Call for Papers

INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Joint Workshop of the ReligioWest Research Project at the Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute Florence, and the Religion and Political Theory Centre, University College London

Place: European University Institute, Florence (Italy)

Date: 19-20 January 2015

Theme

Plurality is an intrinsic characteristic of our contemporary societies. In democratic and liberal societies a normative commitment to pluralism has emerged according to which the state does not impose on all citizens any specific way of life; citizens are free to decide for themselves, within certain limits, how they want to live their lives, according to their own conception of the good. As a result of conditions of freedom, there is a cultural, philosophical, ethical, political and religious pluralism.

There are specific types of pluralism (cultural, philosophical, ethical, political, religious) and this workshop aims at discussing issues that specifically arise in relation to religious pluralism. This religious pluralism itself has several dimensions. First, there is a coexistence of different religious traditions, and those religious traditions are often themselves internally pluralistic; and second, religious individuals coexist with non-religious individuals, since religion (living a religious life, having religious beliefs, having a religious conception of the good) is only one option among others.

In this workshop, we hope to bring together scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology, philosophy, political science and law.

We invite contributions on the following themes:

1. What is pluralism, and what is religious pluralism? Is religious pluralism different from other types of pluralism? And if so, how and why? Does it require a specific solution, like secularism, religious toleration, religious freedom or freedom of conscience?

This theme questions the sources of pluralism, not in the sense of why we have plurality, but in the sense of why we should be committed to pluralism. The justification of our commitment to pluralism has consequences for the way we understand pluralism or the way we distinguish between different types of pluralism, as well as for the way we propose to deal with this pluralism and the kind of institutions of political arrangements that we believe are most appropriate to protect it. We also welcome contributions on different (liberal, critical, agonistic) understandings of pluralism and their implications in

terms of inclusion/exclusion, majority/minorities and in terms of how the state perceives the different groups.

2. Is religious pluralism an obstacle for understanding each other? The public sphere and the duty of civility, which includes the ability to explain one's political decisions to other citizens, are often considered as core elements of a liberal democracy; are they jeopardized by the existence of religious pluralism? Can we understand each other, although we do not share the same religion?

This theme focuses on the social realities and political problems related to religious pluralism. In our contemporary societies, we value such concepts as democratic deliberation or public justification: we expect decisions to be formulated in justified in such a way that all citizens can understand them, and we want to give all citizens the ability to take part in this conversation. But it seems that religious pluralism might end up overemphasizing difference and creating the illusion of different small communities within each society, where the different communities would be unable to talk to each other and would demand more and more political autonomy, *i.e.* would demand to be more and more treated as being different and separate entities.

3. What are the limits of religious pluralism? And how can the liberal democratic state justify such limits? Can the liberal democratic state define the limits of religious pluralism without defining what "religion" means, and therefore without imposing a specific conception of religion on all citizens?

This last theme welcomes contributions concerning the possibilities – and limits – of political authority to govern over something it has, in many cases, pledged not to do, *i.e.* governing religion while being officially or unofficially committed to one or another form of secularism. It is not clear whether there can be any concept of "religious pluralism" or of "secularism" that could be formulated and defended independently of any specific, and therefore controversial, definition of "religion."

Deadline for submission of abstracts (200 words): October 25th, 2014

Please send submissions to: kristina.stoeckl@eui.eu

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