphere, which – as a result of the peculiarities of the totalitarian system – did not directly mean it had an impact in the political public sphere.

- Religious testimony outside direct public eye publicly demonstrates the tyranny of the strong and powerful in much the same way as direct political public exposure. The persecution of Early Christians (their directly public martyrdom) – who had strong faith in their soteriological beliefs – publicly exposed the empty promises of negative power (*pompa diaboli*). Similarly, even before the fall of the regime, martyrdom that does not take place directly in the public eye exposes its aggression in its own way. Only under

⁵⁷ H. Maier: “Politische Religionen. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten eines Begriffs,” in Hans Maier, ed., *Totalitarismus und Politische Religionen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), pp. 299-310.

totalitarian rule, exposure comes later; at the time of the persecution the public's enraged cries cannot be heard. Furthermore – and the unresolved nature of this is sadly felt to this day by Hungarian and other post-socialist countries' religious martyrs – the empty deceit (*pompa diaboli*) has its own means of protecting its alleged innocence and is more than willing to employ them (markedly felt during the regime change); the religious martyrs of totalitarian systems usually stay anonymous even after the fall of the regime. One of the reasons for this is that the ongoing activities of those who contributed to maintaining the given totalitarian system help to keep hidden the negativity of the exercise of power and the achievements of this negativity (which at the same time also constitute the system's failures).

- Finally, it is worth highlighting that in monotheist religions the religious community, religious law and tradition differentiates public (political) martyrdom (testimony) from the "subjectivity of charismatic persons (and radical heretics)"⁵⁸ In other words, public testimony is primarily related to the social structure and social goals of the religious community; the martyr sees himself as merely a small piece in the bigger picture, he does not proclaim his deeds as heroic ones.⁵⁹ This form of religious and political testimony – which lacks heroic characteristics, is embedded in the community (is social), takes place in a hidden manner that is not directly visible to the public – describes the experiences of the religious people persecuted by the totalitarian regimes.

- The Church can only perceive the unmasking and public exposing of *pompa diaboli* in a sphere where *Gloria Dei* and *pompa diaboli* can be simultaneously identified, in other words in an apocalyptic sphere. The defining characteristics of such an apocalyptic religious sphere (the Hungarian for example) can be explored from a practical point of view through the "apocalyptic pastoral method";⁶⁰ but we must also recognize that under totalitarian oppression – and similarly in our modern mass media

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁵⁹ The opposite process takes place when the a person making the testimony identifies his or her suffering – that is only a part of the bigger picture – with the whole picture, thus dismissing the law of the economics of suffering.

⁶⁰ O. Fuchs, "Neue Wege einer eschatologischen Pastoral," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 179, 1999, pp. 260-288.

mediated culture –with the decline of the importance of testimony, and the disappearance of a political public sphere receptive to testimonies the apocalyptic sphere loses its meaning and significance; a new sphere emerges where exposing *pompa diaboli* becomes quite impossible.

The apocalyptically inclined mind is not burdened primarily by the fear of imminent danger or the paralyzing terror of a looming catastrophe but is constantly aware of the necessity of solidarity with the “smallest brothers” – as we see in the Little Apocalypse from the Gospel of Matthew. A dweller who throughout communist times and even after the Central European regime changes still holds onto the historical past, must continue living in communion with the most vulnerable of society; if he forsakes this path, he becomes disloyal to the apocalyptic mindset, the preservation of which should be the responsibility of Eastern and Central Europe. In contrast to the evolutionary (not even atheist any more) “naked godlessness” which is based on a continuous conception of historical time, the emerging Christ-following mindset is ever anticipating the End times and believes in the finite nature of historical time. Metz argues that this Christ-following mindset does not weaken resolve but enables the taking responsibility. This is the foundation from which solidarity, action that is attentive to the “Signs of the Times,” a practice that emphasizes the necessity of social responsibility can spring.⁶¹ In this frame of interpretation, the time dynamics of eschatology connect the final times with the present – and in this way the final concerns become the primary concerns of each individual. Jesus’s teachings directing us to care for “the smallest among us” elevated this historical practice to the norm; and by making the adherence to this practice the criteria by which the Final Judgment will be passed, he set before us a form of eschatological hermeneutics.⁶² This concept of eschatological hermeneutics can only incite action because it regards eschatological reality as conceivably existing and not as an abstract motif:⁶³ eschatological practice can only exist if the eschaton is internally related to our present, if it can be imagined. In our case, in

⁶¹ This concept is in the back in P. Zulehner; cf. idem, ed., *Solidarität. Option für die Modernisierungsverlierer* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1996).

⁶² For more details see: O. Fuchs, *Praktische Hermeneutik der Heiligen Schrift* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004).

⁶³ O. Fuchs, *Neue Wege einer eschatologischen Pastoral*, p. 265.

addition to this, we have in front of us the picture of the imprisoned friend, relative, priest, the tortured or executed father, the student denied admission to the university – a wide range of life experiences. This is why Fuchs highlights, after H.-J. Sander's works,⁶⁴ that what Gaudium et spes is about is "the Signs of the Times": that the Second Vatican Council considers people of a given era not merely "accidents of a timeless idea,"⁶⁵ but regards them as relating to the end of time in concrete circumstances; the Church (and within the Church the religious dweller) – recognizing the Signs of the Times – involves itself in the conflicts of its era.⁶⁶ The dweller awaiting execution, who considers the Church – a Church that holds these experiences in its memory – a non-arbitrary partner understands precisely that "martyrem non facit poena, sed causa,"⁶⁷ or that it is not the suffering endured that makes a martyr but the cause he represents.

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⁶⁴ H.-J. Sander, "Die Zeichen der Zeit. Die Entdeckung des Evangeliums in den Konflikten der Gegenwart," in G. Fuchs and A. Lienkamp, eds., *Visionen des Konzils: 30 Jahre Pastoralkonstitution "Die Kirche in der Welt von heute"* (Münster, 1997), pp. 85-102, 86.

⁶⁵ O. Fuchs, *Neue Wege einer eschatologischen Pastoral*, p. 266.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

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