

PROGRAM

Thursday 20 October 2022 - Preliminary Session (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Afternoon

14u00-14u40

François Finck (Centre d'Action Laïque)

Laïcité: on the evolutions of a polysemic concept

Evren Altinkas (University of Guelph)

Secularism in Turkey: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his secular reforms

Discussion 14u40-15u00

Break 15u00-15u15

15u15-16u15

Adam Mohamed Farhi (Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

The Non-Religious Movement in the MENA Region: Forming Regional and International Connections Against Lifeworld Colonization

Adelina Aredondo (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelo)

Laic education as a pillar in the construction of the laic state in Mexico On the Rise of a Secular State in Mexico

Pascal Tanner (Université de Lausanne)

Transformation of collective identity within organized secularism in Switzerland

Discussion 16u15-16u30

Friday 21 October 2022 (Palace of the Academies)

Morning

Welcome 9u15-9u30

Rector of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Keynote 1 9u30-10u00

Carolin Kosuch (Georg August University Göttingen)

Clashes, Competition, and Common Goals: Italian Secularisms and the Liberal State

Discussion 10u00-10u15

10u15-10u55

Adelaide Madera (University of Messina)

Atheism in the judicial discourse: a comparative analysis between the US and the Italian constitutional scenario

Silvia Baldassarre, Rossella Bottoni, Cristina Cianitto, Ilaria Valenzi (multiple universities)

The respect for and the promotion of belief organizations' rights in the EU space: results from the Atlas project

Discussion 10u55-11u15

Break 11u15-11u30

11u30-12u10

Leo Igwe (University of Cape Town)

Sexuality Beyond Belief: Non religiosity and Same sex relationships in Ghana

Joseph Blankholm (University of California at Santa Barbara)

The Burden of Nonreligious Freedom on Secular Women in the United States

Discussion 12u10-12u30

Lunch 12u30-14u00

Afternoon

Keynote 2 14u00-14u30

Jeffrey Tyssens (SSAB-VUB)

The Atheist and the Court. The Failed Secularisation of the Judicial Oath in 19th-Century Belgium

Discussion 14u30-14u45

14u45-15u25

Niels De Nutte (SSAB-VUB)

Accommodationism as a battlefield: the recognition and subvention of local secular humanist chapters in Belgium in the 1970s

Ellen Van Impe & Rik Röttger (CAVA/SSAB-VUB)

A History of Ambiguity. The Dutch languagenon-confessional community in Belgium and the state (1971-2002)

Discussion 15u25-15u45

Break 15u45-16u00

16u00-17u00

Jean-François Husson (Université de Liège)

Le financement des organisations laïques

Vincent Genin (EPHE, PSL-GSRL)

L'assistance morale et religieuse en Belgique francophone depuis les années 1970. La quête de reconnaissance du « pilier laïque »

Anne Lancien (Science Po Paris - IEP)

La Ligue de l'enseignement et l'Etat français : entre influences et dissonances, de 1950 à nos jours

Discussion 17u00-17u20

Drink 17u30-19u00

Diner for speakers 20u00

Saturday 22 October 2022 (Palace of the Academies)

Morning

Keynote 3 9u30-10u00

David Nash (Oxford Brookes University)

Duelling with the Devil you know. Secularism in Victorian England and its relationship to the state

Discussion 10u00-10u15

10u15-10u55

Johannes Gleixner (Collegium Carolinum München)

An atheist wall of separation? The Soviet state, the League of the Militant Godless and the complicated border between the political and the non-religious sphere

Katharina Neef (Universität Leipzig)

Socialist Secularism? The public presence of secularism and the absence of freethought in the GDR

Discussion 10u55-11u15

Break 11u15-11u30

11u30-12u10

Eva Guigo-Patzelt (Paris-Sorbonne)

L'association des libres penseurs (1988-1991) et le système politique est-allemand, vus par les chercheurs en athéisme scientifique

Stefan Schröder (University of Bayreuth)

Organized Non-religion and the state in 21st-century Germany: Religion-related incorporation and inner conflicts

Discussion 12u10-12u30

Lunch 12u30-14u00

Afternoon

Keynote 4 14u00-14u30

Stacey Gutkowski (King's College London)

State (non) secularism and the religiously doubtful in the Middle East

Discussion 14u30-14u45

14u45-15u25

Sofia Nikitaki (KULeuven)

Nonreligious Perceptions of Church-State Relationships in the EU: A Cross-cultural Qualitative Study in Belgium, Greece and Norway

Alain Vannieuwenburg (CAVA - independant)

Luxembourg: une séparation à l'amiable

Discussion 15u25-15u45

Break 15u45-16u00

16u00-17u00

Sabrina Testa (CNRS- EPHE)

Le prix de l'existence : l'incroyance organisée face à l'État au Brésil

Alejandro Ortiz Cirilo (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional)

Argentina, Brasil y México: La disyuntiva entre educación laica o la enseñanza religiosa en las escuelas públicas

Abraham Hawley-Suárez (University of California at Santa Barbara)

Do Mexicans Want a Secular State? Taxonomy of Attitudes towards Secularity in Four Groups of Religious Affiliation

Discussion 17u00-17u15

Concluding remarks SSAB-chair 17u15-17u30

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Secularism in Turkey: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his Secular Reforms

Evren Altinkas (University of Guelph)

‡

The first 10 years of the modern Turkish Republic is not a widely covered field in the history of secularism. After the end of WW I, Ottoman State was occupied by the Allies following the Mudros Armistice. Turkish Nationalists, under the leadership of a military officer, Mustafa Kemal (later known as Atatürk) have started a resistance movement against the occupiers. This resistance lasted for 3 years and in 1923, modern Republic of Turkey was established. The leader of this new Republic, Mustafa Kemal, was a secular and the reforms carried out under his guidance in the first decade of the country were noticeable examples of secularism, given the fact that the majority of the citizens were devoted Muslims. In this paper, I will show some examples of such reforms, e.g. the abolition of religious courts and schools (1924) and the adoption of a purely secular system of family law; the substitution of the Latin alphabet for the Arabic in writing Turkish; adoption (1925) of the Gregorian calendar; abolition of the caliphate; the elimination of the dervish (Sufi) orders among others. Following the ideas of late Ottoman positivist intellectuals and inspired by the European revolutionaries, the young Turkish Republic was transformed from a primitive, backwards and conservative society into a positivist and progressive one. I will use the books printed and circulated by the Turkish Ministry of Education in early 1930s and their perception of the History of Islam and other religions, all of which considered as social movements. The transformation from a religious society and government into a secular administration will be indicated.

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Laic Education as a Pillar in the Construction of the Laic State in Mexico

Adelina Aredondo (Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelo)

‡

The purpose of my paper is to explain how, immersed in a process of secularization of the Mexican State (instituted in 1821), laic education was established from 1861 as a regimen for governing public education. At the beginning this meant just a lack of religious teaching in the public schools of the capital and federal territories of Mexico. But gradually that government regimen was taking a full shape that was encompassing increasingly broader spaces, in terms of geography, jurisdiction, sectors. The laic regime was ruling educational objectives, curriculum, actors, educational levels, architectural places, classrooms symbols, clothing, financing. Furthermore, the laic regime went beyond the public sphere to include private schools (1917) and the training of workers and peasants (1946). The particularity of Mexico's journey lies on the fact that the educational laicism has remained in force without interruption in the public sector throughout the whole country since 1874. How has the establishment of the laic school been possible in a nation of Catholics? In a deeply religious bouquet of cultures? In my paper I will explain how a formal regime already represents a social construction resulting from power relationships and is not only a legal discourse. The laic regime is a historical product, which emerged from social conditions that made possible the government of education. But also, that regime ordered, assigned, directed, organized and facilitated social

conditions in fields that are not strictly legal or political. An obligatory part of my exposition is to discuss on the definition of terms like secularization, laicization, secular education and laic education, which leads to review the different meanings conferred in Latin and Anglo-Saxon languages and contexts. I hold that laic education should not be translated as secular education, because as historical and legal constructions they are not the same.

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The respect for and the promotion of belief organizations' rights in the EU space: results from the Atlas project

Silvia Baldassarre, Rossella Bottoni, Cristina Cianitto, Ilaria Valenzi (Diverse universities)

‡

Despite the progressive increase of non-believers, their legal status in many countries of the European Union is not yet equated with that of believers. In many of them, there is a gap between the rights guaranteed by the legal system and their effective implementation. In this perspective the proposal aims to investigate, on a comparative basis, the legal status of belief organizations (associations or groups of freethinkers, rationalists, secularists, humanists, atheists, agnostics, indifferentists) in 12 European Union countries: Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and Sweden. The analysis concerns in particular four political areas (education, symbols, spiritual assistance, juridical status), in which the condition of non-believers is particularly disadvantaged. The data examined are based on the Italian research project "Atlas of Religious or Belief Minority Rights" directed by Silvio Ferrari, aiming at mapping and measuring the rights of religious or belief minorities in the EU countries. In the four areas, belief organizations follow a negative trend. For example, as regards the right to receive spiritual assistance, in the twelve countries there is a confessional assistance service organized or financed in some way by the State and celebrated by a chaplain; non-believers do not have this right, except in Belgium. Some solutions have been found on a practical level: even in the absence of an explicit right, in some countries, belief organizations can respond to requests for visits by invoking rules other than those that apply to religious organizations (for example, visits in quality as a representative of social organizations). In Italy the UAAR (Union of Atheists and Agnostics Rationalists) have entered into agreements with hospitals in Rome, Florence, Milan and Turin, to allow volunteers to provide non-confessional moral assistance. The proposal and the project assume that the respect and promotion of the rights of minorities – and in particular of belief organizations – are not the same thing: the former means that rights that every democracy has to guarantee under international standards of human rights protection are not violated; the latter refers to the minorities' actual and active participation in the social, cultural and political life of the country where they live, including decision-making processes concerning issues of interest to them. In today's democratic, plural, globalized and secularized societies, it is urgent to address the needs and rights of non-believers, who represent a large part of the world population (20% Religions and Secularism Observatory-ORELA, 2018); it is also necessary to set up new scientific research activities focused on today's forms of unbelief (very different from the past), its request for protection and legal recognition. In this sense the proposal aims to offer points of reflection, highlight the gaps in the legal systems and the need to develop suitable operational strategies to ensure substantial equality of rights.

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The Burden of Nonreligious Freedom on Secular Women in the United States

Joseph Blankholm (University of California at Santa Barbara)

‡

This paper analyzes how Christian influence on American civil society and secular anxieties about religion combine to create a unique burden for secular women in the United States. Despite their differences, American non-profits, religious and secular, and for-profit corporations resemble one another a great deal. This is because American civil society grows in part from Protestant churches and other religious bodies; like many other aspects of American life, it bears the imprint of Protestant norms. This latent and overt Christianity shapes the lives of secular Americans deeply because they reject anything that seems too religious. Compared with much of Europe, secular people in the United States have less institutional presence and little government support. Secular Americans organize into small non-profits if they organize at all. There are few secular ritual experts—secular clergy—who can perform basic life-cycle rituals like weddings and memorial services. Because women bear more responsibility for domestic life in the United States, secular women bear the burden of this absence disproportionately. This paper relies on several years of ethnographic research and the largest survey of American organized nonbelievers ever conducted (n=12,370), to shed light on American secular women's unique burden.

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Accommodationism as a battlefield: the recognition and subvention of local secular humanist chapters in Belgium in the 1970s

Niels De Nutte (Vrije Universiteit Brussel – SSAB)

‡

In the spectrum of multiple secularisms, the Belgian case provides a relatively unique example where the non-religious are concerned. *Vrijzinnigheid/laïcité*, the typically Belgian version of secular humanism, has been recognised by the state as a non-religious worldview since the end of the 20th century. This situation is the result of an active campaign for what was seen by a part of the postwar secular humanist sphere as advocacy for treatment on equal grounds with recognised religions. This advocacy marked a departure from the preference for a strict church-state separation that identified prewar freethinkers and was inspired for a large part by accommodationist tendencies within secular humanist organisations. In this paper, we will shed light on some municipalities in which seculars successfully negotiated a recognition in some form or another by the late 1970s. We look at local chapters of one of the largest secular humanist organisations of that time, the Flemish Humanistisch Vervond. Following the organisations' recognition as a socio-cultural organisation by the Flemish government in 1975, the highest levels of HV found their funding insufficient to cover all the expenses of their local operations. It thus urged local chapters to find alternative means of funding. By 1979, chapters in Hoboken, Berchem, Boom, Ekeren, Antwerp, Leuven, Ostend, Ghent and Blankenberge

reported having successfully acquired a variety of support from their municipal governments. These most likely included annual subsidies as a socio-cultural or worldview organisation, the funding of secular equivalents to clergy and free usage of a base of operations. The local developments predate any recognition at the national level and were successful within a decade of the emergence of equal treatment advocacy at a national level in 1970. As the cases can all be considered as local battlefields, this research provides some insights into how seculars can successfully gain a place in the public sphere. Given the localities of these successful cases, we expect the presence and possible interplay of either conflictual or marketplace developments in the construction of the factual recognitions of HV chapters to be of particular importance. As such, this paper will contribute to current secularisation debates from the angle of the non-religious.

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The Non-Religious Movement in the MENA Region: Forming Regional and International Connections Against Lifeworld Colonization

Adam Mohamed Farhi (Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

‡

A survey conducted by the Arab Barometer in 2018-2019 found that in the MENA region, 18% of young people under 30 identify as not religious, with an increase from 8% to 13% since 2013 in the general population. ¹ This Arab non-religious minority has attracted little academic attention compared to non-religious people from other ethnic backgrounds. Contributing to this research gap, this ethnography, wearing the theoretical lens of Habermas's Communicative Action Theory, examines how Muslim-majority MENA states engage in international efforts to sustain monopoly over the religious identity and how the MENA non-religious movement resists such efforts. The study used multi-sited ethnography (traditional and online) inspired by Burawoy's extended case method, which forges micromacro connections. Online data was collected from observing and interacting with non-religious people in multinational Arab online communities for around 12 months; offline data was collected through in-person observation of relevant social events first in Morocco and then in Norway, all supplemented with data from relevant documents. The study results show that Muslim-majority MENA states mobilize their sub-systems of money and power to sustain the lifeworld colonization of their populations, restricting public deliberation over the validity claims constituting the state-policed religious identity, an aim that is internationally pursued mainly under the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The MENA non-religious movement forms regional and international connections, as do their states, to resist such lifeworld colonization, however challenging such aim remains, first by connecting with other MENA like-minded non-religious people mainly online, and second by connecting with international like-minded non-religious people and organizations. They attempt to bypass their policed national public spheres and secure a presence in the global public sphere with their alternative validity claims to truth and rightness.

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Laïcité: on the evolutions of a polysemic concept

François Finck (Centre d'Action Laïque)

‡

The meaning of laïcité is still hotly debated in France itself, and its significations vary as it crosses the border with Belgium. In this paper, I will first analyse the variations of the way this notion is understood in France and Belgium, and what this tells us about the strategies chosen by secularist actors. More crucially, I will focus on some recent evolutions, in both countries, that leads to ask whether Belgian laïcité is becoming more French or is the other way around? How is the meaning of this notion evolving? To answer these questions, I will draw on recent research on the origins and evolution of secularism in both countries, and focus on the analysis of recent developments in politics and law signalling further changes in its meanings. In France, from the Revolution to the Third Republic, secularism was divided by tensions between liberal-leaning “separationists” and more radical politicians who aimed to eradicate religions, or at least strictly control them – in particular the Catholic Church. This tension is best illustrated by the competing proposals of Aristide Briand and Émile Combes in 1905, which ended with the adoption of the law of separation of Churches and State. Nevertheless, even liberal separation was made possible only thanks to earlier secularisation of schools in the 1880s. This makes it very difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the liberal separation of Church and State and the project to secularise society, especially through education. Formal separation came after the political and social influence of Church had been reduced.

In contemporary France, the mainstream legal-political understanding is one of separation, and its corollary, the strict neutrality of public authorities. It relies on a clear distinction between public authorities, the public sphere, and the private sphere. However, a recent legal case concerning the neutrality of a private kindergarten’s employees may announce a widening of laïcité’s scope to encompass philosophical convictions, closer to the Belgian approach. In the French-speaking part of Belgium, the laïcité organisée represents non-believers, atheists, rationalists, but also secularists identifying as members of a faith group (ex: secular-Jewish CCLJ, secular-Muslim Laïcité Yallah). It is a set of non-religious convictions, recognised by the State, with a legal status similar to those of recognised religions. Belgian State neutrality is thus very different from French-style laïcité. However, political initiatives have been made to officially proclaim the State’s secularism. This clear departure from the current statu quo and illustrates the influence of French debates. Both French and Belgian secularisms are evolving and give new content to this notion. Recent trends seem to point towards convergences of both approaches, at the same time further illustrating the polysemy of laïcité.

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L’assistance morale et religieuse en Belgique francophone depuis les années 1970. La quête de reconnaissance du « pilier laïque ».

Vincent Genin (EPHE – PSL - GSRL)

‡

Si l’histoire de la laïcisation politique et institutionnelle de la Belgique dispose d’une littérature importante, celle de la place occupée par le champ hospitalier dans ce processus demeure encore mal connue des chercheurs, en particulier pour les XX^e et XXI^e

siècles. Depuis le début des années 1970, l'assistance morale et religieuse est prévue dans le secteur hospitalier (public ou confessionnel) en vertu de circulaires ministérielles. Et depuis la révision constitutionnelle de 1993 et une loi de 2002, cette assistance est « reconnue » par l'État, c'est-à-dire, du moins théoriquement, financée. Cependant, entre les textes et leur application, il y a une marge, elle-même complexifiée par la marqueterie institutionnelle que représente la Belgique. Nous proposons de retracer l'histoire de ce secteur à la fois quotidien et ordinaire de la vie de chaque citoyenne et de chaque citoyen, mais aussi intime et peu médiatisé. Cette enquête d'histoire récente sera enrichie d'une étude de terrain (sur Liège et Bruxelles, au sein des Centres d'Action Laïque mais aussi de plusieurs hôpitaux, publics ou non). Nous mettrons l'accent sur le rôle joué par le Service Laïque d'Aide aux Personnes et interrogerons plusieurs lignes de tension actuelles :

- L'intégration du droit à l'assistance à la loi sur le droit des patients, aux droits fondamentaux et l'assimilation de l'assistance à un soin
- La discrimination de traitements perçus selon la conviction reconnue pratiquant cette assistance, dans un régime où l'Église catholique dispose de moyens humains et financiers sans commune mesure.
- La formation des infirmiers et des infirmières dans l'hôpital public et la question de la neutralité de ceux-ci à l'égard des patients (catholiques, évangéliques, musulmans, juifs, etc.).
- La volonté d'uniformisation des structures d'assistance spirituelle (catholique, protestante (réformée, luthérienne), anglicane, juive, musulmane, laïque, bouddhiste).
- La cohabitation entre liberté du patient, liberté religieuse, éthique médicale et « conseillers » religieux et moraux.

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An atheist wall of separation? The Soviet state, the League of the Militant Godless and the complicated border between the political and the non-religious sphere

Johannes Gleixner (Collegium Carolinum München)

‡

The godless movement of the Soviet Union is often considered a textbook example of state sponsored atheism, sometimes even a symbol of the Soviet experiment in general. Although it emerged comparatively late in the European context as an organization, it was more than any other atheist or freethought movement backed by a state apparatus and its official ideology. However, the *Soiuz voinstvuiuščich bezbožnikov* (League of the militant godless, SVB), as the unified organization of Soviet atheists was officially called from 1926 on, has long posed difficulties for researchers, since it constitutes the core of early pre-war Soviet atheism, but at the same time cannot be taken as representative of the religious policy of the Soviet state, even if key actors were often identical. Upon closer examination, it is especially striking how the atheist state behaved towards this organization, supposedly constituting a pillar of revolutionary culture and Soviet society: The hostility against religion and especially the Orthodox Church did not add up to outright support for an antireligious movement. Even more, key atheist activists were neither able to reach the upper echelons of the Bolshevik party nor could they amass any

political power on their own. In my talk I would like to show that this was due to two reasons:

1. At its core, the Bolsheviks enacted a surprisingly ordinary religious policy that drew mostly from the liberal legal ideas of the 19th century, albeit with highly increased violence. This put the revolutionary state in a difficult position of being at the same time a legal arbiter of the religious field and – due to its proclaimed atheism and the aforementioned personal overlap of actors – an active participant in the struggle for revolutionary atheist culture.

2. The atheist movement itself was never able provide a precise definition of a state atheism that could distance itself far enough from religious meaning. This especially striking if one looks at the public and internal debates on religion in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, the contents of Soviet atheism were always contested and never a stable source for a secular ideology.

In the end, the Soviet state enacted an “atheist wall of separation” that successfully separated the religious and the political sphere but at the same time robbed the atheist secular ideology of its source, as the state in effect distanced itself from the godless movement as well. On the other hand, this successful “atheist” management and compartmentalization of the religious sphere can be considered the hallmark of a specific Soviet secularity.

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L’association des libres penseurs (1988-1991) et le système politique est-allemand, vus par les chercheurs en athéisme scientifique

Eva Guigo-Patzelt (Paris-Sorbonne)

‡

Annoncée fin 1988, créée en juin 1989 et disparue en 1991, l’association des libres penseurs (Verband der Freidenker, VdF) était une des dernières initiatives – voire la « dernière offensive » idéologique (Groschopp/Müller, 2013) – du parti communiste est-allemand. Sa courte existence fait néanmoins l’objet de désaccords profonds dans une historiographie nourrie par d’anciens acteurs (notamment H. Groschopp) et traversée par les tensions inhérentes au « monde pluriel des sans-confession » (die plurale Welt der Konfessionslosen, A. Fincke) de l’Allemagne réunifiée. Les raisons qui ont présidé à la création d’une association destinée à devenir une organisation de masse, et les objectifs poursuivis – par le Bureau Politique, par la Stasi, par la VdF elle-même – ont suscité bien des hypothèses. La communication propose de déplacer le regard et d’éclairer l’histoire de cette association par la stratégie d’un groupe d’universitaires actifs en son sein, et qui ont tenté d’occuper le terrain tant dans la définition de son profil que dans le discours médiatique. Il s’agit des spécialistes est-allemands des phénomènes religieux regroupés dans la discipline universitaire « athéisme scientifique ». Les nombreuses archives inédites, dont des fonds privés, dépouillées dans le cadre d’une thèse soutenue en Sorbonne en décembre 2021 permettent de reconstruire les débats vifs suscités dans ce groupe et finalement une stratégie visant à imposer une orientation particulière à l’association des libres penseurs. Des enseignants-chercheurs d’athéisme scientifique ont ainsi travaillé à y barrer la route à des « athées militants » (militante Atheisten), et à lui conférer davantage un contenu positif d’« aide à la vie » (Lebenshilfe), voire à en faire un acteur du dialogue avec leurs concitoyens chrétiens. Ces derniers les ont interpellés notamment sur le statut juridique d’une association taxée d’« ‘Église’ athée » (atheistische

« Kirche ») ou d'une « libre pensée d'État » (Staatsfreidenkertum) financée par l'État est-allemand. Les chercheurs d'athéisme scientifique ont ainsi été amenés à analyser ce que la VdF a fait au système politique est-allemand, si elle a porté atteinte ou non à la séparation de l'État et de l'Église qui leur était chère, et à l'idée selon laquelle la RDA n'était pas un « État athée ».

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State (non) secularism and the religiously doubtful in the Middle East

Stacey Gutkowski (King's College London)

‡

Over the past decade, there have been renewed calls for various forms of political secularism in the Middle East. This is part of a response to forty years of religiously-tinged political idioms such as Islamism gaining ground in the region. New elite projects and popular effervescence for minimizing influence of religion over political life both recalls the heyday of secular projects in the region (1950s and 1960s) while also proposing new models for politics which incorporate religious idioms. Such new claims take different forms across the Arab world, Turkey, Iran and Israel. This paper first compares the main trends regarding secularism in the Middle East before situating lived non-religion in these state contexts. What have these political trends meant for the religiously doubtful, those who take an ambivalent position towards the religious social orthodoxies in their societies? Looking at but also beyond “organized non-religion”, this paper attends to how everyday doubt is shaped by and shapes new, state-level projects. It concludes by arguing that examining the complex views of those who live doubtfully and ambiguously towards religion sheds light on the evolution of democratization, secularism and the evolution of liberal values in the Middle East.

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Do Mexicans Want a Secular State? Taxonomy of Attitudes towards Secularity in Four Groups of Religious Affiliation

Abraham Hawley-Suárez (University of California at Santa Barbara)

‡

Mexican secularity (laicidad) stands out because of its anticlerical origin as well as its tendency of vigilance and control of religious expressions' social effects. However, among Mexicans, there are still high rates of religious affiliation. Considering such circumstances, in this work, I problematize to which extent Mexicans agree with the type of secularity that underlies their public institutions. Based on multivariate analysis techniques and data from a national survey (ENCREER/RIFREM 2016), I classify the attitudes towards secularity in Mexican society and break them down into four groups of religious affiliation: Catholics, Protestant/Evangelical, Biblical and Non-religious. I propose that, among the study subjects, there are four typical attitudes towards Mexican secularity: 1) partial or strategic support—in which Evangelical and Biblical groups predominate—; 2) systematic weakening of secularity—where there is a clear Catholic majority—; 3) approaching ultraliberalism and moving away from jurisdictionalism—where Catholics also stand out—, and 4) more robust support for Mexican secularity—where

Nonreligious people and religious minorities play an important role—. Most of the sample was located in the cluster that most rejected Mexican secularism (48%), while only 7% was in the subset that most supports this type of regime. By framing the analysis in the theoretical discussions about post-secular societies and the postcolonial critiques of the secularization paradigm, I state that these results suggest inquiry paths about how Mexicans, beyond official definitions, could be redefining the limits about what is public and what is private, what is secular and what is religious.

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Le financement des organisations laïques

Jean-François Husson (Université de Liège)

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Contenu

La contribution proposerait un relevé des modes de financement des organisations laïques (subsidés publics au titre d'organisations philosophiques, subsidés publics dans le cadre d'autres politiques, incitants fiscaux, ...) dans plusieurs pays européens (a priori Belgique, France, Grande-Bretagne, Allemagne) et, à partir de là, analyserait :

- les différences et convergences entre pays et les raisons de celles-ci ;
- les différences et convergences en matière de financement entre les organisations laïques/humanistes et les cultes et les raisons de celles-ci ;
- ce que les modes de financement et ces deux approches comparatives apportent comme éclairage sur la perception du rôle de ces organisations laïques/humanistes par les pouvoirs publics.

Cadre théorique

- Instrumentation de l'action publique (Lascoumes et Le Galès) et instruments budgétaires et fiscaux (Bezes et Siné)
- Approche comparative

...

Between Adam and Eve Or Consenting Steves/Eves: Religious Versus Non-Religious Public Definitions Marriage in Ghana

Leo Igwe (University of Cape Town)

‡

Existing debate has overwhelmingly stressed the role of religion in the definition and conceptualization of marriage. Scholars have noted the enormous influence of religious doctrines on forms and categories of marriage including how faith has shaped child, homosexual and heterosexual marriage practices (Amadiume 1997; Sweet 2003; Falen 2008; Gemignani & Wodon 2015). Little attention has been paid to the non religious definitions and conceptualizations. The fact that religious ideas about gay marriage have elicited responses from the non religious community has largely been ignored. Atheists, agnostics or humanists as the irreligious are variously described have been vocal and outspoken in criticizing the definition of marriage by churches, mosques and other religious bodies. Using the data from the Humanist Association of Ghana and the concept

of deprivatization of disbelief, this article shows that religious bodies do not have a monopoly of definition of marriage relationships. Humanists in Ghana have challenged the religious frame and understanding of marriage. The paper argues that such open and public expressions by atheists and agnostics attest to a shifting notion and a plurality of perceptions and definitions of marriage in Ghana.

...

Clashes, Competition, and Common Goals: Italian Secularisms and the Liberal State

Carolyn Kosuch (Georg August University Göttingen)

‡

My contribution focuses on Italy in the second half of the 19th century, the Risorgimento, the period of nation-building, and in particular on the cultural struggles of this time. In the newly established Kingdom of Italy (1861), two major confessional parties emerged: on the one hand, the Catholic Church and modern Catholicism; on the other, a heterogeneous branch of organised secularism, namely freethinkers, freemasons, socialists, and anarchists. As elsewhere, cultural struggles in Italy did not follow fixed lines. Rather, anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism collided with anti-materialism and anti-modernism in the liberal state in constantly changing constellations. I will first examine the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Italian state in the 19th century and then discuss confessional conflicts and alliances in the liberal state. In doing so, I will concentrate on the secularist practice of cremation, which was a crucial weapon in the Italian culture war, employed not only by secularists but also adopted by the liberal state to markedly differentiate from Catholic positions. I argue that the liberal state was a party in the confessional-political field of the time that pursued secularising policies without openly advocating a secularist worldview. Attempting to find a standing in the modern state and modernity, even some Jewish rabbis accepted secularist practices such as cremation, demonstrating through cremation their positive attitude towards the liberal state, its secularising policies and national unification. After all, it seems that secularist elements have resonated on the ground of the liberal state in many parts of the confessional and political field, raising questions about competitions, interconnections, and the multiplicity of secularisms.

...

La Ligue de l'enseignement et l'Etat français : entre influences et dissonances, de 1950 à nos jours

Anne Lancien (Science Po Paris - IEP)

‡

Cette communication porterait sur les rapports évolutifs entre la Ligue de l'enseignement et l'Etat français de la fin des années 1950 à nos jours, au regard des politiques éducatives et de la laïcité qu'elle défend. Plusieurs temps sont à considérer : du début de la Ve République aux années 1990, l'association ne parvient pas à impacter les politiques éducatives et laïques du gouvernement, qui confirme l'existence d'un enseignement privé, contraire au projet d'un service public laïque et unifié de l'éducation nationale défendu

par la Ligue. Une rupture s'amorce à partir de la fin des années 1980/début des années 1990. La Ligue réforme son socle axiologique, revoit sa stratégie militante et parvient à influencer sur les politiques gouvernementales. Les travaux qu'elle mène sur l'islam, notamment, en sont une illustration. Cette influence est remise en cause lors d'une troisième période qui s'amorce au tournant du siècle et qui se confirme depuis. La relation partenariale qui liait la Ligue à l'Etat s'atténue progressivement, conséquence, entre autres, d'une contractualisation renforcée de leurs rapports ; l'influence de l'organisation sur les politiques étatiques devient toute relative, celle-ci peinant à repenser son idéal dans une société désormais sécularisée. Cette communication vise à mettre en lumière les stratégies adoptées par la Ligue de l'enseignement pour peser dans le débat public et tente d'analyser pourquoi celles-ci ont pu tantôt fonctionner, tantôt échouer. Le contexte joue sans nul doute, l'évolution des forces politiques également, mais des explications internes à l'organisation doivent également être considérées. Ce travail s'appuie sur des données quantitatives et qualitatives réunies lors d'un travail doctoral portant sur la Ligue de l'enseignement.

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Atheism in the judicial discourse: a comparative analysis between the US and the Italian constitutional scenario

Adelaide Madera (University of Messina)

†

In a recent paper, Erhan G. Quillen made the evaluable effort to reconstruct church-state relation in the US context in terms of "Atheist Exceptionalism." Indeed, for a long time Atheism has been perceived as a disliked minority in the U.S. scenario. The controversial question concerning the legal protection of Atheism has been the object of a harsh political and academic debate, culminating in fierce litigation and affecting the interpretation of the Religion Clauses. In Italy, since the 1990s, where the UAAR claimed its right to start negotiations to enter into an agreement with the State, Italian courts have faced the crucial issue of the legal definition of a religious denomination, as a preliminary requirement to have access to an agreement. In a recent judgement the Constitutional Court held that the Government enjoys broad political discretion with regard to the decision to start negotiations grounded on article 8.3 of our Constitution with religious communities and courts cannot second-guess such a political choice. The key question is whether the decision is consistent with the Italian Constitutional framework as a whole and with article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The present aims to analyze, in a comparative perspective, atheist claims in order to assess whether and to what extent they promoted an evolutive interpretation of the meaning of religion in constitutional language and increased the visibility of Atheism in the public space.

...

Duelling with the Devil you know. Secularism in Victorian England and its relationship to the state

David Nash (Oxford Brookes University)

‡

This paper investigates the ambivalent relationship that 19th century Secularists had with the idea and reality of the state as it came to be conceived during the course of the nineteenth century. During the initial periods of that century the state could easily be constructed as an evil which supported established religion at the expense of freethinkers and freedom of thought. However by the end of the century the state was an ambivalent presence in Secularist ideals and rhetoric. Much of this sprang from English Secularism's attachment to Liberalism. Bradlaugh had quickly removed himself from the First International, thus had closing down a route by which this branch of radicalism might later associate itself with the Labour movement and Socialism. As a result several provincial secularists identified themselves with libertarian liberal individualism that echoed Herbert Spencer's fierce anti-statism. Such attitudes also sprang from autodidact attitudes which distrusted compulsion in the tackling of social and moral ills. Yet individuals like Bradlaugh saw the state's power and possibilities in an agenda of 'enabling' progress that would sweep away vested interests and privileges through gradualism. A wholesale overthrow of the state's established religion may once have been contemplated but by the end of the century Victorian Secularism increasingly realised the state was an ally in the construction of progressive agendas. Such a situation has been aided by the gradual retreat of Christianity in Britain, rather than wholesale breaks with its past. In part this gradual species of change explains Bradlaugh's divergence into wider domestic and imperial politics as well as his reverence for the English legal system, and his distrust of continental style breaks with the past and leaps forward into possible political darkness. Perhaps this ambivalence explains British Secularism's surprising distance from forms of socialism and socialist culture which was important in other European countries by the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, those who tried to pull British Secularism in that direction (such as F.J. Gould) found their task an ultimately unsuccessful one. The relationship between modern Secularism/Humanism has never been wholly successful or beneficial and thus differs greatly from other European experiences.

...

Socialist Secularism? The public presence of secularism and the absence of freethought in the GDR

Katharina Neef (Universität Leipzig)

‡

Imagining the non-religious in the socialist states of the 20th century triggers distinct narratives: laicism, ubiquitous critique of religions – and at the same time quasi-religious forms of public representation. These monolithic models have recently been challenged (Rommel/Bubik/Vaclavik 2020; Schuster/Vorpahl 2020): The connections between religions and (socialist) states were multifaceted and interconnected – and have to be explored in their concrete historical settings. The same is true for the research on non-

religious agents and institutions in these settings: While freethought condensed to a sub- and even countercultural habitus in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it needed to be readjusted to the conditions of secularist states. Thus, the 1950s mark a watershed, when German freethought had to take several decisions: whether to remain a subculture in the FRG or to become part of the mainstream culture in the GDR, whether to intensify in-group communication or to popularize and spread, whether to focus on the critique of religion or to develop scientific worldviews. Speaking for the GDR, this not only correlated with a shift in ways and means of public performance and impact, but it also meant adapting agendas and taking a political stance.

As a case of 'choices and frameworks', the GDR shows specific modes of positioning a secular stance in a secularizing societal context. The GDR freethought scene failed that challenge as it dispersed almost completely until the end of the 1980s.

...

Nonreligious Perceptions of Church-State Relationships in the EU: A Cross-cultural Qualitative Study in Belgium, Greece and Norway

Sofia Nikitaki (KULeuven)

†

This paper will present part of the results of an empirical, cross-cultural qualitative research taking place between 2018-2022 and containing 64 in-depth interviews with nonreligious individuals from Flanders (Belgium), Greece and Norway. Placing the focus on the participant views regarding church and state relations in their respective countries, this paper will present and discuss the opinions of the interviewees regarding their countries' majority churches, the church-state relations in their respective cultural contexts as well as their perceptions when it comes to the influence of the majority churches in the Belgian, Greek and Norwegian societies. The participants' insights regarding the relationship between church and state reveal some major differences between the three contexts; with the most noticeable contrast lying between the opinions of the Belgian and Norwegian interviewees on the one hand, and the opinions of the Greek participants on the other hand. To be more concrete, while the former deemed the majority churches of their countries as relatively invisible in society and political life, the latter described the Greek Orthodox church as an ever-present institution in both Greek society and in Greek politics. After presenting these different perceptions, this paper will elaborate on the manners that the power and influence of majority churches within a local context seem to be affecting the nonreligious population existing within that context.

...

Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico: The dilemma between secular education or religious education in public schools

Alejandro Ortiz Cirilo (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional)

†

In this paper, the lines of continuities and changes that followed the educational legislation of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico at the end of the 80' s and beginning of the 90' s of the 20th century will be analyzed. The dilemmas and debates that arose to define the educational policies that fluctuated between two explicit marked projects will be reviewed; on the one hand, a democratic secular education and, on the other hand, the

projects that sought to guarantee the diversity of religious beliefs inside public schools. It is suggested that, despite the growing secularization of contemporary societies, it is possible to examine, at the same time, a growing influence of religion in the public space that imposes specific challenges in the field of education. Based on the review of international treaties, a review of international legislation related to religious freedom and its interference in the national legislation of the countries studied will be carried out. The target of this work will be to carry out an analysis that allows comparing the changes that were generated in these three countries. Why compare the differences between secular education or religious education in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico? In these countries, they can locate processes of change that have certain similarities, each one with its own particularities, scenarios, and actors, but which confronted similar problems and processes of change that were shaping modern educational regimes. Despite this, from what point of view can changes be analyzed? To make the comparison of these three countries, an analytical operator called "educational secularism regime" will be used, which is made up of four fundamental elements, namely: the application space, the study plans and programs, the pedagogical objectives, and the educational agents who can intervene. From the use of this tool, it is possible to review what were the changes in educational legislation in the mid-90s and what have been the particularities in each country regarding other inherent problems such as federalism, nationalism, and confrontations with the Catholic Church for defining the type of education that should be taught at school.

...

Organized Non-religion and the state in 21st century Germany: Religion-related incorporation and inner conflicts

Stefan Schröder (University of Bayreuth)

†

Contemporary non-religious life-stance organizations in Germany like the German Humanist Association (Humanistische Verband Deutschlands) or the Humanist Federation (Humanistische Vereinigung) are legally recognized as corporations under public law. In their everyday practice, however, they still fight uphill battles for state approval and call for equal treatment with the Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian mainline churches, especially in the field of education: While the German Humanist Association demands the establishment of publically funded universities and professorships for Humanistik, the Humanist Federation claims for the admission of the confessional school subject Humanist Lebenskunde (which exists in Berlin and Brandenburg since 1984) in public schools in Bavaria. Building upon ethnographic fieldwork, this paper puts forward two consecutive arguments: First, it shall illustrate how religion-related official regulatory procedures, legal frameworks and jurisprudence govern the self-organization and practice of the abovementioned non-religious life-stance organizations in Germany. Second, it presents an analysis of inter-organizational debates and conflicts within the nonreligious scene in Germany that result from this state-organization constellation. Secularist associations like the Giordano Bruno Foundation (Giordano Bruno Stiftung) or the International Alliance of the Non-Affiliated and Atheists (Internationaler Bund der Konfessionslosen und Atheisten) that opt for a consequent separation of church and state, observe the pluralist policy of the German Humanist Association or the Humanist Federation with disconcertion. The question of how to relate

to legal resources and state regulations has caused a major friction in the organized secular sphere. Thus, the paper puts into question the existence of a united nonreligious or Humanist movement in Germany.

...

Transformation of collective identity within organized secularism in Switzerland

Pascal Tanner (Université de Lausanne)

‡

This article focuses on the more recent history of secularism in Switzerland. On the basis of rich individual data and with reference to the theoretical inventory of research on movements, it establishes an inside perspective on the field of organized secularism and on Freethought in particular. Freethought is the most important movement organization within this field. The emergence of the New Atheism is undoubtedly one of the most relevant events in the recent history of secularism. Taking this event as a starting point, this article describes how freethought has changed structurally and culturally. In doing so, it will become visible that there has been a substantial renewal of the membership base. Thanks to clever campaigning, many new members were mobilized. A more detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data shows that this wave of renewal has led to a structural and cultural shift. Newer members have different expectations of «their» organization and are involved in a somewhat differing social reality than older members. As a result, a realignment of what is described in movement research as «collective identity» is taking place. And this change has the quality of a shift towards political secularism, which at the same time entails an abandonment of communality and interpersonal exchanges.

Data

The empirical foundation of this analysis consists of several datasets and different types of data. Firstly, and in particular, individual data is analyzed that was gathered in a mixed methods approach in the field of organized secularism in the period between 2016 and 2017. On the one hand, this is quantitative survey data collected with the help of a questionnaire (n = 933) and, on the other hand, it is interview data from semi-standardized interviews (n = 51). Quantitative secondary data is also used selectively in order to contrast the profiles described within the movement or to embed them in a larger social context.

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Le prix de l'existence : l'incroyance organisée face à l'État au Brésil

Sabrina Testa (CNRS- EPHE)

‡

Le Brésil est largement connu pour sa diversité et sa vitalité religieuses. Le pays abrite non seulement la plus grande population catholique du monde, mais aussi un secteur évangélique en expansion - très bien articulé et exerçant une influence notable sur la politique, l'administration publique et la société en général - ainsi que diverses religions d'origine africaine et une myriade d'autres minorités qui résistent à toute classification.

Moins connue est l'émergence, au cours des années 2000, d'un mouvement autodésigné athée au Brésil. Il cherche à rassembler, de manière large, tous ceux qui osent affirmer leur incroyance par rapport aux vérités et aux institutions religieuses : athées, agnostiques, humanistes, libres penseurs, rationalistes, sceptiques, voire indifférents. S'adressant à un public minoritaire et animé par une minorité au sein de cette minorité, le mouvement athée brésilien n'est articulé que de manière lâche, sous forme de réseau, particulièrement sur internet et les réseaux sociaux. Cependant, malgré les difficultés évidentes à institutionnaliser et à générer des structures au-delà du cyberspace, il a donné naissance à deux organisations formellement constituées : l'Association Brésilienne des Athées et des Agnostiques (ATEA) et la Ligue Humaniste Séculière (LiHS). Bien que différentes dans leurs principes et leurs méthodes, les deux organisations poursuivent des objectifs similaires : combattre les préjugés qui pèsent sur les non-croyants et, surtout, défendre la laïcité de l'État, qu'elles comprennent selon un modèle séparatiste. C'est cette dernière cause qui, de facto, fait l'objet des efforts les plus soutenus et capte la plupart des maigres ressources dont ils disposent. C'est une enseigne qu'ils ont adoptée comme la leur et qu'ils considèrent, du moins ses dirigeants, comme cruciale pour l'existence sociale des non-croyants dans un contexte où la religion est omniprésente et souvent considérée comme un pilier central du lien social. Cet article propose d'analyser les stratégies d'action que ces organisations mettent en place pour défendre la laïcité de l'État et de réfléchir aux engagements et leurs conséquences sur le statut des non-croyants dans la sphère publique. En effet, la lutte pour la laïcité se divise en deux fronts : l'activisme juridique et la participation aux comités consultatifs interreligieux. Ces deux voies impliquent des instances d'échange avec l'État et obligent les associations laïques à se présenter formellement comme les représentants d'une minorité religieuse, afin de devenir des acteurs valables pour intervenir dans le débat. Nous soutenons ici que tant les stratégies d'action choisies par les associations athées que les conditions qu'elles rencontrent dans le système juridique brésilien constituent autant d'indicateurs des moyens et possibilités pour les noncroyants d'exister dans la sphère et l'espace publics du Brésil.

...

The Atheist and the Court. The Failed Secularisation of the Judicial Oath in 19th-Century Belgium

Jeffrey Tyssens (Vrije Universiteit Brussel – SSAB)

‡

The refusal to take an oath with a religious formula (whether in court or as an oath of allegiance) was an important part of the struggle for a secular society. The Bradlaugh case in the United Kingdom and the adaptation of the law in France's Third Republic have been thoroughly studied, but the Belgian case has remained largely unknown. However, here too the issue was raised with some regularity, not with regard to oaths of allegiance (which do not contain religious references in Belgium) but rather the witnesses' oath in court. Between 1866 and 1914, we identified some 24 individual incidents in courts, which led to fines, occasionally even to an imprisonment, but on several occasions to the de facto permitting of an abbreviated, non-religious oath formula. However, appeals and cassation proceedings soon followed, which led to a controversial case law, because the country's supreme court confirmed, majority against minority, the need for a religious oath formula. Neither the reform of criminal procedures nor the (mainly left-liberal)

legislative initiatives have been able to break this constellation before long. Our study shows how, in addition to concerted actions by freethinkers' organizations, spontaneous resistance from non-militant figures was also important. Although 20th-century socialist politicians dismissed the matter as unimportant (the Catholic party seemed to think otherwise and blocked all reform until 1974), the discussion about the matter -at least in the 19th century- was highly symbolic of the atheist's place in society. Belgian society. References to Belgium's liberal constitution of 1831 and its protection of the freedom of conscience gave way to the proposition that the absence of a divine reference would disqualify the oath as such, but that does not impose a cult and therefore constitutes no attack on that freedom of conscience. For the Catholic opinion, the courts confirmed that constitutional law admitted the existence of God and that the moral order remained based on that premise.

...

A history of ambiguity. The Dutch language non-confessional community in Belgium and the state (1971-2002)

Ellen Van Impe, Rik Röttger (CAVA – SSAB)

†

The relation between life stances and the state took different forms in European countries, ranging from a strict separation, over a 'concordate' system, to constitutional recognition and even state churches. Belgium has been characterized as a hybrid system with its own particularities. Whereas its evolution led to a system of constitutional recognition, the Belgian non-confessional community of the postwar period did not commit wholeheartedly to this strategy. Many different opinions were voiced on the way in which this 'community' – if such a term can be agreed to at all for so diverse a group – was to organize itself. Should the complete separation between church and state remain the only goal, or should a detour be taken, by trying to comply to state regulations in order to get a share of state funding equal to what recognized religions received? On the non-organization end of the spectrum we find, among others, the eldest freethinking student club 't Zal Wel Gaan' (1852) in Ghent and its alumni wing 'Bond Oudleden 't Zal Wel Gaan', systematically opposing every form of institutionalization or compliance with external rules. On the other end, an organization such as the 'Humanistisch Verbond' (1951) was much more in favour of an accommodation strategy and of having the non-confessional life stance recognized on a par with religions, which can benefit from a constitutional recognition and henceforth receive state funding for their personnel and infrastructure. This was in Belgium, from the 19th century onwards, the case for the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Israelite and Protestant Evangelical religions, to be followed in the last fifty years by Islamic and Orthodox religions. The Belgian Dutch language community of freethinking organisations joint forces in an umbrella organisation, the 'Unie Vrijzinnige Verenigingen (UVV)' in 1971. This UVV co-founded with its French language equivalent 'Centre d'Action Laïque' (CAL, 1969) the 'Centrale Vrijzinnige Raad der niet-confessionele levensbeschouwelijke Gemeenschappen van België - Conseil central des communautés philosophiques non confessionnelles de Belgique', which became the representative organ in the negotiations with the government. Their strategy focused on a campaign for legal recognition of the non-confessional life stance. This goal was not attained until 1993, when 'non-confessional counsellors' were added to the list of 'bedienaren van de erkende erediensten' in Constitution article 117, which

settled the list of functionaries which receive a government salary and pension. It took another decade before a new law was voted, which provided the funds to install the infrastructure to go with the new constitutional situation (2002). In the present paper we would like to focus on several decades of discussions between non-confessional organisations concerning the proper relationship with the state, based on new research on the occasion of the UVV's fiftieth anniversary (2021). We particularly focus on certain key moments: firstly, the events leading up to the UVV's provisional founding in the middle of the 1960s; secondly, the discussions and clashes occurring in the early 1980s, when UVV received a first down payment of state subsidy (though without constitutional recognition); and thirdly, on the discussions leading up to the law of 21 June 2002 which eventually settled the financial and material infrastructure. Each moment shows the projected and effectuated interactions with the state and reveals specific tensions between either a more pragmatic or a more principled interpretation of the relation between the secular and the state.

...

The Atheist and the Court. The Failed Secularisation of the Judicial Oath in 19th-Century Belgium

Alain Vannieuwenburg (CAVA – independant)

‡

In 2013 the Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei (CSV), Jean-Claude Juncker's party, loses its majority in parliament. A new coalition, consisting of the Demokratesch Partei (DP), Xavier Bettel's party, the Lëtzebuenger Sozialistesche Aarbechterpartei (LSAP) and Déi Gréng (Green), takes over. Bettel becomes Prime Minister. The so-called 'on-and-off coalition' announces important reforms in the relationship between government and religion. Freedom of thought, neutrality of the state with regard to all religious and ideological denominations and self-determination of the citizens are paramount.

The altered social circumstances force the government to review the relationship between the state and religions. Admittedly, the religious authorities may fulfil a public purpose but a repositioning and reviewing of the place and function of religious denominations within society is urgently needed. The historical attainments and ad hoc adjustments have also resulted in inequalities in the way they were treated. There is also a problem in terms of available budgets. The government wants to change the existing (historically embedded) rules and regulations and start a process of negotiations. A committee of experts is assisting the government of Luxemburg in outlining the reform policy.

The measures contemplated include a reform of the parishes and a change in the existing relationship with the municipalities. The agreement envisaged will determine that the current church councils will be done away with and their properties transferred to a fund. Action is also taken with regard to education: a new subject is introduced to pupils: "Vie et société" (Life and Society). Until then Luxemburg students had the option between religious education (religion) and ethics (morale laïque).

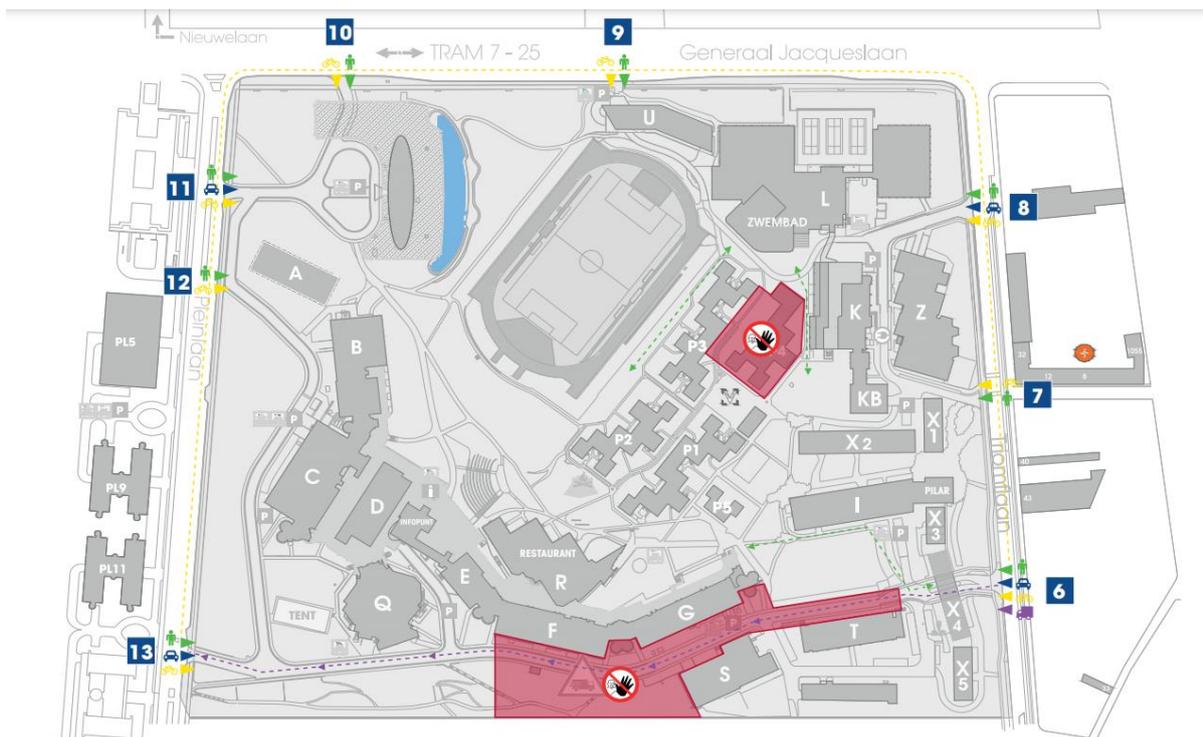
On 20 January 2015 the Luxemburg Prime Minister, Xavier Bettel (Liberal Party), in conjunction with his colleagues Claude Meisch (Liberal Party) and Dan Kersch (social democrat), presents the agreement between the Luxemburg government and the recognized religious communities established in Luxemburg territory. The agreements between the government and the religious communities present are approved. The Prime Minister does not wish to use the word 'revolution' in this context. Bettel is reappointed Prime Minister on 5 December 2018.

VENUES

How to get to the venue at Vrije Universiteit Brussel on Thursday 20 October

Address: Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussel (Building U-Residence) enter through entrance 9.

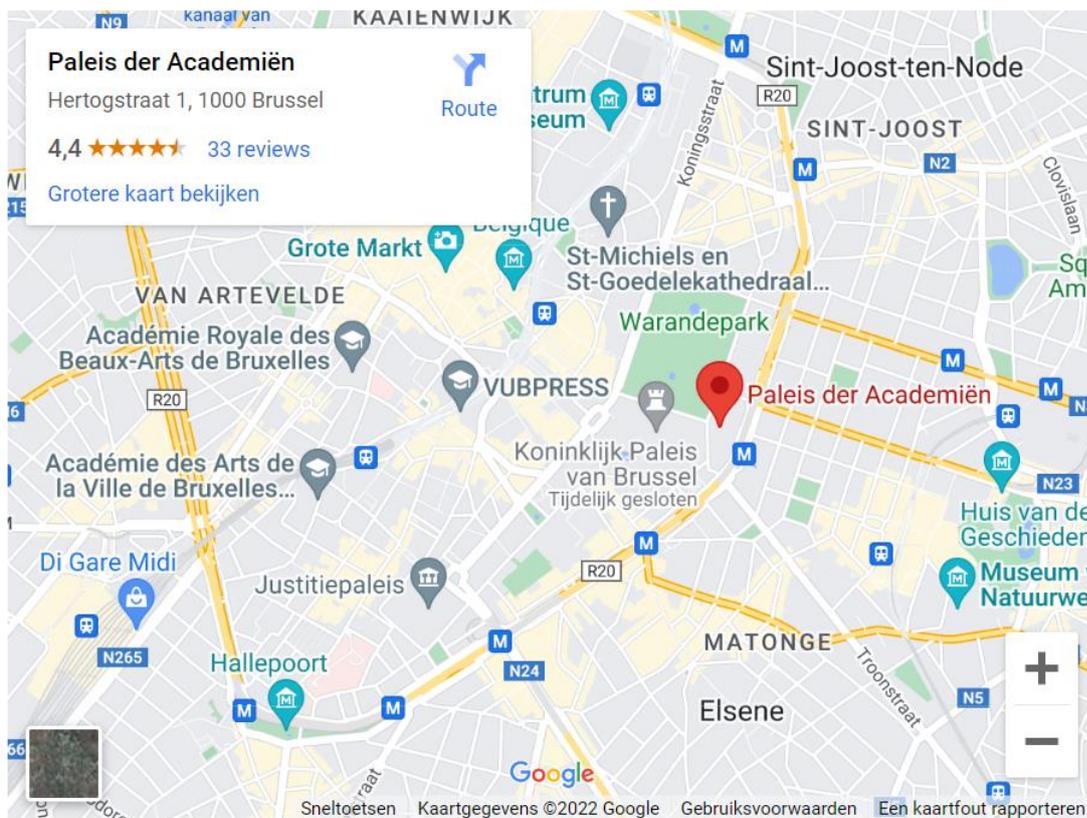
- **By train descend at Etterbeek Station (direct connection from the airport)**
- **By tram/metro any line servicing stops VUB, Petillon or Delta**



How to get to the venue at KVAB (Paleis der Academiën) on Friday 21 and Saturday 22 October

Address: Hertogstraat 1, 1000 Brussel

- **By train, descend at Brussels Central Station, followed by an 11 minute walk (750m)**
- **By tram/metro any line servicing stop Troon**



[tickets most relevant for occasional travelers and tourists \(stib-mivb.be\)](https://stib-mivb.be)

HOTELS

Between nearby Metro stations “Troon/Trône” and “Naamsepoort/Porte de Namur”

Hotel Chambord,
Naamsestraat 82
1000 Brussel

Stanhope Hotel
Handelsstraat 9
1000 Brussel

Royal Studio Residence
Handelsstraat 80
1000 Brussel

Near Metro and train station “Gare central/Centraal station” (not too far from the academy and more in the city center):

Pillows City Hotel
Parochiaansstraat 15/23
1000 Brussel

9Hotel Central
Koloniënstraat 10
1000 Brussel

Ibis (Grasmarkt)
Grasmarkt 100
1000 Brussel

Near Metro and train stations “de Brouckère” or “St Cathérine” (a bit further):

ApartHotel Adagio
Anspachlaan 20
1000 Brussel

Ibis City center
Joseph Plateaustraat N° 2
1000 Brussel