Track: Integration
Dialogue: Migrations and religious pluralism
Title: Islam in a Plural Europe
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Key issues (300 words)

Migraciones y pluralismo religioso

Migrations imply an implementation of cultural pluralism.
There is an increasing importance of the *'C' factor* (C as culture).
Multiculturalism is too large and too weak a frame: it does not explain enough, in itself (and, as a concept, it needs to be put in question, particularly in the European continental situation).
Religions are an important part of this growing pluralism – not by chance "religion is back to the agenda".
The process of pluralisation in enforced by other long-term processes, which are older than migrations, and not related to it, even though they are powered by migrations.
Secularisation implies and is accompanied by privatisation and (internal) pluralisation: now also external pluralisation, through migrations, is in question (and there are reciprocal feedbacks among these phenomena).
We need to take into account religion(s) as such, much more than in the past. An interesting paradox is that including religion (and particularly 'different' or so-called 'alien' religions, minority religions, in short religions which are different from the dominant one) in their reflection on society, seems to be difficult for heavily secularised societies, such as the European ones. And for their 'interpreters' in particular (politicians, journalists, professional observers such as social scientists, that are much more secularised than their societies --- this is a peculiar cognitive and interpretative problem, that creates specific difficulties).
Islam in Europe is the most important case-study, for many reasons. Among others, for historical reasons (because it was the former 'enemy' religion), for social reasons (linked to the migration progress, and the settlement of Muslim populations in Europe), and for evident geopolitical reasons.

Some references:

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--- (2004a), *Inmigraciones y religiones en Europa. Identidades individuales y colectivas en trasformación*, in G. Aubarell e R. Zapata (eds.), *Inmigración y procesos de cambio. Europa y el Mediterráneo en el contexto global*, Barcelona, Icaria-IEMed, pp. 319-350;
--- (2004b), *Ragioni senza forza, forze senza ragione. Una risposta a Oriana Fallaci*, Bologna, EMI, pp. 159;
Allievi S. e Nielsen J.S. (eds.) (2003), *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, pp. 332;
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Content (1200 words)

Introduction: Changes in the Cultural and Religious Landscape

The presence of more and more significant percentages of immigrants in the European social landscape it is not only a quantitative fact, with several consequences on many social and cultural dynamics.
Different quantitative levels of so many indicators do not only produce a quantitative change. All together, they produce and create new problematics, new processes of interrelation, etc. In a word, they produce a qualitative change. Nothing less than a different type of society: quite different from the one imagined with the rise of the Nation-State, and its founding principles.
Among the other changes, one of the more visible and visibilised is the so called 'return' of cultures – and particularly religions (which are profoundly embedded in cultures, and viceversa; not by chance, even if we tend to forget it, cult and culture share the same ethimology…) – in the European public space.
A public space that used to be described in terms of secularisation, is now more and more frequently described as a territory in which a sort of 'revenge of God' would be one of the main ongoing processes. The case of Islam – and particularly of Islam in Europe – is often considered the more problematic and problematised expression of this process, even though not the only one.

Indeed, the presence of immigrants of different cultural and religious background is one of the 'engines', so to speak, that pushes the society into a change that is much 'larger' than their presence: in fact, it has important if not decisive effects also for the host society (an expression that should be used with some irony: this connotation is becoming less credible now than in the past…).
The presence of immigrant populations it is nor culturally neither religiously 'neutral'. The immigrants do not arrive naked, so to speak: they bring with themselves, in their suitcases, among other things, also visions of the world, traditions, histories, faiths, practices, values, moral systems, images and symbols. And they turn to them as indispensable identity references (I prefer this more neutral word, instead of identity systems: in particular because identities, form the subjective point of view, are all but systems – a word that have a too 'coherent' connotation). More than this, they often turn to these references – or, better, use them – not only individually, but also collectively and as communities.

This process produces a radical change of paradigm (in the strong sense used by Kuhn) in our interpretative criteria; and, even before, in our perception, in our experience – in our lives.
One of the things that have changed dramatically, even if we hardly have a clear consciousness of this change, is our idea of the places we live in, and that we consider our mother places.
We usually have a clear definition of the Nation-State, whose elements, in the classical doctrine, are: *one* territory, *one* people, and *one* normative system (one law). An implicit element, which is not part of the doctrine but it is rooted in the collective unconscious of many, is also *one* religion, or at least a common religion heritage, with the possible inclusion of some religious recognised minorities (this is also the 'implicit' common interpretation of classical sociology, such as in Durkheim).
For different reasons, all these elements are undergoing a deep change. Territories are multiplicating (devolutions and separations, but in the other direction also processes of federation). Peoples are pluralising. And even the normative systems are pluralising (national, European, etc.). Finally, cultures and religions which are not part of any historical heritage, find their place in society: in a more or less 'integrated' or 'separated' way, following the different interpretations, but, apparently, with a certain success.
(By the way, a secondary effect of this process is that it renders factually impossible the reproduction of ideological interpretations of society like those we have known in the past century, such as *Ein Volk, ein Reich,*

ein Führer; I suppose that we should consider this a progress… In effect, it is possible that the increasing pluralisation of societies might have the systemic effect of 'pretending' more – and not less, as many tend to say – democracy in our societies).

In the same territory, people, cultures, religions live together: they enter in contact with each other, they mix with each other or they do not, but in any case they co-exist. From being a pathology, plurality is becoming physiology. It is, or it is becoming, 'normal'. And, more than this, in many situations it is also becoming 'norm'.

By the way, this is what makes sociologically unplausible a popular interpretative paradigm, such as the 'clash of civilisations' thesis, popularised by Huntington. He describes civilisations as separated, 'here' and 'there', rooted in different territories, clearly definible. Exactly what it is not, or no more, and not only in the United States and in Europe. Obviously, the fact the civilisations are not so separate as they are described, does not exclude conflicts and clashes, particularly on a cultural and religious ground. It simply obliges to understand them differently: more as the effect of contact and interconnection, than of separation. Like some lucky even if mistaking doctors, Huntington has probably correctly understood the evolution of the illness, but have completely mistaken the causes (the diagnosis) – not to mention the therapy…

This modification in and of society is irreversible. Homogeneity, if it have ever existed (historically it has been more a myth than a reality, but a myth with many 'real' consequences…), is no more a criteria of definition of society: at the social, cultural, political, economic, religious level.

Good or bad, this is the factual situation *already*. We are dealing now with the consequences of this process.

Multiculturalism in question

We consider the acceptation of the term, at least in its descriptive meaning, as given.

The main problem is probably due to the definition of (collective) identities which is too often implicit in the debate. The term is in fact ambiguous and not at all clear. Religious or political definitions of identities are very different from the way identities are perceived and experimented at the individual level. Also scholars in different fields rarely understand each other, when talking of multiculturalisms, identities, communities, etc. ('What is culture?' still is, as in the beginnings of the socio-anthropological disciplines, *the* question, with too many answers). What political philosophy often takes for granted, sociology, anthropology and psychology ('human' sciences…), describe very differently, or cannot accept at all. If (collective) identity is a problematic concept, it will be even more problematic every abstract consideration about suggested 'politics of recognition' of these same identities (the reference is obviously to Taylor and many others).

It is not my objective here to analyse the concept: something that has been done already by many. I want simply to suggest that the debate would gain a lot, if applied to the case study 'Islam in Europe'. More than the discussions on aboriginal populations in Australia, the French populations of Quebec, or the references to the homosexuals' rights or the women's movement, the empirical case of Muslims populations in Europe seems to be an ideal reference in order to compare, confront, challenge, and probably also reject, many of the theories on multiculturalism and their implications.

What is culture? What is religion? What is identity? What is community? What is individual? And how all these references – too often considered as 'static' – change? And how fast? All these questions would be interestingly challenged by the empirical observations coming from this field. Particularly if the field is studied sociologically. And particularly with a socio-historical sensitivity: men, women, identities, communities, societies, change in time, sometimes simply due to time. And not only individuals change. Even their cultural references do: how Islam in Europe change through generations? The islamic references of the fathers are the same islamic references of the so-called second generations? And what about islam of converts? And how they do influence each other, and reciprocally push to change?). Studying sociologically means to take change, movement, etc., as defining elements of description: something that, in the multiculturalist debate, as well as in the liberals vs. communitarians controversy, is still not a common move.

The debate, in present terms, still seems too 'rigid', dealing with hypostatisations of cultures and of identities much more than with reality. Forms of hybridisation, of being 'in-between', of *métissage* (of cultures as well as

of identities), too often are not considered at all. Or, on the contrary, in some case, are 'ideologically' proposed as a criteria for understanding society, instead of as a factual evidence that must be empirically verified, as much as the hypostatic descriptions of the same cultures and identities.

The spaces of regulations must be identified. The role of frontiers, on the cultural level, must be emphasised, as well as the frequent tendency, at the social level, to cross them.

Islam in Europe and Multiculturalism

The presence of Islam has not created a multicultural situation in Europe. However, it has certainly contributed to a great extent to creating an awareness of it and making it more visible and topical, more than other "othernesses" which are less visible or less symbolically charged, including historically; or perceived as less conflicting – less "other", in a word.

Multiculturalism, which I mean here not as the adhesion to a specific political philosophy, but as the mere recognition of a plurality of competing cultural options present in the same territory and of competing cultural universes, linked in particular with the arrival of populations which have these as their own heritage of reference, is now part of the European agenda. Naturally this does not mean that before there were not differences of opinion and of references. However, it is licit to hypothesise that with the arrival of the new migrations cultural and religious plurality has not only increased in terms of potential references, but has found new collectively shared forms of presence and has triggered off dynamics that were at least partially new in the Old Continent.

In Europe the introduction of the use of the term "multiculturalism" marked the passage from an immigration perceived only as economic and temporary to a permanent presence of populations.

In several countries, it still appears as a fact that multiculturalism is giving a new form to (is trans-forming) the public spheres and civil societies of the new Europe.

However, the picture outlined by J. Nielsen in the early 1990s, in one of the first overviews of the Muslim presence in Europe, still seems reliable and it can be summarised in three elements: a liberal myth of a multicultural Europe, which is indeed still a myth; the social reality of a multicultural Europe which can be found in the field; the unreality of a real cultural encounter in Europe.

A reflection on community self-organisation however seems indispensable for an understanding of the processes of insertion and integration. The Muslims who have immigrated to Europe are not only individual immigrants: they are also groups, associations, communities – in a word collective social actors (also collective). As such, they are organised and make their voices heard, and as such they are or are begun to be perceived, by professional observers and, more in general, by public opinion.

On the other hand, it is not possible to concentrate only on the above specificities, with the risk of hypostatising them: cultural communities are not static or rigid - they come into being and are constructed socially, but individuals act in them and through. In communities, as in the individuals that cross them, the dynamics of change and the modifications under way must be highlighted and which are not less important than the forms of cultural continuity and "inertia", and the links with the parallel processes of individualisation are no less important than elements of communitarianism, and no less significant than for the self-definition of these identities, both from the individual and collective point of view.

The European Muslim world is living through a process of extremely rapid transformation. It will be of strategic interest to see how the processes of structuring of Muslim communities continues in this crucial phase, where they are no longer ethnic communities arriving from somewhere else, as with the generational passage they are losing at least in part and progressively the ethnic characterisation and identification with the countries of origin, but are not yet purely and simply autochthonous communities, for reasons linked both to culture and customs as well as to citizenship (nor, above all, are they perceived as such).

In this perspective, the very notion of Muslim "community" ends up by losing that idea of contraposition to "individual" which it maintains implicitly, and often explicitly, in many interpretations of the Muslim phenomenon in Europe and which show here their excessively simplifying characteristic. In the panorama that is being formed, community and individual are not alternative ways of being Muslims, but on the contrary are concomitant and are even mutually reinforcing. It is therefore not correct to formulate the debate in terms of communitarianism *or* individual integration (or simply individual paths), which represents a false alternative and not confirmed by empirical analyses of the Muslim phenomenon: rather, we have to speak of communitarianism (or more simply, and also more correctly, of community, although with a large mesh and fraying at many points) *and* individual integration. With frequent cases of a functional/instrumental use of the community in order to support strategies of insertion and individual promotion.

This observations open to many related questions, that I will not examine here.
It is sufficient for my purpose to underline that, given this situation, from now on, it will not be possible to understand the history and the social evolution of Europe without taking into account its Muslim component. In the same way it will not be possible to understand the history and the social (and even theological) evolution of Islam without taking its European component into account.
The history of Europe has become, at least partly, Islamic history. And the history of Islam, European history.