

The Secularism of the State in a Multicultural Democratic Society

Pénélope Natacha MAVOUNGOU-PEMBA¹, Nadia-Elena VACARU²

¹Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences, Laval University, Canada

²Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences, Laval University, Canada

Corresponding Author: Nadia-Elena VACARU

ABSTRACT: The fundamental question that we will address in this article is that of the cohabitation between secularism and religion within a multicultural democratic society. To this first issue, we will add a subsequent question: under what conditions the organization of public authorities can allow a harmonious living together without granting privileges to either party? To answer these questions, the article is divided into three parts. In the first part, the article addresses the concept of secularism, as well as the concept of identity that flows from it. The need for secularism of the state is linked to a desire for neutral and fair political governance towards all. The second part deals with the perception of religious signs and the polarization of society. The public school will serve as an evaluation framework. In the third part, the article sets out two central ideas: the question of compromise and the question of reconsideration of secularism. The practice of religion is a universal human right. This is why allowing the exercise of this right is to preserve equality and respect for the freedom of conscience of citizens, as well as to respect the fundamental human rights. But in practice, it is necessary to set boundaries to be used to frame freedoms, because freedom may run up against other rights or values related to fundamental rights. In this sense, it is necessary to strike a balance between the demands of religious diversity and the respect for fundamental rights. This balance should be based on the participation of all.

Keywords: freedom of conscience, human rights, multiculturalism, religion, secularism

I. INTRODUCTION

Are secularism and religion forever politically incompatible? Are contemporary secular democratic societies obliged to radically mark the separation of religion and the state? Is there a limit not to be crossed in terms of religious freedom? And secular neutrality, what does it consist of? To these different questions, this article will try to provide an answer or answers. Our approach, in the light of the emergence of secularism and its different models, and more particularly the Republican and Liberal models, aims a conciliation. Conciliation which is even more necessary, because secularism and religion have in common the desire to live together well and the happiness of the individual.

The notion of secularism is a familiar concept to democratic societies. If the origin of secularism places it in a historically specific situation, now secularism must deal with all forms of beliefs within a democratic nation living in a multicultural context. If in history their relationship has been spent in an atmosphere of rejection, nowadays it is far from saying that this happens in serenity, because if secularism in its essence tends to separate the public from the private in terms of religion, it is not uncommon that it often tends towards a form of radicalization. Religion frightens secularism and can be detected by the over-mediatization of religions with a tendency that is more stigmatizing than conciliatory.

II. SECULARISM AND IDENTITY

2.1. The concept of secularism

Originally, *secularism* is a political project that is based on the social contract. This contract reflects a desire to live together as a result of voluntary membership. In secularism there is the idea of neutrality regarding the religious, philosophical, or political convictions. Paul Ricœur considers secularism to be the *modus vivendi* that allows social relations in a multicultural and multi-religious society. Therefore, as it is characterized by a

conciliatory relationship, secularism cannot revel in an uncompromising or separatist vision, because its mission is to ensure the ethical integrity of all citizens, regardless of their religious convictions. The democratic state has a legal duty to guarantee the religious freedom of the individuals.

Historically, secularism began to manifest itself between the 13th and 14th centuries, but in a very reserved way, even if from the beginning its concern was that of the separation of the Church from the State. Later, the rupture of the spiritual unity of the Nation, with the emergence of the Reformation, led to the introduction of a differentiation between belonging to a state and belonging to a religion. The question of secularism, and thus the competence of the state in its essence, from that time on, is linked to that of religious freedom. To each of the causes that spawned the secularization movement, by imposing fair distinctions, corresponded a desire for separation, what can be called the *lay spirit*. According to users and societies, the word secularism will acquire nuances and will end with the idea that secularism is to make political institutions independent of religion and to fight against its influence in these institutions. Enlightenment philosophers have made the *reason* the only universalist source because all cultural particularisms such as religion should, in their view, be returned to private space. Thus, the reason will rationalize the way structures operate and bring out the principle of formal equality.

As it is seen today, secularism is made up of many facets. It cannot be said that there is a single model of secularism specific to all societies, or a tailor-made "ready-to-wear" secularism that would be adapted to a given society. Certainly, each democracy is addressing this issue not only in relation to its history, but also to its reality. Democracy itself, depending on the direction taken, can be a breeding ground for a particular type of secularism, because the expression of religious fact in a democratic society is sometimes obliged to consider cultural diversity. The example of France, which is a very specific secularism, shows how secularism cannot be rid of a certain dynamism that it would derive from its history. Thus, French secularism is not Quebec's secularism, much less Turkish secularism or American, Italian, Danish or Spanish secularism.

Concerning different forms of secularism, Micheline Milot proposes six types specific, according to the aims, the means, the modes, and the principles. First of all, she speaks about the separatist secularism, which is characterized by the radical distinction between the private and the public, the religious relegated to the strictly private sphere and the state that manages the public sphere. Then the anticlerical secularism of which the complete exclusion of the religious from private space is the keyword. Then authoritarian secularism, where the presence of the state in addition to being visible, is also dominant. There is also the secularism of civic faith, which is played out on a field of values, where the values of civil society and that of religion are put face to face. Thus, renouncing religious values appears to be the ideal path for democratic integration. The fifth form is the secularism of recognition which aims at the recognition of the rights of all citizens and individual rights in the exercise of their freedom that considers the respect for others. From this perspective, the freedom of conscience and the right to equality are absolutes and must not be violated: it is the good of the individual that prevails. Finally, there is the secularism of collaboration. In this case, we are talking about a collaboration between the state and religious groups, but it is not always a collaboration that opens up a fair treatment. [1] In addition, there are all the qualifications that are commonly attributed to the notion of secularism: open secularism, positive secularism, republican secularism, inclusive secularism. These qualifiers have the advantage of introducing the concept of secularism into the two opposing universes.

The first universe of secularism corresponds to the traditional republican model. It is based on the radical separation (remoteness of religious practices) between the public and private spheres. However, the principles are the same. This model is most commonly identified by the separation of public and private spheres and its intransigence on neutrality. It is therefore the law of the Republic, assimilating and universalist, that dominates the society. The state equates it with a foundation of common values necessary for social cohesion and proposes values that put all citizens on an equal footing. [2] It is the transmission of republican customs and mores that must form the spirit of the citizen, the public spirit; the public space is supposed to embody its common values. It contains the slogan of a Republic, *One and Indivisible*: the monoculturalism, a consequence of the homogeneity of the nation. The second universe is that of the Liberal or pluralistic model, which "*sees secularism as a mode of governance whose function is to find the optimal balance between respect for moral equality and that of people's freedom of conscience*". [3] In fact, the liberal or pluralistic model is for compromise (non-hermetic secularism), while the republican is for radical neutrality.

2.2. The principles of secularism

As early as 1789, the Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights stated in Article 10 that "*no one should be worried about his or her opinions, even religious ones.*" [4] French secularism will therefore be based on the following principles: respect for freedom of conscience, separation of politics and religion, neutrality of the state and the public services, equal treatment of all cults, privatization of religion, citizenship, republican integration and republican unity. However, because of the internal complexity of secularism and seeking to propose a clear conceptualization of this notion, Maclure and Taylor set out two principles: "*Secularism is based for us on two main principles: equality of respect and freedom of conscience, as well as on two modes of operation that*

enable the realization of these principles, namely the separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state." [5] The construction of this quotation shows that there is no static consideration of the principles of secularism, because the authors say "for us", implying that there is a broader range of the principles of secularism, but that at the foundation of secularism there is this idea of freedom of conscience, common to all forms of secularism, and far beyond their complexity. In fact, it is found in the 1905 Act.

On the question of the *modus operandi* of secularism (neutrality and separation) raised by Maclure and Taylor, it should be noted that the insistence is made on the fact that these modes are not immutable. These are changeable and can be apprehended depending on the context and situation. It should also be noted that while equality of respect is considered one of the principles of secularism, it is also the purpose. But it is not lonely, because secularism also aims to respect freedom of conscience. In fact, both principles are principles and purposes. This could eventually make it possible to understand, as we will see later, that if it is aimed at respect for freedom of conscience, secularism should not confine religious practices, because it would contradict itself *de facto*.

In this neutrality, there is first of all the place for all types of diversity (secular or religious) that make up the same society, far beyond their singular vision of the world. Therefore, neutrality thus appears to be one of the *prerequisites* for the exercise of secularism.

It is important to remember that it is difficult to detach the notion of secularism from the history to which it is linked. Today, we cannot ignore the fact that secularism, according to the republican model, poses problems, and that secularism, in the liberal vision, is worrying. That is what will constitute the development of the second part.

III. THE PUBLIC SPACE AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE ON SECULARISM AND RELIGION

3.1. The path to religious diversity

With international migration, several nations have become pluralistic (also with regard to religious practices). Now, secularism has new challenges, because the universe of so-called historical religions such as Christianity for France and Quebec, or Islam for Turkey, have been enriched by the presence of other religions, other churches, and other spiritual currents. Not to mention that, apart from this, one can encounter within the same religion very varied ways of living the faith, among which we note fundamentalists, extremists, progressives, and flexible religious people. Moreover, even the relationship to the sacred will depend on everyone, since it is the individual who lives his relationship with transcendence and not the religious group to which he belongs. He can therefore make a choice that corresponds only to his own convictions. In a context marked by pluralism, the democratic and secular state institution must deal with all this.

This change in religion will influence the orientations of secularism. It is from these changes that inequalities of treatment will arise, for the public service, which had in front of it only one Church to finance, will now make the difference, for more justice. From then, some questions will arise: should the state continue to subsidize religions? How should it position itself in relation to the construction of places of worship, the respect for festivals and calendars, the question of religious signs, the wearing of the veil or turban in public places, the religious practices, the diet in school canteens, the use of cemeteries etc.? Should we rethink the legal framework that now seems outdated? How, then, can we reconcile the law of separation initially elaborate for a single Church, today in front of the religious pluralism, now massive in these democratic states? Not to mention that with their settlement and emancipation, these religions arrive with their lots of demands that could shake up the state's vision of secularism.

Secularism will therefore face not only the institutional demands of religions, but also individual demands. In many democratic states, including France, this aspect cause problems, because at the beginning there was no legal framework for the issue of diversity. In Canada, the emergence of the legal concept of reasonable accommodation will balance situations for equitable equality that integrates differences. This religious breakdown led the state to rethink the practices of secularism. The question that one is entitled to ask is whether the law on secularism would have ignored providing a heading for unforeseen events. What is the standard of secularism?

Indeed, while the 1905 Act provides certain dispositions regarding the state's relationship with religion, there are many realities that it has not foreseen. There is, for example, the fact that certain religions carry within them a certain singularism that they want to assert, and this inevitably raises questions for secularism. This singular concern, which would correspond to a kind of recognition of identity, goes at odds with the directive of secularism, according to the Republicans. It is even noted that some claims are more a matter of culture than of religious dogma. What would then be the limits of secularism? Will it also have to regulate the style of dress of individuals?

3.2. Religious signs in public space

The issue of the visibility of religious signs in the public space is one of the main points of contention between the republican model and the liberal model. For the first model, in a system whose political principle is secularism, it applies to public schools, because the public school is outside the domain of the state, which is a public corp. As a public official, the teacher, for example, is bound by the obligation of neutrality. Therefore, there should not display any ostentatious sign, or a direct or indirect allusion to religion. This impartiality allows for full respect for neutrality. In public schools, the education is supposed to be independent of any religious or moral doctrines. This is why school curricula and educational projects remain strictly state-owned. The teaching of religious fact, even of the history of religions, must be done within the framework of a common culture. The public school must not teach any dogma and should not be on the side of a particular religious denomination. This is why, for the republican model, the wearing of ostentatious signs is forbidden in schools, in order to remain in the spirit of neutrality.

The liberal model, on the other hand, aims at a balance that considers the principles and purposes of secularism, without confiscating the freedom of individuals. Therefore, it would suppose the respect for freedom of religion and religious plurality, with all that it implies. If the visible religious sign is not a problem and does not violate any fundamental rights, the liberals do not see any disadvantage for the teacher or student to wear it. Clearly the liberal model is the guarantor of civil and religious freedoms. At the education level, he believes that the state cannot improvise as an educator and seek to own the rights of children. With immigration, it would be a mistake for the school not to integrate the multicultural reality, because it is a real basis for living it together. [6] Commenting on Ricœur's vision of secularism, Baubérot highlighted the school's mission, that of expressing the living cultural tradition of the nation, but at the same time being a reflection of the knowledge that is being built, the image of the nascent morality. It is therefore a question of secularism in which confront the points of view and the different types of beliefs that participate in cultural change. It is to this idea that Ricœur will graft the distinction between the state and the nation, likely evolved into distinction between nation and civil society, according to him able to solve the issue between the private and the public. He will broaden his notion of secularism of confrontation, of proliferation or of confrontation. [7]

Moreover, it is clear that this relentlessness on the place to be granted to the religious signs on the public space questions what in itself, in this visibility, poses problems to the principles of secularism or to fundamental rights. Do religious signs prevent those who wear them from carrying out their work in a neutral way?

3.3. Neutrality that neutralizes

It is clear that in the question of secularism, the sense of neutrality when it is undermined is stifled as we have said above. While the word neutrality itself seems complex, the meaning it should have in the context of secularism seems to correspond to the idea of impartiality and justice. It is not about indifference or mathematical equality. This is also the view of the philosopher Habermas when he expresses reservations about a form of secularist secularism, stifling and unnecessarily hardened. Of course, if in theory the idea of neutrality seems so simple, in practice, the evacuating religious signs from the public sphere is difficult to reconcile with the idea of neutrality, because neutrality should keep a neutral eye, therefore not to pronounce for the badges; it would self-violate by banning religious signs in the public square. Neutrality is not the myth of secularism, not even an absolute concept, and it does not mean the denial of privileges that should be granted to any religion. In fact, in its efforts for justice, secularism is called to consider the values of freedom and equality.

Thus, by wanting to neutralize dogmas, finally the supporters of outright secularism end up neutralizing neutrality, thus secularism itself. This neutralization of secularism is done in the name of a certain radical autonomy claimed in relation to the religion. This is the prerogative of a secularism whose narrow-mindedness is the keyword, for merely considering, in an extremist way, the 1905 text on the separation of Church and State. This ideology (of thinking that this legal disposition is untouchable) undermines even the principle of secularism, and this neutrality (that has become a neutrality façade) neutralizes the neutrality that is the foundation of secularism and which should enlighten it. If secularism is a principle rather than a current of thought, as the proponents of extreme secularism tend to assert, it cannot be ruled out that, in its content, it prohibits the doctrinal content of the religion of the political sphere. This leads to a rethinking of the concept of neutrality in itself untouched by any external content. If the notion of secularism implies a certain openness, it is clear that neutrality should be characterized by the impartial recognition of any kind of morality. This poses a kind of paradox or rather internal contradiction to the notion of neutrality.

However, this requirement for neutrality needs to be further clarified. A liberal and democratic state cannot remain indifferent to fundamental principles such as human dignity, human rights, or popular sovereignty. These are the constituent values of democratic and liberal regimes; they give them their foundations and purposes. [8]

Like laws and principles, secularism often struggles in practice. Indeed, its exercise is not often adapted. Its neutral nature often poses difficulties that sometimes tend to confiscate the freedom of certain

citizens. As a result, there is often incompatibility between legal norms and what happens in practice. A common norm is general and paradoxical, and secularism ignores the peculiarities that can characterize a particular individual. It is in this context that the republican model remains very limited and its secularism helps to enclose the individual in a sphere that resembles a difficult cycle. Given these inconsistencies in practice, the question of compromise arises. The neutrality of secularism is not a neutralization, a kind of perpetual anesthesia that would annihilate the religious fact in its visible expression. There is no question of indifferent neutrality because secularism and religions can coexist next to each other. In the end, the attitude to be maintained remains that of balancing respect for the specific claims of religious diversity and respect for fundamental rights. Like Habermas, we believe that this balance must be based on the participation of all. At Habermas, this corresponds to the ethics of discussion.

Secularism is not an absolute concept, not even an unchangeable dogma. Rethinking it is an imperative, and the means to integrate the principle of compromise are the respect for freedom of conscience and religious freedom, which we have developed above.

IV. FOR AN ADAPTED RENOVATION OF THE SECULARISM

4.1. The issue of compromise and reasonable accommodation

The term "adapted renovation" is introduced here to emphasize the need for reconsideration of the principle of secularism, while remaining faithful to its original ideal, namely freedom of conscience, equality, and neutrality. Nor will we forget that secularism, taken from its etymological definition of *lay*, is intimately linked to democracy, to the level of its principles, but also to the place given to the people, in the sense of *demos*. The republican vision of secularism is not erroneous in itself, because it advocates neutrality and equal treatment for everyone, but for the modern multicultural world that is ours today, it seems that this type of model no longer holds, because it either softens, or it rethinks its entire system. We believe that in order to better understand secularism, one cannot ignore its source and origin. But in any system or choice, there are always unforeseen events. That is why, in law, there are always exemptions. Modern democracies today present the fact of the cultural variety that contribute to the "being" of societies. We will have to deal with it, since the democratic vocation is that of equality and freedom; as well as that of secularism: the words "*laïos*", and "*demos*" which mean "people" as a constituted corps, are well distinguished from "*plethos*" or "*ochlos*", which mean populace or "crowd", in the sense of mass, of encompassing crowd. This is why, if today's democratic and liberal societies want to frame their well-life together and make it feasible, they are obliged to take this cultural and religious variety into account. In front of that, secularism does not have to be radicalized by remaining anchored to the past. If it is to consider its foundations, it must also adapt to the new realities. Hence, the idea of "adapted renovation of secularism", in order to mean that the principle of secularism must be renewed by keeping the principles of freedom of conscience, the equality of persons, as well as the neutrality (the impartiality). As these are part of its substrates, they are required to remain. To better analyze this expression of "adapted renovation" which we have "adapted" to secularism, we relied on two points: the reasonable accommodations and the reconsideration of secularism, considering some contemporary issues.

It is obvious today that contemporary democratic societies in general, and liberal societies in particular, are societies whose plural nature of cultures and beliefs is no longer discussed. Of course, this characteristic is not only a wealth, but a wealth that generates a lot of complexity, because if societies were previously thought according to a single model, now we will have to readjust them. As is the case with the republican model of secularism, which today must submit to this need for redefinition. From now on, the presence of cultural diversity in societies poses the need for freedom and equality of respect for people, in an option of recognition, integration and not assimilation. The compromise is therefore necessary here for a better life-together. It should be noted that the compromise referred to here is not a lucrative compromise based on some commodification. Thus, it is not haggling, not even a post-conflict crisis management framework. It is just a matter of setting up certain frameworks for equality that is always neutral and fair. That is why this compromise here must focus on the fundamental rights that are the foundation of equality between people (by enshrining conscience among citizens) which have in common *citizenship* and thus to consider themselves in a relationship of equal dignity. Hence the mutual respect, considered as the principle of secularism, and as an effort to consider, for reasons of justice, the convictions, and values of others. [9]

In the context of our study, we use the notion of reasonable accommodation to illustrate that it is a kind of compromise which, unlike critics of open secularism who believe that it can promote chaos and anarchy in society, constitutes a step forward and allows without contour the exercise of freedoms. The importance for us to present the concept of reasonable accommodation here also lies in the fact that it is a legal concept which, *a priori*, is not discriminatory.

In *Secularism and Freedom of conscience*, Maclure and Taylor, after enshrining Article 18 of the International Pact (regarding civil and political rights, in relation to the dimensions of freedom of religion), questioned about the freedom of practice, which derives from the freedom of religion, also includes the duty of

accommodation when general laws (though non-discriminatory, in their view) prevent a believer from exercising what he considers to be religious obligation. In response to their questioning, the authors will give a general line of what they mean by reasonable accommodation: a legal obligation that is primarily intended to end discrimination against a disability or other type of discrimination. It must therefore enable employers and authorities to find a solution to enable people in situations of discrimination to have and exercise their rights. As can be seen, accommodation is therefore not limited to one category of people. Indeed, any citizen who needs to exercise a particular right is entitled to request reasonable accommodation. Thus, it is a reasonable *accommodation*, and every accommodation requested requires careful study on the part of those who must grant it, so that it does not become the product of a personal fantasy. That is why, for reasons of fairness, in the face of certain difficulties faced by minorities living in states where the general rules had been designed for the majority, a general rule is established or an exemption is granted to a person who is in a situation of discrimination. [10] In his book about the social justice, Fraser stresses the importance of no longer ignoring cultural issues that are now unquestionably issues of justice and social injustice. Philosophically, accommodation and even secularism must be redefined in relation to the policy of recognition. [11]

Even if it were seen as a means of alleviating discrimination, the concept of accommodation itself should also be a place for reflection. The difficulty often raised about reasonable accommodation over the democratic or secular ideal is that of neutrality, because depending on how accommodation presents itself, it seems to favor some and marginalize others. On this question, Maclure and Taylor ask: "*Are reasonable religious accommodations compatible with neutrality in the conceptions of the good that the liberal state must demonstrate?*" » [12] An example of reasonable accommodation, and indeed among the best known in Canada, is that of the Sikh gendarmes wearing a turban in the Royal Gendarmerie, without having to wear the usual hat like the others. This exemption is more closely related to the Sikh religion. In this context, can we speak of neutrality, development, or privilege?

Like secularism, the question of reasonable accommodation itself also raises challenges that are sometimes flexible and sometimes virulent. For example, Brian Barry criticizes cultural and religious exemptions, considering that they tend to enshrine inequalities: he analyzes the issue of exemptions with a fixed criticism, stipulating that granting exemptions does not justify egalitarian restoration. Religion is not in need of an exemption because it is a matter of choice, whereas disability, for example, which would really merit an exemption, has not been chosen. Barry bases his criticism on the impartiality and neutrality of laws that must be viewed in the same way for everyone. [13]

In this context, Maclure and Taylor's contribution to reasonable limits to freedom of conscience seems essential to us, because while secularism is not an absolute concept, also reasonable accommodations are not. In fact, any convention may seem arbitrary, sometimes binding, but it remains a principle that is not free from reflection as to its practice. That is why it can always be subject to change. The interweaving of the principles of secularism is not often easy, especially in practice, but it has the advantage of being a democratic social force. Easing secularism is one thing, but it should always allow vigilance about manipulation or instrumentalization concerning the requests for reasonable accommodation. For Maclure and Taylor, a person who requests reasonable accommodation must have a strong and sincere belief on that what he requires to be accommodated. But they do not dispute the fact that these requests may be in the pay of the prestidigitators who may be led to exploit this duty of accommodation. Hence, even in the context of freedom of conscience, they recommend revisiting choices, because the act of revisiting a choice is a freedom. That is why they are proposing a clause to determine whether the accommodation is approving or not. [14]

4.2. Reconsideration of secularism: new perspectives

There is no law without exception, otherwise it would not be a social law. Therefore, since the question of living together is at the center of the question of secularism, it must continually be subject to a reassessment of its reports. Secular states must understand that redefinition is neither evacuation nor radiation, but it is a breakthrough, a panacea, an openness that remains true to the original ideal, for as Maclure and Taylor point out, "*If the state did not make the effort to redefine the conditions of separation, in the present state of morals and society, it would seriously undermine an imprescriptible right, the spiritual heritage that is a property of the nation.*" [15] Secularism is the hallmark of democratic societies and, in its essence, democracy is not opposed to religion. On the contrary, because of its open nature and the fact that it enshrines freedoms, it can coexist with a religion or a plurality of religions. But so that one does not encroach on the territory of the other, it is better that they are autonomous without opposing. Moreover, several researchers argue that religion is a major fact of society. That is why it is useless in democratic societies to advocate a radical secularism that would serve no purpose. For example, Paul Ricœur is positioning himself for an open republican secularism, which corresponds to a middle way between extremist retreats and ambient secularism. He considers that the idea of secularism is the foundation of living together and allows the functioning of the state. Even in a so-called universalist society, living together cannot be determined and untouchable, otherwise freedoms would be undermined. It is true that

majority groups cannot be challenged by having historical roots, but in cultural pluralism cannot be ignored this diverse reality of cultures and beliefs, and also the respect for individual freedoms. This requires a culture of cooperation, compromise, reciprocal learning, confrontation, and shared responsibility for a better life-together. This is why the continual renewal of secularism, always faithful to the original ideal, is inevitable.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Secularism is a political concept that is based on the principles of freedom of conscience and religion, the equal respect for people, and the neutrality and separation of church and state as a *modus operandi*. We start from two main ideological currents, presenting alternately their perspectives. For the liberal model, only the guarantee of equal freedom of conscience and religion of each individual counts. The role of secularism is to ensure the ethical integrity of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs. The state has a legal duty to guarantee freedom to individuals. It is clear that the application of the principle of secularism cannot go without clumsiness, without prejudice, especially in this third millennium, but we must also not forget that a law, even absolute, cannot be deployed without the contribution of citizens and the State. Secularism is certainly a valid principle, but it is not an unbreakable principle, because it is often a question of compromise; but it is clear that the proper nature of a compromise is to redevelop over time. It is in this that Maclure and Taylor's contribution can be seen as a step forward in the question of secularism, for while the openness they propose may seem at first glance to be the characteristic of liberal societies, we must not ignore that it is also for republican model societies. We cannot stand on an ancient idea of more than a century. Moreover, if we go back to the idea of secularism, the radicalism that some ideologies show today seems fundamentally foreign. Beyond this question remains that about the real scope of the notion of neutrality. Would not a simple and accessible way be to redefine it, or to simplify it by exchanging it with the notion of impartiality, because if they are theoretically synonymous, in fact they do not seem to convey the same issues. An idea that, for our part, is not often exploited, far beyond participation, is the principle of shared responsibility by citizens and the state. Isn't the diversity of religious practices about helping public services become aware of their relationship to religion? The question of equality remains very complex, because forcing girls to take off their veils, for example, is this not a violation of their freedom? But at the same time, to tolerate the practice of female circumcision under the pretext of respect for religious freedom, is it not a blow to respect for human dignity? And will secularism, by wanting uniform neutrality at all costs, not lead to an identity crisis?

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*Corresponding author: Nadia-Elena Vacaru

¹Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences, Laval University, Canada