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What the relationship of religion and culture means for the role of the State in society: Parliamentary debates on education during the "Kulturkampf" in Prussia, France and the Netherlands

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Abstract

Die Ära der Kulturkämpfe kann als ein Schlüsselmoment in der westeuropäischen Geschichte gesehen werden, in dem die Beziehung zwischen Kultur und Religion ein zentrales Thema und Gegenstand unterschiedlicher Interpretationen war, je nach politischem Standpunkt und Land. Diese unterschiedlichen Auffassungen und Definitionen liegen den Argumenten über die Rolle des Staates bei der Erziehung der Nation in diesen Debatten zugrunde. Am Beispiel Preußens, Frankreichs und der Niederlande in den 1870/80er Jahren analysiere ich, welche Rolle dem Staat als „Ersatz" für die Kirche in der Schule zugeschrieben wurde und welche Rolle die unterschiedlichen und oft gegensätzlichen Definitionen von Religion in der Argumentation hatten.

L'ère du *Kulturkampf* apparaît comme un moment historique privilégié dans l'Europe occidentale où l'articulation entre culture et religion est centrale et sujette à des interprétations très divergentes selon les forces politiques et les pays. Ces différentes conceptions et définitions constituent en même temps un enjeu majeur des débats parlementaires autour du rôle de l'Etat dans l'éducation de la nation à cette époque. A partir de l'exemple de la Prusse, de la France et des Pays Bas dans les années 1870/80, l'objet de cette contribution est d'analyser le discours de « remplacement » de l'Eglise par l'Etat dans le domaine de l'école ainsi que les enjeux qui y sont liés pour les définitions de la religion.

The *Kulturkampf* era can be seen as a key moment in western European history in which the relationship between culture and religion is a central theme and subject to different interpretations depending on the political actors and the country. These different representations of religion and its role in culture function as premises in arguments regarding the role of the State in national education. Using parliamentary debates in the 1870s/80s in Prussia, France and the Netherlands as case studies, I analyze the discourse on the role of the State as "replacement" for the Church in the school and the role that often contradictory definitions of religion had in the legitimation of or opposition to legislation on this topic.

Keywords

Kulturkampf • Schule • Religion • Pluralismus • Trennung von Staat und Kirche

Kulturkampf • school • religion • pluralism • secular State

Kulturkampf • école • religion • pluralisme • Etat laïque

The debate on whether specific religious worldviews or practices are compatible with the modern State, founded on a set of institutions and values that include a certain understanding of human rights, is not a new one. Parliamentary debates on the role of the State in education in the *Kulturkampf* era in Western Europe provide a case study of discourses related to this sort of questioning. That which was at stake for the initiators of legislation intended to strengthen the role of the State in the school was variously called "modern society", "modern civilization" or, in German, *Kultur*, but represented in all cases a set of values and institutions deemed at the foundation of the modern nation-state. Representations, explicit and implicit, of the kind of religion that would, or would not, allow citizens to integrate into a national community with shared values constituted a key presupposition in arguments defending the need for the State, rather than the Church, to take the lead in the organization of the school. Opponents to such policies saw these delimitations of the legitimate role of religion as demonstrating an inadequate understanding of their beliefs and practice of religion. Appealing to a putative consensus regarding values such as freedom and equality but also the functioning of a democratic (parliamentary) culture, they asserted their right (in some countries with the support of a small but often influential minority of liberals) to work out for themselves the compatibility between their religion and "modern society". In the process, the different

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representations they had of the role of religion in culture led them to conclusions which were different from those of their political opponents with regard to the role of the State vis-à-vis society/citizens, mirrored in the organization of the school.[1]

My analysis is based on parliamentary debates on the role of the State in national education in Prussia, France and the Netherlands during the *Kulturkampf* era. I use this term as shorthand for a transnational European phenomenon in the mid- to late 19th century usually described as a conflict between the Catholic Church and anti-clericals with regard to the role of religion in the public sphere (Clark and Kaiser 2003; but cf. also Borutta 2010a and Dittrich 2014). Borutta posits that the entire 19th century can be seen as the "Zeitalter der Kulturkämpfe", an epoch characterized by conflicts spanning not only nations but also religious confessions about the role of religion in modernity. These conflicts reached, however, a climax in the final third of the century, when liberals held the balance of power in many governments and the ultramontane Catholic Church was viewed as the principal threat to the modern nation-state (2010b: 351ff). Among the most tenaciously fought battles in this period were those concerning the respective roles of State, Church and family in education. This was an issue that had generated friction in all three countries since the beginning of the century, as the "sacralization" of the nation (Chanet 2005: 11) led to increasing efforts by the State to take the lead in the organization of the school in order to integrate all groups in society into the Nation. During the *Kulturkampf* era, at least in Prussia, France and the Netherlands, the school was chosen as the primary domain in which the principle of the sovereignty of the State in the temporal sphere was, in the interests of national unity, to be enforced. It is also the period in which the 'school struggles' became truly national conflicts, capable of mobilizing large parts of the electorate. Often overlooked, however, is the prominent role of orthodox Protestants in the 'school struggles' in the Netherlands—many of whom had separated from the 'national' Reformed Church, which they viewed as dominated by theological liberalism, and who in these debates rather tend to de-emphasize their relationship to ecclesiastical institutions—as well as that of a dissenting minority of liberals in the Netherlands and republicans in France (including anti-clericals). Their role suggests, however, that the issues at stake were more fundamental and complex than a conflict between the Catholic Church and the State for sovereignty.

The Prussian liberal Rudolf Virchow gave the name *Kulturkampf* to the conflict between Bismarck and the Catholic Church, which both Bismarck and Prussian liberals represented as a struggle between the temporal and spiritual powers for sovereignty (Toscer-Angot 2008). This conflict ended in compromise, but in the domain of education the *Schulaufsichtsgesetz*, passed with liberal support in 1872 and unsuccessfully challenged by a Center motion in 1889, was to remain in force. For Prussian liberals it confirmed the sovereignty of the State in the temporal sphere in that it guaranteed the State's independence from the Church in its choice of school inspectors, even while it continued to appoint clergy as inspectors, insofar deemed loyal to the State. In France the political struggle that came to be known as "la guerre des deux France" (McMillan 2003) came to a climax in the earlier decades of the Third Republic and resulted in the 1905 law on the separation of the Churches and the State. The significant role of religious congregations (and finally the clergy as such) in the school was viewed by majority republicans as a threat to the unity of the Nation. In 1879 Jules Ferry took the first step towards tackling this problem in an attempt—blocked, however, by liberals in the Senate—to legislate the exclusion of unauthorized religious congregations from all schools, public and private. In 1886 the *Loi Goblet* finally instituted the complete laicization of the public school, whereas the exclusion of all religious congregations from teaching in France was achieved by a more radical government in 1904. Conflicts during the same period in the Netherlands (where Catholics occupied a similar position as in Prussia as a significant minority in a majority Protestant country) were arguably less intense except for the school question (Margry and Velde 2003; Coninck 2005), which dominated national politics for decades. In 1878 liberals underscored their commitment to the public school as State school and instrument of national integration by passing a new elementary education law that, while legislating improved standards in all schools, public and non-public, only provided the corresponding financial support to the public school. Since they argued that the constitution and the principle of the separation of Church and State did not allow the use of State funds to subsidize non-public schools, in 1887 the Catholic H. Schaepman introduced a proposal to revise the constitution to permit State subsidies in order to guarantee equal access to education in accordance with the parents' convictions. While the proposal was blocked by liberals in the First Chamber, it became clear in the course of the debates that there was enough liberal support to pave the way for a pluralist compromise in the decades following, leading to the "Pacification" of 1917 (Haan 1998).

The school was thus a central battleground in all three countries, and, even though the 'school struggles' in Prussia, France and the Netherlands neither began nor ended in this period, I would argue that in the parliamentary debates during the *Kulturkampf* era they reached a watershed in that speakers were agreed that the ideological/worldview differences were insurmountable and only a political solution could bring an end to the conflict. In this paper, as in my doctoral thesis, I use the approach to political discourse analysis developed by the Faircloughs, which looks at how "discourses, as ways of representing, provide agents with reasons for action" (Fairclough/Fairclough 2012: 1). Representations of

1 In this paper the focus is primarily on the common threads of discourse that I have found in the three national contexts; for a more systematic analysis of the differences and their significance for the different pathways taken with regard to the role of the State in education, I refer to my ongoing doctoral thesis. I would like to thank Sylvie Le Grand Ticchi, Armin Owzar and Sylvie Toscer-Angot as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback at different stages of writing this paper.

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religion function just as well as representations of the institutions and norms of democracy as reasons in these debates. The speakers are in a dialectical relationship with each other as well as with their political and institutional context (which all together demarcate the 'boundaries of the sayable'), as they search for arguments to support a political consensus. This means that the results of an analysis of parliamentary debates can be (partially) unexpected compared to research findings based on a more varied corpus. I refer, for France, to Le Grand (2013), and for Germany, to Hölscher (2013), for overviews of these broader research findings with regard to discourses on the role of religion in State and society in this period.

In spite of the different legislative measures involved, these debates were represented in all three countries by the participants themselves as being fundamentally about the constitution of the modern nation-state. But whereas liberals and republicans represented the issue as being about the competing sovereignties of Church and State, only in Prussia did the opposition partially accept this framework; the opposition in the Dutch and French debates consistently represented it as being about the relationship of State and citizens. For example, whereas for the Center speakers in the Prussian debates it is the Church whose rights are being violated (and *thus* the rights of Catholic citizens), for Catholic speakers in the other two countries it is "our" or "my" rights as citizen(s) that are being threatened; the Church is not represented by them as an interlocutor of the State.

For the proponents in these debates of a sovereign mandate of the State in national education, religion, to have a role in the school of the nation, had to be assimilable to a shared national (but also universal humanist) culture, which they termed "modern society" or "modern civilization" or, in Prussia, *Kultur*. According to their opponents, the nature and role of religion did not allow the State to have a sovereign mandate in education. They agreed that the modern State could not adopt a religion, but that meant that the State had to have another role in modern society: not a "perfectionist" role, with the goal of "congruence", in which the State is responsible to ensure that citizens are instilled with virtues deemed necessary for participation in the nation-state, but a "protectionist" role, in which the State is responsible for guaranteeing the constitutional and legal conditions for a "modus vivendi", so that a plurality of visions of the common good can compete on the basis of the constitutional freedom and equality of citizens (Wolterstorff 2012; Rosenblum/Post 2002).[2] This shift in paradigm from a focus on the relationship between Church and State to a focus on the relationship between State and society/citizens is more ambiguous in the discourse of the Catholic Center in the Prussian debates; nevertheless, key elements appear that suggested possibilities for another solution than that of the Christian State (still defended by the Prussian conservatives).[3]

"DIE KIRCHE HAT KEINE KULTUR-MISSION MEHR". A JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STATE'S EDUCATIONAL MANDATE

Common to the argumentation of liberals in the Prussian or Dutch debates or of republicans in the French debates is the claim that only the State can lead the education of the nation, whatever subordinate role may or may not be left for the Church or religious organizations. This is because the State is the only comprehensive organism or institution that represents the Nation. The sovereignty of the State in the school (whether the common public school, as in France and the Netherlands, or the confessional State school, as in Prussia) is an essential means to realize the goal of national unity: overcoming religious particularism through shaping citizens who have a shared loyalty and a shared vision of the common good.

Speakers in the Prussian and Dutch debates point to confessional zeal as causing divisions in the Nation. Dutch liberals represent these divisions as a hindrance to expanding the benefits of education (inefficient schools) but also as keeping alive the flame of intolerance. According to Prussian liberals such as Virchow and Lasker, the Church admittedly once had a leading role in the shaping of culture/civilization, because its activities were for the benefit of society as a whole. Since it became dominated by "ultramontanism" and religious "particularism", it is no longer a reliable partner of the State in serving the interests of the Nation. Thus, Virchow states, the Church no longer serves culture/civilization, but its particularist interests: "die kath. Kirche [hat] gegenwärtig keine Kultur-Mission mehr" (*Staat oder Geistlichkeit* 1872: 17).

But the greatest threat to national unity is represented in all three countries as "clericalism", which is defined in the debates as the ambition of the Church to impose its authority on the temporal domain, the domain of the State. The Gallican Church used to defend the sovereignty of the French State, according to republicans such as Ferry or Spuller, but the "ultramontane" Church leaves its proper domain, the spiritual, to meddle with temporal affairs and try to regain its influence over "la société civile". Liberals in Prussia likewise criticize the Church's departure from what they describe as its proper sphere of saving souls to "agitate" in the political domain. The constitutional independence of the Catholic Church in Prussia is represented as a potential risk to the State, because, unlike in the past, it is now free to pursue other goals than those of the State (for example, resisting German language policies in the Polish-speaking territories). Dutch liberals such as Kappeyne, while reserving their most explicit criticism for the

2 The categories of "congruence" (which demands that "common norms be inculcated all the way down") vs "modus vivendi" ("elements of civil society bring their own distinct principled reasons for cooperation to bear in justifying government") are placed by Rosenblum and Post on a spectrum for "evaluating how government and civil society may be accommodated" (2002: 14-15).

3 I leave out the role of the Prussian conservatives for the purposes of this paper, since they represented views that had no parallel in the French and Dutch debates I am analyzing. I would argue, nevertheless, that their presence in parliament (perhaps more than what they said) had a significant influence on the dynamics of the Prussian debates (and the ambiguities in the discourse of the Catholic Center).

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Catholic Church, see Protestant clergy as having had a similar tendency to want to "rule" in the proper domain of the State. Since for all these speakers, there is no question that the (common) school is the domain of the State and a mirror of the constitution of the Nation, the Church cannot possibly have authority in this domain, in the interests of the unity of the Nation and the sovereignty of the State.

The solution to this problem is presented in the Netherlands and France as the "neutral" school, in Prussia at the very least the subjection of confessional instruction to the supervision of the State in order to exclude polemics from the school. Dutch liberals define the "neutral" school as a non-confessional school that, while acknowledging its Christian inspiration, inculcates "Christian virtues" in universal terms so as to be acceptable to citizens of all persuasions (such as the Golden Rule). For French republicans the school must be "laïc" (religiously neutral). But even in the French debates, it is the supernatural, revelatory claims of Catholicism/Christianity that make it impossible to allow religion in the school. René Goblet, for example, has no objections to the "doctrine spiritualiste" that has, he says, for generations governed the education of the *Université*. He explains why: "elle demande sa justification aux seules lumières de la raison, […] elle fonde ses croyances dans l'âme et dans l'infini sur la conscience universelle et non pas sur le surnaturel et la révélation" (Sénat 1886a: 129). The liberals in Prussia generally avoid offering an alternative to confessional religion in these debates; however, Gneist (in 1872) insists on the importance of religious dogma not being separated from *Wissenschaft* in the school to avoid polemics, and Virchow asks why an "allgemeines humanes Wesen" cannot be taught in the school, allowing for individuals to make a confessional choice later on (*Schulantrag* 1889: 118). In spite of the different nuances, there is in all three countries the sense that, whatever the form of religion permitted in the school of the nation, its moral/ethical claims have to be accessible through universal reason and not dependent on the truth claims of revelatory religion.

The opposition, while recognizing the need for the State to be neutral, objects that a large part of the nation, for various reasons, does not have the option *not* to send their children to the State school. They are therefore in practice compelled to expose them to principles that, they argue, are certainly not neutral and will undermine their children's ethics and their Christian faith (in France and the Netherlands, only the socially privileged, they claim, can afford the extra burden of supporting a private school; in Prussia, they point out, there is no *Unterrichtsfreiheit*). Thus their freedom of conscience is being violated, they argue, as well as the constitutional equality of all citizens. This was the core of the argument also of a minority of—often politically prominent—liberal or republican speakers in the French and Dutch debates, who represented the proposals of majority liberals/republicans as undermining the liberal State.

Majority liberals/republicans respond that the sovereignty of the State in the school does not violate freedom of conscience, but is intended to protect it. This argument relies on a representation of the relation of the individual to religion that presupposes a divide not only between the public and private spheres but also between the religious and the political/civic self of the individual citizen. The Dutch liberal Goeman Borgesius' definition of "clericalism" expresses most lucidly this presupposition shared by the liberal and republican speakers in all three countries: "Clericalism lays hands not only on the religious, but on the *whole* person, also on the person as citizen and as political. […] As long as [the Church] succeeds in subjecting individuals to herself, she can in this way completely control not only religious, but also civic and political life" (Tweede Kamer 1878: 1005, my translation, emphasis his). Furthermore, the mass of believers, if not meddled with by political movements under the guise of religion, would have no objection to the public school, as it does not offend their religious principles or their exercise of religion. This argument is based on a representation of religion as being essentially about being able to pray, participate in religious rituals/worship and live a pious life; as Jules Ferry describes the Catholic population: "cette masse croyante et fidèle qui prie comme ses pères ont prié" (Chambre 1879: 5725).

In short, for liberal and republican proponents of the State's mandate in education, religion can only play a constructive role in the public sphere if it can be assimilated to a universal humanist culture. If it is based on divine revelation, it must ei-ther remain in the private sphere or submit its activities to the judgment of the State when it enters the public sphere. There is no apparent acknowledgement that the believer's religious principles may apply to the practice of citizenship.

"L'ETAT N'A AUCUNE AUTORITÉ POUR DÉCRÉTER UN CODE DE MORALE". A JUSTIFICATION FOR A PLURALIST EDUCATION SYSTEM

While prepared to defend their confessional identity when necessary, both Catholic and Protestant speakers consistently depict the conflict as being, not between the confessions, but between Christianity and "modernism" ("heathenism" in Prussia). They depict the danger of the "neutral" school not in the risk of their children coming into contact with the other confession, but in the risk of their children being damaged by the worldview they ascribe to "modernism", which, they argue, has socio-ethical consequences. By "modernism" they do not mean "progress" as such; on the contrary, "progress" has in principle a positive valence with them no less than with their opponents. In fact, French Catholic speakers, including royalists, insist on their right to identify themselves with "modern society". The harm they see in "modernism" as a worldview is that it cannot provide a foundation for morality because it is, they claim, based on a materialist, naturalist presupposition, which, they argue, logically leads to egoism, the right of the strongest, violence and finally nihilism (social democracy is cited in the Dutch and Prussian debates as the logical consequence of the "modern" worldview). It will destroy the faith of their children and thus not only their eternal but

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also their temporal happiness and wellbeing, but it will also, they warn, destroy the foundations of society and the State. A recurring argument is that ethics and thus education is never neutral, and a neutral State does not have the moral authority to choose an ethical foundation for education in the school. As Chesnelong argues in the French Senate: "Au nom de qui […] donnera-t-il à cette morale une autorité qui en assure à la fois l'efficacité et le respect? […L]'Etat n'a aucune autorité pour décréter un code de morale" (Sénat 1886a:126).

In all three countries they argue that Christianity has a crucial role to play in State and society, and they represent this role as ethical (not sacral). Without Christianity, they claim, the State has no ethical foundation and society founders. Christianity, with its orientation towards God and one's neighbor and teachings of self-denial and respect for authority, gives dignity and motivation to the individual, they explain, and thereby guarantees the stability and security of States and societies. When they contrast their beliefs to the beliefs they ascribe to "modernism/heathenism", they do so in terms of "Christianity" and not Catholicism or Protestantism. There is arguably even a certain repristination of Christianity in the discourse, in that they point to Christianity's influence in shaping civilization by combatting inequality, tyranny and slavery, "barbarism", etc. through the love of Christ and the gospel. What is crucial for them, moreover, is that Christianity can only have this influence insofar as it is "positive", i.e. based on truth claims founded on divine revelation, such as the belief in a personal God, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, life after death, judgment, and the gospel based on the cross and resurrection as historical facts. The term "positive Christianity" is used by both Catholics and Protestants in the Prussian and Dutch debates to distinguish from Christianity as associated with theological liberalism;[4] in the French debates the term is rarely used, but Catholic speakers' representation of Christianity is similar. They represent supernatural, revelatory religion and a relationship with a personal God as having authority in people's lives to shape their ethics in a way that no naturalist or even spiritualist morality can have. Since education led by the neutral State cannot be based on "positive Christianity", then it is all the more necessary, they argue, that parents have equitable access to alternatives so that they still have the freedom to raise Christian citizens.[5]

In the Prussian debates the Catholic speakers and their allies do not go into the same detail as is done in the other two settings to explain the consequences of "modernism/heathenism" for society and the individual. Their focus is primarily on the dangers of "heathenism" for the relationship between the State and citizens. If the State is sovereign in the school, even with regard to religious instruction, and there is no other equitable option for parents (no *Unterrichtsfreiheit*), then citizens are exposed to the "omnipotent State" (the State becomes "God", which for them is the modern version of "heathenism"). The Church needs to be independent in the school, at the very least in religious instruction, in order to act as a counter-balance to the State and thereby protect the freedom of religion of its adherents but also be an effective voice in society/culture. For example, in the 1889 debate in Prussia, the Center speakers Windthorst and Mosler point to the role of the Church in the "proclamation of the divine Word"—"Verkündigung des göttlichen Wortes", to cite Mosler (*Schulantrag* 1889: 78)—, which occurs not only from the pulpit but even more crucially, Mosler argues, in the religious instruction of youth in the school. This requires the independence of religion/the Church from the State. In the same debate, the Polish representative Stablewski points to the Church in Russia as an example of how the Church loses its effectivity as a moral influence in society when it becomes, as he terms it, a "Polizei-Institut" (in the sense of moral police) in the service of the State (ibid: 127). Thus, whereas in the Dutch and French debates, it is the parents' freedom of choice (on the basis of equal access to a school that represents their worldview) that counter-balances the "omnipotent State" and provides the space in society for critique and renewal, in the Prussian debates it is the independence of the Church from the State, in the absence of "freedom of education", that guarantees this possibility (the Hanoverian Lutheran Ludwig Brüel, a Center ally, discusses this in considerable detail in both 1872 and 1889).

None of the opposition in these debates (with the exception of Prussian Conservatives), not even Catholic royalists in France, demand or even express a wish for a return to the Christian *State*. The *nation* (*Volk/volk/pays*) may well be (overwhelmingly) Christian in their eyes, but the State is neutral and thus belongs to everyone. Their demand is not for the Christian State, but that the State should not use its power to, in their perspective, de-Christianize society. This discourse pattern is common to all three parliamentary contexts. The only speaker that explicitly welcomed the revival of the Christian State was the conservative Adolf Stöcker in the 1889 debate in Prussia, when he opposed Windthorst's demand to guarantee the independence of the Church at least in organizing religious instruction in the *Volksschule*. No parallel to Stöcker's position appears in either the French or the Dutch debates.

A common feature of the discourse in all three sets of debates is that, while the confessional speakers still depict the nation as being (overwhelmingly) Christian, their representations of religion and the role of the Church do not fit into the paradigm of a national or State religion. They speak of religion and the Church as representing claims that can be accepted or rejected—and citizens are entirely free to reject them. The Catholic Church only has authority over its own members, Catholics remind their hearers, and they insist that those who object to its authority are always at liberty (and should be honest enough) to leave the Church. The Church is thus separated from the State but is also no longer identical with society (as in the 'sacral society' of pre-modern Europe). It returns—in the discourse!—to being the 'ecclesia' (a group of persons who assemble in obedience to the proclamation

4 This is not to be confused with the "positives Christentum" of Nazi ideology.

5 This discourse challenging the claim that the State can guarantee the neutrality of the school by replacing religious instruction with the inculcation of a universal code of morality could be read in the light of Böckenförde's discussion of the problem summarized in his well-known dictum: "Der freiheitliche, säkularisierte Staat lebt von Voraussetzungen, die er selbst nicht garantieren kann" (1991: 112).

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of the Word, in order to go back into society and live it out as citizens; cf. Verduin 1976). They thus argue for freedom for all citizens to compete in the shaping of society—yes, they insist, even social democrats, though they believe their influence will destroy society—, as long as religious citizens and organizations have the same freedom as the rest to be a source of renewal in society. This is true of Catholic discourse even in the Prussian debates, in spite of ambiguities that remain about the role of the Church.

To summarize, what is common to the discourse of the confessional speakers in all three countries (though certainly with different points of emphasis and different degrees of explicitness) is the concern, while continuing to assert the Christian foundations and identity of their culture/civilization/nation, to prevent religion from being assimilated to culture and thus being instrumentalized or marginalized by the State. For them, religion can only be a source of renewal in society if it remains a voice that, while shaping culture, remains in a certain sense independent of culture (transcendent) and free to be counter-cultural if the way culture is shaping is harmful for individuals, society and the State.

A NEW ROLE FOR THE STATE: ON THE BASIS OF WHICH SHARED VALUES?

What are the consequences in their discourse for the role of the State in society? According to Catholic and orthodox Protestant speakers—but also the minority of liberals and republicans who shared their concerns with regard to the "omnipotent State" and freedom—, the State is responsible, not to shape society/culture, but to ensure that competition between visions of the common good—agonism—follows *rules* (Fairclough/Fairclough 2012: 27-28, citing Mouffe) that guarantee the freedom and equality of all citizens. In practice this means for them (with declinations according to the national context) some sort of pluralism in the education system. Does this change of role for the State mean that life together in society/the State is possible without citizens being educated according to a shared set of values? There are plenty of elements in the discourse, especially in the Dutch and French debates, but more indirectly also in the Prussian debates, to demonstrate that Catholic and orthodox Protestant speakers believed this was possible: 1) They could have all the virtues necessary for this pluralist system to work and 2) these virtues could be inculcated just as well, indeed even better, in the context of Christian education, so that it was not necessary to send all future citizens to the same school in order for them to learn the virtues necessary for participation in the modern State and modern society.

In the French debates one virtue that has a prominent place not given in the other two settings—although not entirely absent—is "patriotic unity", which both Catholics and dissenting republicans insist is the only kind of unity that can be aspired to in a society based on the principles of freedom and equality. To quote Bardoux, a dissenting republican (*centre gauche*): "[N]ous voulons enfin conserver à ce pays-ci son unité patriotique […] car une autre est impossible" (Chambre 1879: 1539). Even for Catholic royalists, this patriotic unity—although motivated by their religion ("Dieu et la France")—is indifferent to the flag, royalist or republican, under which it sacrifices its blood for France.

The speakers demanding a pluralist education system demonstrate in their discourse that they do not consider agonism as necessarily harmful for society or a threat to the State. (On this point a minority of liberals and republicans in the Dutch and French debates explicitly agree, some even arguing that it is a sign of a healthy democracy.) While some royalists in the French debates could be interpreted as regretting agonism in society, they argue that, though the Revolution is to blame, there is no just solution, now that this disunity has been introduced, except on the basis of freedom and equality (cf. Boyer, Bourgeois and Baudry d'Asson in 1879).

They hold themselves to the values of respect for authority, regardless of who is in power, respect for the constitution and obedience to the law, as well as non-violence and commitment to the democratic (parliamentary) process. According to Wolterstorff, "[a] liberal democracy survives as long as those who lose the vote think it's better to lose the vote than destroy the system. Its survival does not depend on making anybody shape up to anything other than the formal requirements of the system itself" (2012: 50-51). They demand of themselves and their opponents the willingness to place oneself in the other's shoes, listen to the other's reasons, and expose one's own reasons—according to Stout (2004) and Galston (2002), postures that respond to the requirements of civility and public reason in democratic discourse. They require from the State that it should respect and enforce the constitutional freedom and equality of all citizens, based on the presumption (until otherwise proven) that they are mature, responsible citizens. In their discourse, all these values—respect for authority and one's neighbor, freedom and equality as human beings, individual responsibility—find their reason and motivation in Christianity (the connection is at various points explicitly made in the French and Dutch debates), so that they see no reason why they must adopt a "modern" worldview in order to be able to adapt to "modern society"; their own religion provides them with all the resources they need.

CONCLUSION

In the history of Europe up to this period, a "perfectionist" view of the State, at least in practice, had tended to dominate, whether based on traditional Christendom or modern humanist ideals—even though the idea of the "protectionist" State began to develop already in the wake of the European 'wars of religion' (Wolterstorff 2012: 1ff). The debates I am analyzing suggest that the tendency towards the "perfectionist" State was still alive and well in the *Kulturkampf*

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era among liberals and republicans responsible for initiating the legislative oeuvre intended to strengthen the role of the State in education. On the other hand, insurmountable difference with regard to definitions of religion and its role in shaping culture made possible another discourse that presupposed a reinterpretation not only of the role of the Church, but also of the role of the State in society.

The discourse of Prussian Catholics does not demonstrate this shift as clearly as that of Catholics in France and the Netherlands (the latter complemented by that of orthodox Protestants), even though significant elements are present. The Center in Prussia chose, according to themselves as a matter of political realism, to defend what they argued was the status quo regarding the role of the Church, instead of demanding the freedom of instruction (*Unterrichtsfreiheit*) they insisted was promised in the constitution (and which they seemed to view as more consistent with the modern State). I would hazard the hypothesis that this can help to explain why explicit discussion of the role of religion in society/culture plays comparatively such a minor role in the Prussian debates. In both the French and Dutch parliamentary contexts an official role for the Church vis-à-vis the State was not even 'sayable', so that the interlocutors of the State were citizens defending their freedom of conscience. The official role accorded to the Church by not only conservatives but also liberals in Prussia (under the leadership of the State, be it understood) meant that the Prussian debates were mostly focused on the role of the Church in State and society. Since for the Center and its allies the independence of the Church from the State was the guarantee of citizens' freedom of religion, they only had to justify the role of the Church, rather than give "religious" reasons for their demand for parental freedom of choice in education as part of a process of "liberal arguing" and "democratic bargaining" (Hashemi 2009: 26-27, citing Alfred Stepan).

Catholic and orthodox Protestant speakers in all three sets of debates were not demanding a monopoly of culture, but rather were proposing solutions to enable competing worldviews to exist together on the basis of freedom. These solutions represented different degrees of "organized uncertainty" and only in the Netherlands were there by the late 1880s enough liberals prepared to accept this "organized uncertainty".[6] In their beleaguered position, "organized uncertainty" was (had become) for Catholics and orthodox Protestants as political minorities an acceptable solution to the problem of a heterogeneous society with competing visions of the common good. But for the majority of liberals in Prussia and republicans in France it was not yet thinkable; for the majority the only safe solution was the privatization of religion.

6 The term was used by Till van Rahden in his presentation/discussion "Démocratie, une forme de vie menacée", moderated by Armin Owzar (Maison Heinrich Heine, Paris, 19 April 2022). It was introduced by Adam Przeworski, who states: "Democratization is an act of subjecting all interests to competition, of institutionalizing uncertainty. The decisive step towards democracy is the devolution of power from a group of people to a set of rules" (1991: 14).

Parliamentary Debates

(chronological order)

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