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QUESTIONS OF RELIGION AND CULTURAL POLICY IN FRANCE

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This article explores how questions of religion have impinged on or informed various dimensions of culture-shaping policy in France. Firstly, it considers how religious references have been orchestrated in high-level attempts to frame secular national identities, but also how such processes have assumed quasi-religious forms and functions. Secondly, it analyses the changing place of religion in French educational curricula, and recent contested endeavours to introduce it as a cultural 'fact' into those curricula. Thirdly, the article examines influential framings of art policies in their relation to religion. It considers the pivotal function of religious fragments and debris in Malraux's vision of the imaginary museum, and the use by Bourdieu of sustained religious metaphors to describe the sacralizing dynamics of secular artworlds. Finally the article examines in a long-term perspective the implicit and explicit cultural policies of religious bodies themselves in their attempts to act upon prevailing cultures.

Keywords: French cultural policy; implicit cultural policy; religion and cultural policy.

France often figures in international comparison as the model of a self-consciously and assertively secular republic, in which a series of 'laicist' policies across a range of domains have sought to evacuate religious representation from the public sphere. It might seem, therefore, that questions of 'religion' in this context would emerge in terms of residual formations in a process of ongoing marginalization and extinction. The dynamics in question are, however, not so simple. By looking at France as a kind of accentuated case in this respect, we can explore a number of general issues raised by the relations between modern culture-shaping policies and religion. These can be brought out most clearly by adopting quite a long-term historical perspective (though the article is organised thematically rather than chronologically).

The article develops an approach in which we look for forms of culture-shaping policy outside as well as inside domains that are officially labelled as 'cultural policy' (Ahearne 2009). Certainly, explicit French cultural policy has come up against questions of religion, and we will look at some aspects of this. But these are not the most pivotal areas in which French culture has been

governmentally fashioned or inflected in its relations to religion, and we will therefore look firstly at some of these other areas. Finally, governments are not the only agencies at work in such force fields, and we will consider how the self-conscious attempts by certain religious bodies to act upon or within the national culture have played out in French contexts.

In a sense, we are using 'cultural policy' as an analytic focusing device rather than as a substantive term referring to a clearly demarcated and stable entity in the political world. It directs our attention to certain facets of cultural transmission processes at work across history in enduring social groups and institutions: the definition, maintenance and reworking of certain identificatory symbolic clusters; the inculcation of habits and values; the representation of pasts, of futures, and of co-existent others; etc. As I have argued elsewhere, these processes of cultural transmission – or, in Peter Berger's terms, the construction and maintenance of symbolic worlds - are generally a precarious and conflict-ridden business. They correspond, however to an imperative whose neglect or failure leaves complex social groups exposed to entropic disintegration.[1]

'Religion', of course, can also oscillate as a term in a similar way. It is important as an explicit label in its own right that is ascribed to certain major institutional bodies. Sects of one kind or another try to secure official recognition as 'religions', paradoxically perhaps in a country like France, due to the very symbolic and political benefits that derive from such branding (Roy 2008, pp. 241-2). But we can also use the term as a focusing device, or at the very least as a heuristic defamiliarizing metaphor that discloses aspects of processes which we might otherwise miss. Marc Fumaroli once famously described cultural policy itself as France's 'State religion' (Fumaroli 1991). To what is our attention directed when we look at phenomena that are not intentionally religious as though they were religions? We consider how they foster beliefs and practices of devotion whose rational grounding seems arbitrary or overdetermined; how they liturgically mobilize elevated fictions, fables or myths that bring individuals into aesthetic and cognitive community; how they maintain canons of orthodoxy through practices of catechism and excommunication. The overlaps with our view of cultural policy are clear, and many have been the observers, since at least Durkheim, who have

2

noted between the projects of secularizing modernity and the religions they cast behind themselves forms of uncanny similarity.[2]

National-symbolic culture policies

Before considering issues of religion as they have figured in discrete policy domains (notably education and arts), I shall briefly consider how references to religion have functioned in France at a kind of second-order policy level, in the framing and projection of a certain overarching national identity. As historians such as Eric Hobsbawm, Linda Colley or Anne-Marie Thiesse have noted, this framing and projection of national identity is a fundamental political-cultural process in its own right (Hobsbawm 1992; Colley 2005; Thiesse 2001). The vagueness or lability of the term should not therefore distract us from recognising in it a matrix of cardinal reference-points with, in Lévi-Strauss's terms, considerable symbolic efficacy. This unstable matrix has been composed both of positively and negatively polarized values, and religion has recurrently been orchestrated in France as a necessary anti-value in the positive projection of a national lay republican identity. Marcel Gauchet has noted, for example, how the resonant pathos with which defences of the lay cause could long be invested was dependent on the energizing metaphysical counter-charge still incarnated by the Catholic Church (Gauchet 2005). As this dispersed, so militant assertions of laicism either fell flat or became oddly hysterical, acting out dispositions that no longer corresponded to the effective political and cultural forces in play. Gambetta's famous rallying cry of 1877 – 'Clericalism – that's our enemy' – became less and less effective, save as a nostalgic reference or a way of masking more directly class-based enemies. Revealingly, however, the projection of a lay national identity has gained a new lease of life over the last two decades through the timely emergence and construction of a new enemy against which to rally: islamism. The awkwardly contrived high-profile debate on

'national identity' voluntaristically launched by Nicolas Sarkozy's government in Autumn 2009 rapidly came to revolve around just two issues: immigration and the place of a non-moderate islam in contemporary France.[3] It was a classic demonstration of the axiom that the affirmation of a positive identity presupposes an other that can be negated. In the process of articulating and delimiting an overarching national cultural identity, religions have repeatedly been assigned the role of essential foil for assertive negation.[4]

Religious formations have also inhabited secular projections in other ways. The very processes that evacuated religious contents preserved powerfully constraining religious 'formalities' (see e.g. Certeau 1988, pp. 175-9). The French revolutionary Georges Danton remarked that, in political terms, 'you only destroy what you can replace'. The Revolution famously set out, if not to destroy, then at least to neuter the ecclesiastical apparatuses that had under the *Ancien Régime* worked to shape the minds, sensibilities and loyalties of the French population. It is not surprising if the 'replacement' apparatuses devised by the Revolution and subsequent republican regimes to shape different minds and sensibilities should show at least a formal resemblance to the ecclesiastical institutions they were designed to displace. In the manifest contents they disseminated, they were anti-ecclesiastical, and generally secularizing. In their forms, however, they acted as the instruments of what after Rousseau has been called a 'civil religion'. The manifold 'festivals' orchestrated by revolutionaries, and which they saw as intrinsic components of their overall educational programmes, worked as public liturgical rituals for the celebration of sacralized and allegorized national political principles (Durkheim 1976, p. 214; Ozouf 1976; Baczko 2000).[5] Régis Debray has described the 'involuntary sacralizing operations' through which the Third Republic produced an 'anticlerical pantheonization' of its lay saints (Debray 2007, pp. 90, 370), while figures such as Durkheim himself assumed the role of its 'high priests' and 'theologians' (Bellah 1973, p. x). Claude Lelièvre cites how Jules Ferry, architect of France's secular education system in the 1880s, took as an 'explicit model' the Catholic Church's teaching orders when it came to administering what Ferry himself referred to as the 'sacred trust of a national education' (Lelièvre 2004, p. 40). Of

course, the idea of a Republic has been subject since to the same kind of hemorrhaging of credibility and potency that has affected the Church just like other major social institutions. They can no longer aspire to the same kind of unilateral hold over the cultural lives of their subjects and citizens (Hervieu-Léger 2003, pp. 266-75; Dubet 2008, pp. 113-36). Nonetheless the rituals through which a sacred canopy of emblematic secular values has been instituted and maintained can be envisaged as quasi-religious in function and form.

The framing of a national cultural identity is an important component of a national cultural policy, broadly understood, even if it is necessarily a highly abstract and inherently unstable notion. Even those who contest it politically (rather than simply intellectually) have to have something to put in its place, either of the order of Habermas's *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism) (Habermas 1998, p. 500), or in terms of loyalty to a different kind of grouping. Quite often this high-level orchestration of the elements of a national identity will not be the preserve of a particular ministry, but will be attached to high executive office (in France, it is likely these days to be a function for presidential speech-writers). We have seen how religion has played, perhaps paradoxically, at least a twofold role in this kind of national-symbolic cultural policy formulation. On the one hand, it acts as a foil on which the resonant counter-assertion of lay republican identity is dependent. On the other hand, the celebration and maintenance of lay republican identity in France has tended to assume forms which strike one as insistently religious. However vacuous actual instantiations of such assertions and celebrations may seem to independently minded citizens, their very repetition across two centuries suggests that they correspond to some abiding politico-cultural function.[6]

National education policies and religion

Michel de Certeau once observed that any society that has emerged from a religious universe – and he wondered whether there were any other kinds of society – must confront its relation with the religious 'archaeology' on which it set up its foundations and which continues in one way or another to inhabit it (Certeau 1988, p. 176). It is within the forms of culture-shaping policies, broadly understood, that we can trace the manifest unfolding of this confrontation or negotiation. I will explore some aspects of this first in the domain of educational policy, and then in the domain of arts policy thinking.

The Third Republic's regime-defining educational legislation of the 1880s, generally attached to the name of Jules Ferry, is quite rightly seen as a head-on confrontation with the hold of the Catholic Church over the primary education of the nation's children (and subsequent republican historiography, as an extension of that same policy, would tend to minimize the role of Church schools in producing the substantial long-term rises in popular literacy rates that can be traced across the nineteenth century) .[7] However, we can note that even this most symbolic of 'lay' legislation amounted also to a negotiation with, so to speak, the sheer cultural 'fact' of religious belief in the country. Thus, while denominational content was expunged from formal curricula, a day was set aside each week on which pupils could receive catechistic instruction outside school premises. Indeed the deliberately vague notion of a pupil's 'duties towards God' was preserved within State curricula until 1923.

Religious belief as a cultural fact could thus not simply be disregarded or evacuated in the framing and implementation of 'lay' culture-shaping policies. Most revealing of this is perhaps a telling conjunction. The high point of the sweeping programme of secular State educational reform – broadly 1880-1886 – coincided with the first State-funded research appointments and institutions devoted expressly to the emergent and non-theological discipline of the history of religions. This can partly be explained by France's obsessive intellectual rivalry at the time with other European nations, in this regard particularly Germany and Britain, who appeared to be at the forefront of developments in this new science. But we can also see in it a way of elaborating a new kind of

relation between a republican polity and the accumulated historical sedimentation of human religiosities. Indeed, there were quite early proposals – around the period between 1902 and 1908 – to integrate the fruits of this research discipline into primary curricula, replacing religious instruction with a non-apologetic approach to comparative religious history. However, in a foreshadowing of patterns to come, these proposals would encounter a two-fold refusal. [8] Laicists saw the history of religions as a Trojan Horse for the importation of religious content that would compromise the secular perspectives cultivated in State schools. Catholics saw the history of religions as a Trojan Horse for the importation of sceptical perspectives upon religious contents. Either way, the history of religions – commonly seen by secularists as an archaic province of totems and taboos - had itself become in policy terms a taboo subject. And this would remain the case for the next eighty or ninety years.

When the topic started to re-emerge as an object for sustained consideration, it did so as a function of two very different and expressly cultural problematics. [9] Educational associations such as the *Ligue française de l'enseignement* began to lobby from the early 1980s for the introduction of religious contents into primary and secondary school curricula. The motivations behind this were not religious. Institutional religion, which had once been a massive cultural 'fact' within the nation, was no longer so. And paradoxically, this had began to compromise in the classroom the transmission of the very 'humanist' culture (or more precisely, in France as in other countries, a kind of national-humanist culture) that had once looked to replace denominational creeds and canons (Willaime 2007, pp. 63-4). Adequate engagement with much of this national-humanist culture was impossible without a basic familiarity with the terms of reference of those religious universes within or against which it had emerged. In Certeau's terms as cited above, the religious 'archaeologies' informing contemporary cultural corpuses had become unreadable or even undiscernible for many pupils. In one emblematic example cited, a painting of Saint Sebastian had been interpreted by pupils as a cowboy being attacked by red indians. In terms of the art history vocabulary deployed by the likes of Erwin Panofsky or Pierre Bourdieu, they were limited to a 'pre-iconological' apprehension of works:

they could perceive represented objects, but could not engage with the intended significance produced by the artistic reworking of established motifs.[10] *Mutatis mutandis*, the same would apply to the literary canons that were a more fundamental component of the basic national-humanist heritage transmitted through education.

There were other reasons for the augmented difficulty of transmitting this national-humanist culture through schooling – not least the challenges to its unconsciously elitist presuppositions represented by the successive waves of massification altering the nature of the secondary school population and learning environment from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s (see e.g. Dubet 1998). But a supplementary reason was that families and Churches could no longer be relied upon, in a kind of educational sub-contracting, to familiarise children with religious codes and references. What had long figured as humanist culture's oppositional foil came into clearer focus, now that it could not be taken for granted, as one of its necessary but lacking presuppositions. The discussions of the early 1980s continued; a high-level report was commissioned by the socialist Education Minister Lionel Jospin from the rector Philippe Joutard in 1988; in 1996 religious elements were expressly introduced into formal State curricula, affecting in particular disciplines such as history and literature.

The subject remained nonetheless, within a French State schooling context, hypersensitive and residually strongly taboo. This explains the 'incremental' rather than systematic approach adopted (Joutard's report ruled out introducing a new subject explicitly labelled as such, as exists in other European countries, in favour of the incorporation of religious elements into existing disciplinary structures). Indeed, the socialist Education Minister Jack Lang felt it necessary to commission in December 2001 another report, this time from the prominent public intellectual Régis Debray, that might give extra momentum and legitimacy to the process (Debray had long been associated with the republican lay pole of the debate, and part of his brief was to allay the fears of more fundamentalist laicists).[11]

The timing of Debray's commission was not a coincidence. He certainly addresses the problematic around the presuppositions of general humanist culture as outlined above. But this had patently now been overlaid by a second broad problematic of cultural government – the threat posed to republican and more generally Western forms of democratic ideology by newly visible forms of religious radicalism (invoking in this instance islamic creeds). For Debray, the traditional French republican response of a kneejerk refusal to engage substantially with any religiously based discussion would be counterproductive. He labels this attitude a 'laicity of incompetence' – a lay approach that declares, with a certain satisfaction of closure, that it is 'not competent' to deal with any religiously related matter, and that these ought not therefore to be a matter for its consideration. He argued – with considerable subsequent impact – that this needed to be replaced in education by a 'laicity of intelligence': a lay approach in terms of which religious phenomena like other socio-historical facts can be approached in a rationally controlled and rationally open manner. The alternative of excluding religiously labelled contents from classroom transmission would mean ensuring that significant numbers of pupils encountered those contents only in environments with less comprehensive rational controls (and in which, indeed, the invocation of such controls might constitute a taboo) (Debray 2002).

A term developed by Olivier Roy can help us to elucidate the significance of Debray's intervention here in broad cultural policy terms. Roy sees the potency of contemporary fundamentalist Christian and Islamic formations in the operations of 'deculturation' via which they expressly detach neophyte or 'born-again' adherents from the norms and patterns of the embedded cultures around them (Roy 2008). Debray, we might argue, to transpose a term from Vatican II Catholic discourse, looks to counter this with a governmental programme of 'inculturation'.[12] Religious elements were to be brought into the general and common culture as diffused by State schooling and subjected to the comparative rationalized scrutiny thereby produced. This would, in theory, prophylactically arm pupils against less controlled deployments and mystificatory instrumentalizations of such elements in the wider world. In this way, religion would not be, as it

once was, excluded as the 'other' of a secular educational programme, but would be, in effect, harnessed as an instrument in pursuit of that programme's overriding cultural and inter-cultural objectives.[13]

It appears, however, that this programme of lay inculturation of religion as a social, historical and ideological 'fact' has not been entirely successful. In the view of Dominique Borne, France's former chief education inspector, it remains a taboo object within French educational policy and the humanities curricula it centrally prescribes (Borne 2007a and 2007b). Admittedly, since 1996, religious elements are supposed to have been systematically introduced into the programmes for disciplines such as literature and history-geography. However, on close reading of these programmes, Borne notes that these elements are seldom unpacked 'explicitly' in their religious dimension. By remaining, in his terms, 'implicit', this dimension can be circumvented by unwilling teachers. Indeed, Borne observes how certain 'demagogic' adjustments to the programmes, presumably in response to lobbying pressures from educational associations attached to more established notions of laicity, have allowed teachers to elude some of these elements altogether by making them more or less optional. He also notes the reluctance of some families to have their children instructed in the major works of other religions, as well as the awkwardness felt by many teachers at raising these dimensions in class. This once applied principally to Christianity, but is now cited in particular in relation to Islam, and is a sure symptom of powerful taboos at work. Religion as a cultural policy object and problem – but perhaps also as a resource – is not an inert relic from the past, but continues to discomfort the present.

Religion into arts policy (Malraux and Bourdieu)

Philippe Urfalino has suggested that French cultural policy, in its nominal incarnation from 1959, was built on a split foundation (Urfalino 2004, p. 15). On the one hand, there was the founding

figure of André Malraux and his 'philosophy of cultural action' as mediated through forceful

administrators and flagship programmes like the Houses of Culture. On the other hand, there were

the equally foundational critiques of that philosophy as articulated diffusely around May 1968, or,

more particularly, by key thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu. Accounts of these origins, in France as in

other countries, often have a distinctly mythical ring to them (though not, it should be stressed, in

dispassionate critical accounts such as Urfalino's). They are 'mythical' not because the elements they

assemble are historically false in any simple way, but because these elements are ritually and quasi-

poetically mobilised in order to legitimate and authorise a place in the present. Nonetheless, if we

are to remain for a moment at this resolutely 'mythical' level, it would be possible to present these

origins of official French cultural policy in terms of a two-step secularization process.

For André Malraux, at least in his less complex manifestations as officiating Minister of

Culture, the cultural policy he was inaugurating was designed to meet the needs of the human spirit

in a henceforth godless age (see e.g. Malraux 2002). Mediating between the impersonal laws of

science and the implacable appetites of brute humanity, his Houses of Culture were designed to

replace the cathedrals of an earlier age. For Bourdieu, as is well known, these institutions remained

more like cathedrals for inducing sentiments of culpability rather than houses where people could

feel at home (Bourdieu, 1990). In Bourdieu's view, Malraux's supposedly 'charismatic' view of artistic

reception was effectively a substitute religion, and itself needed further secularization. Just as

Durkheim had argued at the turn of the century for the 'rationalization' of educational programmes

in general, so Bourdieu argued for the introduction,as part of the same continuing campaign, of a

'rational pedagogy' within the terrain of explicit cultural policy (Lane 2000, p. 56). The task for

French cultural policy was, as it were, to complete in its domain the secularization process that

Malraux had only partially followed through.

Such an account of French cultural policy thinking in terms of a progressive secularization

(defined as a diminishing level of operative reference to religion as such) would not be false.

However, I want to dwell in what follows precisely on the enduring references to religion within the

cultural policy thought certainly of Malraux, but also, to a degree, of Bourdieu himself. These are significant, I think, not simply as residual discursive symptoms to be eliminated, but, in very different ways, as structural and enlightening components of their cultural policy thinking.

In a striking formulation in his writings on 'the imaginary museum' (where perhaps his most searching and undoubtedly his most anxious cultural policy thought is to be found), Malraux reflects that 'if their statues could recover their original souls, museums would call forth the most immense prayer that the world has ever known' (Malraux 1996, p. 196). Certainly, Malraux is not suggesting that they can recover those 'souls', or the sacralizing intentions that once animated them. The 'metamorphosis' presiding over their removal from sacral sites and their gathering in what we call 'museums' has categorically 'amputated' them of their divinity (*ibid.*). The process is amplified as the displaced objects gathered in those dispersed museums are themselves gathered together as re-displaced elements in vaster and open-ended 'imaginary museums' constituted by the totality of photographically reproducible artwork available to their contemporary contemplators. Malraux is obsessed by the oddness of this process. Fragments from the incompatible myths and fables that have supplied manifold human groups with their existential frames of reference are brought together through the successive operations of powerful 'artistic' policies into more or less mute assemblages. Malraux struggles to name his reponse to all this debris. It is not aesthetic delectation, and it is not edification (Malraux 1996, p. 232). It is only marginally the erudite pleasure produced by the adequate cataloguing of the world's phenomena. So many residual metaphysical 'assertions' produce in Malraux only a vast 'interrogation' (p. 176). This is perhaps a mode, upon a cultural policy stage, of a secular modernity's confrontation with its 'religious archaeologies', to use Certeau's term. It is rather different as a mode from the assertive break with all religious productions in the name of the nineteenth-century fables of Science, Reason and Progress.[14]

If the sixteenth-century 'renaissance' recovered several centuries of geographically delimited classical works, the twentieth-century 'resurrection' that Malraux describes in the terms of

an emergent and englobing 'imaginary museum' brought into effective aesthetic existence the surviving artefacts from millennia of world history (Malraux 1996, pp. 184-5). Malraux does not interpret these as staging posts and precursors on the way to the normative canons of the classical and modern traditions of Western art. He certainly sees as decisive the modernist break, symbolized by Manet, with the mimetic imperatives of the European classical tradition in painting. After Manet, broadly speaking, the degree of an artwork's approximation to our perceptions of the external world became less and less pertinent. What mattered was the autonomous use of colour, volume and shape to create aesthetic effect. Yet, while acknowledging the fundamental importance of this rupture, Malraux seems oddly uninterested in the actual productions of Manet and his modernist successors, at least to judge by the extensive range of photographic reproductions that accompany his writings on art. They do not speak to him (indeed he analyses their effective suppression of any painterly 'voice'). They are important for him not for their own sake, but because they free up our aesthetic gaze so that it can register and engage with millennia of non-mimetic or partially mimetic artistic artefacts without referring them immediately, as incomplete approximations, to the canons of four centuries of Western mimetic art. Malraux is if anything repelled by mere pictorial verisimilitude. He is drawn above all to expressive stylization (particularly involving the human form), and the modernist break opens up for Malraux not a world of pure abstract form, but a universe of 'stylization' (see e.g. Malraux, 1996, pp. 83, 174-5).

Nearly all the artefacts and images to which Malraux's attention gravitates, and which densely populate and accompany his writings, were originally religious in function and intention. The figures of the visible world are warped or trans-figured by forces that are not visible (they convey dread, or panic, or indeed the pacification of these affects). Thus he speaks, for example, of the 'invincible stylization' produced by the imagined apprehension of any 'divine presence' (p. 19). He is drawn especially to sculptures that once were and are no longer sacred, seeing in them a 'confused signification' (p. 261) – we might say a projected aura – that he does not find in, say, the blander humanistically inspired works of Rodin. He is captivated by these artefacts particularly when they are

13

wrecked, ravaged or otherwise mutilated – attributes that he does not view as unfortunate accidents of fate, but as intrinsic signifiers of the underlying 'metamorphoses' (e.g. pp. 181, 184) through which they have been washed up on our modern and postmodern shores. Secular France's first Minister for Cultural Affairs worked harder on the constitution of his peculiar imaginary 'museum' – etymologically, the seat of his inspiration – than at any concrete collection of museums. That imaginary museum is a virtual space saturated with the confused 'voices' and the projected auras of countless decontextualized religious figurations. It is a confrontation with a set of myths and fables whose capacity to haunt our present is secured in no positivist propositional truth-claim, but solely through the force of residual poetic intimation. It is methodologically really quite a meticulous exercise – despite what art historians might say – in what we could call, after Derrida, applied hauntology.[15]

Pierre Bourdieu would have been most unlikely to have perceived in Malraux anything approximating to methodological rigour. His avowed purpose, as stated already quite clearly in *The Love of Art,* was to demystify by desacralizing the 'charismatic ideology' of art at work in Malraux's thinking as in manifold concretizations of State arts policy (see in particular Bourdieu 1990). But the reference to religion in Bourdieu's description of arts policy and the world of arts and letters more generally is not limited to this particular moment of political and polemical intervention. On the contrary, references to religion are repeatedly mobilized in metaphorical or analogizing modes in his most sustained and influential attempts to uncover the structural logics of the cultural field. Why is this so, and what status do these references have?

It may be helpful first to give a kind of condensed flavour of the descriptive operation in question. Modern cultural fields are constituted and maintained, according to Bourdieu, through processes of 'consecration' and 'canonisation' in which certain symbolic products are set apart from others (sacralized) and proffered for particular forms of 'devotion'. Educational bodies play a fundamental role in this process, working like 'Churches' to transmit orthodox canons, the correct

modes of reading them, and inculcating belief. Their task is to defend such canons against impatient 'prophetic' attacks, but occasionally such prophetic attacks will prevail, resulting in alterations to canons, and indeed in new churches. Outside schools, belief in the *prima facie* improbable value of artworks and associated relics is maintained by elaborate networks of 'celebrants' presiding over and participating in various forms of 'liturgy' and communion (many of these being financially supported and symbolically guaranteed through State arts policies). These networks produce a form of 'symbolic alchemy' through which belief in the value both of fetichised artefacts and the accompanying social game as a whole is consolidated, and its participants are emboldened to defend their 'spiritual' values against the 'temporal' temptations of the world.[16]

Bourdieu is, of course, not the first or the last to have seen in art a kind of mystified substitute religion.[17] It is striking, however, that this transposed sociology of religion (indebted notably to Weber) gives him a tool for a totalizing redescription of the world of art and art policy. What are the effects of this tool?

The most obvious effect is irony and metaphorical defamiliarization. In terms of Bourdieu's 'science' of society, it produces an *épochè* – a suspension or bracketing of belief (Bourdieu 1996, p. 185). To describe a modern belief system (the world of art) in terms of an archaic belief system (the world of religion) is to direct a corrosive critical attention to the mechanisms that produce belief at the expense of that belief itself. Bourdieu is conscious that he is touching upon something of a taboo. He uses Stéphane Mallarmé's phrase 'the impious dismantling of a fiction' (*le démontage impie de la fiction*) to denote the kind of decredibilising operation he is carrying out (1996, pp. 274-7). Paradoxically, it is as if there is a kind of 'impiety' in describing the world of art as a religion. It is an impiety, it has to be said, that Bourdieu appears to relish, and it is not surprising if many have seen in Bourdieu's work on art a simple attack exposing the truth of high culture as an ideologically orientated myth.

It seems, however, that Bourdieu does not inhabit the religious terminology he mobilizes with quite the detachment we might expect. He would come with age to defend that high culture

that he had formerly ironised so vigorously, as its once overarching resources came to seem increasingly fragile in relation to a range of newly virulent market and media logics. His own discourse would take on a certain sacralizing dynamic as he refers, for example, to the 'highest productions of humankind' (in mathematics, philosophy, art), and the care that needed to be taken in their preservation and transmission (Bourdieu 1998, p. 27 – trans. mod.). In his accounts of artists like Flaubert and Baudelaire, it can sometimes seems that he admires their 'spiritual' renunciation of the 'temporal' satisfactions of worldly recognition over and above their specific work within the chosen artistic medium.[18] Commentators have noted how his otherwise subtle analyses of the cultural field morph into a kind of clumsy 'hagiography' when it comes to describing the 'heroic' achievements of such canonic figures (Fabiani 1997). Indeed he inflects his perspective on the networks of agents devoted to the consecration, liturgical celebration and catechistic transmission of high cultural value. These come to be represented as essential components of a precarious 'ecosystem' through which the most valuable resources of a demanding culture are preserved, filtered and deployed (Bourdieu 2008, pp. 344-5). The point here is not to criticise Bourdieu for inconsistency, or to be excessively ironical in my turn. One might conclude instead that certain sacralizing dynamics cannot readily be expunged from the normative framing of arts policies.

Instituted Religions and their Cultural Policies

So far we have considered how religion has figured as an object or a problem for lay cultural policies in France, whether at the level of overarching national-symbolic policies, educational policies, or the framing of arts policies. We have also suggested how religious forms may inhabit, in more or less conscious modes, such forms of secularized cultural policy. I will consider, finally, how religious bodies have themselves developed forms of cultural policy, first implicitly and then increasingly explicitly. In doing so, they have been drawn into different kinds of relation –

collaboration, instrumentalization, rivalry – with other kinds of governmental ambitions on national cultures.

In a long-term comparative analysis of the ways in which religious bodies have managed 'the cultural question', France's leading specialist on contemporary Islam, Olivier Roy, has recently developed a non-nominalist historical framework that displays some striking resemblances with our own problematic. He notes how the modern anthropological conception of culture, dating broadly from the nineteenth century, became a kind of governmental common currency, as it were, after 1945. It was popularized by bodies like UNESCO, for example through their sponsoring of such seminal works as Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Race et histoire*, which displaced a unidirectional model of 'civilization' with a multidirectional and relational model of 'cultural' plurality (Lévi-Strauss 1952). Churches and religious bodies would before long programmatically take up such intellectual tools to theorise their own projects – the most obvious example being the Catholic doctrine of 'inculturation' as developed around the time of Vatican II. However, Roy stresses that the kinds of issues that were henceforth addressed through or under the concept of 'culture' preexisted the deployment of that particular noun. Religions had for centuries come up against questions raised by the mediation between different belief systems, or between different embodied patterns of habits and values. As Roy puts it, speaking here of European Christianity and its confrontation with various forms of alterity, 'the absence of the word does not mean that missionaries and preachers were unaware of the problem: they generally placed culture under the rubric "beliefs, superstitions, and rites"'. While Muslim and Christian authorities today might talk explicitly in terms of dialogue between cultures and so forth, Roy argues that 'in other times, while missionaries had no operative concept of what constitutes a culture, their practices implicitly adapted themselves to the cultural question' (Roy 2008, pp. 49-50).

Roy traces, for example, a 450-year contrastive dynamic whereby the Catholic Church has tended to privilege an approach that grafts itself on to existing cultures ('inculturation'), whereas Protestant churches have adopted an approach that looks to sever their adherents from ambient

custom and mores to produce a 'pure' text- or spirit-based religion. Roy's term for the latter is 'deculturation'. Clearly, there are any number of nuances, as well as interesting quid pro quos, within this overall historical/theological dynamic. Roy traces how 'deculturating' strands in contemporary religious movements (evangelical fundamentalists and pentecostalists in Christianity, or Wahhabism in Islam) take on aggressive or isolationist attitudes to prevailing cultural norms and values. But this has not always been the case. The calvinist Jean de Léry, in his famous unprogrammed sojourn with the Brazilian Tupinamba indians in 1557, saw the tribe's rites and customs as irretrievably pagan (though perhaps as less sacrilegious than the 'paganized' Christianity of Catholicism that he had fled in Europe). However, it was precisely this absence of cultural 'convertibility' that allowed him to describe from a position of sympathetic non-interventionism the intriguing new way of life before him. In so doing he provided what Lévi-Strauss has described as the modern ethnographer's 'breviary' – a model, in other words, of how to do cultural anthropology *avant la lettre*.[19]

Likewise, the Catholic Church's latent model of 'inculturation' did not always play out in quite the way that one might expect. Post-Tridentine Catholicism mounted, in effect, a cultural policy programme designed to arrest heresy and to embed in the areas still under its sway, through instruction, aesthetic seduction and surveillance of practices, a reformed and robustly defensible orthodoxy.[20] However, Michel de Certeau's magisterial analysis of the actual implementation of this programme suggests that the Church was not the only, or even the dominant, agent in this process, at least as regards France (Certeau 1988, pp. 125-205). Firstly, he underlines how in this very process, the nature of the 'truths' transmitted through the new educational campaigns started to change. What was important was less their intrinsic status as true belief, but rather their capacity objectively to mark off social groups against impinging rival heretical groups. Hence their privileging of a certain 'evidence base' – manifest attendance practices, recitable 'knowledge', etc. Secondly, their very capacity to function in this way, culturally marking off certain groups or nations against

certain others, led to their instrumentalization by an emergent absolutist State. As de Certeau puts it:

> If Louis XIV is part of the Counter-Reformation, he inverts its principle through his *manner* of bringing it to a close. […] [This represents] a surreptitious revolution indeed, where ends are transformed into means. Political institutions *use* religious institutions, infusing them with their own criteria, dominating them with their protection, aiming them towards their goals. (1988, pp. 156-7)

The instrumentalization of symbolic resources by governmental cultural policy programmes, spoken or unspoken, has a long history. Certeau notes, moreover, how this instrumentalization would by the eighteenth century increasingly be theorized under another practical near-synonym of 'culture'. He observes that the term 'police', in eighteenth-century French usage, signified both 'culture' (a cultured individual was *policé*) and also the social and ideological order presupposed and produced by this process. A modernising translation might be 'cultural governance'.[21] And for a leading contemporary theorist of the process (Certeau cites Delamare's 1705 *Traité de la police*), religion as such constituted 'the first and the principal object' for the *police* of the nation (Certeau 1988, pp. 188-90). In the long history of its centralizing cultural programmes, the French State used the culture policies of religious bodies as an auxiliary before it used them as a foil.

The history of the Catholic Church's endeavours at 'inculturation', implicitly before the 1960s and explicitly thereafter, cannot be reduced to the history of their instrumentalization by State authorities. Indeed, they were complicated in France by governmental counter-endeavours, sustained since the 1880s, to 'ex-culturate' the Church within the nation and take it out of public space. Indeed, as the Church has become more beleagered and as a more isolationist and conservationist mentality has set in as a backlash to Vatican II over recent decades, the Catholic

Church could be viewed in some respects as itself moving towards a voluntary form of 'exculturation' .[22] It has accepted its position as a minority presence within French society, and has laid stress on those markers (anti-abortion, anti-homosexuality, a celibate priesthood, papal infallibility, etc.) that set it apart from the ambient culture around it. Not all Catholics are happy with this process, and some worry – with justification – that the Church is in the process of becoming simply another 'sub-culture' within a nation whose 'sacred canopy' it once supplied and then oppositionally energised (Rouet 2010).

This *capitis diminutio* as it has affected the Catholic Church should not, however, be read as a symptom of a more general decline in the capacity of religious movements to bring collections of individuals under their allegiance. On the contrary, Roy argues that there are a proliferation of such movements. It is simply that the Catholic Church, with its complex, unwieldy apparatus of historically sedimented ecclesiological doctrine and custom, faces particular difficulties. It is not adapted for survival in the contemporary ecosystem in which religions must exist. Other religious movements are much better adapted. Secularization has generally not eliminated religions, but has disembedded their expression from the social and geographical groupings that once maintained them across time. Globalization has likewise detached individuals, symbolically or physically, from the local cultures into which they are born, and has correspondingly disembedded certain religious formations from the sites upon which they initially crystallized. These two concomitant processes of secularization and globalization have created a peculiar kind of transnational religious marketplace. Those religions that will flourish are those that can reach individuals across different cultures (and thus also across different nations). They must be able to embed themselves within individuals' dispositions while shortcircuiting or bypassing the cultures around them. In other words, in Roy's analysis, they must 'de-culture' the individual from the surrounding norms, values, and rituals. The religious formations that are most adept at doing this are those that are constructed around a 'direct' relation with a simply delimited scriptural corpus (such as Christian evangelical fundamentalism or islamic formations such as Wahhabism) or that propose unmediated contact

with notionally supra-linguistic 'spirit' of one kind or another (pentecostalism or various kinds of new age mysticism). The very deculturation they presuppose is, paradoxically, the condition of their quasi-universal reach (they minimize their dependency on certain cultural prerequisites). Holy ignorance travels better, unfortunately, than careful engagement with historical human diversity.

That religious bodies act programmatically upon prevailing cultures is evident from the terms used by analysts to describe their operation: acculturation, inculturation, exculturation, deculturation, etc. (cf. Roy 2008, p. 51). These prepositional coinages all indicate different kinds of ambition for the steering of culture. In other words, they each describe, in practical terms, what can be understood in effect as forms of cultural policy. Of these forms, it seems that strategies of 'deculturation' are, in contemporary terms, paradoxically among the most potent of policy options for emergent religious movements. They aspire, of course, not to deliver their adherents into a cultural vacuum, but to enclose them in the premises and references of a counterposed imaginary universe. As we have seen, for example, in our discussion of the Debray education report, the real consequences of this imaginary enclosure are an important matter for general cultural policy reflection and action.

Concluding Remarks

By looking for forms of culture-shaping policies in places where they are implicit, unthematized, or 'latent', we can enrich and deepen our understanding of cultural policy processes.[23] The focus on questions of religion as they have impinged on cultural policies, broadly understood, brings this out in a number of ways. Certainly, the modes in which modern arts and heritage policies have dealt with questions of religion are highly significant in their own right – we have seen this in relation to Malraux's thought on the 'imaginary museum', and the issue is addressed head-on in other contributions to this special issue of the journal (Woddis 2011, O'Neill 2011). But we would gain a very foreshortened view of the way in which religious issues have been

culturally 'managed' in France if we were to concentrate only on such areas, or only on recent times. The politico-cultural handling of these issues has been embedded in other strategic governmental sites. In a sense, one of the tasks of cultural policy research is to work out what these sites are for any given object. In the case of religion, we have seen how culture-shaping policies in the field of education have provided stages or platforms on which the projects of secularizing modernity have confronted and negotiated with the religious 'archaeologies' from which they emerged. More transversally, the cultural-political projection of republican 'national identity' has recurrently orchestrated religious themes as an energising oppositional foil (in other countries, of course, national identities have been grafted upon or set within traditional religious formations (Bellah 1992; Colley 2005, pp. 11-54; Hobsbawm 1992)).

While questions of religion provide one possible terrain among others on which to develop broadened forms of cultural policy research, they also reflect back a singular light on cultural policy processes more generally. We have seen how secularizing lay projects, when they are actually incarnated, can look unsettlingly like religions. They organize liturgies and ceremonies around fictions, myths and fables (even if these fables carry names like Science, Progress, and the Republic). To analyse them 'as' religions can bring them into unfamiliar and critical focus.

Finally, religious bodies are not simply objects for governmental cultural policies. They have for centuries themselves operated to all intents and purposes like cultural policy apparatuses (Ahearne 2004, pp. 116, 122-4; Bennett 2009). Moreover, what Régis Debray once called the forest of human religiosities seems to be in front of us and not simply behind us. In particular, transnationally 'deculturating' religious movements circulate via hypermodern means transportable and self-enclosed assemblages of totems and taboos for takers among a deracinated clientele. They are powerful rivals in the symbolic institution of human populations, not just for existing and more culturally embedded forms of religious body, but also for lay forms of culture-shaping policy.

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23

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NOTES

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[1] On the imperative for social groups to work against their 'entropic' disintegration, see e.g. Debray 1981 and 1997. The same issue is treated in canonic sociological texts such as Durkheim (1976) and Berger (1990) (the principal focus of both the latter is specifically the sociology of religions as a foundational socio-symbolic question).

[2] See e.g Durkheim 1976 or, more recently, Debray 2007 (or even, in certain respects to be discussed below, Bourdieu 1996). Rousseau's notion of 'civil religion' (1994, pp. 158-68) has also recurrently been adapted to frame such perspectives (e.g. Bellah 1992; Baubérot 2004, pp. 163-86).

[3] Sarkozy's orchestration of potent religious symbolism at the level of 'national identity' policy has been complex and deliberate, both during his period as Minister of the Interior and as President. He – with the help of his speech-writers Henri Guiano and Emmanuelle Mignon - has extolled the virtues of Catholicism (symbolically at the Vatican's Lateran Palace in 2007) as a force for social cohesion in France, and indeed quite explicitly as an integral part of France's fundamental 'culture' (Sarkozy 2007). In so doing he self-consciously transgressed certain enshrined principles of laicity (setting the figure of the priest, for example, above that of the republican primary school teacher). Sarkozy also set up in 2003, as 'Minister of the Interior and Religions', a 'French Council for the Muslim Religion' designed to provide the State with an official interlocutor (a pragmatic move that is closer to the Napoleonic *concordat* model than to the post-1905 separation of Church

and State). As president, he nonetheless maximised in his legislative programmes the rhetorical charge of images of extreme 'islamism', such as the full-length veil (the *burqua*), thereby retaining at the same time a necessary foil for the political projection of a self-consciously lay national cultural identity.

[4] This is, of course, not the only possible linkage of republican identity and religious tradition – see e.g. Bellah 1992.

[5] For a particularly striking example, see Lynn Hunt's analysis of revolutionary 'Festivals of Reason' (Hunt 2004, pp. 60-66).

[6] These celebrations could usefully be related to Raymond Williams' category of 'cultural policy as display' as placed into contemporary debate and suggestively extrapolated by Jim McGuigan (see Williams 1984 and McGuigan 2004, pp. 61-91). More generally, on the parallel construction in Europe since the eighteenth century of manifold overarching 'national' identities based on 'cultural' programmes, see Thiesse 2001 or Hobsbawm 1992..

[7] For an authoritative survey, see e.g. Prost 1968.

[8] For accounts of the developments synthesized in this paragraph, see Langlois 2007 and Willaime 2007.

[9] I am setting aside here the question of Catholic schools in France, which currently educate some 17% of pupils. Although notionally private, nearly all such schools have operated after legislation introduced in 1959 under contract with the State.

[10] See Saint-Martin 2007, pp. 140-142; Bourdieu 1968.

[11] For an account of the circumstances surrounding the report, the report itself (Debray 2002), and its reception, see e.g. Ahearne 2010, pp. 70-76.

[12] On 'inculturation', see Roy 2008, pp. 86-93.

[13] On the wider contexts of such harnessing (or instrumentalization) of religious education for both national and European general cultural and intercultural policy objectives, see e.g. Jackson 2007.

[14] On the status of such capitalized abstractions as 'enchanted' myths, and the disenchantment that decapitalized them through the twentieth century, see e.g. Gauchet 2005, pp. 38-9.

[15] The term is coined at Derrida 1993, p. 89. It is designed to echo 'its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive. [It is] a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our

available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving' (Davis 2005, p. 373).

On the reception of Malraux among art historians, see Tadié 2004.

[16] For a fuller development of these terms and the accompanying perspective, see Bourdieu 1996, pp. 141-73.

[17] For a recent variant, see e.g. Self 2010.

[18] I am indebted to Jeremy Lane for this observation.

[19] See Léry 1994 and Lévi-Strauss 1975, p. 85. Roy discusses the text at 2008, pp. 70-3.

[20] For a suggestive analysis of counter-reformation artistic strategy within a 'cultural policy' framework, see Mulcahy 2011; for an approach to the modern Catholic Church within such a framework, see Bennett 2009 and 2011.

[21] Tom Conley helpfully proposes the term 'governance' in his translation.

[22] The term 'exculturation' was coined by Danièle Hervieu-Léger (in Hervieu-Léger, 2003, p. 97). She uses it to describe a general socio-cultural process affecting the position of Catholicism within contemporary French society. I am using it here in a more voluntaristic or strategic sense.

[23] I am indebted to Anita Kangas for the idea of 'latent' cultural policies.