

Civil Society and Orthodoxy: A Counter-Discourse

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Introduction

Two American authors who published their prominent works in the early 1990s are relevant to the central discourses on the relationship between democracy, civil society, modernity in general, and “Orthodoxy”: on the one hand, the political scientist Samuel P. Huntington cites his concept of the *clash of civilizations* (1993, 1996) and, on the other, the sociologist of religion José Casanova presents his concept of *public religion* (1994). Both authors see religion as a highly controversial public matter. After the publication of their works, dazzling images shaped the political, scientific, and media discourse: “God’s Century,”¹ “God’s Revenge,”² “Return of the Gods”³ or “Vitality of the Religious,” as Jürgen Habermas soberly tried to explain this *Zeitgeist*.⁴ Another common ground can be found in the fact that both Huntington and Casanova are dedicated to the global perspective: the one from the perspective of political science, the other as a sociologist of religion. So much for the similarities.

The things that separate them show them to be diametrically opposed thinkers. Huntington represents the typical postcolonial figure of a Eurocentric, “old, white man” from “the West” who explains to “the rest of the world” its defective essence that stands in the way of democracy and who wants to impose upon it the only correct world order – by struggle if necessary. Casanova, on the other hand, reveals himself to be a modest thinker who reflects the “shortcomings or limitations”⁵ of his own thinking by consciously applying to his own thinking as well as sociology of knowledge’s stress on sociocultural conditions of knowledge production.⁶ Their discursive effects on the (social) scientific pro-

1 *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*, ed. Monika Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011).

2 Gilles Kepel, *Die Rache Gottes: Radikale Moslems, Christen und Juden auf dem Vormarsch* (Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1991).

3 Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, *Die Wiederkehr der Götter. Religion in der modernen Kultur* (Bonn: C.H. Beck, 2004).

4 Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II.: Aufsätze und Repliken* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 310.

5 José Casanova, “Public Religions Revisited,” in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 101–19, here 102.

6 José Casanova, “From Modernization to Secularization to Globalization: An Autobiographical Self-Reflection,” *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 2, no. (April 2011), 25–36, here 25.

duction of knowledge of “Orthodoxy” and its relationship to democracy, civil society and modernity are also diametrically opposed. Huntington’s discursive statements on the supposed incommensurability of “Orthodoxy” with the basic ideas of democracy, civil society, and even modernity in general, as well as essentialist and determinist statements about the supposedly unchangeable nature of the religion of the other can be qualified as hegemonic, with a broad reception and reproduction. Even Orthodox scholars who emigrated to “the West” are not immune to the reproduction of such statements. On the other hand, Casanova’s statements are not to be found in the discourse on “Orthodoxy”; in other words, its discursive effect simply remains unnoticed.

Using a counter-discourse from the perspective of observation in Postcolonial Studies, I have identified and criticized Huntington’s discursive statements at several points as racism⁷ and orientalism or an “othering” strategy.⁸ Moreover, I have sketched out a proposal for methodological principles of a cultural and social science perspective of observing the religious other that is oriented towards recognition, understanding and mutual trust.⁹ The “othering” strategy is characterized by a binary reduction (civilized/barbaric, modern/pre-modern, normal/abnormal, democratic/undemocratic, enlightened/unenlightened, etc.), which essentially serves to construct one’s own fantasies of superiority and to stabilize dominance over the other. For this reason, this approach, which postulates an allegedly intrinsically defective and deficient relationship of “Orthodoxy” to democracy, civil society, and modernity, will not be pursued here. In this paper, I will present and reflect on Casanova’s counter-discourse in terms of its possible discursive effects on and implications for speaking of “Orthodoxy.” This concept was chosen for two main reasons: first, because it emphasizes the public significance of religions in modern societies

7 I define racism from the perspective of Postcolonial Studies. According to Varela and Mecheril, “At the center of racist thinking is the binary construction of natio-ethno-culturally coded We and Non-We-and with it the evaluative distinction between We and Non-We”; cf. María do Mar Castro Varela and Paul Mecheril, “Die Dämonisierung der Anderen. Einleitende Bemerkungen,” in *Die Dämonisierung der Anderen: Rassismuskritik der Gegenwart*, ed. María do Mar Castro Varela and Paul Mecheril (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), 7–20.

8 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2014 [1978]).

9 Varela and Mecheril, “Dämonisierung”; Irena Zeltner Pavlović, “Imagining Orthodoxy: Eine postkoloniale Beobachtungsperspektive der Repräsentation des religiös Anderen,” in *Ostkirchen und Reformation 2017: Begegnungen und Tagungen im Jubiläumsjahr. Dialog und Hermeneutik*, vol. 1, ed. Irena Zeltner Pavlović and Martin Illert (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), 217–29; idem, “Postkoloniale und postsozialistische Studien. Repräsentierte Orthodoxie,” in *Postkoloniale Theologie II: Perspektiven aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum*, ed. Andreas Nehring and Simon Wiesgickl (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2018), 226–42.

and, second, because it seems particularly fruitful for a recognition-oriented perspective of the religious other and his engagement in the public sphere. By drawing on this perspective of observation in the discourse on “Orthodoxy,” I would like to propose the thesis that the effect of this counter-discourse on the production of knowledge has an enormous global socio-political relevance in that this perspective could/would promote recognition, understanding and trust between the respective “religious others.”

I will first briefly discuss the relevance of the Spanish-American sociologist of religion and theologian José Casanova, who is currently “internationally regarded as one of the most important contemporary sociologists of religion,”¹⁰ for the discourse of sociology of religion. I will then present Casanova’s deprivatization thesis, whereby he decisively deconstructs the Eurocentric secularization episteme. Following that, I will introduce the localization of religion and religious actors in civil society, which was stimulated by the concept of *public religions* that is presented as part of the intermedial space of a modern, pluralistic society, as well as its later correction. In addition, I will outline Casanova’s later concept of *global denominationalism* because of its importance for the observation of the “religious other” that is presented here using the example of the discursive treatises on “Islam.” Finally, I will answer the question what consequences Casanova’s concepts can have for the observation of “Orthodoxy” and its relationship to civil society.

Religion in the Modern Age

The visibility of religion in the modern world has been extensively discussed by Casanova in his book *Public Religions in the Modern World*, which was published in 1994 and is now considered a key work in the sociology of religion.¹¹ As Astrid Reuter remarked, the book is “avant-garde” in the sense that the persistence of the public relevance of religion in modernity was recognized here, much earlier than, for example, the notion of a “post-secular society”

10 Hermann-Josef Große Kracht, “Öffentliche Religion im säkularen Staat (Casanova),” in *Religion und Säkularisierung: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Thomas M. Schmidt and Annette Pitschmann (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2014), 114–26, here 114.

11 José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); see also Hubert Knoblauch, “Portrait: Jose Casanova. Deprivatization, the Public Sphere and Popular Religion,” *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 2, no. 1 (March 2011), 5–36, here 5. <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2011.020102>.

(Habermas) arrived in scientific discourses in the German-speaking world.¹² Casanova, for example, is one of the authors who made a decisive contribution to the fact that the so-called “return narrative” or narrative about the “return of religions” has become firmly established in the cultural and social sciences.¹³ What is special about his work is that it has challenged the (Western) European secularization narrative or at least, according to the majority of interpretations in the literature of this thesis, has brought it to a close, and “a clear predominance of critics of the secularization thesis can be observed”¹⁴ at this time. At this point, it must be emphasized that there are still attempts by the defenders of the secularization thesis to “save” it, as Karl Gabriel noted, but Casanova’s work introduced a “scientific revolution,” a paradigm shift in Thomas Kuhn’s sense.¹⁵

Casanova’s deconstruction of the secularization narrative is based on two central analytical instruments that he presented in his early works: the deprivatization thesis, whose division into three sub-theses is considered his most important merit in the sociology of religion¹⁶, and the concept of *public religions*. These central aspects and their further development or reformulations in later works will be presented in the following.

The Deprivatization Thesis

The central thesis of his study is “that we are witnessing the ‘deprivatization’ of religion in the modern world.”¹⁷ Casanova understands deprivatization as “the fact that religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the

12 Astrid Reuter, “José Casanova: Public Religions in the Modern World (1994),” in *Schlüsselwerke der Religionssoziologie*, ed. Christel Gärtner and Gert Pickel (Wiesbaden, 2019), 449–58, here 457.

13 Albrecht Koschorke, “‘Säkularisierung’ und ‘Wiederkehr der Religion’: Zwei Narrative der europäischen Moderne,” in *Moderne und Religion: Kontroversen um Modernität und Säkularisierung*, ed. Ulrich Willems, Detlef Pollack, Helene Basu, Thomas Gutmann and Ulrike Spohn (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 237–60; Oliver Hidalgo, “‘Rückkehr der Religionen’ und ‘Säkularisierung’: Über die Verwobenheit zweier scheinbar gegensätzlicher Narrative,” in *Das Narrativ von der Wiederkehr der Religion*, ed. Holger Zapf, Oliver Hidalgo and Philipp W. Hildmann (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 13–34.

14 Karl Gabriel, “Der lange Abschied von der Säkularisierungsthese – und was kommt danach?” in *Postsäkularismus: Zur Diskussion eines unstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2015), 211–36, 212f.; see also Karl Gabriel, “Säkularisierung und öffentliche Religion: Religionssoziologische Anmerkungen mit Blick auf den europäischen Kontext,” *Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften* 44 (February 2003), 13–36, here 15.

15 Gabriel, “Abschied,” 220.

16 Reuter, “Casanova,” 457.

17 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 5.

marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them.”¹⁸ Based on empirical observations of four countries (Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States), he critically questions the West European religious-sociological secularization narrative. This is the narrative that shapes the discourse on the relationship between religion and modernity and is thus based on the premise that religion was “bound to either disappear or become increasingly privatized and therefore, ‘invisible.’”¹⁹

To deconstruct the hegemonic secularization narrative, which “appears as a closed secularization thesis,”²⁰ he proposes splitting up three sub-theses of the secularization thesis analytically so that he can question to what extent partial aspects are constitutive for modernity, as was the case in the dominant secular narrative of consensus.²¹ The first aspect, or rather the first sub-thesis is, that secularization is understood first of all *as the functional differentiation of religion and politics* or church and state during the course of modernization processes. For Casanova, this sub-thesis initially remains of central importance as a sign of modernity and thus valid. In Casanova’s words, “The differentiation and emancipation of the secular sphere from the religious institutions and norms remains a general modern structural trend.”²² The second sub-thesis is about *the erosion of religious beliefs and practices*. Even if this represents a dominant trend, especially in (West) European societies, it is “manifestly not a modern structural trend,”²³ according to the early Casanova. This also applies to the third sub-thesis on *the privatization of religion* in modernity, which is decisive for the concept of *public religions*. The formula “religion is a private matter” is not constitutive for Western modernity; it is merely one of the possible “historical options.”²⁴

Since these sub-processes occurred simultaneously in Western Europe, “the leading sociological theories assumed that they were not only historically, but

18 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 5.

19 José Casanova, “Religion in Modernity as Global Challenge,” in *Religion und die umstrittene Moderne*, ed. Michael Reeder and Matthias Rugel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 1–16, here 1.

20 José Casanova, “Chancen und Gefahren öffentlicher Religion: Ost- Westeuropa im Vergleich,” *Das Europa der Religionen: Ein Kontinent zwischen Säkularisierung und Fundamentalismus*, ed. Otto Kallscheuer (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 181–210, here 182.

21 Cf. Casanova, “Public Religions” (see footnote 17), 212ff.; Casanova, “Chancen,” 184ff.

22 Casanova, “Public Religions,” 212; Casanova, “Chancen,” 184.

23 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 213; see also Casanova, “Chancen,” 185f.

24 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 215; see also José Casanova, “Private und öffentliche Religion,” in *Zeitgenössische Amerikanische Soziologie*, ed. Hans-Peter Müller and Steffen Sigmund (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2000), 249–80, 249.

also structurally and inherently connected”²⁵ and thus presented a universal path to modernity exemplary for the whole world. The others, if they want to become modern, must follow this same path. But this premise reveals itself to be untenable on closer examination. A comparison with the USA, in which both the private and public vitality of the religions becomes visible, already shows, according to Casanova, that these secular premises are not tenable even for “the West.”²⁶ At this point it should be emphasized that he does not question either the empirical validity of these processes in (Western) Europe or secularization as the theoretical basis for the analysis of Western European modernization processes. This applies both to his early works²⁷ and currently insofar as he states that “the secularization of most West European societies remains an unquestioned *fait accompli*.”²⁸ The West European narrative of secularization is regarded here merely as a singular or particular European development.²⁹ The early Casanova’s point here is that there is no uniform path in Western modernity; rather, the various paths in it can diverge. This means that Western societies can also have religion in both the private and public spheres and still be considered modern. So much for the early Casanova.

By adopting a global research perspective, Casanova wanted to correct a central “limitation” of his own earlier thinking, including “*Western-centrism*, i.e. a decidedly ‘Western’ perspective,”³⁰ with the intention of expanding his theoretical framework to make “it more applicable beyond [the?]Western Christian context.”³¹ He successively revised his concepts and presented them systematically in the text *Public Religions Revisited*³², which was published almost simultaneously in English and German in 2008. As Große Kracht

25 Casanova, “Chancen,” 182.

26 Casanova, “Chancen,” 182ff.

27 Casanova, “Chancen,” 197.

28 Casanova, *Public Religions*, 4; see also José Casanova, “Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration,” in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, ed. Timothy Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 65–92, here 65.

29 José Casanova, “Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam,” *Social Research* 68, no. 4 (December 2001), 1041–80, here 1057; José Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective,” *The Hedgehog Review* 8 (March 2006), 7–22, here 1.

30 José Casanova, “Public Religions Revisited,” in *Christentum und Solidarität: Bestandaufnahmen zu Sozialethik und Religionssoziologie*, ed. Herman-Josef Große Kracht and Christian Spieß (Paderborn, Schöningh, 2008), 313–38, here 315.

31 José Casanova, “Rethinking Public Religions,” in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, Monica Duffy Toft (Oxford, New York, 2012), 25–36, here 25.

32 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 29); Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5).

correctly noted, this is a “massive reaccentuation”³³ of his concept. Two changes are relevant to Casanova’s deprivatization thesis.

The first change concerns the territorial validity of the deprivatization thesis, which now no longer applies only to certain regions outside Western Europe. He considers it to be more than sufficiently confirmed; furthermore, “the best confirmation of the validity of the deprivatization of religion can be found in the heartland of secularization, that is, in West European societies.”³⁴ This does not mean that there has been an increase in religious beliefs and practices, but rather that “a significant shift in the European *Zeitgeist*”³⁵ has taken place, and religion has become a discursive event or “as a discursive reality.”³⁶ Or, as he pointedly states elsewhere: “We are not yet ‘religious’ again. However, we are concerned with religion as a problem, especially as a public matter.”³⁷ So, unlike his early works,³⁸ he also sees this as a global trend, as a “global social fact.”³⁹

The second change to his earlier assumptions becomes relevant through his questioning of the whole secularization thesis, which – according to my reading – concerns three different aspects. The first is that all three subtheories of the secularization thesis are now being questioned, including the previously defended thesis of the constitutive relevance of the structural differentiation of the subsystems of modern societies. According to Casanova,

One could at most, on pragmatic historical grounds, defend the need for separation between “church” and “state,” although I am no longer convinced that complete separation is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for democracy. The attempt to establish a wall of separation between “religion” and “politics” is both unjustified and probably counterproductive for democracy itself.⁴⁰

33 Hermann-Josef Große Kracht, “Öffentliche Religion im säkularen Staat (Casanova),” in *Religion und Säkularisierung: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Thomas M. Schmidt and Annette Pitschmann (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2014), 114–126, here 122.

34 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 101.

35 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 101; José Casanova, “Das Problem der Religion und die Ängste der säkularen europäischen Demokratien,” in *Europas Angst vor der Religion*, ed. José Casanova (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2009), 7–30, here 23; Casanova, “Modernity,” 313.

36 Casanova, “Modernization,” 32.

37 José Casanova, “Die Erschließung des Postsäkularen: Drei Bedeutungen von “säkular” und deren mögliche Transzendenz,” in *Postsäkularismus. Zur Diskussion eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2015), 9–41, here 33; see also Casanova, “Identities” (see footnote 27).

38 Casanova, “World,” 223.

39 Casanova, “Modernization,” 32; see also Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 313; Casanova (see footnote 29) “Rethinking,” 25.

40 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 28), 20.

A second aspect concerns the hegemonic and ideological use of the secularization narrative. Thus, the secularization thesis is still useful for explaining certain “particular internal and external dynamics of the transformation of Western European Christianity from the Middle Ages to the present.”⁴¹ But, according to Casanova the concept of secularization becomes problematic if one attempts “to reinterpret the particular Western Christian historical process of secularization in a universal teleological process of human development from faith to disbelief and from primitive, irrational religiosity to a modern, rational, secular consciousness.”⁴² The secularization narrative is thus used as an ideology when it is stylized as the only teleological path to modernity and as the norm and normality of modernity.

Closely related to this is the third aspect, which concerns the questioning of the transferability of this theory to other contexts. In Casanova’s words, it “becomes problematic once it is generalized as a universal process of societal development and once it is transferred to other world religions and other civilizational areas with very different dynamics of structuration of the relations and tensions between religion and world, or between cosmological transcendence and worldly immanence.”⁴³ Since one can observe multiple secularizations and multiple modernity even in “the West,” this applies all the more to the rest of the world.⁴⁴ For the global context, insisting on an intrinsic correlation between modernization and secularization is, according to Casanova, also a problematic, ideological use and not very persuasive.⁴⁵ For observing other contexts, therefore, other theoretical perspectives are needed. Casanova finds these in the model of *multiple modernities*, which was first designed by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. Eisenstadt opposes both secular cosmopolitanism, which he regards as the consequence of a secularization narrative, and the thesis of a *clash of civilizations*:

The multiple-modernities position rejects both the notion of a modern radical break with traditions and the notion of an essential modern continuity with tradition. All traditions and civilizations are radically transformed in the processes of modernization, but they also have the possibility of shaping in particular ways the institutionalization of modern “religious” and “secular” traits. Traditions are

41 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 28), 12; see also Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 319.

42 Casanova, “Modernity,” 58f.; see also Casanova, “Identities” (see footnote 28), 66; Casanova, “Erschließung,” 16.

43 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 105; see also Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 12; Casanova, “Modernization,” 33.

44 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 11.

45 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 13.

forced to respond and adjust to modern conditions, but in the process of reformulating their traditions for modern contexts, they also help to shape the particular forms of “religious” and “secular” modernity.⁴⁶

The consequence of his questioning of the entire narrative of secularization is a plea that “[i]t is time to revise our teleological conceptions of a global cosmopolitan secular modernity, against which we can characterize the religious ‘other’ as ‘fundamentalist.’”⁴⁷ Programmatically, he proposes a counterstrategy, i.e., the “recognition of the irremediable plurality of universalisms and the multiplicity of modernities, namely, that every universalism and every modernity is particularistic.”⁴⁸

It is noticeable here that Casanova’s argumentation pattern is very much based on Eisenstadt: where Eisenstadt talks about modernity, Casanova writes about secularization. For this reason, the criticism, which has been voiced in the context of postcolonial studies, that Eisenstadt essentializes the different modernities without considering their connectivity⁴⁹ could also be applied to Casanova. This would be a mistake, however, because he explicitly emphasizes the interwoven nature of the world, even in reference to the terminology of *Postcolonial Studies*: “Intercivilizational encounters, cultural imitations and borrowings, diasporic diffusions, hybridity, creolization, and transcultural hyphenations are [...] part and parcel of the global present [...]”⁵⁰

Public Religions and their (Re-)Localization

Building on the thesis of the deprivatization of religion, Casanova developed his central concept of *public religions*, according to which – in contrast to assumptions of the liberal concepts of the public sphere – religions have not lost their public relevance in modernity. The concept does not refer to an increase in private religiosity but rather to the visibility of religions in the public sphere, which was described as a new Phenomenon “already in the 1980s”⁵¹ worldwide.

Following the subdivision of the three “arenas” or spheres of the public sphere made by the political scientist Alfred Stepan, Casanova identifies three ideal types of public religions, each of which can act on the state, political or

46 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 106.

47 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 119.

48 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 119; see also Casanova, “Modernity,” 15.

49 Gurinder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

50 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 119.

51 Casanova, “Private” (see footnote 24), 264.

civil society level.⁵² In principle, the public religions can be located on all three levels, but it is true that “*civil society has now become the public place of the church*, and no longer, as before, the state or political society,”⁵³ according to the early Casanova. Elsewhere, he speaks in the imperative, stating “that modern religious institutions *must* necessarily be in civil society [...]”⁵⁴

In doing so, he considers the public religions’ “actions” or religious actors in public to be ambivalent because they can function both as a danger to and an opportunity for democratization processes. They are a danger when they highlight conflicts. He distinguishes between religious-secular, ethnic-religious and confessional conflicts.⁵⁵ They are an opportunity if they stand up for human rights, act as a moral resource in social discourse, stimulate public reflection on the normative structures of a society and plead for the common good and “‘solidarity’ with all people.”⁵⁶

In retrospect, he also regards this restriction of public religions to the civil society arena as a second “limitation” in his thinking.⁵⁷ In 2006, he revised this position, considering it a preferable option, but not an absolutely necessary one:

If today I had to revise anything from my earlier work, it would be my attempt to restrict, on what I thought were justifiable normative grounds, public religion to the public sphere of civil society. This remains my own personal normative and political preference, but I am not certain that the secular separation of religion from political society or even from the state are universalizable maxims, in the sense that they are either necessary or sufficient conditions for democratic politics.⁵⁸

After becoming aware of his own preconceptions, Casanova later says goodbye to them for good. He revises his earlier position by self-critically distancing himself from his own “modern Western secular prejudices,”⁵⁹ which manifest themselves in “assumptions about the separation of the religious and secular spheres and about the idea of a public sphere of civil society,” as well as his own denominational (Catholic) preconception, which was shaped by the

52 Casanova, “World,” 61; 252; Casanova, “Chancen,” 190f.

53 Casanova, “Chancen,” 194, italics his.

54 Casanova, “Chancen,” 209, italics his.

55 Casanova, “Chancen,” 200.

56 Casanova, “Chancen,” 209.

57 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 102.

58 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 21.

59 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 17), 29.

experience of the *aggiornamento* of the 1960s.⁶⁰ The restriction of religion to the sphere of civil society is not suitable from a global comparative perspective. Because of this, the democratic-theoretical concept of civil society no longer plays a role in his later publications.

Now public religion was dis- or relocalized programmatically beyond civil society. This corrects the previously primary localization of public religion in civil society by no longer rejecting the influence of public religions in the realm of politics and the state.⁶¹ Public religions are also relocalized beyond disestablishment. This means that, on closer examination, the “great secular European narrative” of democratization, which is based “on the secularization of society and the privatization of religion”⁶² is revealed as a “myth.”⁶³ Rather, it is empirically evident that divergent models⁶⁴ of the shaping of state-church relations compete with each other in Europe: from state churchism (establishment) to the “model of the formal separation of church and state in the case of an informal remaining influence of one or more churches (quasi-establishment)”⁶⁵ to the French *laïcité* (deestablishment; laicism). Thus, according to his corrected position, “the strict secular separation of church and state is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of democracy.”⁶⁶

Instead of secularist assumptions, Casanova proposes an alternative model for a global observation perspective, the model of twin tolerations by Alfred Stepan,⁶⁷ which he considers “a promising approach.”⁶⁸ Casanova points out that, based on empirical analytical democracy research, Stepan has shown that neither secularity nor a disestablishment model is among the constitutive characteristics of modern democracies,⁶⁹ as liberal theories of democracy

60 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 321f.

61 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 106.

62 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 327.

63 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 110.

64 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 326; see also Casanova, “Problem der Religion,” 19.

65 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 326.

66 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 112.

67 Alfred Stepan, “Military Politics in Three Political Arenas: Civil Society, Political Society, and the State,” in *Rethinking Military Politics. Brazil and the Southern Cone*, ed. Alfred Stepan (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1–12; Alfred Stepan, “The World’s Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the ‘Twin Tolerations,’” in *Arguing Comparative Politics*, ed. id. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 218–25; Alfred Stepan, “Religion; Democracy, and Human Rights,” in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft (Oxford and New York: 2012), 55–72.

68 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 321.

69 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 329.

assume. For a democratic polity, a minimum of mutual acceptance or tolerance between political and religious actors would suffice, which in Stepan's words is constantly being constructed and deconstructed.⁷⁰ Accordingly, the following applies:

Religious authorities must 'tolerate' the autonomy of democratically elected governments without claiming constitutionally privileged prerogatives to mandate or to veto public policy. Democratic political institutions, in turn, must 'tolerate' the autonomy of religious individuals and groups not only in complete freedom to worship privately, but also to advance publicly their values in civil society and to sponsor organizations and movements in political society, so long as they do not violate democratic rules and adhere to the rule of law.⁷¹

This means that religions – like all other social groups – can raise their voices in all public arenas of a democratic community and cannot be prohibited *a priori* from participating. Casanova holds Stepan's findings to be important: they have shown that it is relevant to base the shaping of the state-church relationship in a political system on a minimal definition⁷² of democracy.⁷³ This relativizes the secularist assumptions that democracy is only possible by separating the religious and political spheres.

Reciprocal Recognition: Global Denominationalism

If the early Casanova dealt primarily with "the West" and, due to the methodology of Western sociology, limited himself to national contexts, he retrospectively considers this to be the third "limitation" of his earlier positions. It is deficient because it does not take into account the transnational and global dimension⁷⁴ that is decisive for the later Casanova: "The adoption of a global perspective switches the focus from methodological nationalism and the

70 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 17), 59.

71 Casanova, *Public Religions* 113; see also Casanova, "Das Problem der Religion," 18f.

72 Stepan views democracy from an institutional perspective and defines it as follows: "Democracy is a system of conflict regulation that allows open competition over the values and goals that citizens want to advance. In the strict democratic sense, this means that as long as groups do not use violence, do not violate the rights of other citizens, and stay within the rules of the democratic game, *all* groups are granted the right to advance their interests, both in civil society and in political society" (Casanova, *Public Religions* [see footnote 17], 56f.).

73 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 113.

74 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 102.

dynamics of state secularization it entails to the paradigm of religious pluralism which accompanies the process of globalization.”⁷⁵

Through the processes of globalization, according to Casanova, the world religions have the opportunity for the first time to become “truly world religions.”⁷⁶ This is caused decisively by two factors: mass media and mass migration. Mass media have broken through their former “relatively closed communication spaces.”⁷⁷ For example, “[t]he Bishop of Rome may have always claimed to speak *urbi et orbi*, to the city and to the world. But in fact this first became a reality in the twentieth century.”⁷⁸ Mass migration brought about a deterritorialization of public religions. The novelty of globalization is thus that the world religions “can be presented for the first time as de-territorialized global communities.”⁷⁹ This leads to complex, permanent interdependencies between religions that contribute to or rather cause change. According to Casanova,

Under conditions of globalization, world religions do not only draw upon their own traditions but also increasingly upon one another. Inter-civilizational encounters, cultural imitations and borrowings, diasporic diffusions, hybridity, creolization, and transcultural hyphenations are all part and parcel of the global present.⁸⁰

He regards deterritorialized, transnational, global communities as “global *denominationalism*,”⁸¹ which he defines based on the American model of regulating the religious sphere. *Denominalization* thus means “a system of mutual recognition of groups within society, which is not regulated by the state”;⁸² global denominationalism means the same process of mutual interreligious recognition at the global level.⁸³ Based on the aforementioned statement that “every universalism and every modernity is particularistic,”⁸⁴ he predicts: “One could say that we are moving from the condition of competing particularist universalism to a new condition of global denominational contextualism.”⁸⁵

75 José Casanova, *Global Religious and Secular Dynamics: The Modern System of Classification* (Brill: Leiden 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004411982>.

76 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 116.

77 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 333.

78 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 116.

79 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 333.

80 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 17; see also Casanova, “Modernity,” 15.

81 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 335.

82 Casanova, “Modernity,” 13.

83 Casanova, “Dynamics,” 65.

84 Casanova, “Modernity,” 15.

85 Casanova, “Modernity,” 15.

Relevance for the Representation of the Religious Other

Casanova's treatises are relevant to the discursive representation of the "religious other" because they provide a hermeneutical framework for correcting the current discourse about the "other democracy," civil society and modernity, and thus enable the establishment of a counter-discourse. In what follows, I would like to highlight three aspects that seem to be central to this before sketching – using the example of his treatises on "Islam" – how he concretely challenges the hegemonic discourse of Islam. I will then discuss the implications about/for "Orthodoxy."

The first aspect concerns the questioning of the common categorization of the other by suggesting an "ontological difference."⁸⁶ In his essays, he decodes the common mark of the religious vitality of the other, which is described as "anti-modernist fundamentalism,"⁸⁷ as "a reaction of a traditionalist collective identity to the process of globalization,"⁸⁸ as "annoying and hopelessly anachronistic,"⁸⁹ as "the rise of fundamentalism in not-yet-modern societies,"⁹⁰ as a sign of "failed modernity"⁹¹ or as the incommensurability of the other with modernity per se.⁹² He shows that the public visibility of religions "did not have to be interpreted necessarily as an antimodern, antiseccular, or antidemocratic reaction."⁹³ As shown, the vitality and public visibility of religion itself is present in "the West" and is not an obstacle to modernity, so that also applies to the religious other. From this follow implications regarding speaking about the religious other, which is aimed at recognition, understanding and trust.

The second aspect relates to the recognition of the plurality of paths to modernity. Thus, adaptation to a secular Western European norm is not a universal planetary path from primitive, traditional or pre-modern to modern societies, as modernization theories suggested, and "as Europeans like to think."⁹⁴

86 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (April 2007), 240–70, here 253; <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>.

87 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 119.

88 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 336.

89 Casanova, *Identities* (see footnote 28), 70.

90 Casanova, "Problem der Religion," 23; Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 314.

91 Casanova, "Modernity," 3.

92 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 30), 314; Casanova, "Problem der Religion," 23.

93 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 17), 25.

94 José Casanova, "Welche christliche Säkularisierung und Globalisierung," in *Europas Angst vor der Religion*, ed. José Casanova (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2009), 85–120, here 103.

On the contrary, these paths are to be thought of in the plural. The recognition of this plurality, according to Casanova, “should allow a less Euro-centric comparative analysis of patterns of differentiation and secularization in other civilizations and world religions.”⁹⁵

Closely related to this is a third aspect that emphasizes the connectivity of modern societies and religions. The pluralistic paths to modernity are never to be considered in isolation, but intersectionally – with crossings. This emphasizes the contingency in the dynamics of change, which also arises from the encounter with the other. At this point, I suggest speaking of *connected religions*. Just as the moderns are to be regarded as *connected modernities*⁹⁶, histories as *connected histories*⁹⁷, so this also applies to religions. They are also connected. This aspect is directed explicitly against essentialist and naturalizing imaginations of the religious other.

Casanova himself illustrates the implications of his theses and concepts on the representation of the other in numerous texts using the example of “Islam” or the much-discussed question of the supposed incompatibility of modern democracy, individual liberty rights and “Islam.”⁹⁸ He devotes himself to “Islam” for two reasons: on the one hand, Huntington’s thesis “has found the greatest resonance and has provoked the most heated debates,”⁹⁹ and “Islam” has since then been represented “as ‘the other’ of the Western civilization.”¹⁰⁰

He leaves the answer to the question “Are Islamic norms, values, and practices compatible with modern democratic political structures and with an open pluralist civil society?”¹⁰¹ he leaves to Muslim actors themselves. At the same time, he says that those voices are multivocal: “Obviously, given my lack of expertise I am not in a position nor is this the proper place to attempt to address these questions systematically. In any case it is up to Muslim practitioners to answer these questions in their own multivocal ways.”¹⁰² Furthermore,

95 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 11.

96 Bhambra, “Modernity.”

97 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes toward a Reconfiguration on Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.

98 José Casanova, “The End of Islamic Ideology,” *Social Research* 67, no. 2 (June 2000), 475–518; José Casanova, “Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam,” *Social Research* 68, no. 4 (December 2001), 1041–80; Casanova, *Identities* (a / see footnote 27); José Casanova, “Religion, Politik und Geschlecht im Katholizismus und im Islam,” in *Europas Angst vor der Religion*, ed. José Casanova (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2009), 31–84.

99 Casanova, “Society,” 1052.

100 Casanova, “Identities” (see footnote 28), 71.

101 Casanova, “Society,” 1054.

102 Casanova, “Civil Society,” 1054.

he considers Muslim actors to be reflexive subjects who are able to take a position on these questions. In addition, he does not regard them as a monolithic block but emphasizes the plurality of their positions. Moreover, they are not only capable of articulating their position but already do so. For example, whenever “open public spaces appear, either in Muslim countries or in the diaspora, Muslims seem to find a way of reformulating their tradition in a civil, democratic direction.”¹⁰³ Casanova hereby reverses the hegemonic discourse by transforming the other from the object of observation to the subject of the discourse.

Instead of discussing these individual discursive statements and discourse fragments and interpreting them from his own horizon of normality, he looks at the question of (in)compatibility on the level of discursive statements on “Islam.” In doing so, he draws attention to the parallelism or “striking similarities”¹⁰⁴ of the debates on the compatibility of “Catholicism” with democracy that were conducted until Vatican II.¹⁰⁵ He regards the comparison as fruitful because Catholicism “was viewed for a long time as the paradigmatic anti-modern fundamentalist religion.”¹⁰⁶ Just as “Catholicism” was viewed at that time as “an inner Orient, a primitive and atavistic remnant within Western civilization,”¹⁰⁷ that was neither compatible with modern democracy nor with individual freedoms, so today Islam is imagined “as the other of Western secular modernity.”

Against essentialist imaginations of the religions, he emphasizes that “Islam is also subject to immense processes of change, and likewise has no “unchanging core essence.” Just as “Catholicism,” which is strongly dogmatically structured, has undergone processes of change¹⁰⁸, so this possibility exists all the more for Islam: “The premise of an unchanging core essence should even be less valid for other world religions with a less dogmatically structured doctrinal core or with a more pluralistic and contested system of authoritative interpretation of the religious tradition.”¹⁰⁹

The point of this comparison is to set up a hermeneutical frame that is oriented towards understanding and acceptance, by which the “others” are

103 Casanova, “Civil Society,” 1076.

104 Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 108.

105 Casanova “Private” (see footnote 24), 80, Casanova, “Religion” (see footnote 98), 31; Casanova, “Identities” (see footnote 28), 80; Casanova, “Religion,” 31.

106 Casanova, “Civil Society,” 1054.

107 Casanova, “Religion,” 44.

108 Casanova, “Religion,” 47.

109 Casanova, “Civil Society,” 1051f.; see also Casanova, *Public Religions* (see footnote 5), 108; Casanova, “Religion,” 47.

recognized as reflexive subjects. Thus he considers “today’s Muslim changes as forms of Muslim *aggiornamenti* [...], i.e. as multiple and often antithetical attempts by individual and collective Muslim actors to create their own version of Muslim modernity [...].”¹¹⁰ He does not expect an unanimous voice and emphasizes: “There are many Western modernities and there will probably be many Muslim ones as well.”¹¹¹ What this would look like concretely remains open because, as he emphasizes, “When it comes to religion, there is no global rule.”¹¹²

The counter-discourse on “Islam” presented above is relevant for the discursive representation of “orthodoxy,” since the discourses also show “astonishing” or “striking” parallelisms.¹¹³ From the perspective of Postcolonial Studies, however, it is not very “astonishing” because this is *orientalism* or the strategy of *othering*. In other words, no matter what objects are at the focus of this strategy (“the Jews,” “the women,” “the blacks,” “the migrants,” etc.), every representation of the Western European other in history and the present shows parallels.¹¹⁴

From there, everything Casanova says about “Islam” also applies to the “inner Orient” of Christianity, “Orthodoxy” and its alleged incompatibility with democracy, civil society and modernity. Here, too, a hegemonic discourse, hardly questioned by the devaluation and essentialization of “Orthodoxy” dominates, a discourse that has received great resonance through Huntington’s treatises. Here, too, a deficient “unchangeable essence” of “Orthodoxy” is imagined. But a counter-discourse can also be established for “Orthodoxy.” The Orthodox actors too are to be regarded as reflexive subjects as well who develop their own vision or version of modernity. “Orthodoxy” is also multivocal.

For reflection on the relationship between Orthodoxy and civil society, Casanova’s remarks mean: Orthodoxy *can* but does not *have to* engage in civil society. Whether the Orthodox churches in their self-positioning want to see themselves as an integral part of civil society and choose this *locus* as central to their public commitment or prefer other *loci* of activity is – to use Casanova’s words – “up to them.” If engagement in civil society is to be understood “as self-organized and independent, as public, conflict-prone and pluralistic, as ‘civil’, i.e. non-violent and non-military, and as solidarity, i.e. not only self-interested

110 Casanova, “Religion,” 64; see also Casanova, “Society,” 1061.

111 Casanova, “Religion,” 56; see also Casanova, “Society,” 1063.

112 Casanova, “Secularization” (see footnote 29), 17.

113 Irena Pavlović, *Schieder, Rolf: Sind Religionen gefährlich? Religionspolitische Perspektiven für das 21. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2011 in *Theologische Revue* 110 (2), 1–2.

114 Varela and Mecheril, “Dämonisierung.”

but also oriented towards the common good,¹¹⁵ then, of course, nothing speaks against this commitment. This applies in the context of democratic states.

But Orthodoxy acts – to express it metaphorically – “from Jerusalem to Moscow” in completely divergent social contexts in which this choice (cannot/must not) is not made. In some contexts, it *cannot* get involved because there are no civic virtues in society – neither with church actors nor with other dialogue partners. In many post-socialist countries, for example, it is customary to interpret in the style of communist rulers any public activity of the church as “undue interference in politics” and to discuss away the question of the legitimacy of the church’s public speech. On the other hand, in the context of the Serbian Orthodox Church, for example, certain media and even academic speaking positions are strictly regulated by church actors, even by bans or dismissals. Finally, if Orthodoxy opts for the civil society option, it can contribute to the stabilization of a democratic culture of discussion and democracy. This option is certainly preferable to dictatorships and other unjust states.

Here it should be emphasized that, as Antonius Liedhegener remarked, current political science considers it “misleading” to locate religion and the church exclusively in civil society “because it fails to recognize the autonomy of religion in the cultural-religious sphere of a society and the multifunctionality of religion in its organized form, which enables religious actors to be part of other areas or systems of differentiated societies, for example in the context of the provision of services by the welfare state or the political decision-making process in the public sphere and the government system.”¹¹⁶ “Orthodoxy” can also interfere in other public spheres and need not limit its public engagement to the sphere of civil society.

Conclusion

The use of the “collective singular[s]”¹¹⁷ is simply wrong if it is applied in a generalizing manner to certain ethnic and religious groups (such as “the Jews,” “the Muslims,” “the Arabs,” etc.). Thus, speaking of “Orthodoxy” is also

115 Antonius Liedhegener, “Ein kleiner, aber feiner Unterschied: Religion, zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement und gesellschaftliche Integration in der Schweiz,” in *Integrationspotenziale von Religion und Zivilgesellschaft. Theoretische und empirische Befunde*, ed. Edmund Arens, Martin Baumann, and Antonius Liedhegener (Zurich: Nomos, 2016), 112–82, here 125.

116 Liedhegener, “Unterschied,” 128.

117 Paul Sailer-Wlasits, *Verbalradikalismus. Kritische Geistesgeschichte eines soziopolitisch-sprachphilosophischen Phänomens* (Vienna/Klosterneuburg: Edition Va Bene, 2012), 215f.

a simplifying portrayal that disregards the plurality and diversity of patterns of interpretation within the various autocephalous churches and within the various sub-publics within these churches, such as academia, the media, and church. In other words, to speak of “Orthodoxy” suggests its “unchangeable nature,” a uniformity and homogeneity that does not correspond to reality. Furthermore, it neglects its connectivity to other religions or denominations, which seems particularly important for questions of socio-political relevance.

In view of the current state of civil society research, according to which “religion and civil society [...] must always be seen or analyzed in the context of existing political systems and their relationship to civil society and civil society engagement,”¹¹⁸ a uniform relationship of “Orthodoxy” can also be assumed. Again, the Orthodox Churches function in completely divergent socio-political contexts that require careful empirical analysis. For practical research reasons, however, this could not be done within this contribution.

For this reason, I have argued here on the level of discourse. In any case, I have deliberately ignored the hegemonic mainstream discourses of threat and deficit about Orthodoxy and democracy, civil society and modernity. The escalating effect of this discourse is a reminder of ethical responsibility in the production of knowledge. Just as “Catholicism” was both “a construct and an effect of the anti-Catholic discourse,”¹¹⁹ so “Orthodoxy” also constructs itself in relation to this “anti-Orthodox” discourse. Therefore, the counter-discourse has to be initiated to present and establish a new hermeneutical-analytical framework that is oriented towards recognition, respect and understanding of the “religious other” and its positioning in society and modernity that could be implemented and made fruitful for future research on “Orthodoxy.”

118 Antonius Liedhegener and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner, *Religion, Zivilgesellschaft und politisches System – ein offenes Forschungsfeld in Religion zwischen Zivilgesellschaft und politischem System. Befunde – Positionen – Perspektiven*, ed. Antonius Liedhegener and Ines-Jacqueline Werkner (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft, 2011), 9–36, here 9 (Translation I.P.).

119 Casanova, “Religion,” 47.