Centre for the Study and Documentation of **Religions and Political Institutions in Post-Secular Society**
CSPS
University of Rome Tor Vergata

Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia

FONDAZIONE ROMA
TERZO SETTORE

Multiple Modernities and Global Post-Secular Society
Workshop at CSPS, University of Rome Tor Vergata
4-6 May 2011

Location: Sala del Dipartimento di Ricerche Filosofiche, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Via Columbia 1, I piano.

Program

4 May 2011

Arrival and dinner in the centre of Rome

5 May 2011, 10.00-13.00

Organizers' Welcome

Peter Wagner
"The modernity of "new societies": trajectories of post-Enlightenment non-European modernities"

Coffee break

Alessandro Ferrara
„From Multiple Modernities to Multiple Democracies"

Buffet lunch

14:30-17:30

Vincenzo Pace
"The Unbearable Lightness of Multiple Modernities: The Nigerian Laboratory"

Coffee break

Massimo Rosati
"The Turkish Laboratory: Alternative Modernity and Post-Secularism in Turkey"

Dinner in the centre of Rome

6 May 2011
10:00-13:00

Alexander Agadjanian
"Russia's Cursed Issues: Combining Belated Modernity with Revived Tradition"

Kristina Stoeckl
"European integration and Russian Orthodoxy: two multiple modernities perspectives"

Abstracts

Peter Wagner: 'The modernity of "new societies": trajectories of post-Enlightenment non-European modernities'

Focusing on South Africa and Brazil, this contribution will reflect on the modernity of those societies that emerged from colonial encounters, thus are shaped by European post-Enlightenment thought, but gain auto-interpretative and institutional shape in the response to the specificities of the respective colonial and post-colonial situation.

Vincenzo Pace: "The Unbearable Lightness of Multiple Modernities: The Nigerian Laboratory"

The paper will use the socio-religious laboratory of Nigeria in order to evaluate critically from an afro-european perspective the concept of multiple modernities.

Massimo Rosati: "The Turkish Laboratory: Alternative Modernity and the Post-Secular in Turkey"

It is well known that Turkey is a country in a state of flux. The ongoing transition from a Kemalist ideology to a post-Kemalist one has a deep impact on many different levels and domains of the Turkish national life. The Western-like profile of the Kemalist project of modernization is starting to leave room for alternative forms and understandings of modernity. From international relations and foreign policy to TV soap operas and fictions, just to mention two relevant and different examples, Turkey seems in search for herself. Part and parcel of this making of a new way to modernity is a revision of the idea of secularization and a move towards a new understanding of the place and role of religion(s) in national life. In other words, the shaping of an alternative form of modernity is parallel to a deep and highly contested revision of the Kemalist understanding of secularization. The paper will try to draw from the Turkish case some general consideration on the very idea of the postsecular, and its relationship with the notion of multiple modernities.

Alessandro Ferrara: "From Multiple Modernities to Multiple Democracies"

This paper aims at rethinking the "multiple modernities" thesis and exploring the possibility of using it as a background for a parallel thesis about "multiple democracies".

Concerning the "multiple modernities" theory, lines of tension will be explored between the direction of inquiry developed originally by Weber in his *Essays on the sociology of religion* (the great world religions divide into world-affirming ones, with low potential for rationalization, and world-rejecting ones, with higher potential for rationalization, and the latter further split into those which intimate a world-escaping mystical route for salvation and those which intimate a maximally rationalizing world-trasforming ascetic route for salvation) and the axial view endorsed by Jaspers, according to which the decisive transition occurs roughly during the same period in all religiously different contexts (regardless of the world-affirming or world-rejecting inclination of the various religious cultures and regardless of the mystical or ascetical route for salvation intimated by world-rejecting religions). Weber's line of thought will be shown to contain a strong evaluative dimension based on the "potential for rationalization of social life", an evaluative dimension which he uses cross-civilizationally as well as intra-civilizationally (e.g. the unfavorable assessment of the potential for rationalization of the Catholic, as opposed to Puritan, ethos).

In the second section of the paper, these different approaches to multiple modernities will be brought to bear on a question of political philosophy. Is full-fledged democracy with a democratic spirit, as distinguished from democracy as procedures and rituals that can be paid lip service to, consonant with one and only one ethos of modernity? If we reconstruct a genealogy of the cultural presupposition of democracy (a passion for the common good, a passion for equality which translates today into a passion for equal recognition, a passion for individuality and a passion for openness), does this background resonate with one and only one specific version of modernity?

George Kateb has famously (and, unbeknownst to him, problematically) noted that democracy *qua* ethos and way of life, as understood for example by Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman "is the culmination of radical protestantism" (Kateb 1992: 85). To remain within parochial Christian

boundaries, is democracy then doomed to remain imperfect in non-radical protestant contexts, not to mention Catholic contexts? What about non-Christian contexts? Is democracy there doomed to remain a mere procedural form forever disjoined from the true "spirit of democracy"?

The paper will address the question of the culture-specific quality of the "spirit of democracy" (construed by analogy with Weber's "spirit of capitalism", as distinct from capitalism as generic profit-seeking entrepreneurship) in the light of the debate on multiple modernities, focusing on the question whether culture-specific versions of this spirit can be said to exist and what they might look like.

Alexander Agadjanian: "Russia's Cursed Issues: Combining Belated Modernity with Revived Tradition"
Russia's several attempts of "European" modernization (Model 1) from 18th through early 20th century generated the dominant discourse of backwardness, belatedness and unoriginality. The romantic, indigenous, and religiously-saturated reaction – and an alternative - appeared in the mid-19th Slavophil movement, which had, due to Russia's imperial experience, a very strong tendency toward self-perception as a "civilization" (rather than a nation or ethnos). (Model 2). The communist Revolution launched a new alternative: accelerated techno-centric modernization with radical communitarian, egalitarian, and universalistic ethos (Model 3). This ethos was seen as a radical break with both European Modernity and with "Russian civilization", although, as a matter of fact, it was an involuntary (and unexpected) combination of elements from both Model 1 and 2. Within the Soviet Union, especially by the end of it, the tension between these two cultural/political agendas reproduced itself vividly, although under the shadow of an officially dominant, distinct Model 3. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union, both old agendas, corresponding to Models 1 and 2, came publicly to the fore, but as they have long developed under pressure and in strong isolation, both seemed to have taken somewhat obsolete, "scholastic," i.e. speculative forms. On the one hand, there was the pursuit of "classic" Modernity which was supposed to have been missed (because of the "communist interregnum"). On the other hand, there was the pursuit of a specific national Tradition, again mostly in civilizational or "cultural" terms, based on some essentialist and religiously-bound assumptions; the Tradition that was supposed to have been lost (because of the same "communist interregnum"). But these trends (as well as their opposition and/or their combination) seem to be not quite relevant to current realities and dominant discourses worldwide. Both the idea of catching up with Modernity (classic secular and liberal universalism) and the idea to revive an idiosyncratic cultural Tradition, based on religious values (classic civilizational, anti-Enlightenment relativism) sound simplistic in the world where the very meta-narratives of Modernity and Tradition are under question; in the world of "global condition," transnational communities, permeable boundaries, and multicultural patchworks; in the world that is "post-secular" – which is far from being equal to "religious."

Kristina Stoeckl: "European integration and Russian Orthodoxy: two multiple modernities perspectives"
The paper develops a distinction within the multiple modernities approach, delineating a comparative-civilizational approach on the one, and a post-secular approach on the other hand. The official discourse of the Russian Orthodox Church on social values and human rights is used as an example to make this theoretical point.