

## INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Academic Organisers: **Olivier Roy** | RSCAS/EUI  
**Kristina Stoeckl** | RSCAS/EUI and University of Vienna  
**Maria Birnbaum** | SPS/EUI  
**Lois Lee** | UCL  
**Aurélia Bardon** | UCL  
**Cécile Laborde** | UCL

Villa La Fonte– Via delle Fontanelle, 18  
San Domenico di Fiesole

19-20 January 2015

### ■ PROGRAMME

#### Monday 19 January

09.30-10.00 WELCOME BY THE ORGANIZERS

10.00-11.00 **Panel I: On “Religion” in Religious Pluralism**

Chair: **Maria Birnbaum**

Accommodating Religious Difference: A Pluralist Account of Conceptions of Justice  
**Stephen de Wijze** and **Garvan Walshe**

Political-Theological Pluralism

**John Ackerman**

11.00-11.30 COFFEE BREAK

11.30-12.30 **Panel I: continued**

Why Religion’s Specialness is Not So Special after All: Debating the Sources of  
Conflictual Pluralism

**Paolo Costa**

Religion Outside the Bounds of Reason

**Volker Kaul**

12.30-14.00 LUNCH

14.00-15.30 **Panel II: Religion and Public Justification**

Chair: **Aurélia Bardon**



The Normative Underpinnings of the Asymmetrical Role of Secular and Religious Reasons in Public Justification

**Nemanja Todorović**

Challenging the Topos of “Religion and Violence” in Liberal Political Theory

**Ulrike Spohn**

(Religious) Pluralism, Children and Harm: A Challenge for Liberal Neutrality

**Bouke de Vries**

15.30-16.00 COFFEE BREAK

16.00-17.30 **Panel III: *Dialogue With(in) Religion***

Chair: **Kristina Stoeckl**

Hyper Pluralism and the Call to Dialogue

**Benedict Coleridge**

Lost in Translation: A Critique on Habermas’ Postsecular “Translation Proviso”

**Marthe Kerkwijk**

Christian Pluralism, Moral Conflicts and the Strategic Translation of Conservative Religious Arguments: A Critical Application of Habermas’ Translation Proviso

**Anja Hennig**

## **Tuesday 20 January**

09.30-11.00 **Panel IV: *Freedom of Religion***

Chair: **Kristina Stoeckl**

Religious Exemptions, Freedom of Conscience and Justice

**Dara Salam**

Egalitarian Theories of Religious Freedom and the Black Box of Religion

**Anna Blijdenstein**

Freedom for Me and, Perhaps, You – But Surely Not Them? Attitudes to New Religions in Contemporary Democracies

**Eileen Barker**

11.00-11.30 COFFEE BREAK

11.30-13.00 **Panel V: *Law and Religion***

Chair: **Ronan McCrea**

Two Conceptions of “Living Together” in Religiously Pluralistic Communities: A European Human Rights Law Perspective

**Ilias Trispiotis**

Conscientious Objection to Same-sex Marriage and Partnerships: The Limits of Toleration in Pluralistic Liberal Democracies

**Stijn Smet**

Religious Pluralism and the Law: Be Wary of Noxious Compromises

**Élise Rouméas**

13.00-14.30 LUNCH

14.30-16.30 **Panel VI: *Pluralism and Catholicism***

Chair: **Lois Lee**

Liberalism and Religion: On Separation and Anticlericalism

**Sebastian Rudas**

Limits of Transgression: Religious Pluralism in a Religiously Homogeneous Society

**Agnieszka Pasięka**

Italy and the Controversies around Religion-Related Issues: Overemphasizing Differences

**Alberta Giorgi and Luca Ozzano**

What and Where is Religious Pluralism in Lithuania?

**Milda Ališauskienė**

16.30-17.00 COFFEE BREAK

17.00-18.00 Discussion and concluding remarks

**Olivier Roy**

## ■ ABSTRACTS FOR THE WORKSHOP

### *INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM*

19-20 January 2015

**John Wolfe Ackerman** || Birkbeck, University of London || ackerman@u.northwestern.edu

#### *Political-Theological Pluralism*

**Abstract** – This paper will investigate resources within ‘religion’—in theology—for cultivating and sustaining a plural politics capable of acknowledging and actively accommodating religious pluralism as a manifestly, legitimately political phenomenon. Such an approach goes against the grain of discussions that have become entrenched in recent years in which ‘political theology’ is taken to be a fundamentally unitary force, one that shores up sovereign ‘political’ power by appeal to extra-political, ‘religious’ absolutes. In contrast, I advance a model for a plural political theology (or, better, plural political theologies). I do so by recovering aspects of German-Jewish political-theological resistance to the German philosophical tradition’s thinking of the Rechtsstaat in the 19th and early 20th centuries (which is itself a Christian political theological tradition, from Hegel to Carl Schmitt), including responses to that tradition’s consistently deprecatory view of ‘Jewish legalism’, illuminating an emphatically pluralistic Jewish critical political-theological alternative. This Jewish political theology consists in everyday practices of gratitude for the given, encounter with the neighbour, and ongoing, agonistic negotiation of laws that are never simply the product of autonomous, human self-governance. Excavating it can help point the way beyond the currently entrenched sacred-secular divide and toward a more pluralistic understanding of both theology and politics.

**Milda Ališauskienė** || Vytautas Magnus University || m.alisauskiene@smf.vdu.lt

#### *What and Where is Religious Pluralism in Lithuania?*

**Abstract** – This paper approaches the problem of religious pluralism in Lithuania, discusses the notion of religious pluralism in the country whose population is mainly Roman Catholic. What kind of religious pluralism was implemented in the country in the early nineties after the establishment of democratic Lithuanian state? What did the implemented model of religious pluralism promised and what actually it provided for Lithuanian society and its certain groups? The analysis of legal acts, various Lithuanian population survey data, participant observation in the religious field of the country and interviews with members of religious minorities allow author to conclude that religious pluralism that was implemented in Lithuania was challenged by new religions and spiritual groups. These challenges were met with uncertainty and suspiciousness by population and these attitudes did not change during almost two decades. Recent social research data supports author’s idea that the type of religious pluralism that was implemented in Lithuania in the early nineties increased division within society, marginalized certain religious and spiritual groups and misrepresented the actual picture of religious field of the country.

**Eileen Barker** || London School of Economics / INFORM || e.barker@lse.ac.uk

#### *Freedom for Me and, Perhaps, You – But Surely Not Them? Attitudes to New Religions in Contemporary Democracies*

**Abstract** – Throughout history new religious movements (NRMs) had been treated with suspicion and fear. Although most contemporary democracies do not throw members of NRMs to the lions, burn them at the stake or plunge them into boiling oil, they have ways and means of making it quite clear that pluralism and freedom of religion have their limits. Criteria required for registering as a religion or gaining charitable status can militate against recognising NRMs as having a legal status. Interfaith organisations, which proclaim that there should be free dialogue between different faiths, frequently exclude NRMs from their membership. Legislators may declare that all citizens are equal before the law, yet the law may be differentially applied when it comes to the NRMs – thus, the police have turned a blind eye when converts have been illegally kidnapped and held against their will by “deprogrammers”. This paper will explore some of the ways in which the expansion of pluralism insofar as it encompasses the arrival of NRMs has led, in a number of situations, to (sometimes successful) attempts to restricting the very pluralism that is overtly celebrated.

**Anna Blijdenstein** || University of Amsterdam || a.e.e.blijdenstein@uva.nl

***Egalitarian Theories of Religious Freedom and the Black Box of Religion***

**Abstract** – Many contemporary political theorists writing about religious freedom argue that in a pluralist world religious convictions should not be treated as uniquely special. Cecile Laborde calls these theorists ‘egalitarian theorists of religious freedom’. When discussing questions of free exercise and establishment liberal egalitarians do not solely focus on religion and religious beliefs. The category of what is protected by religious freedom is extended by analogizing or comparing religion with other beliefs, commitments and identities. that merits special consideration and protection. In this article I will discuss two egalitarian theories of religious freedom: that of John Rawls, presented in *Political Liberalism* (2005) and that of Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure who depart from a Rawlsian framework, but criticize his chosen analogy of religion with ‘comprehensive doctrines’ by claiming all ‘convictions of conscience’ merit special protection Laborde rightly states that the analogies chosen by both Rawls and Taylor and Maclure show that these theorists ‘underestimate the communal, cultural dimensions of religion” and betray a Protestant bias’ (Laborde 2012). In the second part of the article I will discuss Laborde’s critique, but will also extend it by arguing that the problem of both theories not lie solely in the chosen analogies. By looking more closely at both theories it becomes clear that they contain several different representations of religion, some of which rely on implicit theological assumptions, others of which are related to a historically specific construction of religious conflict. Finally I will argue that to completely open ‘the blackbox of religion’ we should also look at representations of specific religions, like Islam.

**Benedict Coleridge** || University of Oxford || benedict.coleridge@balliol.ox.ac.uk

***A Politics of Learning: Dialogue and Engaged Understanding***

**Abstract** – This paper positions dialogue between religious traditions (inter-faith dialogue) as an essential component of modern pluralism. It considers the challenge presented by the practice of dialogue to the standard liberal account of toleration as put forward by prominent contemporary liberal theorists: that toleration can undergird modern pluralism despite mutual incomprehension between citizens of different moral or faith traditions. Against this view, I argue that tolerance without understanding is insufficient to counteract the fissiparous tendencies innate in modern ‘hyper-pluralism’. Toleration is thought of as being instrumentally valuable because it offers the prospect of social harmony. This paper argues that tradition-constituted dialogue offers a challenge to post-Lockean liberal toleration through the social practices that it cultivates, particularly those of translation and interpretation, which are oriented towards the goal of understanding. In this sense, dialogue rejects the ‘silence’ of toleration and the maintenance of an epistemic gulf between the citizen and the ‘moral stranger’. Moreover, it establishes spaces in which more expansive efforts at communication are realised, beyond the scope allowed for by ‘public reasoning’ of the Rawlsian variety. Some theorists express concern that to endorse ‘respect’ as a principle of communal life would be for the community to ‘undertake to teach each citizen... what to think.’ But, on the contrary, dialogue, of which ‘respect’ is a constitutive principle, suggests the importance of reciprocal teaching and learning.

**Paolo Costa** || Fondazione Bruno Kessler || pacosta@fbk.eu

***Why Religion’s Specialness is Not So Special after All: Debating the Sources of Conflictual Pluralism***

**Abstract** – When one reflects on the disruptive potentials of religious pluralism in a secular context, the key theoretical question that, for understandable reasons, one always tries to avoid, concerns the rationale underlying the alleged dangerous, if not intractable, character of religious beliefs. The reasons for understanding religions as especially threatening, if they hold at all, must reside in the very nature of the religious experience. What is a religion and what makes it special? In my paper, I will discuss whether a reliable definition of religion is available independently of the specific historical trajectory of Latin Christianity in the West. In particular, I will focus on three (disputable) aspects of religion that primarily disturb the secular critics of religion: (1) its being an epistemically inadequate theory of everything; (2) its close connection with rituals and practices; (3) its tendency to arouse deep emotions. Seen from this perspective, religion actually is the “Other” of the standard modern understanding of what is rationally manageable. In the conclusion of my paper, however, I will argue that the dilemmas which, in a modern secular perspective, are supposed to affect religion, do not concern so much religion per se, but the human condition more generally. Thus, the alleged specialness of religion, in the end, will turn out to be less a brute fact than a projection of an inadequate vision of human plurality and of the resources necessary to recognize it, before governing it.

**Anja Hennig** || Viadrina University Frankfurt || ahennig@europa-uni.de

***Christian Pluralism, Morality Politics and the Strategic Translation of Conservative Religious Arguments: A Critical Application of Habermas' Translation Proviso***

**Abstract** – This paper focuses on conservative religious arguments in the public sphere. It does so by linking political theory with comparative public policy research. Theoretical point of departure is Jürgen Habermas' concept of post-secular societies to which the "institutional translation proviso" is central: Though Habermas acknowledges the public presence of religious citizens, he argues that religious arguments should be translated into a secular language before entering the public sphere. The aim of this paper is to contrast Habermas' "institutional translation proviso" with findings from empirical studies on the public "secular" reasoning of European Catholic and American Evangelical organizations in the course of debates over abortion and gay marriage. It argues that during such moral conflicts, translation among conservative religious citizens is intentional. Accordingly, translation does not occur as a cooperative process à la Habermas enhancing mutual learning and understanding but as a strategy to communicate and cooperate with non-religious conservative minded decision-makers. This implies a perspective on religious pluralism, which emphasizes the (often overlooked) divide between moral-politically liberal and conservative minded – in this case – Christian groups. In terms of refining Habermas' concept, the paper concludes by suggesting that more emphasis is placed on identifiable religious arguments in an increasingly multi-cultural and transnational public sphere.

**Volker Kaul** || LUISS, Rome || kaul\_volker@hotmail.com

***What Makes a Fundamentalist? Metaphysics, Morality and Psychology***

**Abstract** – Although political discussions on pluralism are highly conflictual, the opposing parties share one fundamental assumption: The source of pluralism is reason; when people reflect upon the good life, morality or justice, they come quite justifiably to different conclusions. The disagreement between the parties concerns the origins and the limits of reason, and not cognitivism as such. Religion, however, seems to resist this cognitive interpretation. Typically, religions conceive faith as a gift impenetrable to reason. And in fact, religious commitments are not up for discussion, interpretation, compromise or revision. It is properly unthinkable for believers to question them. Commitments are simply there, categorically commanding the person. For a traditional Muslim woman, for example, it is utterly out of question to show herself bareheaded in public, she would rather die, literally. For some pious Muslim women even participation in the public sphere can give rise to a sense of humiliation. With regard to these cases, rationalists, who after all pursue an emancipatory agenda, can only shake their heads and consider believers to be some sort of victims, alienated, manipulated and exploited by their environment. The most they can do is to look for and promote liberal sources and forces in the respective religions, with the risk to further essentialize religions and accentuate the fastidious debates on the good Muslim, bad Muslim. The question I want to address is how we can be true pluralists with regard to religious people and accept and respect them exactly as they are. I am looking for an alternative for rational pluralism, that has shown its limits of integration in Europe and has brought about so much resentment in the postcolonial world. Accordingly, after individuating the problem of religion in constructivist theories, I am proposing a theory that distinguishes between the problem of pluralism and that of justice, similar to Rawls' original idea in A Theory of Justice.

**Marthe Kerkwijk** || Heythrop College, UCL || marthe.kerkwijk@heythrop.ac.uk

***Lost in Translation. A Critique on Habermas' "translation proviso"***

**Abstract** – Jürgen Habermas contends that only secular reasons can justify state coercion. However, he recognises our society as a postsecular society: religious plurality is here to stay. Furthermore, he takes on board Wolterstorff's objection to Rawls' position: it belongs to the religious beliefs of many religious citizens that they ought to base their political decisions on those beliefs. Therefore, Habermas proposes his translation proviso: religious citizens can use their religious reasons in the public arena, but beyond the institutional threshold they ought to be translated to secular reasons if they are to justify coercion. This process of translation from religious to secular language is the cooperative task of society as a whole, in Habermas' view. This process of translation "salvages" the relevant content from the religious reasons and results in secular reasons, which are neutral, that is, "equally accessible to all". Thus, religious as well as secular citizens can accept this requirement, Habermas argues. But can religious reasons be translated to secular reasons? Are secular reasons neutral in the sense Habermas has in mind? I will argue that translation is not possible without inviting Wolterstorff's objection again.

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**Alberta Giorgi** || Centro de Estudos Sociais – University of Coimbra || alberta.giorgi@gmail.com

***Italy and the Controversies around Religion-Related Issues: Overemphasizing Differences***

**Abstract** – In Italy, as in other European countries, the last decades have been characterized by harsh controversies around religion-related issues. Among them, some revolved around how to deal with non-Catholic religions: being Italy a religious quasi-monopoly, the debate was indeed intertwined with the debate about migration. Other debates were instead focused on issues related to the role of Christian values in the secular public sphere, and particularly on religious symbols, bioethics and sexuality. Our paper exposes the preliminary results of a three-years research on the Italian ethical-religious debates, to be published in volume by Routledge in 2015, based on the analysis of a wide database of printed media. It pays attention particularly to how the debates have been framed by the different actors and how their coalitions changed in time and according to the different issues. In relation to the meaning of religious pluralism in contemporary Italy, the research shows on the one hand that political actors have different views of issues related to pluralism according to the values founding their worldview; on the other hand, they are ready to shift their allegiances and to look for a compromise or rather to frame the debates as struggles between non negotiable values according to their perception of short-term political interests. In other words, we show how the setting influences the forms of the political debates and their outcomes.

**Agnieszka Pasięka** || Polish Academy of Sciences || aga.pasieka@ispan.waw.pl

***Limits of Transgression: Religious Pluralism in a Religiously Homogeneous Society***

**Abstract** – My paper addresses the question of the limits of religious pluralism and the challenges of maintaining pluralism in a religiously homogenous society. Drawing on the materials gathered in course of an ethnographic study of a multireligious community in rural Poland, I aim to highlight paradoxes inscribed into the practice and discourse of pluralism, showing how the undermining of some hierarchical relations can lead to the establishment of other ones and how demands of recognition by minorities often translate into performing exclusion. More specifically, the paper explores the ways in which religious minorities respond to the dominant narrative of the association between Polishness and Catholicism. In so doing, it introduces the concept of “hierarchical pluralism,” by which I mean an arrangement of social relations that allows plurality while at the same time establishing one ethnic or religious group as the dominant and norm-defining one. Exploring the mechanisms whereby hierarchical pluralism is perpetuated, the paper demonstrates the powerfulness of the discourses and practices which reconfigure religion as “culture” and “tradition” and, by defining the bond between Polishness and Catholicism as “natural,” reproduce ethno-religious hierarchies. A close examination of the Polish case-study leads to a reflection on a broader European context.

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***Religious Pluralism and the Law: Be Wary of Noxious Compromises***

**Sebastian Rudas** || LUISS Rome || sebrudas@gmail.com

***Liberal Secularism: Pluralist and Anticlerical***

**Abstract** – The principle of church-state separation plays a decisive role in the success—or failure—of states’ commitment to freedom and equality. Different interpretations of the principle have been motivated by contextual circumstances such as the specific features of pluralism (e.g. whether it is religious, cultural, or moral) and power relations between religious and secular institutions. In some cases, it is interpreted as an antireligious principle, which might lead to failures in protecting freedom. In other cases, it is interpreted as an inclusive pluralist principle, which leads to friendly environments for pluralism to flourish. In this paper, I argue that it is also interpreted in anticlerical terms. The latter interpretation, I claim, is necessary in contexts where a politically dominant church controls the institutions of the state as a means to impose its moral worldview. I argue that the anticlerical interpretation of the principle of church-state separation can be liberal. I illustrate these interpretations by comparing how they have crystallized in designing the institutions of education in the French conception of republican laïcité, the Anglo-Saxon conception of liberal pluralism, and some versions of liberal anticlericalism in Latin America.

**Dara Salam** || LUISS, Rome/King's College || dara986@hotmail.com

### ***Religious Exemptions, Freedom of Conscience and Justice***

**Abstract** – Can general liberal principles justify religious exemptions and accommodations? I argue that the liberals' contention for religious exemptions contradicts their own principal argument for consensus on the basis of principles of justice. The archetypical liberal argument is the one by Rawls who argues that citizens would reasonably agree to certain principles of justice only when they are ignorant of their substantial value commitments or, in Rawls's language, of their comprehensive moral, religious and philosophical doctrines. Although some liberals would argue that religious exemptions are required by justice as they are claims of justice, such as the claim for not working on religious days, these claims are actually justified on the basis of freedom of religion and conscience and not justice. Even though it seems as if it is a proven argument that freedom of conscience is one of the liberal rights, it is however not clear if exemptions of certain religious practices from the law can be justified by appeal to the freedom of religion or conscience. If liberal rights can guarantee different kinds of freedom for individuals in their conceptions of the good, practices and value commitments, exemptions then cannot be granted on the basis of the same principles. In fact, either other principles are needed, from the outset, to grant certain accommodations and exemptions to religious people for them to support the secular law or these exemptions have to be fair to all religious and nonreligious citizens.

**Stijn Smet** || Ghent University || stijne.smet@ugent.be

### ***Conscientious Objection to Same-se Marriage and Partnerships: The Limits of Toleration in Pluralistic Liberal Democracies***

**Abstract** – In recent years, a number of high profile court cases on service delivery to LGBT persons in Europe have dealt with seeming conflicts between individual freedom of religion, on the one hand, and the right to equality, on the other. In the United Kingdom, cases like *Ladele v. London Borough of Islington* and *Bull v. Hall* have put the apparent conflict in sharp relief. In resolving these cases, the UK courts have clearly sided with the right to equality of LGBT persons, thereby indicating that – in a liberal democracy – respect for religious pluralism ends where equality begins. In the Netherlands, however, similar issues have been treated quite differently. There, the Council of State has emphasised the compatibility of both sets of rights, holding that the authorities should organise their public service delivery in such a way as to keep both the religious rights of civil servants and the equality rights of LGBT service users entirely intact. The difference in approach suggests that the courts in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom may be employing radically different (post-)secular approaches to the limits of religious pluralism in contemporary liberal democracies. In the paper, I will analyse where their difference in approach lies, exactly, and how it can be explained.

**Ulrike Spohn** || University of Münster || ulrike.spohn@uni-muenster.de

### ***Challenging the Topos of "Religion and Violence" in Liberal Political Theory***

**Abstract** – In the normative debate about the role of religion in politics, theories of political liberalism advocate special restrictions for religious reasons in public deliberation. The primary justification for this 'public reason-view' is the claim that religious reasons lack general intelligibility and acceptability. Political liberals argue that citizens who have recourse to religious reasons in public debate violate the principle of equal respect by denying their fellow citizens reasons which all can understand and accept. While this respect argument for a duty of public reason has been intensely discussed, there is a second argument in liberal political thinking which has received less attention in the debate so far. This security argument suggests that special restrictions for religious reasons in public are necessary and justified because religion bears a special potential for violence and thus poses a special threat to public safety. I will point out that this security argument is based on a general, essentialist theory of religion. I will first elucidate the argument and subsequently critically analyze it from four different perspectival angles: I will touch on historical, methodological, empirical and social theoretical aspects. I will conclude that the security argument for a duty of public reason is unconvincing. Moreover, I ask why the topos of 'religion and violence' proves so persistent. I will argue that this persistence can be explained by looking at the security argument as an expression of a deep-seated cultural pattern of meaning which serves the function of constituting and preserving the sense of a (superior) European identity based on the notion of 'secular modernity'. The proposal especially connects to theme 1 of the call for papers in that it focuses on the idea that religion or religious pluralism, by bearing a special potential for violence, is different from other types of pluralism and thus in need of a specific solution (i.e. religion-specific restrictions for public presence and political participation). In this way, questions of inclusion/exclusion are addressed. Moreover, the proposal touches on central aspects mentioned in theme 3 of the call when discussing the definition of religion inherent in liberal political theory and the latter's attempt to define the limits of religious pluralism along the lines of this definition.

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***The Normative Underpinnings of the Asymmetrical Role of Secular and Religious Reasons in Public Justification***

**Abstract** – Arguably, the dominant paradigm in the contemporary political theory endorses the following asymmetry regarding permissible justification of political power: Whereas a public justification based on secular reasons alone is (almost) always morally permissible, public justification based solely on religious reasons is (almost) always morally impermissible. The grounds for the asymmetry are usually understood as an implication of the commitment to (1) moral equality of persons in the circumstances of (2) deep doctrinal disagreement on matters of religion and morality. Many have objected that this possess an unfair burden on religious citizens, one that seems to require of them to compromise their fundamental loyalty to the religious creed. Others have objected that moral concerns of religious adherents cannot be exhaustively rendered in secular terms. And yet, the most devastating challenge to the dominant paradigm has been to question whether a plausible reading of (1) and (2) does mandate departure to secular reason, at all. I revisit some of the most prevalent arguments in favor of the asymmetry, focusing mostly on the so-called argument from respect. I conclude that (on its own) the argument from respect fails to provide unequivocal support for the asymmetry. In the end, I offer a tentative argument for the asymmetry which includes supplementing the respect argument with an epistemological component. I claim that the very fact of disagreement, conjoined with pervasive evidence drawn from research of experimental social psychology mandates reducing the credence with which one holds his belief, at least when one's actions may expose others to great risk. Since exercise of political power is just such a case, we are required to search for a common point of reference that can sustain debate on most matters of public concern. A portion of the so-called secular reasons suffices here.

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***Two Conceptions of 'Living Together' in Religiously Pluralistic Communities: A European Human Rights Law Perspective***

**Abstract** – What does a normative commitment to religious pluralism entail for the state responsibility to protect the public moral space where we all live? Religious pluralism culminates in plural forms of individual participation in our public moral space. Questions about whether social interaction and civility are inherently valuable and whether they can be enforced have recently come before the European Court of Human Rights in the *S.A.S. v France* case, where the Court held the burqa ban does not contravene pluralism (nor, in fact, the Convention) given that it is required by the ground rules of 'living together'. In my paper I will argue that a normative commitment to religious pluralism requires framing the issue not as a balancing exercise between freedom of religious manifestation and the rights of others, but as a question about whether, and to what extent, states can legitimately claim a distinct interest in protecting 'living together'. Grounding our understanding of pluralism on the fundamental moral principle that our common culture should be formed organically through individual ethical choices and not through collective action leads us to two different conceptions of the state interest in protecting 'living together': responsibility and conformity. I will analyse the two conceptions and argue that it is the responsibility, rather than the conformity, conception that is compatible with a normative commitment to religious pluralism.

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***(Religious) Pluralism, Liberal Neutralism, & Mandatory Vaccinations Schemes***

**Abstract** – Parents in many liberal societies choose not to have their children vaccinated against infectious diseases such as the measles, mumps, smallpox, polio, and whooping cough. Whilst some of these individuals object to mandatory vaccination schemes on religious grounds (for example, large groups of reformed pietists in The Netherlands argue that preventive health measures interfere with God's will), others believe vaccinations to be ineffective or even harmful for children (e.g. vaccination-skeptics in many countries believe that vaccinations do not just fail to protect against infectious diseases but also cause autism). Such resistance against vaccinations makes some liberals feel uneasy about making vaccinations compulsory for children. On the one hand, these liberals want to state to be neutral towards citizens' (reasonable) conceptions of the good by not justifying political decisions on the basis of controversial comprehensive (i.e. metaphysical and epistemological) views; on the other hand, they want to protect children from severe bodily harm. However, since the decision to make vaccination compulsory seems to rely on secular, scientific beliefs about the nature of harm and its prevention, it would appear that they have to choose between these desiderata or balance them. The aim of this paper is to show that the alleged tension between a liberal commitment to state neutrality and children's well-being here does not exist. Specifically, I argue that liberal justificatory neutrality does not provide reasons for resisting mandatory vaccination schemes.



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**Garvan Walshe** || European University Institute || [garvanwalshe@gmail.com](mailto:garvanwalshe@gmail.com)

***Accommodating Religious Difference: A Pluralist Account of Conceptions of Justice***

**Abstract** – Religious pluralism is fact of contemporary Western democratic societies which causes specific difficulties for liberal conceptions of justice. This paper argues that one of the difficulties is due to the monist premises underlying such accounts. Drawing on the work of Isaiah Berlin Stuart Hampshire and Bernard Williams, we argue that a better way of accommodating religious pluralism in liberal societies is to begin with the assumption that there are multiple political and social values which are incommensurable. This ‘deep pluralism’ means that conceptions of justice need to accommodate conflict rather than seek consensus and universally agreed principles. The paper begins with arguments for deep pluralism and the effects these have on two well-known traditions in theories of justice, namely libertarianism such as Nozick’s and liberalism such as Rawls’s. These traditions are reconceptualised, following and developing upon Hampshire’s argument, from the assumption of deep pluralism to show the advantages of seeking civility within conflict rather than the resolution of differences through agreed universal principles. We explore some of the criticisms raised against this and argue for the superiority of pluralist accounts of justice over their monist rivals.