Introduction

In science, we can never reach perfect precision but we should try to be as clear as possible. Therefore, I will try to briefly characterize what is subsequently meant by religion without entering the endless discussions on the true meaning or the true definition of religion. In general, religion relates to the macro-, the meso-, as well as the micro-level. At the macro-level we call certain teachings or dogmas a religion. We also distinguish between more or less religious societies. At the meso-level a religion is usually understood as an organization like a church or a community. At the micro-level religion is considered as a property of an individual. In order to avoid any confusion we call the latter not his or her religion but religiosity.

The first part of this paper deals with the impact of social structure and social change on religiosity. Although religiosity is in the first place a micro-level variable, it can be easily transformed into a macro-property by calculating the percentage of religious people, the average religiosity, the modal religious belief system or other measures of central tendency and by interpreting them as typical for the society under consideration. By means of aggregation we thus switch from the religiosity of a person to the religiosity of a society. Subsequently, we will aggregate different indicators of religiosity in the same way because most theories of religious change do not focus on particular individuals but on macro-trends or changes of the typical members of a society. Religious decline, for example, is often interpreted as a decrease of the percentage of religious people in a given society. Glock has distinguished five dimensions of religiosity: knowledge, practice, beliefs, experience, and consequences. Moral norms and moral behavior are often seen as a consequence of religion. I prefer to treat morality as a completely separate dimension or variable which can be, but need not be, affected by religiosity. Whether it is or not is an empirical question.

Theories of religious change usually do not distinguish between the remaining four dimensions. It is simply assumed that they all are affected in the same way. If there is a religious decline, it is a decline of religious knowledge, practice, beliefs, and experience. The theoretical part of this paper will follow this common practice too, and the empirical analysis will focus on two dimensions of religiosity, religious practice and religious beliefs. Religious beliefs are distinguished from other beliefs in that they refer to a transcendental, supra-natural, and supra-empirical reality. Religious practice comprises rites like church attendance, meditation, or praying which are related to that transcendental reality by the teachings and doctrines of a group or an organization. By traditional religiosity we mean the core doctrines and the typical practices of the Judeo-Christian religions in the Western hemisphere. The doctrines comprise a belief in God, in heaven and hell, or in a life after death; the practice includes church attendance and praying. The first section will briefly outline the major hypotheses about long-term religious change in the Western world. They are subjected to an empirical test in the second section. In the third section we will briefly address the problem of moral change which in Western Europe is often seen in close connection with religious change. Many people believe that the decline of religiosity will result in increasing moral relativism and moral pluralism. We will briefly examine the empirical evidence for such a change by
comparing moral relativism and moral homogeneity in older and younger generations.

1. Theories of Religious Change

1.1 Three Basic Assumptions about Religious Change

The theories of long-term religious change can be divided into three broad classes. The classical theories of secularization assume that religiosity as well as all kinds of superstitions will decline and finally completely disappear during the process of modernization. This was not only the teaching of the French Enlightenment and the 19th century criticism of religion, it is presumably still the conviction of most sociologists who do no research on religion. The second broad class of theories assumes that the old, traditional religiosity will be replaced by a new, less hierarchically organized, more spiritual form of religion. Religion will not disappear but only take on new forms and content. Proponents of this view are Thomas Luckmann and Ronald Inglehart. A third view has emerged in the so-called new economic approach to religion. Here, religiosity is seen as dependent on the structure of the religious market. If the latter is liberalized, religious competition will increase, which will have a positive impact on religiosity.

In this paper it is argued that all these approaches overestimate the impact of the economic and the social structure on religiosity. The fate of religiosity is much less affected by the process of modernization than is usually assumed. Rather, it is the role of religion in the public sphere and in the socialization process which largely determines the fate of religiosity.

All three approaches expect an increase of religious pluralism, at least in a transitional phase. According to secularization theories this would be due to the rise of atheism and agnosticism in modern societies. According to the second approach, the present mixture of old and new religiosity will produce the same result. Finally, in the economic approach religious pluralism is conditioned upon the liberalization of the religious markets. If the latter takes place, manifold forms of religiosity will emerge. Since there is no fundamental disagreement with respect to religious pluralism, this question will not be investigated in detail. We will briefly return to it after the core assumptions have been discussed and tested.

1.2 The Secularization Thesis: The Decline of Religion

Secularization has become a pejorative concept in the sociology of religion. It is accepted and used by a few sociologists of religion and rejected by most. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, a few clarifying remarks are necessary: First of all, there is not a single theory of secularization but there are many of them. Second, secularization theories are not based on laws in a strict sense but on a number of interrelated trend hypotheses. We know from Karl Popper (1967) that these trend laws are highly problematic from a methodological point of view. It is probably more accurate to consider these so-called theories as theoretically ambitious descriptions of the historical process and not as real theories. Third, most of these approaches focus on the macro- or the meso-level of the societies and not on the micro-level.

As far as they go, these approaches have given some valuable insights into the historical process. For example, it is certainly true that churches have lost some of their former influence as a consequence of functional differentiation (see Beyer 1994, 1998; Dobbelare 1981; Luckmann 1991; Luhmann 1977; Wilson 1976, 1982, 1985). In medieval societies, science and education were largely pursued in monasteries. The church had its own canonical law and its own courts. The canonical jurisdiction was often more important than the worldly. The Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations was crowned by the pope and held his position by the grace of the Lord. In our day, these functions are mostly performed by specialized institutions; science by the universities, education by the schools, the administration of justice by courts, and health care in the hospitals. The influence of religion has not completely disappeared—we still have Christian hospitals, denominational schools and universities, and most people still take the oath by God in the courts—but it has certainly shrunk.

It is also true that the functions themselves have become largely independent of religious
legitimization, at least of traditional religious legitimation. Modern political leaders do not derive their power from God, and court decisions are not passed in the name of Lord but in the name of the people.\footnote{A closer look at modern legitimation theories would reveal that most of them still include metaphysical assumptions and conceptions and that they therefore can be called quasi-religious. However, these quasi-religions fundamentally differ from the old forms of religious legitimation.} Partly as a consequence of this process, the functionally specialized institutions of modern societies in general seem to refer less to religion than did the institutions of traditional societies.\footnote{To Luhmann (1997), one of the leading German scholars of sociological system theory, the autonomy of the subsystems is already a fact: Religion for logical reasons cannot directly influence politics, science, or jurisprudence and versa. This only a consequence of his largely implicit definitions. Luhmann distinguishes subsystems on the basis of communication. He further assumes that communication within a subsystem is only dependent on other communications within the same subsystem, and since he finally assumes that political, scientific, juridical or religious communication constitute different subsystems, it logically follows that religious communication cannot directly influence political communication or vice versa. If, for instance, religious leaders engage in political communication they become actors of the political subsystem and are subjected to the internal logic of this very subsystem. The political communication of a religious leader may have a feedback on the religious subsystem because both, the religious and the political subsystem, are structurally coupled. However, in my view, the whole conceptualization is unnecessarily complicated and does not help very much in understanding religious change.} The name of God nowadays rarely occurs in political speeches—perhaps a little bit more often in presidential speeches in the U.S. than in Europe. There are a few occasions where religious leaders officially participate in political events—such as New Year receptions or the enthronement of a Queen in a constitutional monarchy. However, these events are designed in such a way that they do not give religious leaders any political power. The withdrawal of religion from the specialized subsystems is most visible in empirical sciences where traditional religion has been completely eliminated from the scientific discourses. Actually, it is one of the requirements of an adequate scientific explanation that the explanation is empirical, i.e. it must not refer to super-natural forces.\footnote{This does not preclude that from time to time we enter a discussion of whether modern evolution theory should be replaced by a closer reading of Genesis. However, these rare, and usually unsuccessful activities only confirm the trend.} \footnote{What is true for science, is also true for other subsystems. Achievement motivation in the modern economy is primarily sustained by competition and not by religion. Modern judges rarely refer to God in their decisions. In politics, modern democratic constitutions guarantee religious freedom. This implies the independence of state and religion or the religious neutrality of the state (see Casanova 1994).}

Secularization theories adequately describe these macro-trends of the past centuries in Europe. Whether these trends will continue, however, is a different question. It could be argued that subsystems always have to refer to a transcendental reality if they attempt to define their boundaries and to legitimize themselves. For that reason, religion will persist in all societies.

This is not the major concern of this paper, however, which focuses on the micro-level. Here, the implication of functional differentiation is much less clear. At first glance, functional differentiation seems to imply the decrease of religious communication at the individual level, too. If the professional communication in the specialized subsystems is gradually purified from all religious elements, religious communication is largely restricted to the private communication outside the professional world. However, this conclusion is based on too simple a distinction between the professional and the private world. And its empirical validity can hardly be tested as long as the distinction between political, scientific or economic communication remains vague. Even if the assumption were true, however, this would not necessarily imply less religiosity. The modern person may still find the meaning of his or her life in religion.

It has also been maintained that during the process of modernization religious beliefs and knowledge increasingly come into conflict with the knowledge and beliefs of other subsystems; the Christian miracles, for instance, with the physical causal laws; the book of Genesis with the theory of evolution, or the...
command of charity with the requirement of economic efficiency (see Max Weber 1975). These conflicts would gradually erode the Christian faith. However, specialization has also increased our ability to avoid such conflicts by strictly separating the conflicting belief elements from each other. The autonomy of the functional subsystems is to some extent paralleled by the compartmentalization of our knowledge. As scientists we may believe in the law of causality \( (A) \) but as religious persons, believe in miracles \((\neg A)\), etc. Compartmentalization can help us to protect religious beliefs against the destructive power of conflicting knowledge.

Thus, functional differentiation has no straightforward implications for individual-level religiosity. Other scholars, in particular those in the Marxist tradition, have derived such consequences from the idea of compensation. Indeed, if religion is nothing but a compensation for lacking material goods or physical security it must become superfluous as soon as there is a sufficient supply of these goods. The objections to this position are obvious: The function of religion cannot be reduced to such a compensatory function. Religion has always been more than a surrogate for material goods and security. Nevertheless, let us state as a first testable hypothesis that religiosity will decline in the process of modernization and functional differentiation.

1.3 The Transformation of Religion

As in the case of secularization approaches we have to begin with a clarifying remark. Obviously, a distinction between secularization and transformation can only be made on the basis of a precise definition of the term religion. Luckmann (1991; 1995), for instance, agrees with the adherents of secularization theories that traditional religion will decline in the process of modernization. The two sides differ mainly in their understanding of religion and religiosity. Luckmann considers not only the world religions, but also political ideologies and psychotherapy as forms of religion. He bases his considerations on such a broad definition of religion that the latter cannot disappear for logical reasons: In his understanding, socialization is genuinely a religious process. A decline of traditional religiosity is therefore necessarily accompanied by the emergence of a new religiosity.\(^5\)

Inglehart (1990; 1997) arrives at a similar transformation hypothesis on the basis of different theoretical considerations. According to Inglehart, religion cannot be reduced exclusively to a compensatory function. Specifically, traditional religion could contribute to a feeling of security in a largely insecure environment. It is true, religions have also offered compensators for material scarcity and insecurity in the past. In the postmodern societies, however, religion can focus on its main problem, the meaning question of the human existence because the basic materialistic needs are largely satisfied and compensation in this respect is no longer required. A new form of religion will emerge which places much less emphasis on security and safety. It will be less hierarchically organized and will be less rigid in its doctrines. While Thomas Luckmann has given no advice for measuring the new religion and religiosity, Inglehart suggests, at the least, an indirect indicator. The more often a person thinks about the meaning of life, the higher the new spiritual religiosity. Let us therefore try to summarize his considerations in the second hypothesis: In the process of modernization, traditional religion is replaced by a religion in which meaning questions, in particular the question of the meaning of life, play a more important role.

1.4 Liberalization of the Religious Market, Religious Pluralism, and Increasing Religiosity

To the new economical approach of religion, the question of old and new is much less important.\(^6\) In contrast to the other approaches, it considers religious change not so much as a demand side but as a supply side phenomenon. The demand for religion remains more or less constant in time and space.

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5) Luckmann is considered as an adherent of secularization theory.
6) It is not astonishing at all that this approach has emerged in the United States where church attendance rates are still much higher than in Western Europe. Obviously, our theories are still influenced to some extent by our daily experience and not only by our sociological knowledge.
Societies differ, however, in the religious supply (Iannaccone 1988, 1990, 1991; Iannaccone et al. 1997; Stark and Iannaccone 1997). As in economics, only a free market guarantees an optimal supply. Consequently, the high religious participation in the United States (see Finke and Stark 1992) is attributed to the existence of a largely liberalized pluralistic religious market. The low church attendance rates in many West European countries are seen as a consequence of religious monopolies or state subsidized churches. If churches have a privileged status, the clergy becomes lazy and does not care about the needs of its clientele. Iannaccone et al. (1997) also try to show that the liberalization of the religious markets in Japan, Korea, or, recently also, in Sweden has led to a revitalization of religion. Assuming for the moment that religious pluralism has increased after the second World War in most Western countries, we may state the third hypothesis: increasing religious pluralism will positively influence all forms of religiosity, in particular, the traditional ones.

1.5 Public Visibility and Socialization of Religion

The economic approach correctly points out that modernization does not necessarily lead to a decline of traditional religiosity. In this respect, secularization as well as transformation theories overestimate the impact of functional differentiation or the differences between the old and the new functions of religion. The new economic approach is wrong, however, in assuming that the demand for traditional or new religion is more or less the same in all societies. Rather, the demand is heavily influenced by early childhood socialization and on the public role of religion. If religious stories and myths are no longer communicated in the socialization process, it will decline. The contacts of adults with religion are no less important. If religious themes are no longer discussed at the working place or in public, people will lose their interest in religion. This, in turn, will negatively affect the socialization process.

In contrast to Luckmann (1991) we do not expect a withdrawal of religion from the public. There is no general trend to a privatization of religion. In discussing Luckmann’s ideas, Casanova (1994; see also Greeley 1995) has suggested to distinguish two parts of the public arena, the arena of political society and the arena of civil society. The former is the stage of political parties and other political actors, the latter the stage of unions, employer organizations and other civil actors. One can only agree with Casanova that the churches in the United States, as well as in some other European countries, have remained active and visible in civil society and this need not change. One can even doubt that modernization will lead to a withdrawal of the churches from the political public arena even though they certainly have been less active on this stage in most Western societies after World War II.

The fate of religion in the public arenas is certainly affected by religious competition which stimulates public discussions on religion. However, other factors are equally or even more important. It has already been mentioned that West European politicians are hesitant to appeal to God in public speeches as is quite common in the United States. The communist regime of the former GDR (East Germany) was most effective in expelling religion from the public sphere. The East German Protestant churches did not strongly oppose this policy since the middle of the fifties because they themselves had gradually accepted the privatization thesis. They hoped that religion would survive in the families and in the private sphere. This was, as we know today, an error.

On balance, religious socialization and public visibility play a decisive role. Unfortunately, we so far are not able to measure the latter directly and to empirically test its impact. Therefore, we will not summarize our previous considerations in an explicit hypothesis. Rather, we will interpret the results of the other empirical tests in the light of these considerations.

2. Empirical Analyses

The empirical analyses follow the organization of the theoretical section. We will first discuss the
empirical evidence in favor and against the secularization hypothesis, then turn to the transformation hypothesis and finally examine the economic approach.

2.1 The Secularization Thesis: Is there a Decline of Religion?

As Jagodzinski and Dobbelaere (1995a) have shown, there is indeed a decline of traditional religiosity in many West European countries. The Netherlands and West Germany may serve as two examples. Figures 1A and 1B summarize the results of a cohort analysis in which the percentages of persons in different generations and at different time points who attend church at least once a week are defined. A generation is defined as a group of people who were born in the same historical period. In the Figures, a ten year time interval is used for distinguishing cohorts. In defining the intervals, the end of World War II has been chosen as a cutting point in the Netherlands; accordingly, those who were born after the war form a separate generation. Since the difference between the war generation and the postwar generation was not as large as expected, slightly different cutting points have been chosen for West German Catholics. The

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**Figure 1 A** : Religious Change in Dutch Generations, 1970 to 1991

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**Figure 1 B** : Religious Change in West German Catholic Generations 1959 to 1994

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Source: Election Studies, ALLBUS and other Studies
oldest generations in the Netherlands include all individuals born before 1906; the youngest generation is
born between 1956 and 1965. In West Germany, the oldest generation is born before 1899 and the youngest

In the Figures, each cohort is indicated by a distinct symbol. Furthermore, the percentages of a
generation are connected by a line. As can be seen, the older generations usually display higher
proportions of religiously very active persons, or more precisely, of persons who attend religious services
weekly or more often. Deviations from this general pattern are probably due to sampling error. In 1990 the
oldest generation has already become so small in size that we do not report its percentage for the
Netherlands.

While religious participation declines more or less steadily in the Netherlands, there has been a
sudden change among West German Catholics. Here, we witness a rapid decline of church attendance
rates in all Catholic generations between the middle of the sixties and the middle of the seventies.
Afterwards the percentages remain fairly low and stable. I have not reported the same percentages for the
German Protestants because these figures would not have given much information. Protestant weekly
church attendance rates were already very low immediately after World War II and they remained largely
unchanged up to present times.

Most countries in Western Europe follow the Dutch or the West German pattern. After World War II,
there is either a steady decline of church attendance rates in all generations, or a sudden breakdown in a
relatively short period, or these rates remain at low levels during the whole postwar era (see Jagodzinski
and Dobbelaere, 1995a, for details). Thus, the change does not completely correspond to the typical
generational replacement model with high intra-cohort stability and large differences between the cohorts.
Rather, we observe a considerable change within and differences between generations at the same time.

On balance, Western Europe largely confirms the secularization hypothesis with respect to religious
participation. Whether this is also true for traditional religious beliefs cannot be stated with the same
amount of certainty for the simple reason that similar longitudinal data are not available for religious
beliefs. The World Values Survey covers only the period after 1980 where most of the changes probably
had already taken place. For this reason, we may tentatively try to obtain some evidence from cross-
sectional analysis. It is true that the danger of a fallacy cannot be completely discarded if we make
inferences of longitudinal change from a cross-section analysis. However, considering the fact that religious
beliefs and religious practice correlate quite highly in all European countries, this risk seems to be
tolerable.

In Figure 2 we have distinguished between those who were born before and after the end of World

![Figure 2: Mean Number of Endorsed Religious Beliefs](image-url)
War II (1945) as well as between males and females. A distinction between men and women has been made because women seem to be more religious in almost all societies (see Dobbelare and Jagodzinski 1995). Thus we obtain four groups, (1) the prewar and war female generations, (2) the prewar and war male generations, (3) the postwar female generations, and (4) the postwar male generations. We have next calculated the average number of endorsed beliefs for each of these four groups in Ireland (IRL), Italy (I), Spain (E), Great Britain (GB), Norway (N), Belgium (B), West Germany (D), The Netherlands (NL), France (F) and Denmark (DK). These four means for each country are reported in Figure 2. For instance, the average number of beliefs in the prewar and war generations of both sexes as well as for the female postwar generations range between 5 and 6 in Ireland, and only the Irish male postwar generations display an average below 5. The data stem from the World Values Survey (WVS) 1990 in which respondents were asked whether they believe in God, heaven, hell, a devil, life after death, sin, and a soul. From these items a scale has been constructed ranging from 0 (=believe in none) to 7 (=believe in all 7). The countries in Figure 2 have been rank ordered by experts according to the degree of rationalization and functional differentiation. However, by and large the same ordering would result if the gross national product per capita or similar economic indicators are used.

Again, the findings are consistent with the basic tenets of secularization theories. The more rationalized and economically advanced a society is, the smaller the number of endorsed religious beliefs. Furthermore, we find the expected differences between prewar and postwar generations and between men and women. Women in both generations are more religious than men. However, the differences seem slightly to decrease in the more rationalized societies. There is also a large gap between the prewar and postwar generations with the former sharing much more traditional religious beliefs.

Thus, the results of these findings are consistent with secularization theory. However, they do not contradict the other two theories either. Religious transformation theories also expect a decline of traditional religiosity. Adherents of the economic approach have more difficulties to explain the results because the religious markets certainly have not become more regulated in postwar Western Europe. However, they may argue that the churches in most West European countries still hold a privileged position and that the observed change is the long-term consequence of these privileges. We will take up this point in Section 2.3 when we examine the economic approach more closely.

2.2 The Transformation Thesis: Emergence of a New Religion?

It is clear from the never-ending discussions on the new religiosity or spirituality that an ideal question for its measurement does not exist. Inglehart (1990) has made the interesting suggestion to use the question: “How often do you think about the meaning of life?” for that purpose. One may object that this does not indicate a new religiosity but at best a search for religious answers. Let us nevertheless accept the indicator in the absence of a better instrument. Inglehart shows in the analysis of the WVS 1981 that postmaterialists think more often about the meaning of life than materialists. This finding suggests that the new religion will become more widespread together with postmaterialism in advanced societies.

There are two reasons why such a conclusion seems to be risky. First of all, postmaterialists are, on the average, highly educated. Highly educated people think more about many things, not only about the meaning of life. The percentages therefore may tell us more about the intellectual activities then about the religiosity of postmaterialists. Second, we know from secularization theory that highly educated people are less religious in a traditional sense. If this low level of traditional religiosity should be the result of a replacement process, the total amount of old and new religiosity should be similar in materialistic and postmaterialistic groups. In the right part of Table 1 we have calculated the percentage of respondents who believe in a God, think often about the meaning of life, or do both. The left half of the Table refers to the WVS 1981, the right half to the WVS 1990. At both time points, we have calculated the percentages for materialists (Mat), mixed types (Mix) and postmaterialists (Postmat). As can be seen, the materialists are still much more religious than the postmaterialists—in spite of the fact that the former think, on the average, less often about the meaning of life. It could also be shown that postmaterialists with a traditional
religious orientation think much more often about the emergence meaning of life than postmaterialists who do not believe in God. Putting these facts together, some doubts may arise about the emergence of a new religion.

### 2.3 The Economic Approach: Constant Demand but Varying Supply?

For adherents of the economic approach, low religious participation is not a consequence of declining demand but of an inferior supply of religious goods. They point above all to the United States where we still have fairly high religious participation rates in spite of functional differentiation and economic progress. The basic tenets can be tested to some extent if we look at the demand for religion in European and North American countries.

Greeley and Jagodzinski (1997) have suggested constructing an indicator of religious demand from the beliefs in God and in a life after death. In the Judeo-Christian countries at least, a positive answer on one of these questions indicates a concern with a transcendental reality. On the other hand, a demand for religion can be excluded if a person definitely does not believe in God and in a life after death. Let us call these individuals atheists for the sake of brevity. Atheists in our sense have no demand at all for religion.

Since both items are included in the WVS 1990 and in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 1990 we can calculate the percentage of atheists in both surveys. Unfortunately, only the ISSP uses 5 point scales for measuring the beliefs in God and in a life after death. In this survey atheists can be defined as persons who definitely deny both, a life after death and the existence of God. In the WVS 1990 only dichotomous items (yes/no) have been used for the same purpose. It is relatively safe to expect that respondents will often choose the no-answer if they have doubts about God or a life after death. If we would count them as atheists, we would heavily overestimate their number. In order to correct for this effect, atheists in the WVS 1990 are defined as persons who believe in none of the seven dogmas which

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Only those countries which are also reported by Inglehart 1990 (Table 6.7) are included in the Table.
have already been mentioned in connection with Figure 1 B.

In Figure 3 the proportions of atheists in former Communist countries, religiously mixed countries, and Catholic countries are reported. As can be seen, the results of WVS and ISSP usually correspond quite well. The only exception is East Germany where the ISSP yields a much higher proportion of atheists. Obviously, we have not constructed truly equivalent measures for all societies. Since we are mainly interested in the rank order of countries, however, the differences between ISSP and WVS are not too detrimental.

From Figure 3 a number of important conclusions can be drawn. First of all, even in many so-called secularized societies the demand for religion is still very high. It is hardly compatible with theories of secularization, showing instead that about ninety percent of the Dutch, the French, or the Scandinavians still have a demand for religion, i.e. are not atheists. In North America, Poland, or Ireland the percentages of atheists are almost negligible. Only in some of the former Communist countries has the demand for religion been effectively reduced.

While the percentages contradict most micro-level theories of secularization, they also present some difficulties for the economic theories of religion. If we have, as suggested, measured the demand for religion, the latter is obviously not constant across countries. One could counter that our measure is still dependent on the religious supply and therefore varies with the regulation of the religious market. It is true, in former Communist countries where religion was largely suppressed, religious beliefs as well as religious participation is low. However, by interpreting atheism as a supply side phenomenon we run into other difficulties: Why is the atheism so low in Catholic countries like Ireland and Poland where almost no religious competition exists? And why is it quite high in the Netherlands where we had such vigorous competition, at least after the breakdown of the Dutch cleavage system? On balance, the findings do not fit the secularization theory but they do not fit the economic approach either.

There is another argument against the new economic approach. If religious change were largely determined by the regulation of the religious market, the latter should more or less immediately react to a liberalization as occurred in many East European countries after the breakdown of communism. It is true, religious groups need some time to build up their own infrastructures, but five years after the collapse of Communism this should have been accomplished. Is there any change in the religious participation, however? In Figure 4 the proportion of 18 to 24 year old respondents who never attend church is bold. The upper bold line connects the percentages of the East German young adults, the lower bold line the percentages of the same West German age group. Both lines are surrounded by the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.
According to the economic approach one would expect a steady decrease of the religiously inactive group in East Germany. This is not the case, however. Approximately 80 percent of the young East Germans were religiously inactive in April 1991 (4–91), and this has not changed very much as of December 1995 (12–95). The difference between West and East Germans has remained rather stable. If the groups are marginally moving towards each other, this is due to a slightly increasing percentage of religiously inactive West Germans.

In our view, the liberalization of the religious markets has only a long-term impact on religiosity. It may increase the public visibility and awareness of religion. It may stimulate the religiously indifferent population in largely secularized societies like East Germany to think about religion again. And only under these conditions does religion have a chance to revitalize.

If religiosity is not instilled during youth, there will be much less demand for religion in adulthood. This is the reason why religious socialization is crucial. It is particularly crucial in those societies where religion has already withdrawn from the public. This has already been demonstrated by Kelly and de Graaf (1997) for church attendance. It is also true for religious demand or atheism. In Table 2 the results of a regression analysis on atheism are displayed; on the left side are the more basic OLS-results, and on the right side, the results of the technically more appropriate logistic regression. As can be seen from both regressions, early church attendance at the age of twelve has a strong impact on present-day atheism. It is stronger in those former Communist societies which had effectively reduced the public influence of religion: Hungary, Slovenia, and, above all, the former GDR. The fit of the regression equation can be improved if we introduce for these countries and for the others mentioned at the bottom of the Table an additional effect of religious socialization in early childhood. Only the interaction effect for East Germany remains significant in the logistic regression, however.

In many respects, the East German situation after World War II was exceptional. For mainly two reasons the East German Communists had it much easier than other Communist regimes to suppress or at least to significantly reduce the influence of religion. First of all, East Germany was dominated by the Protestant churches, and European Protestantism was never very resistant to political forces. Second, some Protestant groups had a strong link to nationalism and national socialism in the Third Reich. This made it easy for the East German SED to denounce the Churches as collaborators. The Communists concealed the

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Figure 4: Church Attendance of Age Group 18 to 24 In East and West Germany (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, E.V., Politbarometer, 1991 to 95)

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8) Technically, this is an interaction effect of country and religious socialization. The estimation could be further improved by running a multi-level logistic regression. In general, this will have an impact on the significance levels, but it will not alter the magnitude of the regression coefficients very much.
The fact that several Protestants had died in the National Socialist concentration camps. In any case, the East German government was able to replace the traditional religious beliefs with a communist quasi-religion which has survived in some rudimentary forms in the Eastern part of Germany.

3. Moral Pluralism

We will not examine the question of moral change with the same scrutiny as religion. It is sufficient to say that almost the same prophecies about the fate of religion have also been made about morality (see Beyer 1994; Jagodzinski and Dobbelare 1995b; Jagodzinski 1998, with further references). It has been argued, for instance, that functional differentiation will destroy not only religion but also morality because a moral integration is neither any longer necessary nor possible in advanced societies. It has also been argued that modernization will lead to a clearer distinction between universal moral principles and mere cultural conventions. We will not only witness a new religion but also the rise of a new morality. And it has finally been maintained that the decline of traditional religion and processes of individualization will be combined with an increasing moral pluralism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Linear Regression</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>$R^2=19.4%$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interaction Terms included</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Regression Coefficients</strong></td>
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<td>beta</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>-0.143</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
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</table>

^1 Standardized Effects

Remark: The Table reports only effects which are a significant impact at the 5%-level in a two-tailed test. In the regression with interaction effects the linear terms have been kept because significance test for these terms are not meaningful.
It must be sufficient to briefly discuss the question of moral pluralism and moral relativism. It is not only the conservative forces in Western Europe which often deplore the breakdown of an absolute morality and the spread of moral liberalism and permissiveness in the younger generations. The WVS 1990 allows us to investigate this question to some extent.

If we mean by moral relativism that the moral assessment is dependent on the circumstances, there are indeed some indications that the younger generations become more relativistic. The World Values Survey confronted the respondents with the question of whether there are clear-cut moral guidelines or whether right and wrong depends entirely on the circumstances. In almost all Western countries which are displayed in Figure 5 the majority of the postwar generations assumes the latter. The percentages for the postwar generations are depicted by a triangle and the ones for the prewar generations by a square. Thus, approximately 90 percent of the Danish postwar generation and still about eighty percent of the Danish prewar generations have a relativistic view on morality. Accordingly, only a minority of the Danes has opted for the other alternative—that there are clear guidelines for right or wrong—or a middle position. Moral relativism is highest in Denmark (DK) and Sweden (S) and lowest in the USA. Apart from the latter country, however, the differences between the postwar and the prewar generations are usually quite large. The younger generations believe much less in an absolute morality than the older ones. This can also be seen from the two fitted curves which have been estimated for both groups of generations.

![Figure 5: Moral Relativism in Western Pre- and Postwar Generations](image)

There are also some signs of an increasing moral pluralism. The World Values Survey includes a battery of items which ask about the moral quality of different forms of behavior: Is cheating on taxes, for instance, never ok, sometimes ok, or always ok? Respondents could answer on 10-point-scales with labeled endpoints (1=never ok; 10=always ok). In Table 3 the variances of some of these items are displayed for the prewar and postwar generations. The larger this variance, the less homogeneous is the group. In Hungary (H), for example, the variance for the item “keeping found money” is 8.53 in the prewar generations and 10.52 in the postwar generations. Accordingly, the older generations are more homogeneous than the latter. Similar patterns hold for other countries. This is consistent with the assumption of increasing pluralism. On the other hand, homosexuality displays a more complicated pattern. While the younger generations hold at least as homogeneous an attitude towards this behavior as the older ones in Denmark and in The Netherlands, in most of the remaining countries the reverse is true. With regard to divorce, abortion, and euthanasia, the attitudes have become quite heterogeneous in all generations.

The younger generations are sometimes more heterogeneous and sometimes not. In Figure 6 two extreme cases are contrasted, killing in self-defense and joyriding. The countries are displayed on the bottom line and the variances along the y-axis. It is not surprising at all that killing in self-defense yields
very similar variances for the older and younger generations. Since the behavior is widely considered to be morally justified, old and young respondents should equally choose response category 10. The high variances of this item are probably due to response set effects. By contrast, cheating on transport fare is a typical form of juvenile delinquency. It is therefore not surprising at all that young people are less homogeneous than older ones in this respect. While the latter hold quite a rigid view, some of the younger respondents seem to be more lenient.

Can we conclude from these findings that the youth in Western Europe have become more relativistic and pluralistic? Certainly not. First of all, the question on moral relativism does not really measure what is

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Keep Money</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>DK</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>FIN</th>
<th>GB</th>
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Notes: An "n" indicates that the variance of the postwar generations (Post) is not significantly different from the variance of the prewar and war generations (Pre). A "*" is added, if the difference is significant on the 10% level. All other differences are significant on the 5% level or lower.

Figure 6: Moral Pluralism in Western Europe and North America Variance in Prewar (Pre) and Postwar (Post) Generations; World Values Survey 1990

The item "Transport Fare" is only for Hungary not significant. The item "Kill in Self-Defense" is in 11 of 17 countries not significant. In all countries, "Kill in Self-Defense" varies between the 1% level to the 5% level of significance.

DK = Denmark, SE = Sweden, NO = Norway, FI = Finland, GB = Great Britain, NL = Netherlands, WG = West-Germany, EG = East-Germany, NIRL = Northern Ireland, IRL = Ireland, PT = Portugal, B = Belgium, IT = Italy, ES = Spain, USA = USA, CAN = Canada, H = Hungary
usually understood by the notion. Even if a general norm or principle exists, we have always to look carefully at the circumstances of the particular case. Killing is a good example. Almost all people will ban willful murder. Nevertheless it depends entirely on the circumstances whether the killing of a particular person is morally justified or not. The same holds for almost all moral norms. A relativistic response to an item may only reflect what has become almost a truism in the application of principles and laws: Only if we assess the specific circumstances of a case can we arrive at a fair and just solution.

And with respect to moral pluralism, the situation is not so different. It is often due to the lack of imaginative power that people resort to a rigid rule. They simply cannot imagine a situation where a behavior is justified. Experts, however, in these instances can often give a long list of examples of morally justified behaviors. For example, traveling without paying can be morally justified if it is the only means to get help for another person. Young people who often are better educated may take these exceptions into account and therefore reject the response alternative “never ok”. And since it is much more difficult to correctly determine a position in the middle range of the scale than at the poles, the larger variation may be due to nothing but response uncertainty.

Conclusions

This empirical analysis has led to two major conclusions. First of all, the fate of religion in the modern world seems to be much less affected by social-structural and economic processes than it is usually assumed. Neither will functional differentiation undermine traditional religion nor will religious competition necessarily result in more religious participation. In all societies, the public role of religion seems to be a decisive factor. Religion need not disappear from the public sphere. However, if it does, and if it withdraws from the public arena of civil society, this will have serious consequences. An invisible religion will also lose its roots in the socialization process. It was the major fallacy of the privatization hypothesis that this has been overlooked. A religion without public rites and visibility cannot survive in the private world either. Once religion has disappeared from the public sphere, it cannot be easily revitalized. After the breakdown of communism the liberalization alone of religion was not sufficient for this purpose, as the East German example shows. Thus, the public role of religion seems to be an important intervening variable which so far has been largely neglected.

The second conclusion concerns the moral pluralism in modern societies. We have shown that the empirical indicators of pluralism and relativism do not say very much about moral and immoral behavior. We have to considerably improve the measurement instrument before we can say something about the extent and the consequences of moral pluralism. Presently, we cannot exclude the possibility, for instance, that greater pluralism with regard to specific behavior is accompanied by an increasing consensus about universal moral principles. The increasing dissension on minor forms of political violence, for example, may be combined with less tolerance for the more intensive forms, in particular for violence in the family. As long as we do not sufficiently distinguish between the general principles and the specific attitudes we will not learn very much about these processes. Thus, there remains a vast field for further research.

Literature


