Love in the Religions of the World

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Edited by

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PREFACE

This volume arose out of a dialogue that took place in a secular university, the University of Hong Kong. That, I think, is significant. As far as I know it is the first time that the Arts Faculty of the University of Hong Kong has attempted to bring such an array of perspectives from different faiths together in dialogue. I do not say this in order to suggest that the secular basis of the university has changed, but to draw attention to what any educated person today should know, viz. that political, cultural and social issues cannot be adequately addressed without reference to the role of the world's religions. We are a humanist Faculty in a secular institution, but the idea that religion is somehow to be left outside of the scope of human activities is no longer sustainable. Indeed, I will argue in the Introduction that the great achievement of secular society was not what its most anti-clerical exponents hoped—the abolition of the divorce between men and gods ("I hate all gods said Marx citing Aeschylus' Prometheus as the epigram to his doctoral dissertation on the difference between Epicurus and Democritus)—but the openness to the threads between humanity and the mysterious (often violent and contradictory) powers of life to which humans beings have supplicated themselves before and summoned over the ages and across and within communities.

This book contains chapters on Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as some more thematically focussed chapters. Such a topic as this cannot claim to be exhaustive. On the contrary, I think no two essays which dealt with love and any one religion would be exactly the same. In a world where styles and traditions are ever in danger of losing their distinctiveness due to the homogenizing effect of technological, administrative and economic systems, religion is one of the most durable forms where we can see difference of purpose and approach to the meaning of life. Of course, there are people, and indeed perhaps some contributors to this volume, who believe that all religions are essentially looking for the same thing, a perennial philosophy, as Huxley called it. Certainly in the Jewish and Christian religions that thing may be designated as God's love. Whether all religions are looking for that, though, is questionable. Indeed, the purpose behind the conference that led to this book was to explore to what extent and what manner love features in the main religions of the world. This volume supplies some answers to that very big question.

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INTRODUCTION

LOVE AND RELIGION IN THE SECULAR WORLD

WAYNE CRISTAUDO

Part I

Two closely related great failures within Christendom conspired to create the modern secular state, both of which were a flow-on from the Reformation. The first was the failure in France not only to purge itself after the Reformation, but to deal with its reformers in a Christian manner. The forces against Reformation in France were powerful and vicious, particularly the University of Paris, though in those tumultuous times panic and violence were not the peculiar prerogative of one party.[1] In the Middle Ages all the finest theological minds in Europe passed through the University of Paris, which had become the indisputable centre of scholastic learning. What had created such prestige and political importance for it was the very thing that made it so resistant to the new humanism, which found scholasticism hopelessly outmoded. For its part it did all it could, including orchestrate the fateful massacre of the Huguenots of St. Bartholomew's day and forcing the Protestant King, Henry of Navarre, (Henry IV) to convert to and enter back into Catholic Faith, to prevent the spread of Reformist ideas. As for the clergy of the Catholic Church, they (or enough of them), had been so closely inserted into the absolutist monarchist aims that they, along with the nobility and the king himself, constituted one of the ruling classes of France.

This is all conveyed with bitter wit by one of France's greatest writers, François Rabelais, a Catholic monk himself. His attack upon the entire orders of France focuses on the University of Paris, the academicians, the lawyers and the clergy. Had he stopped there he would have been barely

[1] In what follows there is a great debt to Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. See his *Out of Revolution* (Berg, 1993 [1938 1968]) *and Die europäischen Revolutionen oder der Charakter der Nationen*, (Bredow 1987 [1931 & 1960]. Also cf. my *Religion, Redemption and Revolution: The New Speech Thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy*, forthcoming with University of Toronto Press. I would like to thank Norman Fiering for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

distinguishable from Erasmus, but he went much further. He mourned the Christian killing of the great pagan God Pan, and he advocated a neo-pagan form of religiosity. He did this as he contrasting the dwarfish lives within Christendom, which he saw all around him, with the gigantic lives of his heroes whose only faith was in their natural appetites and what they had learnt from nature. Unlike the reformers, he mocked both sides in the religious wars, the war he portrayed as nothing more than between the fish eaters of lent and the Chitterlings, the Protestants who can eat sausage every day of the week. Rabelais was radical not simply because he criticised the hypocrisy and petty spirits around him, nor because he saw them as closely bound to the institutions that they had accepted, but because he does not merely wish to reform that world but blow it away—albeit with gales of laughter.

The St. Bartholomew massacre occurred about forty years after Rabelais' depiction of the Chitterling war, but, by then in France many had responded to the Reform that had swept through Europe. One may ask why did Rabelais stay in the Church given his writings do nothing but show its corruption, and the one good priest in his writings, Father John, is a virile, womanizing drinker who formulates the commandment that expresses the key to Rabelais' entire thinking: "Do what thou will."[2] We have no answer for that, except that it gave him a livelihood. It is no less strange than the fact that the man sometimes considered to be the first out and out modern atheist, Jean Meslier (1664-1729), had lived his entire life as a priest whilst writing a huge tract defending atheism—Meslier's tract would only be published after his death; and when Voltaire published extracts from it, he dragooned Meslier into the Deist camp.

With the Edict of Nantes of 1598, of Henry IV, it seemed that religious tolerance had been established and if not an outright peace, at least a stand-off between Catholics and Protestants had been secured. But Catholic forces and interests had no desire to see the Church reformed. In 1685 Louis XIV renounced the Edict; though by then it was already a tattered piece of legislation due to shifting domestic politics and the periodic squashing of Protestantism.

Prohibitions against Protestantism would not completely end in France until 1787, on the eve of the French Revolution, with the Edict of Toleration, and it was only with the Revolution itself that Protestants, who along with the Jews, the latter for the first time, received full citizenship. I think it no exaggeration to say, following Rosenstock-Huessys' analysis,

[2] François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Patagruel*, translated by J.M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 159.

that the assault upon the Church in the French revolution was, *inter alia*, revenge for its persecution of the Huguenots.

Another momentous event had also been talking place which also greatly impacted upon a section of the best and brightest seeking a pathway out of Christendom. That event was the Thirty Years War—Europe's original Great War. To be sure that war cannot simply be explained in terms of religion, as Catholics allied with Protestants and vice versa, but the role that religious symbols and rhetoric played in it helped create a new kind of person who was convinced that a new way must be found— Christianity simply could not do what was needed to free man from hell on earth.

One of the participants in that war was René Descartes. Although one of the co-founders of analytical geometry and a contributor to optics and meteorology, Descartes was not Europe's greatest scientist, but he was, perhaps, the greatest advocate of a new faith in the power of science to alleviate people from the wretchedness of daily existence. Moreover, he had a vision and a plan which he introduced to the general public in a little work called *Discourse on Method* (it was the introduction to his work on optics, geometry and meteorology, and it was published in French not in the language of the scholastics, Latin). It was that general public, rather than the academicians, who interested him and in whom he hoped to find followers who would create the future. Descartes himself insisted that he was respectful of the laws of the land and to the Catholic faith of his forefathers (though he chose to live in more tolerant Protestant lands than live in a land where so many of the school men were attacking him), and thus was not seeking radical social change. But his philosophy—though dressed in scholasticism—contained the seeds of a radical philosophy. The God upon which his philosophy rested was neither Protestant nor Catholic. His God certainly was decked out like the scholastic God, and his *Meditations* was his attempt to show his scholastic enemies that His God was their God. But there was one major difference: Descartes' philosophy revolved around physics and the laws of nature, and God was nothing more than a stabilizing form to provide that. The scholastics, on the other hand, wanted to establish that God was indeed something necessary to the order of the universe, but the crucifixion was the contingency around which the Christian faith then turned. Pascal, a genuine member of the Christian faith, pointed out that one could not pray to Descartes' God; it was not the God of Abraham, Isaac and Joseph. In fact, Descartes had provided the God which increasingly appealed to a great many intelligentsia: a Deist God.

One of his most influential students and philosophical critics (whose criticism was insignificant compared to his philosophical overlap with his former master) was the man whose name was to become synonymous with atheism for many years in Europe—Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza, though not only excommunicated by his fellow Jews and widely denounced as the philosophical atheist of the time, was not strictly speaking an atheist, but a pantheist, for he had dissolved God into nature and nature into God—allowing as he does from the outset of his greatest philosophical treatise, the ethics, only one substance. But from within the confines of the traditional Christian faith shared by Protestants and Catholics alike in Western Europe, pantheism and Deism were variants of atheism—for they all abolished any need for participating in a common worship of Christ. Deism had but a brief social, political, and cultural currency—it is evident in the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man ("Therefore," it states, "the National Assembly recognizes and proclaims, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being.") While it had intellectual favour, Deism was incapable of being sustained as a new kind of Church—Robespierre's Festival of the Supreme Being, an attempt to supplant Christianity by ritualising Enlightened beliefs on God, took place once. It was a short-lived attempt to replace the more radical festival, established by the atheistic *enragés* of the Cult of Reason. The success of the cult of reason is not to be measured by the short lived festival, but in the grounds of appeal and affirmation embedded in modern secular institutions.

Spinoza's philosophical importance was not only that he provided one of the great metaphysical systems of the new view of nature that had swept through Europe's intelligentsia in the seventeenth century, nor that he had provided one of the earliest arguments for a democratic view of politics, but also he was a pioneer of what would become modern biblical criticism. Spinoza knew that the new vision of reality that was being spread through the new sciences opened up the prospect of a complete overhaul of the imagination—and for Spinoza the imagination of his contemporaries and forefathers was corrupted because it was so out of synch with the understanding—i.e. people imagined all sorts of nonsense instead of rightly understanding nature and its laws. That's why he took the Bible as a collection of facts which had to be examined—and, of course would be found to contain all manner of lunacies. (Rabelais had also made a slyly similar point about the deranged understanding of Biblical writers in

chapter One of the Second Book of his Chronicles where Pantagruel's ancestry is a non too subtle parody of Genesis.)[3]

Unlike the earlier humanists who were interested in learning biblical languages in order to better understand the spirit of scripture, Spinoza's biblical criticism was an early undermining of its entire foundations. The way in which he did this was to argue that revelation and philosophy stood on different footings. Revelation taught obedience to the command to love God and neighbour. As correct as this was ethically, he said, it was based on imagined events being projected onto the truth of the understanding. In Spinoza, religion, then, broke down into statements about nature and morality, and the moral teaching of the prophets was "nothing, which is not very simple and easily grasped by all."[4] In other words, the mind in conjunction with nature covered everything and Spinoza thus continued in Descartes' tracks in the construction of what would subsequently become a common Enlightenment or Deist view of religion—religion was but the ritualistic and superstitious rendering of morality. Kant's moral theory is not Spinozian, in that it is directed against a deterministic view of human nature and ethics, but his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* is thoroughly Spinozian.

It is also in the *Theologico Political Treatise* that Spinoza, in his characteristic dry and understated tone, holds up the mirror of shame to the Christian faithful of his times:

> I have often wondered, that persons who make a boast of professing the Christian religion, namely, love, joy, peace, temperance, and charity to all men, should quarrel with such rancorous animosity, and display daily towards one another such bitter hatred, that this, rather than the virtues they claim, is the readiest criterion of their faith.[5]

The following sentence went one step further and it expressed what was perhaps much more a wish than an observation.

> Matters have long since come to such a pass, that one can only pronounce a man Christian, Turk, Jew, or Heathen, by his general appearance and attire, by his frequenting this or that place of worship, or employing the

[3] *Ibid.*,171 ff.
[4] Preface, *A Theologico-Political Treatise* in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, Vol. 1: A Theologico-Political Treatise / A Political Treatise*, (New York: Dover, 1955), translated by R.H. M. Elwes, 9.
[5] *Ibid*., 8.

> phraseology of a particular sect—as for manner of life, it is in all cases the same.[6]

This idea typifies the Deist view of religion viz. that all are really wanting the same thing, obeying the same laws—because there is only one set of divine laws and one God. In *The Ethics* Spinoza had conducted the entire dissolution of the Christian world view under the auspices of love of God. The love spoken of was an intellectual love to be deployed in the study of the God, and the God spoken of was the unitary totality of nature's laws. As he says in one of its most cited passages

> The intellectual love of the mind towards God is that very love of God whereby God loves himself, not in so far as he is infinite, but in so far as he can be explained through the essence of the human mind regarded under the form of eternity; in other words, the intellectual love of the mind towards God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself.[7]

In Spinoza's philosophy as the above, I think, indicates, there is an important amalgam of ideas which expressed what has become the secular or agnostic approach to religion: the religious differences between peoples stems from a failure to distinguish between the fundamental and the secondary (rituals, rites, traditions, dress), that the obsession with the secondary features of a religion lead to fanaticism, and that what religion really teaches is an ethics, which can just as easily (or more easily) be attained by dropping the secondary. What is broadly called the mystical is frequently seen as the peculiarly religious addition to ethics—Spinoza himself has often been seen as a kind of mystic. And as he himself illustrates, the mystical may be accessed without any specific reference or appeal to a specific religion or God. Indeed, a great deal of what passes for religious dialogue today seems to me to accept this particular line of thinking.

It took a long time before the ideas of a man who could not teach in a university, who, in spite of having refuge in the most tolerant country in Europe, dared not publish his most important ideas in his life time under his own name, became commonplace. (*The Ethics* was only published posthumously; *The Theologio-Political Treatise* anonymously. Only his *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* was published under his name). To

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[6] *Ibid*., 9.

[7] Ethics, in The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, Vol. 1. On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence, translated by R.H.M. Elwes, (New York: Dover1955), Prop. XXXVI, Part V.

gauge the fear and hatred of the doctrines he taught one only need consult the letters of his former friend and pupil, Albert Burgh who upon undergoing conversion to Catholicism felt impelled to pour invective upon Spinoza, informing him that he was a "wretched pygmy, vile worm of the earth, ashes for worms."[8] The letter exhibits just the kind of animosity and rancour in defence of the religion of charity that Spinoza drew attention to in the above citation. Naturally, enough, if Burgh was trying to halt Spinoza or change his mind, it had no effect. Spinoza's ideas would circulate in Europe some years after his death in an anonymous underground political atheistic tract entitled *The Three Impostors*, where Moses, Jesus and Mohammad were, as the title, indicates indicted for teaching nonsense to the gullible, and their view of life condemned as superstitious nonsense as the authors of the tract advanced a naturalistic account of life which science alone could complete.

One of Spinoza's metaphysical critics, the author of one of the most influential works of the eighteenth century, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, and a great inspiration for Voltaire, Pierre Bayle did a great deal to further Spinoza's social cause. Bayle was ostensibly a faithful Calvinist —how faithful he was is not easy to gauge, but what is easy enough to see is that he did believe in religious tolerance. Indeed, his legacy had nothing to do with his professed faith, but with the grist he added to future Enlightenment critics of religion and atheists. Thus, for example, in his entry on David, he compares this great, but flawed King of the Jews, with what he considers the general precepts of natural morality and found him severely wanting. His depiction of Pyrrho, the Greek sceptic, is but a thinly veiled appeal to scepticism and the deficiencies of theological dogmatism. And most important of all about the book, as he put in it in his own words in his "Clarifications," was "the praise paid to persons who deny either providence or the existence of God."[9] Bayle argues that there is not only no reason why atheists should be more perfidious than believers, but that, in point of fact, "since of the many criminals who pass through the hands of the public executioner there are none found to be atheists,"[10] and that the intellectual atheists who have been so heavily criticized (he mentions Spinoza, among others, by name) show no signs of moral depravity. Further, he made the important point that religious beliefs are only a small part of a large mix of appeals and drives which lead men

[8] *Correspondence* in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza, Vol. 1*¸ Letter LXXIII, 413.
[9] Bayle, Pierre. 1965. *Historical and Critical Dictionary*. Selections translated and introduced by Richard Popkin. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill), 395.
[10] *Ibid*, 405.

to action.[11] Indeed, if belief were supposed to have stopped criminals and murderers it had hardly achieved its aims. At the time he was writing there had been no purely secular ideological wars and his writings helped spread the idea, common amongst atheists even today, that religious differences is such a great spur to war that were peoples to put aside their different religious beliefs peace would follow. Two secular world wars, not to mention other twentieth century secular revolutions and wars shows that this is not the case; but after almost two centuries of religiously fuelled wars in Europe it is understandable why Bayle's ideas could easily be taken in this direction. And that was indeed the direction they were taken by those who helped craft the ideas that would change the world forever in that most dramatic of all revolutions—the French revolutions.

One of the great images in Descartes' *Discourse on Method* is of the new science being likened to an army;[12] for that army to triumph it ultimately had to win the hearts and minds of the great majority of men and women. Descartes creates the materials leading to a radical social and political and religious overhaul; indeed he even supplies the metaphor of the need for humanity to dwell in a new house, though we have to live in an old one as the new is being built.[13] But Descartes was ever cautious and he does not develop the social implications of his thought in a full blown teaching of politics and society. Rather he bequeaths his method to a generation and he hopes that if they are more receptive to the implications of the new philosophy they will have the numbers to make the changes he dreams of. Spinoza was one of those respondents and he immediately saw the link between the content of the new sciences and the requisite transformations in society which would enable free speech unconstrained by the vested interests of a priest and professorial (primarily scholastic Aristotelian) class. He made that link explicit in his political writings—indeed the scientific ends of the new naturalism could only be achieved by a different kind of political order. Living in a commercial republic, he appreciated the free air, much freer than anywhere else in Europe, and he sought to spread the doctrine of a democratic society where the learned could share their findings with the public at large.

As important as Descartes and Spinoza were to the great transformation in religion that took place in Europe, it was Voltaire who not only understood that the overthrow of the Church needed not only an active army willing to do the job, and a new class who would lead the

[11] *Ibid*., 400.
[12] René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, Discourse 6, translated by F.E. Sutcliffe, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 82.
[13] *Ibid*, Discourse 2, 35 f.

people, but who had the wit and temperament to devote his life to calling for like minded spirits to join him in "crushing the infamy." Just as the French revolution was the first European revolution to have dispensed with all Christian appeals, it was the first revolution led by a new class—the intellectuals, *les lumières*—those who celebrated natural reason (celebrated as one recalls in the opening page of Descartes' *Discourse on Method*). It was this new class who created the Enlightenment story about God and the priests: God was the invention of the priests. He was the means by which a class could control the stupid masses who believed their ridiculous fables. The story, while having little, if anything, to do with the real history of the emergence of priest casts throughout the world, tells us everything about how the clergy were perceived in France. The story was certainly integral to the aims of *les lumières* who had come to save the people, to show them their own genius, so that all could live off the fruits of human knowledge and in the solidarity of virtue. Of course the oppressive estates had to be done away with: Diderot's "when the last noble is strung up by the guts of the last priest" pithily expressed where *les lumières* stood.

While *les lumières* alone did not make the French revolution, they scripted its meaning; and thereafter provided the conceptual matrix for all the great and explosive ideas of the nineteenth century; nationalism, liberalism and socialism were all developed with an a-theistic "discursive regime," to use Foucault's neat formulation.

The Russian revolution was even more stridently atheistic. It had no need for squabbles between Deism and atheism. And just as its leaders took every opportunity both to represent themselves through symbolic equivalences with their earlier French counter-parts whilst rebuking its bourgeois horizons and core, they played out the role of intellectual leaders with even greater remoteness and alienation from the revolutionary masses. The French *lumières* were inserted within a revolutionary class who had genuine grievances which eventually exploded—by contrast, the Russian Marxist revolutionaries deployed a theory whose very agent barely existed in Russia. The first outright atheistic revolution in the world was made by a group whose most important end came out of the most radical (and defeated) ideas of the Jacobins (Babeuf and his small group of followers), ensconced in a philosophical/ economic theory by a member of a small group of alienated intellectuals in Germany (none of whom could get a university job) and picked up by the disaffected Russian intelligentsia who could sense the gaping backwardness and cruelty of Russia, but who had almost nothing in common with the one enormous class whose rancour and desperation could supply the fuel for a real

revolution. It took a World War to create the Russian revolution, and Lenin's genius to recognize that the Russian peasantry were not motivated by (nineteenth century) nationalist ambitions. But if the Russian revolution was stridently atheistic, by the time of its success, the nation state had firmly ensconced itself as the ruling power at the table of political order. If the First World War was started by great empires, it ended with empires immediately or imminently fractured into nations—first the Austro Hungarian, Ottoman, then and belatedly the British, and finally the Russian empire which had morphed into the Bolshevik one, only eventually to crack and give way to more nations. The ideology of the nation which fuelled a new kind of political entity, the modern nation state, was thoroughly secular. And while some nation states were formed on the back of religion—the general "logic" of the nation state was a-religious.

In fact, there are great parallels between the growth of science and the nation states. And the entwinement of the two forces of science and politics leading up to and within revolutionary France became global—as science, with all the complexity of its *habitat*—its schools, universities, technologies, industries etc.—became indispensable to economic growth and social improvement. But *habitat* shapes and is shaped by *habitus*. And it was the shift in *habitus* by Descartes and his subsequent army (and in England, it was Bacon's army that had done the deed) that transformed what might have simply been a revolution by an alliance of classes in France into a revolution with global implications.

The shift in *habitus* is itself closely related to another revolutionary event, one which accompanies the scientific, English and French revolutions, but which was far less visible, much more subtle. It was the philological revolution, the revolution of speech or language itself—the elevation of one set of names and a vocabulary over another. I have already been hinting at this throughout the paper. It is immediately obvious if one compares the rhetoric of the German, English and even the American revolutions (where the pulpits played such a large part) with the French and Russian revolutions.

Spinoza's *Ethics* and Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* both show a deep awareness that if the human understanding is to be modified so that it no longer becomes led astray by the fear and fire and frenzy of its imagination then words must be used right; a new way of speaking about reality had to be forged. That new language applied as much to things of the world (hence Locke argues all representations have their origins in experience) as to the emotions which govern us (hence Spinoza pins down their nature and content). In other words, a new semantic field had to be

established. It is often noted that atheism seems almost non-existent in the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance and Reformation. But rarely is it appreciated that atheism only makes sense in a certain semantic field. Philosophers, so prone to asking after the essence of a thing, too frequently forget that God is not only a metaphysical term, but first and foremost a philological one that operates with a vast array of other signs which provide it with the kind of "sense" that assists the facilitation of the array of experiences which make up a life. The new philosophy of the scientific revolution changed all that. The God that no longer referred to a hidden, creative, loving and redemptive force which could be *witnessed* in moments of *grace* and *providence*, in those moments where the incalculable opportunities and synchronicities are over-awingly manifest in one's life had become an object of dispute between physicists. Kant might well have convinced (or tortured) the philosophical layman with his transformation of "God" into a regulative idea for science and a practical one for morals, thereby satisfying the Deists, but La Place's immortal quip on God "I have no need of that hypothesis" finally pulled down the curtain on the lonely metaphysical God who only spoke in mathematics and who was powerless to intervene in the world after its creation. Thereafter, it would only be the odd scientist and philosopher who would any longer look to prove seriously that His hand was behind the physical universe.

It was the German philosopher Hegel, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, who expressed a fact that hardly anyone had noticed in the aftermath of the French revolution: that the state had become God. In Hegel, this did not mean, as some held, that Hegel was a proto-totalitarian —something impossible to reconcile with his quasi-representative, albeit corporatist, model of the state outlined in his *Rechtsphilosophie*. Hegel simply meant that the state was the highest source of appeal in the world, and it was the power which arbitrated between the permissible and impermissible, as it presided over the other forms of ethical life, the family and civil society. Irrespective, of his Prussian parochialism in his outlining of the essential components of the modern state, he had rightly expressed the theological meaning of the modern state. His statement that his daily prayers consisted of the reading of the newspaper well expressed the spiritual priorities of the moderns.

Long before Hegel, when Thomas Hobbes, writing in the smoke and gunpowder of the English civil war, argued that the people must devolve its sovereignty absolutely to a power that would be absolute, he took care to emphasize that politics should not specify the *summum bonum*. He knew that England had long since passed the situation where a sovereign could expect a people to simply share his faith. But having seen the source

of the woes of England in the dual sovereignty that in *Behemoth* he had traced back to the great conflict between the pope, Gregory VII, and Emperor, Henry IV, he sought the solution in what is essentially, even if dressed up in more multicultural friendly garb still, the Western way, by demanding that the sovereign prohibit teachings which would destabilize the kingdom, whilst leaving sufficient space for people to believe what they please, provided they did not contradict that requirement. In that plain speak which so typifies his work Hobbes makes the case in *Behemoth* that the sovereign will only create the very opposition it wishes to avoid if it seeks to tell people what they must believe to be the truth in the highest matters:

> A state can constrain obedience, but convince no error, nor alter the minds of them that believe they have the better reason. Suppression of doctrine does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already believed them.[14]

It has often been noted how paradoxical it is that Hobbes, a political absolutist, is in fact one of the earliest political philosophers to lay out the essentials of a liberal vision of the state. And while modern Western states have not always been liberal, it does seem true that those western states which are not liberal have not survived in the modern sea of nation states. And it does seem questionable how "modern" a modern state is which is not liberal—how modern a state is which does not respect property rights, or human rights, or freedom of religion. Hobbes knew that until the problem of sovereignty had been solved all else was vain. This is why, even if Locke is right to insist upon representation and the constraint of prerogative power over property, the absolutist nature of sovereignty—albeit a sovereignty embedded firmly in the rule of law—still finds itself assumed or evoked in the various operations of the modern liberal state—in taxation, in its plans of urban or rural development, courts and prisons, and in its right to make war, in its censorship of the school curriculum, and in matters of political and even religious affairs. Great Britain's refusal to allow Geert Wilders's entrance in February 2009 (since overturned) was a symptom of the Leviathanal moment of the modern state seeking to ensure calm by designating who could say what where. In that case there was a

[14] *Behemoth.* 1990. Edited by Stephen Holmes, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 62. See Curley, Edwin. 2007. "Hobbes and the Cause of Religious Toleration," in *A Critical Companion to Hobbes LEVIATHAN*, edited. by Patricia Springborg, Cambridge University Press, 3907 ff.

clash of world views—a clash of one view of the secular and religion with another.

But there is one thing that is of much greater significance than the revolutionaries who stretch from Hobbes and Descartes to Robespierre and Lenin ever thought about—that this dissipation of God into space and state is not one that all people want. On the contrary, His death has left a vast spiritual emptiness in European based societies. A deep sense of this was felt by the romantics of the nineteenth century who feared the glaring light of Enlightenment and who did so much to foster the other component of modernity which developed hand in hand with the sense of progress and the desire for moral improvement (so evident in such institutions as the UN and EU). I am speaking of nostalgia, that concept which we detect clearly in the pre-Enlightenment writings of Montaigne and which occupies a central place in the political writings of the man who contains all the contradictions from Enlightenment to romanticism, from atomism to collectivism, from lover of liberty to propensity to tyranny, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Though Rousseau's nostalgia is interesting—and so much like that of many European-centred or based societies—his nostalgia is not for the relatively recent historical past, as is the nostalgia of Novalis or Schlegel who pined for the Roman Church (or their imagined version of it), but for the kind of life most remote from civilization and its particular ailments—for the indigenous life (which, of course, is romanticised in no less a fashion than Novalis' Middle Ages).

This nostalgia has become a great part of the West's consciousness. It is why, for example, anthropology develops as a social science. It comes with a deep sense of self-mourning. Again one thinks of the Enlightenment emphasis upon the elimination of history, as if it is a terrible nightmare of the duped masses constructed by cruel priests, and aristocratic tyrants, and how remote that emphasis is from the kind of dialogues and issues that occur today in modern states. This brings me to the second core issue of this paper: religion.

The West, as we have said, became hostile to religion in the name of progress, science, freedom, tolerance, and Enlightenment. It would take us too far afield here to argue what I and many others think is the case—that art and genius were supposed to provide the spiritual nourishment to sustain the inquisitive politicized member of the commercialized community. From early in the latter part of the nineteenth century oriental ideas were streaming into the West through organizations such as the theosophical and anthroposophical societies. Originally it was swamis, gurus, Buddhist monks, and Sufis who came to teach spirituality to a mostly educated class who felt spiritually rootless. But then it was

significant numbers of Muslims from former colonies or "guest workers" who now exist in a *habitat* where science and the modern state prevail and which emerged from the processes we have discussed. For many of the new arrivals—and often even more for their children and grandchildren—their *habitus* does not fit this *habitat*. But it is not just that they feel alienated; it is also the case that Europeans themselves are alienated. Indeed, the traditionalist who attacked men like Descartes and Spinoza were often so ferocious because of the fear that they had of the alienating forces that these men were unleashing. If one places Pascal beside Descartes one sees this immediately; Descartes enthuses his readers about living forever and having access to machines which will make a paradise of life on earth—Pascal has his readers think of the effects of alienation in a universe where we are but specks of dust and God no longer speaks to us. Descartes' future is one of plenty—Pascal's one of despair and depression. And the fact is that the modern world is both: it is one of wealth and despair, often simultaneously masked and fuelled by addiction. While art may suffice for a particular temperament to provide spiritual direction and nourishment for the soul and imagination, in the main religion speaks more successfully than art to the hole of despair in a human being. Certainly it has done so for much longer—and if we are to take stock of the affliction of modernity, a case can be made for its continuing to do so. It is this reality which I think we must face given that what once seemed to be the modern triumph of science, reason, art, and morals over religion can no longer be taken for granted.

Part II

When Samuel Huntington spoke of the "clash of civilizations" he was widely condemned by academics who believed that his accentuation of the negative of difference only fed the problem of social disturbance. While he had said that "religion is a central defining characteristic of civilizations,"[15] had he framed his argument in terms of the "clash of religions" I wonder if he would have been so vehemently criticized. I suspect not.

The criticism directed at him disclosed a widely held consensus amongst people in the West and those whose education is shaped by Western parameters, viz. that religion and politics are separate, and that

[15] Huntington, Samuel, 1998. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (London: Touchstone), 47.

the clash of civilizations is a political matter, which through the right modes of mediation may be managed. At this level I think the criticism misses the mark – the binds of religion are the thickest of cultural twines. Where Huntington's formulation seems to me to miss the boat is that religious conflict goes all the way down and can be so decisive that to speak of a civilization, say Indian civilization, is far less helpful than to address the explosions of religious differences that can break out in the sub-continent.

The West (at least up until the Rushdie affair and the breakup of Yugoslavia) had, by and large, not only thought that it had solved its religious conflicts. The one exception was the Irish troubles, which, though, could readily be enough explained in terms of class. Until conflicts with Islamic militants raised the issue of faith as a matter worth dying and killing for, the West had long accepted empires, nation-states and ideology as *the real marks* of social identity. And it tended to think that the rest of the world went along with it. This was not completely naïve. The First World War had confirmed the primacy of empire and nations, the Second World War had confirmed the primacy of ideologies. How remote now, still less than twenty years after the demise of the Soviet Union does the conflict of secular driven global ideologies seem? Who today who speaks of China's imperial potential thinks of that as driven by faith in the triumph of global communism? The question of nations is more complicated, in so far as they are more resilient. But the continuous petty erosions of national sovereignty amongst the world's first "nation-states" within the EU, the continuous political instabilities from Somalia to Afghanistan, and the revival and revitalization of regionalism no longer make it so certain that national sovereignty is the defining mark of "a people."

Indeed the question of Islam in Europe is very much a question over precisely this issue: Do the greater number of Muslims and radical Islamists within them give loyalty to the nation state or to Allah and the prophet? The question does not even have to have a sharp point, such as are you willing to engage in a war against a non-Islamic state in the spread of Islam and its message and means of salvation? But a religion which places sharia law (Allah's law) at the centre of its faith forces the question: are the public/private, church/state dualisms of the West, which are so fundamental to its form of state, really stable? Do the great majority accept them as inviolable sources of appeal? Similarly, is the idea of community representatives, of the sort Western styled liberal governments engage with inviolable? Given that multiculturalism requires community leaders, community representatives, to help the feedback loop of public policy,

they are necessary, but are they *real*, i.e. do the faithful of Islam really live in such a way that they may (to use an old Marxian term, which I think not inappropriate) be co-opted into the concerns of political parties?

For their part, politicians and political parties in Europe are now finding themselves having to engage with communities whose religion is, with the odd exception, vastly different from theirs, if, indeed, they even have a religion. The modern Western parliamentarian is, with few exceptions, a stakeholder in the secular order and its stability. But it is not only politicians who have a stake and social-political-economic role in preserving a certain kind of stability. University teachers and journalists, school teachers, some judges and lawyers, a vast array of people who see themselves as part of a class who can influence government to do its members' will.

Immigrants who are religious and whose religion has followed a very different trajectory from Western Christendom are the great reminder that even though the great revolutions of the West generated ideas and practices –science, commerce, liberalism, democracy, communism –the creations that came out of the furnaces of revolution are not all assimilated in the same way at the same rate.

Social time is living time—mechanical time is embedded deep in the *habitus* of the West: it is at the basis of the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution which brings together human labour with the great machines and technologies of science, and it is just as present in the earliest great manifesto of representative government, Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. Spinoza was a democrat, but his theory of governance—leaving aside the more general remarks about protecting the inquirers into nature and his defence of freedom—looks hopelessly ancient in comparison to Locke. From Locke it is no large leap to the American frame of government. Locke's legitimation of representative government is completely ahistorical, another example of a thinker within the mechanistic paradigm denying history: Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau, Paine along with Locke himself all reduce, deny or defy history. For all of them it is as if an act of will suffices to silence the commands of their ancestors calling from beyond the graves, crying that their dreams be realized. Locke's politics is bloodless activity, rational commercial engagement. Other peoples (the "Red Indian" he refers to, for example) are simply potential traders and consumers. Locke appealed to those like George W. Bush and his neo-conservative advisors who thought that once the people see democracy they will do it, likewise, once they experience secularism they will love it. They chose to ignore the meaning of the

Iranian revolution and the triumph of the Justice and Development Party (AK) in Turkey over purely secular parties.

The ahistorical faith in geometric ethics and politics is very much part of the Enlightenment mindset. It persists in our attitude to property ownership, economic growth, greater social solidarity (the Enlightenment was cosmopolitan) and social individuation (the Enlightenment was atomistic), inter-communal commercial flows, and technologies—it has, with some concessions to ideas about culture, coming out of Romanticism, supplied the basic matrix of value of secular states. What the Enlightenment men could never do was deal well with the night side of our nature, except reductively. One great all important difference between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment is that the former is not reductionist: it treasures the rich epiphantic tradition that the Bible and rituals of the Church had been carrying for so many hundreds of years, as well as the natural secrets it seeks to uncover. And while the great artists and philosophers of the Renaissance embrace mathematics, where appropriate, they also valued those aspects of our existence which are activated symbolically. The reception of alchemy and astrology and numerology all come from this willingness to embrace the plethora of signs of the world. This is the real watershed between why Rabelais is also a precursor of the Enlightenment—he pillories all the symbolic sciences of the age, and has a view of knowledge that is not fundamentally different from what Voltaire valued. Almost immediately upon the triumph of Enlightenment, there was a backlash of Romantics and decadents. It is no accident that the Romantic movement immediately brings back dreams and the devil – that is their refutation of *les lumières* and their faith in what they see as their rather paltry mechanistic methods.

Now, thanks largely to psychoanalysts and script-writers and fantasy and gothic novelists, we are not frightened of seeing meaning in the symbolic order. And while there are still many aspects of modern administration, government and "knowledge production" who still proceed as if life were straight lines, and moral laws, and measures of excellence and that social levers could solve everything, in the age of different peoples, all sharing technologies of communication, of massive changes in the ethnic and religious composition of Euro-centric peoples, who does not know that each social unit carries it ghosts full of their clamours for revenge, expressions of possibilities unfulfilled? The ghosts are buried deep in the very language a group speaks.

Words full of meanings contrary to the dictates, mechanisms and laws of modernity also swim through us—archaic words whose real meaning has long since been forgotten. A word may be a real jewel whose sheen is

lost in all its circulation so that now it appears the most dispensable and insignificant of trinkets. The real meaning of a word is its urgent purpose. Words which survive were originally spoke in solemn moments, crises and resolutions, profound shakings about occurrences in life, commonly shared, and names were sealed to move across the centuries. To open them is to read portent signs; it is to be alerted to another time, outside of mechanical time. In that time with access to ideas unimagined previously (this used to be called an education and why the humanities were formed into a field of study, of social cultivation), one's self is reformed. This is the real question at issue that the Western Church had lost. The Church had lagged behind civic groups – groups, for example, who did not merely ask that homosexuals be forgiven, but that they be loved and that their love be respected. To those groups the Christian legacy (remote, often, in their everyday personal symbolic index, but deeply registered in the social index) was simply a vehicle, a vehicle that was now largely untrustworthy, outdated, immersed in its rituals and dogma. What mattered now was not being judgmental, letting different groups be different, living together in respect.

To take a recent example at the University of Hong Kong that occurred at an Opening Ceremony for Cultural Diversity Ambassadors. The ceremony culminated in a song composed by one of the students. The song repeated the refrain of the power of love, how we should love each other, how love could heal rifts between groups, and how the future would be made from love. It stressed—as indeed did the entire ceremony—that the coming together of different cultures was an enriching experience for all involved. A number of things struck me as I watched the ceremony. First, the commandment to love everybody. This command goes back originally as far as I know to Judaism and its insistence that one loves God who creates human beings in His image, but it is also the cornerstone of the Christian religion.[16] Secondly, in the context of the Ceremony for Cultural Diversity Ambassadors and the university environment this command no longer had any specifically "religious" frame. Thirdly, though, there was, to use a Jewish term, a distinctly messianic flavour, that this was a key to a greater future peace, a peace that was a great reconciliation of living communities, a banquet or feast of all that was possible, the result of all the past times and their creative efforts that had flowed into the multiplicity of the world's cultures, all of which could be tapped to enrich the potential of all members. The idea of the fusion of the world's cultures

[16] That God had commanded his people to love Him and their neighbor in Deut. 6: 5, 11:22, 13: 3, Lev., 19:18, and Josh., 22: 5.

is not new, and it is not only the bedrock of much twentieth century anthropology, but of Herder's eighteenth century romantic vision of a harmony of diverse and vibrant cultures, an organic creation that is driven by the overflow of achievements which come from the collective pooling of energies over time.

It could be argued that there is something very naïve in all this, that cultures are built on blood and bone and suffering and contestation. The Marxist reading of history had no sentiment for culture, for example—the ruling classes perverted human possibilities wherever they existed and as Marx said in his Preface to a *Contribution to Political Economy* real human history began only when the prehistory of class struggle ended. And while the Enlightenment included figures like Diderot and Montesquieu who were deeply attracted to the exotica of other peoples, Herder's critique of it was pretty much the romantic critique generally: that its principles of generality and rationality left little scope for appreciating cultural diversity. In the cases of Marxism and the Enlightenment this lack of valuation of culture came from a revolutionary impetus driven by the deep divisions and pathologies within European culture itself. But the ideology has not survived –outside of academe and the rather hollow symbolic order in a communist state driven by economic growth and private enterprise. How a people still relate in a living way to a religious code that exists in centuries passed is something alien to most people (outside the ever decreasing number of Christian Church goers themselves and the odd intellectual) with a Christian/ secular ancestry. And even to Christians the fact remains their code is not that of Others, and it is pure folly (unconscious arrogance perhaps) to assume they are the same. People unconsciously *repeat* ancestry—it is embedded in their history, their laws, their monuments, their institutions, their art works, their daily speech. An interesting example of this was brought home to me when the Turkish Consul, who was speaking to a class of mine in Hong Kong referred to the EU as "a Christian club." He did not elaborate on the phrase, and it seemed that the reason he did not elaborate was that it seemed obvious. Even though, Europeans themselves often do not see themselves as particularly Christian. Moreover only a few years ago discussions had been taking place with the European Union about the intended EU constitution, and the idea floated by some—Poland who was on the verge of joining strongly supported it—that there should be reference to Europe's Christian heritage. The motion was soundly defeated. And in 2006, before the EU constitution had been entirely abandoned, when Germany's Angela Merkel called for a future EU constitution to put "Christian values" at the heart of the constitution she

was widely condemned by MEPs.[17] These MPs had argued that the modern secular state with all its freedoms and liberties was a humanist invention, a reaction to the Church rather than its continuation.

Conclusion

From what I have said already it should be clear that my position is that Merkel and her critics were both right. And I would like to draw my Introduction to a conclusion by bringing in the central concept of this volume, love. I may have alarmed or surprised the reader by saying so little about it. But there has been a reason for this. I have dwelled upon why volumes such as this about religion are necessary today in a secular state. I have suggested that the failure of the Church particularly in France and I should also add in Russia as well where the Church had remained truer than Rome to its original formation has been fateful for the entire world. Although my Introduction has focused upon the French revolution and the mindset that made it so pivotal to modern nationalism and secularism, throughout I have referred to the various revolutions of Europe. I have drawn upon ideas of the largely unknown theorist of revolution and sociologist Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy who argued painstakingly, in my view, that what he calls the total revolutions of the West—in reverse order—from the Russian, French, English, German (Reformation) and Italian (Renaissance) have their original template in the papal revolution where Gregory VII sought to completely rejuvenate a Church that had become thoroughly corrupt by eliminating the right of the Emperor to appoint bishops and by demanding that clergy remain celibate—the point of which (long forgotten by the time of the Reformers) was to prevent the usurpation of communal Church land falling into the hands of political families wanting to increase their own and their Emperor's wealth. In rhetorical extension and in terms of its aims, the revolution was total—its appeal to heaven was intended to change the way all would live thereafter. Rosenstock-Huessy had argued that of the national revolutions this was their real success—that each one had created something that spread beyond its own borders, even though its internal national crises had given birth to a new nation, and ultimately a new Europe and even a new world.

[17] See Merkel resurrects 'holy' EU constitution row By Bruno Waterfield - 29th August 2006 in *The Parliament.com*
http://www.theparliament.com/no_cache/latestnews/news-article/newsarticle/merkel-resurrects-holy-eu-constitution-row/ Accessed October 12, 2009.