

# Hent de Vries

## **A Religious Canon for Europe? Policy, Education, and the Postsecular Challenge**

IT SHOULD BY NOW BE CLEAR THAT THE SCHOLARLY STAKES IN discussing religion historically and systematically are much higher than those of mere impassive, intellectual interest. Even “methodological atheism” and “asceticism”—two well known provisos made by nonconfessional, nondenominational, nonsectarian inquiries into religion that espouse not so much value-free but rather differently valued normative perspectives of their own—clearly do not suffice to suppress or contain the passion the subject of religion provokes and, perhaps, deserves.

Modern states, their functionaries, and enlightened citizens have begun to take notice and express not just concern but also genuine curiosity, informing themselves more thoroughly about the cultural presence and political force of the phenomenon of “public”—or, as I would prefer to say, “global”—religion in the contemporary world. While many stress its perils far more than its promises, they are convinced—on either side of this somewhat artificial divide (artificial, since one could hardly separate such perils from their promises and the very conceptual and practical possibilities for which both stand)—that the phenomenon in question can no longer leave us indifferent, not least because it is unlikely to disappear from our expanding and increasingly flattening—worldwide, “global”—horizon anytime soon.

To take up its political no less than metaphysical challenge, much more will be required than the call for a basic familiarity with the established canons of Western and non-Western cultures, of so-called world religions or the religions of the world that have infused our contemporary sensibilities even though they are still largely ignored by institutions of higher learning, not to mention cultural and bureaucratic elites. Religion's current publicity and globality has acquired new social and cultural dimensions that tie an increased worldwide expansion of its old and modern forms of life and everyday practices to a no less pervasive dehistoricized impression of its meaning and legacies.

As a matter of fact, there is a growing awareness that, in addition to the invaluable task of historical learning and the general cultivation of knowledge—moving us from an “ignorant” to an “intelligent” secularism (or *laïcité*) at best—there is an increasingly urgent need for understanding of “religious” signs and symbols, rituals and practices, acts and passions, movements and institutions, in the deepest—that is, most extensive—and broadest—that is, generic as well as intensive—possible sense. Such an understanding, we might venture to say, must reach across the board into all sectors of society and beyond: in education and the arts, local and national levels of policy and administration, international diplomacy and military intelligence, the environment and matters of health, but evidently also into the proliferation of economic markets and the diffusions of global media culture, and, perhaps, the very “global soul” they prepare or already express.

Again, this fact seems more and more recognized by political authorities, policymakers, independent observers and informed publics, while most commercially and ideologically driven print and electronic media and their pundits, with few exceptions, do not advance much beyond all too facile sensationalism and innuendo, caricatures and chatter, *doxa*, and dogmatism.

This much is clear: all secularist attempts at “neutralizing” and containing global religion's recent phenomena have proved laughable at best and counterproductive at worst. Sadly, even some of the best scientific and philosophical minds—Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett,

among other, lesser gods—waste their considerable talents on reinventing the wheel of atheism, bare bones secularism, and what have you. Yet they whistle in the dark, bark up against the wrong tree, and leave everything as it is or, worse still, fuel the very tendencies they fear most.

What better alternative, then, can we propose?

## **THE RELIGIOUS “FACT”: EDUCATION AND THE SECULAR STATE**

One of the more interesting and puzzling approaches taken in recent years to tackle the question of religion and the modern nation or nation-state was the assignment given in December 2001 by Jack Lang, then minister of national Education in France, to Régis Debray, then a professor of philosophy at the University of Lyon-III.

As Lang pointed out, Debray was the author of a much debated study, entitled *God: An Itinerary (Dieu, un itinéraire)* (2001), as well as of numerous writings on the material—and, as he calls it, “mediological”—aspect of culture as it grounds all aspirations toward transcendence (meaning that “no society is capable of effecting its own closure” and is, hence, “necessarily incomplete” [Reader 2006, 492]). Interestingly, the book that had drawn Lang’s attention sought to provide not so much a biography but another history of the changing “face and sense [*sens*]” of God, whose “original appellation” remains while his “Being” has no longer the same characteristics, caught up as it is in “the machineries of the divine production” (as the back cover of the French version stated).

Debray was also known from his Latin American political adventures in Cuba and Bolivia and from his role as a longtime adviser of President François Mitterrand, until his disappointment with the latter’s second term and his own increasing “exaltation of De Gaulle as supreme exponent of the ‘Europe of nations,’” led him to turn to the academic study of religion from what one of his commentators, Keith Reader, calls an “impenitent cultural materialist” (2006, 491) perspective.

Peter Sloterdijk, in one of the rare discussions of the relationship between Debray and Jacques Derrida (to whom I will return in a

moment), suggests that *God, An Itinerary* “contains the most important hint at a mediological re-contextualization of Derrida” and takes Debray to have founded “the genre of what one might call theo-biographical discourse” with its “hybridization of theology and historical mediology” and its invention of “a new type of secular, semi-blasphemous religious science which provokes a comparison with Niklas Luhmann’s 1977 work *Funktion der Religion*” (Sloterdijk 2009, 44).

Mediology, as defined and explored by Debray’s 1991 *Cours de médiologie générale* (*A Course in General Mediology*), is introduced as “the study of the material mediations through which a Word becomes flesh, an idea, a collective force, a message, a vision of the world” (Reader 2006, 491). In Sloterdijk’s words:

If the last word of philosophy, driven to its limits, had been “writing,” then the next word in thought would have to be “medium.” By founding the French school of mediology—which differs from the slightly older Canadian school through its more deep-seated political orientation, but shares a sense of the weight of religion as a historical medium of social synthesis—he [Debray] had not only provided post-philosophical thought with a new material horizon, but also established the vital connection to culture-scientific research and the theoretical sciences of symbolically communicating systems (Sloterdijk 2009, 43–44).

With reference to *Dieu, un itinéraire* as a “much-noted work on the knowledge of religions,” Lang pointed to its discussion, “in passing” of the “question of teaching about religions in school.” Indeed, he cited Debray’s elegant diagnosis of the problem: “The Republic, rightfully, does not *recognize* any religious system. Must it therefore refuse to *know* any?” (Debray 2008, 430; see Debray 2002/3; McCaffrey 2005)

Debray was asked to assess the needs of the Fifth Republic in having its functionaries and teachers—confronted with the complex

demands of a multicultural, multiethnic society in a transnational, globalizing world and deeply troubled by the controversy over *laïcité*, the prohibition of veils in public schools, violence in the *banlieux*, and more—study and especially teach “religion” in a more engaged and useful, comprehensive, yet also intellectually acceptable way than had been the case up to that day.

Debray’s assignment was to “reexamine the place accorded to the teaching of religious facts” and this, Lang added in his “Letter of Invitation,” “within a secular and Republican framework [*cadre*]” (Debray 2008, 430). Lang’s invitation came some 13 years after Lionel Jospin’s request for a report by Philippe Joutard in 1989, referenced by Lang but in need, in his eyes, of a sequel, and was solicited some three months after the events of 9/11, which had inspired the outcry of *Le Monde*’s chief editorial *Nous sommes tous Américains* (Colombani 2001), and, finally, less than a year before the report of the Committee of Reflection on the Application of the Principle of Secularity in the Republic, headed by Bernard Stasi, of which Debray would also become a member. Now, if the Republic could no longer refuse to know religion could it do so without falling in the trap of the “secular fundamentalism” that the *New York Times* in its editorial of December 19, 2003, attributed to the Stasi recommendations at the very moment then-President Jacques Chirac signed them into law? (see Wallach Scott 2007; Bowen 2007) Conversely, could it avoid repudiation by secularists and religious traditionalists alike without losing anything of its critical edge and pedagogic corrective?

As a secular school would have to give students “access to an understanding of the world” and since religions are “facts of civilization,” speaking of religion in the schools of the secular Republic had, Lang claimed, “always been possible” and had “long” been part of its curricula (Debray 2008, 415). In Lang’s interesting phrasing of the assignment:

While respecting *laïcité*, a principle of harmony [sic, HdV], teachers give the knowledge of religions its fair place in

the teaching of their disciplines. History, philosophy, literature, the plastic arts, music . . . here we can rightfully call upon the humanities.

Without privileging one or another spiritual option, and deliberately distancing themselves from any *religious instruction*, teachers approach religions as defining and structuring elements in the history of humanity; sometimes agents of peace and modernity, sometimes sowers of discord, murderous conflicts, and regression.

It is thus within the framework of the existing disciplines—and not as part of a hypothetical new school subject—that religious facts must be presented. Carrying this out, however, is difficult for a numbers of teachers. It appears necessary to better train all to address religious facts calmly (2008, 415).

Debray's report, entitled *L'enseignement du fait religieux dans l'école laïque* (Teaching Religious Facts in Secular Schools), came out in 2002 and was circulated widely. I, for one, purchased my copy at a newsstand while waiting for my train at the Gare du Nord. An English translation came out in 2008 in a volume I edited under the title *Religion Beyond a Concept*.

The slim report proposed to relegate the responsibility for the training of teachers in this old-new domain of “religious facts”—that is, of these “defining and structuring elements in the history of humanity”—to the famous fifth section, founded in 1886, responsible for “Sciences religieuses,” of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (EPHE), a section in which luminaries such as Marcel Mauss, Étienne Gilson, Alexandre Koyré, Alexandre Kojève, Lucien Febvre, Louis Massignon, Henry Corbin, Georges Dumézil, and Claude Lévi-Strauss had taught and researched in earlier days.

Indeed, Debray's institutional proposal led to the establishment in 2006 of the *Institut européen en sciences des religions* (IESR or European Institute for the Sciences of Religion), of which Debray was the founding (and is currently the honorary) director. The IESR

forms an integral part of the EPHE and has instituted a host of academic initiatives and reflections on secondary education even though, to my knowledge, it has not yet succeeded in establishing a systematic or required curriculum for the training of all teachers in the public (*laïc* or common) schools. This said, it has encouraged discussion on the content of the curriculum and offers a host of online resources on its website ([www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr](http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr)).

Debray had called for several concrete measures to regard the place of religion in course material on the school syllabus, albeit within the existing subjects such as history, French, and civics, and to train teachers at secondary schools on the introductory and advanced level, notably in the context of a course on religious facts and *laïcité* that they would need to attend at Les Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres (IUFM, the University Institutes for the Training of Schoolteachers). Such enhancement of the curriculum, supported by the training of its teachers, was aimed at enabling students, first, to learn to understand their cultural heritage (in monuments, art works, and the like) and, second, to help them develop the intellectual tools necessary for improved intercultural relations and mutual respect (Willaime 2008). A limited module of 10 hours per year on the “philosophy of *laïcité* and the teaching of religious facts” was instituted.

However, from a distance it seems that the model of the IESR is much more like that of the Collège de France, the Collège International de Philosophie, or, indeed, the system of Grand Écoles (of which, again, it technically forms part), all of which offer a wide variety of courses open to the general public. What the IESR adds, though, is a Professional Master degree and the possibility for public educators to enroll in a program consisting of internships in relevant institutions, just as it assists the National Education Department to formulate frameworks, pursue theoretical reflection and excellence in the study and teaching of religion within the existing disciplinary structures of higher and secondary education to enable the transition “from a *laïcité* of *incompetence* (the religious, by construction, is none of our business)

towards a *laïcité of intelligence* (it is our duty to understand the religious)” (Debray 2008, 424).

I am aware of the fact that several further initiatives have been taken to address the question of religion in education in the European context, the 2008 conference and 2009 report of the European Research Project with the acronym REDCo (Religion in Education: A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries), being one of them. Jean-Paul Willaime in particular, a member of that group and one of the subsequent directors of the Institut européen en sciences des religions, has made several efforts to relate this project to the original Debray proposal, producing surveys suggesting that a majority of French adolescents support “the idea that religion should be discussed impartially within existing subjects” (Willaime 2008, 25). But I cannot go into them here. Their analyses and proposals do not affect the conceptual matrix that underlies them nor do they undermine my more modest—philosophical—reconstruction in this paper.

### **CONCEPTUAL MATTERS: DECONSTRUCTING “CULT” AND “CULTURE”**

The principal justification for Debray’s proposal for a new curriculum under the EPHE’s auspices is what is taken (by him) to be an insurmountable analytical distinction between two categories or concepts that have accompanied and structured “religion” throughout the course of its history, namely, that between “cult” and “culture,” together with the assumption that preoccupation with the first (that is, “cult”) should—under proper methodological and pedagogical guidance—be replaced with an investigation of the second (that is “culture”) (see Taubes 2010 [1996]).

While a “cult” would, first of all, be a “religious fact,” but then also a fact of “civilization,” one that “structures human history,” at times as a factor of “peace and moderation,” then again as a source of “discordance, of murderous conflicts and regression” (Lang 2002, 10), its counterpart, “culture,” as Jacques Lang’s preface suggested and

Debray reiterated, would not seem or need to display such ambiguity and volatility.

In the report it is as if Debray were arguing that whereas “cults,” whose mythic origins and participatory modes of being must be described in “thick” language, require our unconditional allegiance, “culture,” on the contrary, is a loose descriptive—historical and empirical—notion, whose referenced reality is characterized by a regimen and adherence best captured in “thin” language.

Put differently, what is distinguished and, in fact, separated here is a certain diffuse and uncritical “*appartenance*” or “belonging,” on the one hand, and an “*autoconstitution*” or “self-constitution,” on the other (see Jansen 2006, 193).

The pragmatic elegance and, dare we say, political and institutional courage, of Lang’s and Debray’s proposal thus gives way to a postulated, assumed ideological divide that rests on shaky presuppositions and condemns the whole project to failure.

After all, the differentiation between “belonging” and “self-constitution,” in other words, by sectarian “*communitarisme*” on the one hand, and republican-democratic “*laïcité*” on the other, is far from evident and, in fact, is questionable as an all too simple dichotomy such as those between “faith” and “knowledge,” “value” and “fact.” It rests upon a naive assumption of a space of nonconfessional, civic neutrality or liberality, while allowing (indeed, requiring) at the same time to conceive and speak of the common, public school in quasi-religious terms as a “*sanctuaire républicain*” (as President Chirac called it in 2003).

Further, Debray claims that teaching “cults” as an integral part of the study of “culture” needs to be premised on the axiom that “the teaching of *the* religious is *not* a religious teaching” (Debray 2008, 419). Only thus could the integrity of republicanism as promulgated by the institutions of secondary and higher learning be maintained and the corresponding “demons of communitarianism” (feared by secularists) and the “Trojan horse” of “syncretism [*confusionisme*]” or “relativism” (scorned by clerics)—as if these were Debray’s main concern—be contained (2008, 418–419).

All depends, therefore, on our intellectual ability and political will to avoid blurring the categorical distinctions that exist between “catechism” and “information,” or between “testimony” and “reports”—that is to say, between a “sacramental” relation to “memory” on the one hand, and an “analytical” attitude toward “knowledge” (as opposed to “faith”) on the other (2008, 419).

Moreover, without allowing any single confession to make its necessarily exclusivist claim to “authority,” let alone its “monopoly of meaning,” the Republic should, on Debray’s view, abstain from putting itself in the position of an “arbiter”; it should instead offer a merely “descriptive, factual, and notional” approach to the residual (now stable, then again growing) presence of the religious phenomenon in its midst (2008, 419).

Its assumption is that to let “religion” circulate outside the accepted institutional channels for the publicly controlled and rational transmission of knowledge ipso facto means to relegate it to a series of “pathologies” (2008, 420) that religious cults generate when left to their own devices. And holding these in check would require nothing less than a methodological and didactic approach based upon sound philosophical premises that stipulate “the bracketing of personal convictions,” steer clear from the fruitless alternatives of “devitalizing” and “mystifying” tradition, and opt instead for informed interpretation of religious, that is to say, sociohistorical, literary, and cultural facts (2008, 421, 29, 30).<sup>1</sup>

All this does not mean that Debray—in addition to excavating its most salient and pervasive phenomena—has much use for the term or reality of “religion” (or, for that matter, any of “object” and “region of reality” [Debray 2006, 289–291] per se. In fact, his more recent *Les communions humaines: Pour en finir avec “la religion”* (*Human Communion: Doing Away with “Religion”*) explicitly calls for the concept’s retirement and for its substitution with the more sober notion of “communion” (Debray 2005, 60 ff.) In either case, mediology’s claim would be that “religion” has come to serve as a “medium” of sorts:

What mediology wishes to bring to light is the way in which something serves as a *medium*, and the often unperceived complexities that go with it, looking back over the long term (from the birth of writing) without being overly concerned with present-day media (even if certain mediologists are prepared to consider these). . . . The mediologist's interest is therefore neither in an object nor a region of reality (the media, let us say), but on *the relations between* objects or regions; between an ideality and a materiality, a feeling and a piece of equipment, a disposition and a device. What matters is putting two terms into relation with each other. . . . A study of the desire for immortality is welcome in itself: but it becomes a mediological inquiry only if one attempts to show how this moral sentiment has been transformed by contact with, and under the influence of, painting, photography, cinema, and television—in short, with the evolution of the apparatus of the collective imagination. Thus, what phenomenologists asked of the “eidetic variation” (namely to imaginatively modify the properties of an empirical object in order to intuitively discover its essence), the mediologist asks of the “technological variations” of supposedly invariant faculties, behaviors, and institutions (Debray 2006, 289–290).

And these distinctions would seem to hold true whether one thinks of religion as an “object of culture” or an “object of cult.”

We need not investigate here whether the deployment of these (or, for that matter, any other) conceptual alternatives create more clarity, allow for more resourcefulness, in assessing and addressing the phenomenon or set(s) of phenomena whose name or concept (“religion,” “communion”) we may, indeed, have to change one day. They may or may not do so; in any case, it remains doubtful whether successive functional equivalents for—and beyond—a concept, in this case, “religion,” will escape the long shadow cast by the very tradition or, rather, set(s)

of traditions, whose common denominator and supposed commonality, community, let alone “communion” was admittedly something of a stretch, that is, nothing less than a violent imposition (as any concept will be). Nothing, strictly speaking, falls under a concept (albeit the most pertinent or appropriate concept found or coined so far). In the end, there is nothing but the at once minimally different and infinitely multiple “beyond” of a concept (for example, of “religion,” but also of “God,” “the Other,” “communion,” even of the “beyond” itself) that could possibly interest, captivate, or inspire us. And when and wherever it does, this happens in barely visible (audible, tangible, etc.) yet at the same time radically, globally transformative ways.

### **“A LITTLE FURTHER”**

Jacques Derrida, who had been Debray’s teacher at the École Normale Supérieure, rue d’Ulm, in Paris, was asked by Jacques Lang to critically evaluate and respond to Debray’s proposals. Derrida made an important observation, on which he reported in rough outlines during a conference at Stanford University in 2002, about a year after Debray’s report was first presented.<sup>2</sup> The change in the French government that soon followed probably explains why this invited response, at least to my knowledge, never materialized.

In 2004, Debray and Derrida appeared in a lively long televised debate with each other on France 3, in the program *Culture et Dépendances*, without ever touching upon these matters directly, let alone explicitly. What did become clear, though, was the sharp contrast between Debray’s long held belief in “the determinant specificity of the nation-state, a belief . . . which animate[d] his hostility to pan-European federalism and his admiration for an . . . ‘idealized de Gaulle,’” (Reader 2006, 491) on the one hand, and Derrida’s more radical and resolute federalism and internationalism (in matters European and well beyond), on the other.

In his remarks at Stanford, Derrida noted that the distinction between the “cult” and “culture of religion” or between “religious teaching” (or “teaching religiously”) and “teaching religion” is both

useful, even necessary, and unhappy, indeed, questionable and (as you guessed) deconstructable. As he put it, “I approve of Debray’s distinction between culture and cult, teaching religion and religious teaching. Nevertheless, I am not totally convinced by and happy with this distinction, and I would try something else. Not to object to his rhetoric or logic, but to *try to go a little further*” (unpublished transcript; emphasis added).

Derrida’s different approach does not so much propose to leave concepts—here those of “cult” or “culture”—behind, but instead asks what such concepts have to rely on for their distinction and application to offer any guidance at all. More precisely, he hints at a “space” or “spacing,” which would allow for any concept—“religion” or each single one of “religion’s” central notions, such as, say, “revelation”—to make its appearance in the first place. “Revelation” would require some “revealability,” not so much in terms of the latter’s logical, chronological, or ontological precedence or prevalence, but as a “condition” or “in-condition” that is “conditioned” by what it “makes possible,” in turn, thereby undercutting every traditional and modern assumption of foundationalism, transcendentalism, possibilism, and the like. As the quasi-condition of any possibility, more precisely, as a “conditioned condition” (and, hence, no condition at all), it would “be” the impossible par excellence and, as such, irreducible to any theologico-religious or theologico-political stratagem.

Further, Derrida invokes once more Plato’s term *chora*, which in the *Timaeus* stands for the impossible possibility (rather than a possible impossibility, as Heidegger would have phrased it) of, precisely, a beyond of the concept (here: of any concept). Unthinkable that we should not attempt to think it, Derrida seems to say, unthinkable that we find it readily—or, indeed, ever at all—anywhere present. Derrida would thus insist on (what Adorno called) the “unthinkability [*Unausdenkbarkeit*] of despair,” while acknowledging (again, like Adorno) that this difficulty can hardly be the source of much hope.

Everything comes down, then, to relating or negotiating two different endeavors, irreducible to each other, but also unthink-

able without each other. On the one hand, there would be our taking “religion”—in short, all our efforts to maintain the term, for lack of better substitutes—seriously, while venturing into territories and dimensions, possibilities and virtualities, that exceed its past and present conceptual grasp. On the other hand, there would be the need to study the incomplete set(s) of phenomena of apparent historical and systematic relevance for the eventual understanding of its (that is, “religion’s”) phenomenon and, as we said, phenomenality (studying words and things, gestures and powers, sounds and silences, smells and feels, shapes and colors, affects and effects, etc.), in light of whatever it “is” or “might be” that eludes them.

Having distinguished these two—broadly systematic and roughly empirical—approaches to one and the same object, subject, name, or concept, a simple but far-reaching hypothesis imposes itself. What is at stake in these endeavors is not so much a metaphysical dualism between the here and the hereafter (the *Hinterwelt*, before, around, beyond, under or above the world we know), than an at once ontological and methodological duality of perspective: a “dual-aspect theory of reality,” to cite Stuart Hampshire’s characterization of Spinoza’s *deus sive natura*, a two-way seeing of “aspects” of which Wittgenstein speaks in his *Philosophical Investigations* (invoking the duck-rabbit picture), a differentiation between *langue* and *parole*, as Ferdinand de Saussure proposes in his *Cours de linguistique générale*, a “double séance” and “double science,” as Jacques Derrida proposes in his study of Mallarmé, and the list of exemplifications is far from complete.

Instead of asking, perhaps, what the attempt “to go a little further” aspires toward, we are thus invited to see what promise and what difficulty the proposed—in Derrida’s view, provisional and, at best, strategic—distinction between “cult and culture” or between “teaching religion and religious teaching,” entails exactly.

The division of labor between theoretical (cultural, historical) versus confessional and ritual (cultic, confessional) interest it implies is thus at once pragmatic and deeply steeped in a metaphysical as well as societal need for separating, contrasting, perhaps, contradicting

normative domains or “value-spheres.” But its inevitable suggestion of dichotomy and definitional or methodological purity is, ultimately, also misleading and, again, has no *fundamentum in re*.

Rather, if there is any religious “fact,” it will take on the form—philosophically no less than sociologically speaking—of a “*fait social total*,” that is of a total (“global”?) phenomenon of which it is hard to believe that its historical and more than historical presence is that of a “fact” and a “social fact” at that. As a fact of its own kind (“*un fait total d’un genre particulier*”), it is “multidimensional” (Debray 2002/3, 173–175). Indeed, as Marcel Mauss (on whom Debray draws here) already knew—borrowing this expression from his pupil Maurice Leenhardt (who in turn had taken his lead from Emile Durkheim)—the term “*fait social total*” conjures up a reference or reality that is neither purely material nor spiritual but transcends both in a way and direction that is at once magical, mysterious, mystical. Its “archive” (as Derrida will say) or “apparatus” (as Giorgio Agamben, following Michel Foucault, will add) has a certain virtuality that is not without effect—and, hence, “actuality”—in the world we experience.

Over the years, Derrida had devoted considerable attention to the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the French concept of *laïcité* in view of what Michael Naas has ventured to call “a radical secularity that inscribes faith (though not religion) at the very origin of the sociopolitical and thus . . . at the very origin of all sovereignty” (Naas 2008, 63) But what does such “radical secularity”—a “reworked and originary *laïcité*” (Naas 2008, 64) as Naas also calls it—imply in more practical-institutional matters? And can its “faith” keep “religion” at bay, that is to say, distance, separate, indeed, emancipate itself from it?

The concept and practice of *laïcité* would have to be “reworked” in pursuit of its “originary” meaning, sense, and force, so that its remaining—perhaps, inevitable—“sacrality” and “sovereignty” might not so much be removed as put under erasure, deconstructed, subjected to an interminable analysis that disjoints a certain “faith” from all the historical and natural, revealed and positive, private and public forms of “religion.” It is this “faith” that I am tempted to call “global.”

In sum, this notion—hardly a “field”—requires a different type of analysis than the one that history or, for that matter, social science, literary studies, even philosophy are most familiar with. It is here that the question of what I would like to call “deep pragmatism” arises. For one thing, such an inquiry touches upon theoretical and conceptual problems that challenge the very basis and parameters of “History” (even “Intellectual History”) as a discipline or, for that matter, of any other field. Indeed, it requires one to invite the perspectives of scholars steeped in different domains of inquiry and reflections (philosophers and other theorists to begin with), without invoking all too facile appeals to inter- or transdisciplinary scholarship.

For reasons that I cannot develop here, I thereby take Lang’s and Debray’s view to be indicative of a systematic (call it conceptual or analytic, hermeneutic and normative) problem that we have long been familiar with: that history or historiography, whether as an ancient discipline or as a modern academic field, even when it relies on the most sophisticated and nuanced among its methods, cannot adequately address or fully resolve on its own account (that is, on its own turf) the questions raised by the modern phenomenon of “global religion.” Indeed, no single field can.

### **A RELIGIOUS CANON FOR EUROPE?**

Again, it should be noted that, for Jack Lang and Régis Debray, religion—the “religious fact”—within the French national context of the Republic and its laic public school (in the “Europe of nations,” as Debray, now as a left-wing Gaullist, is only happy to add) does not need a new or separate field of study. In Lang’s and Debray’s view, religious education or, rather, the teaching of religion does not enter the curriculum as an added subject, a theme or field *sui generis*. The need and duty to know does not need specialized, religion-oriented, disciplinary knowledge *per se*. It requires even less the privileged, insider kind of “thick,” putative knowledge that is based upon revelation, tradition, dogma, mystic illumination, spiritual exercise, or ritual practice. “Theology” is

not what is called for here, as, in Lang's and Debray's terms; it can only be "cultic."

It is important to emphasize this assumption and also its relative merit, if only to get into clearer view what goes wrong with the overall argument that claims to sustain it.

Some have argued that the "cross-curricular treatment" of the religious "fact" in French education is "seriously problematic" since it presupposes, precisely, a "kind of detachment from religious beliefs that is neither possible nor desirable" and also that to better understand religion (the intellectual aim Lang and Debray wish to achieve, albeit not so much for its own virtue, but as a conduit, first of all, to civic education and its ethos) "young people require a thicker encounter with religion than the study of *le fait religieux* will permit" (Williams 2007, 685).

Yet, this familiar objection all too easily reverts into a contrary (and no less dubious) assumption, namely that *only religion gets religion*; in other words, that only a "theological approach" to the phenomenon of, say, global religion has a better chance to respect and protect the very "substance" that would otherwise get lost in the methodologically atheist and neutral or secular approach that forms its alternative.

But, in this, Lang and Debray are certainly right: one does not need a separate discipline or field—a department or program of religious studies, nor, for that matter, a comprehensive or integral account of the so-called history of religions or world religions—to discuss matters of importance that find their *proprium* in the very "fact" (a "religious fact," if ever there was one) that they are no longer identifiable and localizable (and, perhaps, never were) and that, hence, tend to subvert all explanatory genealogies, chronologies, the very nexus of cause and effect, law and exception, between structure and event, if you like. The study of "global religion"—of its words and things, gestures and powers, sounds and silences, smells and touches, etc.—suggests nothing else.

As a consequence, there is nothing wrong with a "thin," that is to say minimal—and be it "minimal theological"—cross-curricular and transdisciplinary approach to "religion" per se. Provocatively put,

the only elements and forms of religion that could truly and responsibly interest us all are “generic” and, hence, “generalizable,” perhaps, “universal” in their intent and import.<sup>3</sup>

This said, it is, perhaps, more appropriate to say that the two perspectives or “takes” (“snapshots,” really) on one and the same worldwide yet elusive or, as I said, “global” phenomenon—that is, the “thin” and “thick,” the “public” and “particular” (whether “private,” “communal” or “national”)—cannot be kept apart that easily. Nor should they be.

This is why the “movement away” from an “abstentionist” and “incompetent” *laïcité* to “a return of religion to public education” (Williams 2007, 682, with reference to Willaime 2007) in a *laïcité* of “intelligence,” of sorts, leaves neither the former nor the latter untouched or intact, but traverses and transcends both. The question, really, is how one both “traverses and transcends” (to use Alain Badiou’s elegant formulation) historical and legal, cultural and situational differences so as to achieve a result in which needless abstraction and all too much concretion are mostly avoided.

If what I have argued is at all plausible, then there is no such thing as a fully “indirect” teaching of religion, just as there can be no absolutely “direct” instruction of its putative reference or lack thereof, that is to say of its experience and promise, either. In other words, the very distinction between the “teaching of religion” and “religious teaching” is misleading or somewhat artificial at best.

### **CAN A CANON BE MOBILE?**

I would like conclude by briefly addressing a question that the 2010 European Educational and Cultural Forum, among other platforms and public debates, has recently sought to answer, namely, what does “living with religious differences in education” amount to given the historical and accelerating tendencies toward “Europeanization and globalization” that “bring people closer together than ever before” while, perhaps, prompting them to “fall back on traditional identities and private loyalties, where religion often plays a major role,” as

well? Put differently, how should we give new “impetus to a European dialogue on the direction of a new model in education with religious difference, moving from passive toleration and mutual misunderstanding to active appreciation and accommodation of religious difference, without surrendering the goal of a shared citizenship,” indeed a “shared European space”?

My tentative answer would be: by introducing a religious canon for Europe, to begin with, a canon that would be at once provisional and open, limited and selective (if not restrictive, as most, perhaps, all canons are) and mobile, indeed, virtual (which I take to mean “digital” and much more). Traditionally, at least since Irenaeus, the “canon” is a “single, sacred, and unalterable corpus” (Carroll and Prickett 1998, xii). Is there a possible, contemporary or future, substitute for this definition that would be adequate to the world that is ours? To conceive one, we might indeed concede that we do not need a separate field or set of disciplines—just as we do not need departments or programs of religious studies, divinity schools, and religious academies per se—to study contemporary religion intensively and extensively, that is to say, deeply and broadly or, as now I prefer to say, globally.

It would seem that what Lang and Debray have in mind is a religious “canon” for the secular nation-state, not just for France but for Europe, convinced as they seem, in the words of Jean-Paul Willaime, that “Europe, contrary to the impression gained by a superficial study, is more laical than one would think” and assuming that is the reason “why the French solution which is now in the process of emerging can expect a positive and interested response in other European Union member states and, possibly, in countries aspiring to membership now or in the future” (Willaime 2007, 100). Willaime continues:

It is not the *laïcité* of understanding, brought about through the Joutard colloquium and the Debray Report, which risks a rebuff from Europe, but an abstentionist and paralysed *laïcité* that, in the eyes of our European partners, will appear suspicious and outdated. Between a process of inter-

nal secularization in religious education curricula in various European countries, on the one hand, and the opening of the question of introducing religious culture to school in France, on the other, there is a certain degree of convergence emerging from very different historical and legal contexts. Characterized by a longstanding secularization process and suffused with the spirit of cultural secularism, European countries face the same challenges: a growing number of Muslim school students, the threats posed to respect for civil liberties by certain religious groups, the religious ignorance of students, demands for direction and ethical guidance, and the education towards citizenship in culturally diverse societies. . . . Whatever their legal frameworks, all European countries are facing the question of how to approach religious faith respecting the freedom of conscience of students and their families while at the same time educating them towards freedom of thought and a critical stance. The question is, then, how to integrate these different orientations into the school without diminishing its laical stance or its educative mission. In France it is the very success of *laïcité*, the maturity of the system, that allows is to open itself calmly to the question of instruction about religion in a laical school (Willaime 2007, 100).

But what form, in Lang's, Debray, and Willaime's eyes, could such a secular canon take as it moves from laical "incompetence," with its putative "abstinence" and "ignorance" in matters religious, to a "laicity" or "laicism" of "intelligence"? On the basis of their premises and going "a little further," with Derrida and others, the following might be said: a religious canon (for instance, to begin with, for Europe), should be able to name or nominate, present, and recommend religious authors and texts, authoritative documents and doctrines, themes and concepts, images and gestures, sounds and silences, places and spaces, just as it must leave room for alternative—if not necessarily historically

or culturally dominant—roots and resources, archives and apparatuses, that may well acquire more strength and prominence one fine (or terrible) day (depending on whom you ask).

Such a canon presents the—again, necessarily limited and selective—list of books, of authors and ideas, idioms and icons that have been more influential than others in shaping, say, the Western imagination, like it or not, for good and for ill. This legacy is that of its realized, failed colonizations, and imperialisms as well.

Put differently, such a canon would comprise and compress—indeed, expand and condense—a set of regulating principles and notions, values and norms, practices and ways of life, by which current intuitions and so-called maxims are measured and judged and, thereby, found to be wanting or, on the contrary, proven to be genuine innovations, improvements for learning.

Last but not least and somewhat paradoxically (since this seems to violate the very concept of “canonicity,” traditionally defined), such a canon would have to be updatable and, as it were, up- and downgradable.

After all, to propose and determine a canon—the canonicity of certain words and things, gestures and proven or supposed spiritual powers—is not necessarily an imperial, authoritarian gesture (although, of course, it can become one and, historically, this has been the default). But just as canonization in the Roman Catholic Church does not make someone a saint but merely declares that person is and, indeed, previously, was one, so also can the establishment of a so-called religious canon for Europe be a descriptive, if selective, as much as a normative, hence, discriminatory, act. The difference would merely be that, other than traditional canonization, a religious canon for a contemporary and future Europe remains not only open-ended—new saints, like worthy texts and words, images and sounds, may come along—but is also revisable and amendable in principle, as items drop out. Moreover, given the fact that it will be an inevitable compromise—no matter what consensus is reached—it will be no less inevitably compromised in ways that no “give and take” can fully balance or compensate. With

religious (or, for that matter, any other) canons, winner takes all is the rule of the game, at least for a certain period of time, until revisions take hold.

But such an open-ended, provisional, and limited, if mobile, canon for Europe, it might be objected, is hardly religious and precisely in its celebration of diversity and heterogeneity, equality and freedom, obeys a secular concept of reason and “intelligence” more than anything else. Put differently, a canon of European religion—more precisely, of religions in and (still or already) beyond the “shared European space” we inhabit—could not have the same historical and theological weight (indeed, the same existential feel and political impact) as a properly religious canon does (or, should we say, once did). It would seem that we could no longer teach religiously when we teach religion in this way, in the old-new format of a canon that from this present moment onward would have to be principally open in all (past and present, lateral as well as future) directions at once.

But then again, it is easy to see that this objection merely reiterates and returns us to the—philosophical no less than theological—impasse into which the Lang-Debray proposal has lead us, in spite of their best intentions to solve these matters once and for all.

Should we conclude, then, first, that the concept and practice of “the secular”—and, a fortiori, secularism and French *laïcité*—were never neutral, value-free to begin with, and, second, that the boundaries between the two cultural domains of the religious and the secular with their respective pasts and present references are porous, even fluid? That this is the case and will, no doubt, become ever more seems obvious as current tendencies toward globalization, the expansion of economic markets and technological media, render ideological systems and ways of life associated with revealed, natural, world, private, or public religions in the modern world, if not obsolete, then in any case increasingly “global.”

In contrast with the United States and unlike other immigration societies (such as Canada, Australia, perhaps even Israel and Palestine), the European Union, its populations, policymakers, and leading intel-

lectuals do not tend to conceive of “their” canon—let alone, a “religious canon”—as something principally and practically mobile and open. Even less are they capable of conceiving of a canon that, while attuned to elements and forms of religious life, remains open in any imaginable direction.

The ongoing debate about “civic integration” (*inburgering*) requirements and courses for immigrants and new citizens, especially in the wake of growing skepticism concerning the politics of multiculturalism, is a case in point (see Scheffer 2007). A religious canon “for all,” that is to say, equally distributed among all—in public as well as confessional schools, in governance bodies high and low—might not only be a better substitute for them; the catch of a religious canon for Europe is, ultimately, this: it is “ok” to expect from immigrants and new citizens that they blend in, culturally no less than legally and politically, if and only if what they blend into has a genuine chance of receiving and registering what they themselves are (or even, in “their” putative original state, were) or, indeed, may yet take themselves to be and become, when their beliefs and practices enter into the mix.

But for this to happen a certain converse of this process of civic integration or *inburgering* of those who are supposedly already integral parts of the civic community (nation, state, or body politic) and tend to self-identify as such is logically and practically necessary and imperative as well: a certain *uitburgering*, by which I mean here an at least mental (intellectual and spiritual, moral and affective) “expatriation,” rather than an inner or outer emigration, a shedding of “bourgeois” or, for that matter, *citoyen* identity and espousing the “coolness” of “global soul.”

Even taken as a “spiritual exercise,” “ideal role taking,” or “serious game,” such a countermove—and a move that should come first, before anyone (or any law) asks “others” to do their share—could work wonders pragmatically and politically, in Europe and beyond, as it ruptures and fractures the “natural disposition,” the dogmatic slumber of identities and ethnicity that are presumably homegrown and far more ingrained than is good for us all. A gradual widening of our hori-

zon, broadening our circle by pulling “others” (including other circles) in, will not establish this all by itself. And in this sense, the traditional and modern concept of cosmopolitanism may no longer suffice.

The risk of my proposal for a religious canon for Europe is clear. “Europe” is both too big and too small a reference to begin with. For one thing, it is too big, given that the situation in different countries varies historically and legally, and given the fact “the principle of subsidiarity, laid out by the European Union in the 11th Annex to the Treaty of Amsterdam, respects the status accorded to religious and nonconfessional organizations according to national law” (Willaime 2007, 100).

For another, the reference to “Europe” is still or already too narrow since global religion does not stop at the borders of the union, nor does it originate there. It traverses and transcends national and international boundaries and helps us imagine a global civil society or truly transformed public sphere that is no longer determined or restricted by the principles of national and statist—or, for that matter, federalist—sovereignty, but emerges and inspires, as it were, from the bottom up (or, if you like, from a higher “top,” more precisely, a greater idea of perfection and perfectibility, down: a “more perfect union,” but without the potential falsity lurking in the epithet *e pluribus unum*).

In other words, Willaime’s assurance that “we are not talking of introducing any kind of rupture in the school’s ethos”—but also that the school’s contribution, not only to the transmission of knowledge, but to a whole “deontology of intellectual conduct” is, first of all, that of a “national institution which culturally and socially integrates students from different social backgrounds and educates them in civic virtues”—may be based on a silent axiom that merits interrogation (Willaime 2007, 98). After all, the “cultural dimension of knowledge transmission” opens up an understanding of known and unknown horizons of understanding of “the entirety of cultures past and present” that hardly fits the mold of any given national identity, let alone the civic or intellectual “ethos” that are derived from it (Willaime 2007, 98). A different type of archive and apparatus—one that is virtual in

more than one respect and, hence, not only digital, but one of “total recall”—is implied here.

Willaime is right to claim that the teaching of “historical method,” “procedures of verification,” and “critical reasoning,” when applied to the “religious fact” studied in school, contributes all by itself to the establishment of a distinct “citizenship education,” if only because religion thus enters “a space of collective examination” (Willaime 2007, 98). Indeed, Willaime continues:

The need to speak of religion in front of a diverse audience, the inability to appeal to the connivance of co-religionists, the necessity to objectify and explain the worlds of representations and attitudes proper to a given religion, alone constitute a position that marries religious belief to citizenship in a pluralist democracy. It enforces the recognition from the start that the religious worldview under discussion is not an all-encompassing symbolic structure for all society—even if it is the majority religion—but one orientation among many. Such an approach must inevitably clash with all religious self-descriptions that refuse a historical perspective. In other words, the fact that religion is treated in school means we must enter into conflict with all fundamentalists and especially with all understandings of religion that insist on forcibly applying their own norms to the whole of society (Willaime 2007, 98).

But then again, while this allows and requires pupils and parents to learn “to speak of one’s own religion as though it was someone else’s,” it is certain that no given civic and intellectual ethos—indeed, no nation or state or union of these—can proscribe or control what its outcome will be. The aforementioned “examination” may very well end up carving out the (social, cultural, and legal) “space” in which it takes place or from which it starts out. Indeed, treating religion at public school within the context of existing subjects creates a phenomenon of

“interference” with the religious education outside of school and, as it were, in the general culture as well (Willaime 2007, 98).

An explicit reference to—and engagement with—the religious archive and apparatus, in its totality and globality no less than in its inevitable limitation (working with specific words and things, texts and practices, images and sounds, gestures and powers), literally signals and names this principal open-endedness and pragmatic depth that all education, in schools (public or not) and beyond, will have to aspire to in order to make any intellectual and ethical sense and contribution in our world at all. In the age of globalization with its predominance of economic markets and technological media, the resurgence of “global religion” serves as a reminder of just that incontrovertible “fact.”

## **CONCLUSION**

The canon I have only alluded to constitutes a temporary and open—that is, provisional and pragmatic—condensation and sedimentation of an immense and immemorial, indeed, virtual or absolute past that reaches deeper and wider, higher and further, than the metaphor of “roots” or the singling out of names (be it divine ones, such as “God” or “Trinity”) allows or imagines

Paradoxically, and in light of the orthodox traditions of all stripes, in all confessions where the concept of “canon” or “canonicity” plays a role (which is to say, almost everywhere), the proposed “religious canon for Europe” would have to conceive of itself as fundamentally “open” and “mobile.” It would be geared more toward topics and themes—call them words and things, sounds and silences, gestures and powers—that would allow one to loosen all-too-direct references to supposedly fixed historical and cultural identities (in short, all the presumed givens that theorists of the “clash of civilizations” have needlessly hypostatized with all the consequences we know). Neither final nor authoritative, such a canon would thus make an altogether different claim upon us.

The problem is not so much that we “need religion” (to use Hans Joas’s suggestive expression)—assuming that our psychological and sociological, not to mention evolutionary, biological, or neuro-

logical condition and make-up is that of a *homo religiosus*, of sorts—but that in pragmatically determined contexts religion may, indeed, be a “need” or be “useful”; in other words (to adopt a well-known insight and phrase by the American pragmatist, the late Richard Rorty, who, in turn, borrowed it from William James’s conception of truth): “what it is better for us to believe” (Rorty 2009, 10). (Indeed, to add that religion, like the metaphysical concept of truth, offers “the accurate representation of reality,” Rorty claims, leads nowhere: “Or, to put the point less provocatively, . . . the notion of “accurate representation” is simply an automatic and empty compliment which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do” [Rorty 2009, 10])

Yet such need or use or belief will be conditional and provisional, pragmatic if deep, dictated by encounters, opportunities, and challenges, here and now. And a limited and preliminary, open-ended, and mobile religious canon—for Europe, its individual “nations” and “shared European space,” to begin with—might capture just that idea, give it a form and an at once political and spiritual life.

As Debray intuited—but, perhaps, did not anticipate in this fuller and at once thinner and thicker, global and postnational form, communal and civic—such a religious canon might, ironically, become the most promising “material mediation . . . through which a Word becomes flesh, an idea a collective force, a message a vision of the world” (Reader 2006, 491).

## NOTES

1. These formulas remind one of an old debate concerning the academic study of religion and the “methodological atheism” that it should or should not—could not—entail. See for a review of some of these arguments the opening chapter of my *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Theodor W. Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas* (de Vries 2005).
2. I am grateful to Helen Tartar for providing me with an unpublished transcript of this intervention.
3. More than abstract X’s, they reveal, rather than present or represent, singular and genuinely “saturated” phenomena (icons and events,

miracles and special effects), whose very idea and, indeed, “immortality” requires not so much testimony and memory, but a militant “fidelity” carried by a “subject” that no longer coincides—that is, is no longer defined and determined by—the situations in which it found and founded itself through intervention, decision, nomination, and the like. It is along these lines, using an idiom and “phenomenology” and “materialist dialectic” that Jean-Luc Marion and Alain Badiou develop in their alternative and contrasting projects, that I would be inclined to formalize and de-formalize the point I am trying to make here.

## REFERENCES

- Bowen, John R. 2007. *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Carroll, Robert, and Stephen Prickett. 1998. “Introduction.” In *The Bible: Authorized King James Version*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Colombani, Jean-Marie. 2001. “Nous sommes tous Américains.” *Le Monde*, September 13.
- Debray, Régis. 2001. *Dieu, un itinéraire: Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'Éternel en Occident*. Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob.
- . 2002. *L'Enseignement du fait religieux dans l'école laïque, Préface de Jacques Lang*. Paris: Éditions Odile Jakob.
- . 2002/3. “Qu'est-ce qu'un fait religieux?” *Études*, 397: 169–180.
- . 2004. *God: An Itinerary*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. London: Verso.
- . 2005. *Les communions humaines: Pour en finir avec “la religion”*. Paris: Fayard.
- . 2006. “Mediology.” *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2008. “Teaching Religious Facts in Secular Schools.” *Religion Beyond a Concept*, trans. Daniela Ginsburg, edited by Hent de Vries. New York: Fordham University Press.
- de Vries, Hent. 2005. *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Theodor*

- W. Adorno and Emmanuel Levinas*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jansen, Yolande. 2006. "Stuck in a Revolving Door: Secularism, Assimilation, and Democratic Pluralism." PhD dissertation, Amsterdam.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *Inventions of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- McCaffrey, Enda. 2005. "The Return of Faith and Reason to *laïcité* : Régis Debray and 'le fait religieux.'" *French Cultural Studies* 16 (3): 273–290.
- Pépin, Luce. 2009. *Teaching About Religions in European School Systems: Policy Issues and Trends—NEF Initiative On Religion and Democracy in Europe*. London: Alliance Publishing Trust.
- Reader, Keith. 2006. "Régis Debray." *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rorty, Richard. 2009. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Thirtieth-Anniversary Edition. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Scheffer, Paul. 2007. *Het Land van Aankomst*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. 2009. *Derrida, an Egyptian*. Trans. Wieland Hoban. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Stroumsa, Guy. 2010. *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Taubes, Jakob. 1996. *Vom Kult zur Kultur: Bausteine zu einer Kritik der historischen Vernunft*. Edited by Aleida and Jan Assmann, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, and Winfried Menninghaus. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- . 2010. *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason*. Edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel, with an Introduction by Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Wolf-Daniel Hartwich. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Wallach Scott, Joan. 2007. *The Politics of the Veil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Willaime, Jean-Paul. 2007. "Teaching Religious Issues in French Public Schools: From Abstentionist *Laïcité* to a Return of Religion to Public Education." *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, edited by Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse, and Jean-Paul Willaime. Münster: Waxmann.
- . 2008. "Religion in the Classroom—the Challenge of a "*laïcité d'intelligence*" in Europe and Findings of the REDCo-Project." *Religion in Education—A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict: Presentation in the European Parliament*, edited by Wolfram Weisse, in cooperation with Robert Jackson, Christian Rudelt and Jean-Paul Willaime.
- Williams, Kevin. 2007. "Religious Worldviews and the Common School: The French Dilemma." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 41 (4): 675–692.