

Political Church, Procedural Europe, and the Creation of the Islamic Other

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Abstract

Taking the cue from the controversial speech of Pope Benedict XVI at the University of Regensburg in 2006, this paper explores the connection between the apparently divergent positions taken by the Catholic Church and the European secular establishment on the question of European identity and Islam. The argument is advanced that the proceduralism of the European secular establishment contributes to breed its nemesis, a conservative politicised church, but also converges with it in identifying Islam as ‘the Other.’ It is thus asked whether a critical valorisation of Europe’s emotional attachments may not actually strengthen its capacity to embrace the ‘difference’ represented by Islam.

Keywords

Europe, Islam, Pope Benedict XVI, Catholicism, proceduralism, identity, secularism, memory, integration

A public sphere formally devoid of all nonsecular sources of moral and ethical judgement is quite defenceless against substantive ethical claims; it has only proceduralism to fall back on, and thus cannot deliver compelling judgements about, or even interpret the meanings of, a polity's thorniest ethical or political dilemmas. Once nation-state sovereignty itself begins to fray [...] public discourse becomes more vulnerable to subnational or transnational identity claims (ethnic, racial, sexual, religious) [...] [and] a range of social movements fill the public sphere with noisy demands and complaints, including reactionary, anti-modernist ones. The commitment of liberalism to a public sphere uncontaminated by non-liberal moral discourses, whether explicitly religious or not, paradoxically makes it vulnerable [...] to the claims of fundamentalist or essentialist identity-based social movements.¹

1. Introduction

What kind of political reading can be made of Pope Benedict XVI's address at the University of Regensburg in September 2006 which led to widespread protests in the Muslim world? This broad question is taken as the starting point of a specific line of inquiry that considers Benedict's remarks on Islam and Europe not simply as the expression of a theological perspective, but of a political void created by Europe's nominal proceduralism in relation to the

¹ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 93–94. This article has greatly benefited from several stimulating conversations (and disagreements) with Ed Frettingham on the pope's speech at Regensburg and from Andrew Linklater's and Harmonie Toros' insightful comments. It goes without saying that all errors remain my own.

question of European identity. The term ‘Europe,’ in this case, designates not just a set of institutions, ranging from the European Union to other political actors at national and supranational level, but a social imaginary, a system of meanings and expectations² that “underpin[s] the creation and reproduction of [these] institutions and the organization of solidarity.”³ It is contended that the social imaginary of Europe on the vast set of issues related to the question of European identity has been primarily shaped by a nominal proceduralism: a political approach that promotes a system of communal allegiances based on the acceptance of and compliance with universally shared principles. This approach can be observed in relation to the politics of enlargement, with membership granted upon fulfilment of the *acquis communautaire*, as well as in the debate on Islam in Europe, with integration mostly conceived as Muslim acquiescence with the norms of European secularity.⁴

European proceduralism is the attempt to overcome a painful past of religious and national sectarianism and can thus be described, following Etienne Balibar, as the endeavour to shape “a new society, and a new civilizational pattern [...] by rearranging the elements inher-

² For Charles Taylor a social imaginary is how “people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.” Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

³ Craig Calhoun, “Constitutional Patriotism and the Public Sphere: Interests, Identity, and Solidarity in the Integration of Europe,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 18 (2006), 257–280, at p. 258.

⁴ On this latter point see Luca Mavelli, “Appropriation and Redemption in Contemporary Western Discourses on Islam in Europe,” *St Antony's International Review* 3/2 (2008), 74–93, at pp.82-86; Tariq Modood & Riva Kastoryano, “Secularism and the accommodation of Muslims in Europe,” in: Tariq Modood et al. (eds.), *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach* (London: Routledge, 2006), 162-178; Armando Salvatore, “Power and Authority within European Secularity: From the Enlightenment Critique of Religion to the Contemporary Presence of Islam,” *The Muslim World* 96/5 (2006), 543–561.

ited from the very institutions it has to overcome,” particularly the nation-state.⁵ However, two issues cloud the capacity of proceduralism to keep its promise. Firstly, a procedural Europe, “formally devoid of all nonsecular sources of moral and ethical judgment,”⁶ appears unable to come to the rescue of nation-states placed in a “defensive position” by a globalisation which restricts “their ability to mediate social conflicts and leav[es] them without a solution to the urgent problem of the constitution of a new ‘citizenship’ in Europe.”⁷ The risk is that envisaged by Wendy Brown in the opening quote of this article. A European proceduralism unwilling and unequipped to address the political knot of European identity, fearful that this may bring further elements of divisiveness in the already trembling European project, may have the paradoxical result of favouring the emergence of those reactionary forces that the very commitment to procedural (liberal and secular) principles would want to keep at bay. It is important thus to discuss how the election in 2005 of the ‘doctrinaire’ Benedict XVI after the ‘pastoral’ John Paul II may represent one expression of such reactionary forces and an indication of the growing political deficiencies of proceduralism in shaping a European polity which may overcome sectarianisms. Proceduralism, it will be argued, does not displace, but simply relocate them.

There is then another important limit of proceduralism that needs to be taken into account. Proceduralism as part of the European social imaginary is also a means to “suture a dislocation”⁸ between a present of solidarity and a past of divisiveness. Proceduralism, therefore, fosters a horizon of meanings that tends to fold on itself, favouring a selective reading of

⁵ Etienne Balibar, “Europe: Vanishing Mediator,” *Constellations* 10/3 (2003), 312–338, at p. 334.

⁶ Brown, “Regulating Aversion,” 93.

⁷ Balibar, “Europe,” 325.

⁸ David R. Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis, “Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis,” in: David R. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval & Yannis Stavrakakis (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies, and Social Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 1-23, at p.13.

the past. According to Danièle Hervieu-Léger, selective memory should not necessarily be re-presented as it contributes to the symbolic production of norms and values which make for a shared worldview.⁹ The risk, however, is that of institutionalising a self-absolving narrative whereby Europe, in its politics of identity and difference, appears to have definitively transcended the elements of ethnicity, nationality, or religion which made its past so violent. Proceduralism, in fact, makes the politics of identity/difference merely a question of compliance with the universal principles of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. However, it will be shown that the proceduralism of Europe has often been only nominal and therefore, in key moments of the definition of the idea of Europe, elements of kinship based on alleged civilisational or religious ties have been privileged over universalist narratives.

Taken together, these two arguments suggest that the nominal proceduralism of Europe is not only politically counterproductive as it favours the re-emergence of reactionary forces, such as that of sectors of the Catholic establishment that, with Benedict XVI, propound an essentialist understanding of Europe revolving around Christianity which stigmatises Islam as ‘the Other.’ European nominal proceduralism is also ambiguous because while practicing a communitarian politics of demarcation between members and strangers, it vindicates a universally rule-based politics that places the burden of exclusion automatically on the excluded. This externalisation of responsibility has been an important dimension of the numerous public disputes on Islam in Europe, with Muslims accused of failing to comply with the rules of secularity and little reflection on the role that Europe may have had in fostering those tensions. A strange spectre seems thus to haunt the land of Europe: that of a nominal proceduralism that breeds its nemesis, a conservative politicised church, but converges with it in identifying Islam as ‘the Other.’

⁹ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, “The Role of Religion in Establishing Social Cohesion,” in: Krzysztof Michalski (ed.), *Religion in the New Europe* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 45-63, at p. 59.

2. Political Church

Pope Benedict XVI's address at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006 has been one of the most recent European controversies about Islam. The spark which led a number of Muslims all over the world, including religious leaders, intellectuals, and politicians, to voice their indignation at Joseph Ratzinger's words was his decision to quote a Byzantine emperor who argued that Islam has spread its word mostly through violence. The pope was discussing the necessity of establishing an alliance between faith and reason and, to argue his case, he contrasted the mainstream Christian image of God as shaped by Greek philosophy—in which an immanent understanding of the good sustained by the strength of reason provides the measure of God's will—against the Islamic image of God as understood by Ibn Hazm—a God whose will takes priority over any possible account of the good. In this case, Ratzinger suggested, reason and faith are separated and “God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God.” The result is that the believer is at the mercy of “a capricious god [...] not even bound to truth and goodness” and thus more prone to commit acts of unreasonable violence.¹⁰

That the pope was referring to Islamic terrorism seems uncontentious, less so is whether he considered the Islam of Ibn Hazm representative of mainstream Islam. In this case Islamic terrorism would appear not just a deviation, but a structural component of an irrational religion. Some critics believe this is what Benedict was hinting at: that “because Islam

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, “Lecture of the Holy Father,” Regensburg, 12 September 2006, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html (accessed 30 April 2008).

commits itself entirely to faith rather than synthesizing faith with reason, it is a fanatical rather than a rational religion”¹¹ and therefore inferior to Christianity.¹²

Some scholars, however, have claimed that the pope did not mean to offend Muslims since his speech was not about Islam but the relationship between faith and reason¹³ and, as such, it also contained a condemnation of those strands of Christian thought that have disregarded the role of reason.¹⁴ Interestingly, though, others have asked why, if that was the aim, did the pope not mention events such as the crusades or the inquisition in which Christianity held violent, overpowering and ‘irrational’ behaviours.¹⁵

Although interesting, the light these remarks shed on the political dimension of Benedict’s address is too narrow because their concern and perspective is mainly theological as is most of the (limited) academic literature that has been produced on this event.¹⁶ The lack of scholarly attention to the political dimensions of Ratzinger’s speech can be probably explained by the widespread secular attitude that characterises (western) social science, which

¹¹ David Nirenberg, “Islam and the West: Two Dialectical Fantasies,” *Journal of Religion in Europe* 1/1 (2008), 3–33, at p. 8.

¹² Rosemary Radford Ruether, “What the Pope Should Have Said to the Islamic World,” *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5/2 (2006), 127–129.

¹³ Roland Chia, “Protestant Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI’s Faith, Reason and the University,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 46/1 (2007), 66–77, at pp. 66–67.

¹⁴ Thomas G. Guarino, “The God of Philosophy and of the Bible: Theological Reflections on Regensburg,” *Logos* 10/4 (2007), 120–130, at pp. 124–125.

¹⁵ Paolo Naso, “Da Assisi a Ratisbona,” *Confronti* 6 (2006); see <http://www.confronti.net/EDITORIALI/da-assisi-a-ratisbona> (accessed on 30 April 2008). ‘Irrational,’ in this case, is synonymous with ‘violent’ since “[v]iolence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul” and “not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature.” See Benedict XVI, “Lecture.”

¹⁶ For a notable exception, however, see Nirenberg, “Islam and the West” in the first issue of this journal; Nirenberg discusses Benedict’s speech as an example of a dialectics of exclusion.

leads to conceive religion almost exclusively “as a system of meaning (supported by symbols and rituals) concerning ultimate goals” and thus to approach it “largely from a symbolic or culturological point of view.”¹⁷ From this perspective, even if a latent political content in the Regensburg address is identified, it is considered free of any specific political implication. However, a perspective on religion that “invites to separate it conceptually from the domain of power”¹⁸ makes us blind to how religion is usually embedded in a religious regime, “a formalized and institutionalized constellation of human interdependencies [...] legitimized by religious ideas and propagated by religious specialists.”¹⁹ As Mart Bax points out, a religious regime is also a political constellation which plays “an important role in processes of state formation and state-development” and whose meanings and powers are interrelated and dependent not just on theological argumentations and internal negotiations, but on dynamic relations with the worldly regime and with other religious regimes.²⁰ This is all the more the case for the Catholic Church that with its hierarchical structure, global presence, and universal vocation has long been theorised a transnational actor.²¹

¹⁷ Mart Bax, “Religious Regimes and State Formation: Towards a Research Perspective,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 60/1 (1987), 1–11, at p. 1.

¹⁸ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 29.

¹⁹ Bax, “Religious Regimes,” 2.

²⁰ Bax, “Religious Regimes,” 11.

²¹ See the seminal article by Ivan Vallier, “The Roman Catholic Church: A Transnational Actor,” *International Organization* 25/3 (1971), 479-502, and José Casanova, “Globalizing Catholicism and the Return to a ‘Universal’ Church,” in: Susann Hoerber Rudolph & James P. Piscatori (eds.), *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997), 121-143. In this paper, following José Casanova, I focus exclusively on the Papacy “as the institutional core of Catholic transnationalism and its relation to the external worldly regime” (note 1, 138).

Hence, in the case of the Regensburg address, we observe how the religious regime of Catholicism as embodied by its leader, Benedict XVI, tries to mould the future development of Europe, a polity in the making, by questioning another religious regime, Islam, in a historical juncture characterised by intense debates in the worldly regime about European identity (particularly following the last waves of enlargement and the failure of the Constitutional Treaty) and about the capacity of Islam to be part of Europe. The political dimension of Benedict's address is underlined by its timing—a few months after the publication of the 'Danish Cartoons,' various national controversies concerning the Islamic veil, and unfriendly declarations about Islam by some European leaders, hence in an already strained context of relations between non-Muslims and Muslims.²² However, more importantly, its political dimension is visible in the speech's content. The strict line of demarcation Benedict sets between Christianity and Islam, in fact, is not purely theological. In arguing, right after his remarks on Ibn Hazm, that the "inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry" that characterises Christianity together with its Roman heritage "*took on its historical decisive character in Europe [...] created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe,*"²³ the pope is affirming an identity, a transsubstantial compenetration between Christianity and Europe that leaves no room for including Islam in the political and civilisational space of the latter.

Although Ratzinger's address is part of Catholic tradition that "since the Middle Ages [...] has conceived Europe organically as a Christian civilisation whose unity subsists in the

²² On the timing of the address see Ana Belen Soage, "The Muslim Reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's Regensburg Address," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/1 (2007), 137–143.

²³ Benedict XVI, "Lecture" (emphasis mine).

Church itself” and has strongly supported European integration since its inception,²⁴ it is the first time, at least since World War II, that a pope feels the necessity of remarking the non-European nature of Islam—the obligation, in other words, of specifying not just what accounts for Europe, i.e. Christianity, but also what is *alien* to Europe, i.e. Islam.²⁵ To account for this situation it is not enough to appeal to a different theological perspective: theological considerations, as Mart Bax suggests, need to be complemented with an exploration of the interactions between the religious regime and the worldly regime and, if necessary, also other religious regimes. To undertake this task, a very useful framework is offered by Bryan Hehir who, in his analysis of Vatican diplomacy towards Europe from World War II, identifies three distinct eras.²⁶

The first era is that of the pontificate of Pius XII (1939–1958) who, on the one hand, contributed to strengthen the social basis of the Christian Democratic movements in Western Europe, and on the other practiced a politics of intransigent opposition and absolutely no collaboration between the church and the communist regimes, which he deemed totally illegitimate.²⁷ According to Hehir this politics of opposition, including the “rejection [...] of the very prospect of dealing with communism or with communist states, complemented much of allied policy during the Cold War era.” Pope Paul VI (1963–1978) shaped the second era of Vatican politics towards Europe with an important change. He abandoned the rigid logic of confronta-

²⁴ Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah, “Faith, Freedom and Federation: The Role of Religious Ideas and Institutions in European Political Convergence,” in: Timothy A. Byrnes & Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34-64, at pp. 36, 34.

²⁵ Ratzinger had already put forward his idea of a civilisational difference between Europe and Islam in his firm opposition to the possibility of a European membership for Turkey.

²⁶ Bryan J. Hehir, “The Old Church and the New Europe: Charting the Changes,” in: Timothy A. Byrnes & Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 93-116.

²⁷ Hehir, “The Old Church,” 102–103.

tion and, very much in line with the European worldly regime, propounded “a Vatican’s version of *Ostpolitik*.”²⁸ The argument was that the Catholic Church “had to accept responsibility of ‘saving what could be saved’ within these very circumstances” and thus dialogue had to be restored in order to preserve the crumbling network of local churches in the communist bloc and in the name of a joint responsibility of East and West towards the sufferings of the South.²⁹ If Paul VI’s approach entailed an acceptance of communism as an inescapable dimension of Europe, one with which it was necessary to find forms of cohabitation, this view was radically challenged under John Paul II (1978–2005), Hehir’s third stage.

The Polish pope put at the centre of his pontificate a double commitment: bringing “Europe back into the center of the Church’s concern”³⁰ and strengthening the transnational role of the Catholic Church in “international conflict and in issues dealing with world peace.”³¹ As for the previous popes, the politics of John Paul II was greatly influenced by the interaction with the worldly regime. However, unlike Pious XII and Paul VI who somehow adjusted their positions to the dictates of secular politics, John Paul II also exercised a proactive role in fostering political change. Tirelessly campaigning against the logic of the blocs, he acted as the “first citizen of the emerging global civil society”³² when appealing directly to the masses in Poland and other Eastern European countries, gathering huge crowds and summoning them on human rights and religious freedom.³³ Yet, John Paul II appealed also to the secular regime “as early as in 1988” when, in a famous address at the European Parliament, “he called for Eastern enlargement so that the whole continent might again ‘breathe with both

²⁸ Hehir, “The Old Church,” 104.

²⁹ Hehir, “The Old Church,” 104–105.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Casanova, “Globalizing Catholicism,” 125.

³² Casanova, “Globalizing Catholicism,” 131.

³³ Philpott & Shah, “Faith,” 42.

lungs.”³⁴ Although determined to pursue a re-evangelisation of Europe and vocal in calling for a recovery of the European “Christian memory and heritage,” a patrimony that he believed had been squandered “in an atmosphere poisoned by secularism and dominated by consumerism,”³⁵ John Paul II was also very careful in not making the Christian identity of Europe as source of exclusion and divisiveness.

Having experienced the end of the Iron Curtain but also the disillusionment that followed with the spread of ethnic and national conflicts, Karol Wojtyla was particularly concerned with the possibility of a ‘clash of civilisation’³⁶ and thus considered it his particular duty to strive to dismantle boundaries between faiths and peoples.³⁷ Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue were important dimensions of his pastoral view and led him to a number of unprecedented initiatives. He was in fact the first pope to visit a mosque and the only one to date to have kissed a Qur’an; he fasted during the last Friday of Ramadan in 2001, received the Hindu forehead mark during a sojourn in India, issued an unprecedented heartfelt apology for the sins committed by the Catholic Church, from the crusades to anti-Semitism, and invit-

³⁴ Philpott & Shah, “Faith,” 46, 52.

³⁵ John Paul II, “Ecclesia in Europe,” (2004), available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa_en.html (accessed on 30 April 2008).

³⁶ Naso, “Da Assisi a Ratisbona.”

³⁷ Despite controversial declarations such as the “Dominus Iesus” (2000), which has been accused of claiming the supremacy of Catholicism over all others religion. It contains statements such as “The followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.” Although the document was released under the aegis of John Paul, it had actually been written by the then head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. See “Dominus Iesus,” available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html (accessed on 30 April 2008).

ed religious leaders from all over the world to pray for peace in Assisi in 1986 and again in 2002.³⁸

The notions of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue advocated by John Paul II have been seriously reviewed by his successor, Benedict XVI. It is known that the German pope, who under John Paul II had served as head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, looked on with scepticism at events such that of Assisi, since they would give “the false impression that all religions are equally valid.”³⁹ This theological view, according to Benedict XVI, has contributed to aggravate “the most profound difficulty of our day”: the spread of moral relativism, particularly in a Europe dominated by secularism which seems to have forgotten its Christian roots.⁴⁰ For Allan Stoekl, Ratzinger’s approach to interreligious dialogue should be interpreted as the attempt to recover the original spirit of the Second Vatican Council, yet with a change of strategy. The Second Vatican Council “affirmed ecumenism because the hope of de-secularizing society seemed a lost cause,” and thus considered it as a means “to further missionary activity” in an irredeemably secular context.⁴¹ However, particularly with John Paul II, ecumenism appeared to have become an end in itself, with the “reconfiguration of the Church as a tolerant, open organization that recognises the validity of all other

³⁸ See Allan Stoekl, “French Catholic Traditionalism and the Specter of Reactionary Politics,” *South Central Review* 23/1 (2006), 89–106, at p. 95; Naso, “Da Assisi a Ratisbona”; The Guardian, *Pope Says Sorry For Sins of the Church* (available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2000/mar/13/catholicism.religion>; accessed on 29 May 2008); BBC, “Pope Apologises for Church Sins” (available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/674246.stm>; accessed on 29 May 2008).

³⁹ Christopher Gross, “Beyond Tolerance: Benedict XVI’s fresh approach to Interreligious Dialogue” (Paper presented at the conference “Engaging Particularities,” Boston College, 2007). Available at http://escholarship.bc.edu/engaging_cp/8 (accessed on 30 April 2008).

⁴⁰ Cited in Marcello Pera, “Relativism, Christianity and the West,” in: Marcello Pera & Joseph Ratzinger, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 1-50, at p. 23.

⁴¹ Stoekl, “French Catholic,” 102, 99.

religions.”⁴² Benedict XVI seems determined to return to the idea of ecumenism as a purely instrumental, ancillary dimension of the preservation and the assertion of Christianity as the only pathway to full truth and salvation.⁴³ Rampant secularism needs thus to be challenged, not accommodated. Drawing on Arnold Toynbee’s theory of civilisations, and in particular on the idea that (a) the Western world is experiencing a crisis due to secularism in the form of “the abandonment of religion for the cult of technology, nationalism and militarism” and (b) “the fate of a society always depends on its creative minorities,” Ratzinger has recently argued that the destiny of Europe depends on Christians, who should conceive of themselves as such a creative minority. They should help Europe to recover its heritage so as to place it at the service of the whole of humanity.⁴⁴

The reference to Toynbee is a particularly interesting key through which to examine the meaning of Benedict’s words. As Robert Irwin points out, “[o]ne particular literary image which had a diffuse yet unmistakable impact on Toynbee’s thinking is [...] that of the Asiatic barbarian horde, conceived of as simultaneously the destroyer and the potential renewal of Western civilization.”⁴⁵ Ratzinger seems to fully embrace this view. Europe’s identity is fundamentally Christian, even though Europe, unlike the United States, is against its history and

⁴² Stoekl, “French Catholic,” 99.

⁴³ Significantly in 2006 Benedict XVI decided to “downgrade” the Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the organ responsible for interfaith affairs, by placing it under the remit of the Pontifical Council for Culture. The decision was reversed one year later. See BBC, *Pope Reinstates Islam Department* (2007); available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6699247.stm> (accessed on 24 June 2008).

⁴⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, “The Spiritual Roots of Europe: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow,” in: Pera & Ratzinger, *Without Roots*, 51-80, at pp. 68, 80.

⁴⁵ Robert G. Irwin, “Toynbee and Ibn Khaldun,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 33 (1997), 461–479, at p. 464.

almost denies the public dimension of Christian values.⁴⁶ Islam, on the contrary, is on the rise “because of people’s conviction that [it] can provide a valid spiritual foundation to their lives. Such a foundation seems to have eluded old Europe, which, despite its enduring political and economic power, seems to be on the road to decline and fall.”⁴⁷ According to Benedict XVI, if Europe wants to survive it has to rediscover its Christian roots and affirm its unique (and superior?) character, which rests on a unique blend of faith and reason, particularly in the face of a rising Islam. One could catch, in these words, a glimpse of Bernard Lewis’ argument that, were things to remain as they are, Europe may turn into a Muslim land by the end of the century. Hence, in Ratzinger’s account Islam appears at once a threat and an opportunity for the moral rebirth for Europe.

Following Bax’s perspective, it is possible to argue that Benedict’s theology is (also) responding to a central worldly European angst about identity (and Islam), one which has already emerged in a number of occasions, from the debate on whether the European constitution should contain reference to the ‘Judeo-Christian roots’ of Europe, to the ‘cultural’ question over a possible Turkish enlargement, to the issue of Muslim immigrant integration. To explore a possible source of this anxiety it is worth considering how Europe has generally addressed these issues.

This argument demands drawing a heuristic distinction between Europe conceived as a civilisational identity (constructed around historical signifiers such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Christianity), and Europe as an instrumental or procedural project. Both

⁴⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, “Letter to Marcello Pera,” in: Pera & Ratzinger, *Without Roots*, 107-136, at p. 109. It is interesting to note how the original Italian subtitle of Pera and Ratzinger’s book—“Europa, Relativismo, Cristianesimo, Islam” [Europe, Relativism, Christianity, Islam]—differs from the English translation—“The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam.” Cf. Marcello Pera & Joseph Ratzinger, *Senza Radici: Europa, Relativismo, Cristianesimo, Islam* (Milano: Mondadori, 2004).

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, “The Spiritual Roots of Europe,” 65.

perspectives aim at providing peace, stability, and security by spreading the values of human rights, democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law. However, whereas Europe as a civilisational identity considers these values as expression of a well-defined (Judeo-Christian) tradition, Europe as an instrumental project purges these values of their civilisational belonging. By claiming to preserve an organic link between present values and a shared past, the first perspective privileges the growing quest for a common centre of identification which may bestow legitimacy and social cohesion on the European project; by softening the link between present values and an allegedly shared past, the second account sacrifices the institution of a common centre of gravity in order to avoid dimensions of exclusion based on claims of cultural/civilisational appropriation. To avoid misunderstandings, these categories are not theories of the European polity,⁴⁸ but rather dominant discourses within conceptualisations of Europe, variously embraced by different social actors both within the worldly and religious regimes.

Overall, however, it can be argued that the worldly regime of Europe has seemingly privileged an instrumental/procedural understanding of Europe with the avowed ambition of securing greater room for diversity. Hence, the EU has decided not to include any reference to the Christian roots of Europe, but only a general mention of its religious heritage; the official approach to enlargement is claimed to be based on universally valid principles⁴⁹ (which make appear the debate on whether or not Turkey ‘belongs’ to Europe a cultural speculation with limited political relevance); and finally, the issue of Muslim integration has often been conceived as a matter of mutual tolerance and Muslim compliance with the norm of European secularity. This rule-based, procedural approach pursued by the worldly regime of Europe—which opposes the civilisational perspective endorsed by the Catholic Church—stems from

⁴⁸ For a review of recent accounts see H. Friese & P. Wagner, “Survey Article: The Nascent Political Philosophy of the European Polity,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 10/3 (2002), 342-364.

⁴⁹ European Council, cited in Helene Sjurgen, “Why Expand? The Question of Legitimacy and Justification in EU’s Enlargement Policy,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40/3 (2002), 491–513, at pp. 502–503.

the European historical experience. It is the attempt to deflate those sources of communal identification that in the past have engendered fragmentation and conflict.

The problem of this approach, however, is that it is unable to account for the multifaceted emotional layers that shape communal dimensions. In “dredg[ing] out of public life as much cultural density and depth as possible so that the muddy [...] ‘religious’, [and cultural] differences don’t flow into the pure water of public reason, procedure and justice,”⁵⁰ proceduralism overlooks the resilience of communal attachment and collective identifications. These dimensions become intercepted by conservative forces, as that represented by Benedict XVI, that fill the seemingly *apolitical* stance of European proceduralism, offering an answer for the insecurity that stems from an apparent lack of leadership and political direction. This argument, however, does not suggest that proceduralism may lead to a possible ‘re-evangelisation’ of Europe. As it has been pointed out by Danièle Hervieu-Léger, “the significance of referring to the European religious bedrock in terms of heritage,” a term frequently used by both John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is possible “only because [religion] is kept distinct from and operates separately from the places where the rules of collective life are primarily decided. The classification of religion as heritage is supported inexorably by the erosion of the organisational power of religion in social life.”⁵¹

This erosion can be observed in the fact that for Benedict XVI the ‘Otherness’ of Islam does not simply stem from it being an alternative to traditional Christian teachings, but resides in the very absence of those elements, grown out of the Enlightenment, which account for modern and independent reason (and that the pope considers a specific Christian heritage). In evoking a tension between reason and Islam (whose subjects appears uncritically prone to submit to the will of a capricious God), the pope is drawing on a secular tradition of Oriental-

⁵⁰ William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 23.

⁵¹ Hervieu-Léger, “The Role of Religion,” 58–59.

ism which denies to Islam the “search for a hidden truth” and thus “the capability of engaging in a process of subjectivity-formation.”⁵² Benedict XVI’s critique of Islam, in other words, resonates with dominant western—and for this very reason, also partially secularised—discourses in which Muslims are portrayed “as moved by passionate, pre-modern, non-rational feelings.”⁵³ This view partially draws on a tradition of thought that, ranging from Max Weber to Norbert Elias, identifies the specificity and uniqueness of Western European modernity in “the regularization and rationalization of one’s entire conduct of life, both body and mind [...] [which] renders individuals autonomous and isolated at the same time, resistant to any merely external forms of domination but closed into the iron cage of a type of subjectivity formation that seems impossible to escape.”⁵⁴

Benedict XVI celebrates the unique synthesis of faith and reason of the Christian subject, but, at the same time, denounces how this synthesis has increasingly displayed an unhealthy bias towards the latter, leading subjectivity to turn into an ‘iron cage.’ To restore an original equilibrium, the German pope champions a shift from a secularly-dominated regime in which religion “is placed under the guardianship of reason and carefully contained” to a post-secular phase in which “religion and reason [...] limit each other mutually, with each showing the other its respective limitations, while also pointing the other in the right direction.”⁵⁵ This process, however, neither aims to overturn the assumption of a European specificity, nor to make it irrelevant in cross-cultural relations. Rather, European specificity needs

⁵² Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Reading, UK: Ithaca, 1997), 73.

⁵³ Mavelli, “Appropriation and Redemption,” 84.

⁵⁴ Arpad Szokolczai, “Review: Reappraising Foucault,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 103/5 (1998), 1402–1410, at p. 1405.

⁵⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, “Prepolitical Moral Foundations of a Free Republic,” in: Hent de Vries & Lawrence E. Sullivan (eds.), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 261–268, at p. 264.

to be strengthened, as it is the only barrier against an unconditioned opening towards other cultures that, as Ratzinger sees it, can lead to dangerous forms of moral relativism.

Interestingly, the nominal proceduralism of Europe that has made political room for Benedict's stances also vindicates a European exceptionalism. In this case, however, the exceptional nature of Europe rests on its being the only polity that, guided exclusively by the universal principles of reason and rationality, can transcend the divisiveness engendered by primordial elements such as ethnicity, nationality, or religion. This belief is the second, crucial, limitation of proceduralism. It rests on a selective reconstruction of the past that obliterates events in which elements of alleged civilisational commonality and historical affinity have been given priority over universal, rule-based, principles. This belief, however, is decisive for endowing Europe with a higher moral authority—an authority that allows Europe to place the burden of exclusion automatically on the excluded without questioning its own assumptions and behaviours.

In this respect, it can be useful to consider two important moments in the definition of the idea of Europe: its birth and the 2004 enlargement. It will be shown how a reading of these events solely through the grand-narratives of 'integration' and 'inclusion'⁵⁶ does not simply overlook the role of interests and political calculations, but neglects important dimensions of conceptual and physical exclusion postulated upon a deeply entrenched social imaginary of Europe as a moral geography whose boundaries are not simply rule-based, but draw on a blend of cultural, religious and civilisational dimensions.

2. Procedural Europe

⁵⁶ Gerard Delanty & Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3.

In a 1992 article, “The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” Tony Judt powerfully argues that for the peoples of Europe the process of European integration has served the purpose of obliterating the shameful memories of collaboration with the Nazi regime and of other violence carried out in the name of nationalist ideologies. As he recalls:

Woodrow Wilson and the Treaties of Versailles notwithstanding, the 60 million people living under an “alien” jurisdiction in 1914 had not all achieved self-determination after World War I: there were still some 25 million persons living in “someone else’s state.” The Nazi occupation had gone some way to resolving this perennial European problem by killing most of the Jews and some of the smallest stateless groups [Roma among others]. After the war, the liberated states took the occasion to further this process by removing the Germans themselves. [...] Others felt free to indulge in further exercises of ethnic purification.⁵⁷

According to Judt, the “further exercises of ethnic purification” were made possible by the oblivion which characterised the years immediately after World War II.⁵⁸ The rushing desire to overcome these tragic memories by fostering a ‘Euro-cant’ of peace, stability and unity was built upon a politics of responsibility which made Germany the supreme and almost only culpable for the tragedies of World War II. This ‘myth’ ignored the crucial fact that:

The Nazis could certainly never have sustained their hegemony over most of the continent as long as they did [...] [had not] most of occupied Europe either collaborated with the occupying forces (a minority) or accepted with resignation and equanimity the presence and activities of the German forces (a majority).⁵⁹

For Judt, the unwillingness of European nations to recognise their responsibilities in the Nazi regime and the adoption of the status of victims of external ferocity was partly necessary to

⁵⁷ Tony Judt, “The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” *Daedalus* 121/4 (1992), 83–118, at pp. 88, 89.

⁵⁸ On the question of Europe’s “amnesia” see also Noël O’Sullivan, *European Political Thought Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 16–19.

⁵⁹ Judt, “The Past,” 85.

restore a minimum of social cohesion and trust in a social fabric already undermined by totalitarian regime and total war.⁶⁰ However, this rebirth of Europe came at a heavy price. It entailed the emergence of ‘two moral vocabularies’ which draw a sharp distinction—a hypocritical incommensurability—between “what the Germans have done to us” and “what we are doing to others.” Accordingly, this double moral standard not only allowed the expulsion and killing of about 15 million Germans and other ethnic minorities from the Balkans and Eastern European countries.⁶¹ It also favoured a certain resilience of anti-Semitism in countries like Poland, France, or Austria where, for instance, in the aftermath of World War II, Jews were tacitly considered in the general category of those who had been persecuted by the Nazi regime and thus put on a par with the persecuted nationals of these countries. This in turn cleared these nations from any charges of cooperation with the Nazi regime in persecuting Jews.⁶²

More generally, this double moral vocabulary allowed Europe to purge itself of its responsibilities without undergoing a serious reflection on both its anti-Semitic and nationalistic tendencies. This sanitising process has been vigorously undertaken through the process of European integration which has promoted an idea of Europe as a space of peace, democracy, and solidarity. However, undigested memories from a past that Europe had tried frantically to suppress have started to make their comeback: this is how Judt interprets the electoral success of the nationalistic and xenophobic far right in Europe, from Jean-Marie Le Pen to Jörg Haider, at the beginning of the 1990s. However, there is more than that.

For Judt, writing in 1992, the legacy of these memories not only casts a shadow on the cohesion of the then EU 15, but also on the very possibility of enlargement to the then coun-

⁶⁰ Judt, “The Past,” 90.

⁶¹ Judt, “The Past,” 88.

⁶² Judt, “The Past,” 106, 107.

tries of Eastern Europe. He suggested that the idea of Europe—and the related process of European integration—was also possible because of “the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe.” It “had the double virtue of keeping the region away from the prosperous West, while at the same time allowing the latter the luxury of lamenting the very circumstances from which it was benefiting.”⁶³ Western Europe—the European Union—felt little responsibility to actively campaign to tear down this divide. Judt recalls the support of the western left for the communist regimes and how some of its exponents described the Perestroika as a missed opportunity for the renewal of the communist project; or the “lack of enthusiasm displayed by French and other statesman at the fall of the Wall and its consequences.”⁶⁴ Judt concludes by arguing that the idea of Europe as institutionalised in the process of European integration has been built on “historical sands.”⁶⁵ It has been based on a myth of solidarity and cohesion which hides the powerful nationalistic tendencies which haunted the EU 15 and which obscured the divide between Western and Eastern Europe, casting shadows on the possibility of a future European enlargement.

Two elements of Judt’s account are particularly relevant for our purposes: firstly, the idea that a united Europe is a project born out of the necessity of obliterating the memories of violence of World War II; secondly, the fact that this very genesis, the obliteration of memory, leaves this project “built on sand” and thus casts a shadow on its future developments, particularly the possibility of an eastern enlargement. These arguments raise two important sets of questions: firstly, what are the implications of conceiving the European project as one born out of the attempt to overcome past memories of violence, and thus not moved primarily by elements of communal identification? Secondly, how can we interpret the fact

⁶³ Judt, “The Past,” 110.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Judt, “The Past,” 112.

that an enlargement that in 1992 appeared deeply problematic was, slightly more than ten years later, a political reality?

The creation of a community among entities that had been fighting each other for centuries suggests a universal project—a project based not on shared blood, ethnicity, or religion, but on a universal aim, peace, and universal principles, such as democracy, justice, and tolerance. This universal narrative, which, in slightly different guises, accounts for one of the most revered meanings of the idea of a united Europe and is one of the pillars of its procedural self-understanding, is nonetheless postulated upon an implicit exclusion. Taking Judt’s argument as reflective of a more generalised European understanding, Talal Asad observes how the suppressed memories of violence on which the project of Europe has been built do not include “violence perpetrated in this period [World War II and its aftermath] by Europeans outside Europe—in colonial Africa, say, or in the Middle East. No mention is even made of Algeria, which was, after all, an internal department of France.”⁶⁶ What Asad is suggesting is that the memory of past violence on which the narrative of Europe has been built does not include *all* forms of violence committed by Europeans, but only those specifically committed on *Europeans* within a *European* geographical space. This self-referential culpability for past violence which does not take into account violence committed onto those *beyond* the space of Europe, has important implications for “how the conceptual boundaries of moral and legal solidarity are actually traced.”⁶⁷

The memories of injustices committed in Europe, albeit fragmented and partially distorted, are the selective memories mentioned by Hervieu-Léger in our introduction: memories that mould contemporary dimensions of European being and solidarity and contribute to

⁶⁶ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 162.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

shape a shared European worldview, but that obliterate another history of European violence, linked to the process of decolonisation. According to Peo Hansen, “the most canonized frame of reference in the literature on integration theory and the historical evolution of today’s European Union” usually includes four elements, two internal—the devastation of two world wars and the nationalist rivalries in Europe—and two external—the role of the United States and the Cold War.⁶⁸ It is a strange omission, he continues, that this framework does not take into account post-colonialism since “the early stages of European integration would also coincide with the dismantling of another world order.”⁶⁹ This omission, he suggests, is not fortuitous but is related to the “European Union’s own conception of its historical trajectory and [...] how the EU employs these conceptions of history in its current endeavour to foster and disseminate a sense of ‘European identity’ in the Union.”⁷⁰ Hansen’s main contention is that the notion of European identity as based on peace, human rights, solidarity, and widening circles of identification, is postulated upon the exclusion of a whole series of “atrocities, wars and structures of exploitation” directly linked to colonialism and decolonisation.⁷¹

Thus, he states, the idea that European integration has guaranteed the absence of wars in Europe can only be defended if one rules out the wars fought by European countries in their colonial possessions. Among them stands out the 1956 Suez War and, most of all, the Algerian War (1954–1962). The latter is particularly relevant not only because it engaged 400,000 French troops and killed hundreds of thousands, but because Algeria was constitutionally an integral part of France, and thus it was part of the then European Community. This example, Hansen contends, is particularly illuminating because “even a sizeable war fought

⁶⁸ Peo Hansen, “European Integration, European Identity and the Colonial Connection,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5/4 (2002), 483–498, at p. 483.

⁶⁹ Hansen, “European Integration,” 484.

⁷⁰ Hansen, “European Integration,” 485.

⁷¹ Peo Hansen, “In the Name of Europe,” *Race & Class* 45/3 (2004), 49–62, at p. 59.

inside the Community has not been able to impinge on the notion of European integration as a symbol of peace, and that its promotion of a European identity has served as an antidote to war.”⁷²

What this case seems to suggest is the existence of a space *of* Europe and a space *outside* Europe to which Algeria fighting for independence belonged—despite formally being a part of Europe—and therefore somehow morally less relevant to the shaping of European sense of identity. This argument not only sustains Talal Asad’s argument of the existence of two moral spaces, but also suggests that the very selective memories that feed the narrative of the European Union are not procedurally mobilised in a universal environment, but confront the existence of an already qualified moral geography whose boundaries have their roots in supposed civilisational or religious commonalities.

This moral geography, the existence of a transcendent idea of Europe, should not be exaggerated in its capacity of moulding feelings of identification and solidarity. A number of factors, including political realism and economic calculations, contribute to shape political processes and build communities. What is merely claimed here is that the idea of a procedural Europe shaped by universal narratives, as that of a strongly sought peace which could bring to an end the long history of European violence, is possible only if a communal vision is upheld, one which deems certain manifestations of European violence, as those perpetrated “in colonial Africa [...] or in the Middle East,” less compelling or relevant, in any case different, and therefore exclude them from Europe’s universal history.

The encroachment of universalist rhetoric, civilisational visions, and political calculation can be interestingly observed in another important moment of the definition of the idea of Europe, the 2004 enlargement. Again, Judt’s argument offers an interesting platform for discussion. The obliteration of memory of violence which makes the bedrock of the European

⁷² Hansen, “European Integration,” 488.

project, Judt argued, will probably constitute a hindrance against the possibility of an eastern enlargement since these nations will not easily forget having been ‘abandoned.’ However, with the 2004 enlargement eight countries of Central and Eastern Europe have become official members of the European Union. This fact should not lead us to automatically discard Judt’s conclusion (written in 1992), but rather to consider what has made possible this rapprochement in such a short period of time.

According to Helene Sjursen, although “[t]he EU claims that the rules that govern the enlargement process are not just ‘specially preferred’, but rely on universally valid principles,”⁷³ it is not merely the compliance of Eastern European countries with such principles, if at all, that has made enlargement possible. She highlights how, from the mid-1990s, Western European rhetoric towards Eastern Europe has increasingly emphasised a shared identity and past and thus the necessity of helping these countries in their transition. This duty, Sjursen remarks, is expression of “a long term commitment [...] a sense of particular responsibility towards Eastern Europe”⁷⁴ stemming also from the traumatic division that took place at Yalta. This argument suggests that the perspective adopted by Judt to account for the birth of the European Union could also be employed to explain some dimensions of the decision to enlarge. Whereas the European Union allowed several European countries to veil their violent past made of collaboration with the Nazi regime and nationalistic excesses, enlargement to eastern countries has allowed Western Europe to lay a veil over “the image of the west abandoning Eastern Europe at the end of the second world war [...] [on the betrayed] expectation that they ought to do something and the moral outrage when they did not.” This idea, Sjursen maintains, “has remained powerful and colours both east European perception of western policies

⁷³ Sjursen, “Why Expand?,” 503.

⁷⁴ Sjursen, “Why Expand?,” 505, 507.

and the west's own policies and role conception."⁷⁵ For Sjursen, however, the eastern enlargement can neither be reduced to a matter of historical guilt, nor of procedural implementation of liberal norms, but encompasses the existence of a deeper "community-based identity."⁷⁶

It is in the name of this common European identity that, "in the process of supporting applicant states in their efforts to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria," the EU has channelled much more financial resources to Poland (incidentally the country whose European identity was more forcefully advocated by John Paul II) than Turkey.⁷⁷ Moreover, had it been just a question of procedural compliance with the rules of *acquis communautaire*, Poland's membership in the EU should have been delayed.⁷⁸ According to Bahar Rumelili, the different treatment reserved to Poland and Turkey can be better grasped by drawing a heuristic distinction between "acquired" and "inherent differences."⁷⁹ Poland and other eastern countries are deemed to share the same civilisational pattern of Western Europe. This pattern has diverged under the communist dictatorships, with the result that these countries have 'acquired' differences. These differences, however, can be 'eliminated' as long as Western Europe supports these countries in their process of transition. The same argument cannot be made in the case of Turkey, for which a dimension of 'inherent' difference ('civilisational,' in the terms of this paper) sheds an aura of doubt on whether, European efforts notwithstanding, this country can really become part of Europe.

⁷⁵ Sjursen, "Why Expand?," 505–506.

⁷⁶ Sjursen, "Why Expand?," 508.

⁷⁷ Sjursen, "Why Expand?," 491.

⁷⁸ Sjursen, "Why Expand?," 505.

⁷⁹ Bahar Rumelili, "Constructing Identity and Relating to Difference: Understanding the EU's Mode of Differentiation," *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004), 27–47.

These arguments alone would probably be sufficient to support the claim that Europe, while vindicating a universal proceduralism (that endows it with a moral higher ground whereby it can place the burden of exclusion automatically on the excluded), practises a communalistic politics of exclusion. There is, however, another aspect of this logic of “externalisation of difference”⁸⁰ pursued by Europe, namely its self-enforcing character. In order to grasp this dimension it is necessary to consider how Western European attitudes towards Eastern Europe, despite claims of “community-based identity,” have been anything but even. The enlargement policy, Paul Blokker remarks, has been predominantly based on a spirit of assimilation and therefore “some [Eastern European] countries have been favoured from the start on the basis of their alleged [cultural] vicinity to Europe.”⁸¹ This approach has pushed applicant states not simply to emphasise their historical and civilisational Europeanness, but also to stigmatise the non-European nature of competing neighbouring states.⁸² The “making of Central Europe” (which would include countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia) as a historical/geographical space distinct from Eastern Europe (ranging from Ukraine to the Balkans, but also including Romania and Slovakia), whose Europeanness has been heavily questioned by the neighbouring countries of Central Europe due to their Russian and ‘Oriental’ influences, is a paradigmatic example of how embracing the logic of externalisation of difference appears as a necessary requirement to be part of the European Union⁸³ (albeit one

⁸⁰ Rumelili, “Constructing Identity,” 45.

⁸¹ Paul Blokker, “The Post-Enlargement European Order: Europe ‘United in Diversity’?” *European Diversity and Autonomy Papers* 1 (2006), 1–32, at p.14 (available at http://www.eurac.edu/documents/edap/2006_edap01.pdf; accessed on 19 June 2008).

⁸² Iver B. Neumann, “European Identity, EU Expansion, and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus,” in: Lars-Erik Cederman (ed.), *Constructing Europe’s Identity: The External Dimension* (Boulder, Co.: L. Rienner, 2001), 141–164.

⁸³ Neumann, “European Identity,” 145 and ff.

not codified in its rule-based approach). As Iver B. Neumann insightfully argues, “one reason applicant members [have] avail[ed] themselves of an exclusionary rhetoric is that it sits well with a certain exclusionary strand of overall European discourse.”⁸⁴

The self-enforcing auto-referentiality that seems to characterise the process of European integration, based on the replication of a non-negotiable and non-questionable Western European core, raises doubts on the transformative potential enacted by the project of enlargement, particularly on the possibility of a cosmopolitan Europe capable of embracing diversity. Hence, European nominal proceduralism, disregarded in practice, appears also deeply problematic as a normative aspiration. Its blanket of rules prevents the self-reflection that should accompany every encounter with what or who is deemed ‘different’ and, at the same time, leaves a sense of anxiety on values and identities that this blanket should shelter. Proceduralism, expanding on Wendy Brown’s argument, can neither provide substantive answers, nor interpret Europe’s thorniest questions of identity, difference, and boundaries.

Proceduralism externalises Turkish (Muslim) Otherness, making it a matter of ‘inherent difference’ that preserves as much as possible a social imaginary of universal principles that have definitively transcended blood, nation, and religion, and leaves to formally non-political actors, as Benedict XVI, the role of voicing fears and prejudice against Islam. Within this framework, the “paradox” of a secular Europe whose “boundaries are becoming more sharply defined in religious [Christian] terms”⁸⁵ remains a paradox only as long as we take the pope and his addresses as relevant for the faithful and the theologians. This perspective, however, is problematic. As has been argued, that of Benedict, is a fully fledged political position

⁸⁴ Neumann, “European Identity,” 157.

⁸⁵ James A. Beckford, “Final Reflections,” in: John Fulton & Peter Gee (eds.), *Religion in Contemporary Europe* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 167, quoted in Timothy A. Byrnes, “Transnational Religion and Europeanization,” in: Timothy A. Byrnes & Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283-305, at p. 284.

generated (and strengthened) by the inconsistencies of European nominal proceduralism. Politics overflows the realm of the secular (after all, a very recent invention) and therefore it would be a mistake to ignore this voice by branding it simply as ‘religious.’ This voice (certainly not the only one) signals an uneasiness: the fact that the question of European identity is a political question and as a political question it has to be dealt with.

3. Conclusion

Is it possible to treat the question of European identity ‘politically,’ that is to say, valorising national and religious attachment without turning this appreciation into the very exclusionary dimension that an impossible proceduralism wants to avoid? Maybe not, but what this essay has tried to argue is that this is probably a better starting point for a more open and pluralist Europe than the arrogant proceduralism of a European polity which hides its emotions and fears behind the veil of technical rules. The ‘political minimalism’ endorsed by Europe appears counterproductive, if not altogether detrimental. As William Connolly has suggested, in highly differentiated polities “spaces in which differences may constitute themselves as contending identities are [...] most effectively established by political means.”⁸⁶ The call for a politicisation of the question of identity does not mean that Europe should anchor its self-understanding to a single dimension or a blend of them (Christianity, secularity, nationality, ethnicity) and then shape its policies accordingly. Quite the opposite, it means recognising that all these aspects that make the character of Europe and their related exclusionary tendencies cannot be contained and transcended through a set of procedural norms. It means recognising, in other words, that ‘European’ identities are not exceptional: they are emotional formations that articulate solidarities and exclusions like all ‘other’ identities.

⁸⁶ William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), xi.

If this is the case, how is it possible to reconcile Europe's universal and exceptional narrative of reconciliation after violence and unity after fragmentation with an identity still admittedly particularistic, as witnessed by its difficult relation with Islam,⁸⁷ be it within (Muslim minorities) or at its gates (Turkey)? At the beginning of this discussion, quoting Etienne Balibar, it was argued that European proceduralism is the attempt to shape "a new civilizational pattern [...] by rearranging the elements inherited from the very institutions it has to overcome." For Balibar, however, this project does not necessarily demand proceduralism. On the contrary, he claims, it is possible to "explore the possibilities for Europe to use its own fragilities and indeterminacies [...] as an effective mediation in the process of bringing about a new political culture, a new pattern of politics."⁸⁸ Europe could then be conceived as a "vanishing mediator," a transformative bridge between past and present whose 'exceptional character' would reside, also in consideration of its history, in being a 'space of translation' between different cultures.⁸⁹ Translation as the only genuine "idiom of Europe" (Balibar borrows the image from Umberto Eco) would demand looking for universals, but also acknowledging the existence of "non-translatable ideas and forms."⁹⁰

This image, powerful as a literary figure, appears more elusive in terms of political implementation. Whatever the hurdles though, this project deserves every effort. The brief exploration of Papal diplomacy with regards to Europe has in fact suggested a correspondence between events in the religious regime and the worldly regime. Thus, whereas the religious regime moved from the logic of the blocs of Pius XII, to the proactive 'inclusiveness' of John Paul II via the *Ostpolitik* of Paul VI, the worldly regime of Europe was undertaking a process of "cosmopolitan Europeanization" expanding "its territorial borders through the integration

⁸⁷ Difficulties, to be sure, to which Muslim themselves have contributed.

⁸⁸ Balibar, "Europe," 334.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Balibar, "Europe," 335.

of the external periphery into an internally homogeneous space.”⁹¹ Benedict XVI’s conservative and exclusionary stances, however, matched by the increasing difficulties of European societies to integrate their Muslim minorities, appears to be an indication of the limits reached by a cosmopolitan model of territorial enlargement which may not have been as successful in “enlarging the European mind.”⁹² Hence the necessity of rethinking Europe as a complex space of translation appears all the more urgent, because, as remarked by Talal Asad,

[i]f Europe cannot be articulated in terms of complex space and complex time that allow for multiple ways of life (and not merely multiple *identities*) to flourish, it may be fated to be no more than the common market of an imperial civilization, always anxious about (Muslim) exiles within its gates and (Muslim) barbarians beyond.⁹³

The barbarians awaited and feared by Toynbee and Benedict XVI.

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⁹¹ José Casanova, “Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration,” in: Timothy A. Byrnes & Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 65-92, at p. 90.

⁹² I take this expression from Andrew Mango, “Turkey and the Enlargement of the European Mind,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 34/2 (1998), 171–192. On the limits of the European cosmopolitan model of integration and expanding borders see Casanova, “Religion,” particularly pages 89–90.

⁹³ Asad, *Formations*, 180.

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